The Collection of Wonders – Pippi Longstocking’s Cabinet of Curiosities

By Elina Druker

Det var en stor, stor klaffbyrå med många små, små lådor. Pippi öppnade lådorna och visade Tommy och Annika alla de skatter, hon hade förvarade där. Där fanns märkvärdiga fågelägg och konstiga snäckor och stenar, små, fina askar, vackra silverspeglar, pärlhalsband och mycket annat, som Pippi och hennes pappa hade köpt under sina resor runt jordklotet.¹

It was a huge chest with many tiny drawers. Pippi opened the drawers and showed Tommy and Annika all the treasures she kept there. There were wonderful birds’ eggs, strange shells and stones, pretty little boxes, lovely silver mirrors, pearl necklaces, and many other things that Pippi and her father had bought on their journeys around the world.²

What is described in this quote from Astrid Lindgren’s novel *Pippi Långstrump* (1945; *Pippi Longstocking*) is a collection of naturalia and artefacts which are kept in a cupboard. The collection, with its strange shells, stones, trinkets and jewelries, indicates a strong link to the curiosity cabinet, or a „wunderkammer“, as well as natural science cabinets of the Enlightenment – collections of extraordinary objects, animal and mineral specimens and exotic curiosities.³ Pippi describes herself as „A Thing-Finder“, she states: „Hela världen är full med saker, och det behövs verkligen, att någon letar reda på dom.“⁴ („The whole world is full of things, and somebody has to look for them“).⁵ She gives some examples of potential items of interest: „gullklimpar och strutsfjädrar och döda råtter och sånt där.“⁶ („Lumps of gold, ostrich feathers, dead rats, candy snapcrackers, little tiny screws, and things like that.“)⁷

Besides the mention of the large drawer, Lindgren’s text gives very little information about Pippi’s home. However, Ingrid Vang Nyman’s illustrations, both in the novels and the picture books, are filled with a range of things. The swarms of objects, both every-day items and more exotic articles, distort the sense of space in the illustrations and contribute to a jumbled disorder surrounding Pippi. The illustrations suggest that her home is not very orderly, which the text confirms: „det såg

¹ Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1945, 18–19.
² Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1950, 23.
⁴ Lindgren/Vang Nyman, 1945, 23.
⁵ Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1950, 27.
⁶ Lindgren/Vang Nyman, 1945, 23.
⁷ Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1950, 27.
ut som om Pippi hade glömt fredagsstädningen den här veckan“ („it certainly looked as if Pippi had forgotten to do her Friday cleaning that week“). Vivi Edström proposes that even the name of the house „Villa Villerkulla“, which reminds of the Swedish expression „villervalla“ („disorder“ or „mayhem“), establishes the concept of turmoil and chaos in this unconventional home.

I have previously proposed that Vang Nyman’s illustrations investigate the still-life genre through studies of curiously assorted and meticulously rendered objects in the books about Pippi. I have suggested that the constellations of objects surrounding the protagonist, both animate and inanimate, function as pictures of performance and agency, depicting the energy and norm-breaking behavior that personifies the character. In this article, I aim to develop my discussion of Vang Nyman’s interior studies by expanding the question of still-life further. I argue that Pippi’s entire home is arranged in a similar manner to the chest described in the initial quote, and that it can be seen as a form of curiosity cabinet. In fact, within the genre, the original term „cabinet“ described a room rather than a piece of furniture and included a chamber or a gallery that exhibited the collection.

When discussing how these arrangements of every-day objects and artefacts can be understood in relation to the tradition of meta-painting, I will use the ideas of art historian Victor Stoichita as a theoretical standing point for my analysis, alongside research about the text-image interaction in picture books and illustrated children’s literature.

At first glance, the collections of objects in Vang Nyman’s illustrations appear to consist of random things. Similar to still-life painting, they range from common household objects like cups, plates,
and food items to artefacts like framed paintings, seashells, and porcelain figures. No organizing principle is detectable; instead, all the items seem to be of equal status and importance. Despite the jumble, different categories of objects are presented in the illustrations — categories that have diverse uses and functions. The first category consists of everyday items, even though they are not always used or placed according to their conventional purpose. As media theorist Bernhard Siegert states, items we encounter in still-life paintings are usually objects of domestic use and refer to absent human actors.\(^\text{13}\) In a similar way, many of the things in Vang Nyman’s illustrations — kitchen utensils, cleaning tools, and food items — are for domestic use and belong to the sphere of everyday life. But Lindgren’s iconic child character lives alone and is no ordinary child. Neither is her home a conventional home. Already in the first paragraph, we are told that Pippi is nine years old and that she has no parents. Her mother is dead and her father is a sailor who has gone missing: „Han var sjökapten och seglade på de stora haven, och Pippi hade seglat med honom på hans båt, ända tills pappan en gång under en storm blåste i sjön och försvann.”\(^\text{14}\) („He was a sea captain who sailed on the great ocean, and Pippi had sailed with him in his ship until one day her father was blown overboard in a storm and disappeared.”)\(^\text{15}\) Her father is, however, indirectly present in Pippi’s home. The second category of things discussed here is connected to him since it consists of things gathered during journeys around the world. In fact, the topic of adventure and faraway places is positioned at the conceptual center of Vang Nyman’s compositions. Several items complete this scenario; exotic feathers and colorful seashells as well as several Asian artefacts; decorated blue and white porcelain jars, a floral vase and Chinese dolls. In painting, these kinds of objects often have symbolic relevance and generally relate to wealth, beauty, adventures, and other cultures.\(^\text{16}\) As Victor Stoichita notes in his influential study about sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European painting *L’instauration du tableau: Métapainture à l’aube des temps* (1993; *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*), a collection’s inherent contextual relationship does not become clear until it is transformed into an intertextual relationship and a system of images’ self-referentiality will emerge in an image that represents it.\(^\text{17}\) Pippi’s collection refers, as the „wunderkammer“ essentially does, to faraway places and cultures, and reminds us of the events that took place before the novel starts. They were collected by Pippi and her father during their adventures, suggesting there have been other stories and escapades, beyond those narrated in the novel. The items in Pippi’s home thus hold a double identity. They belong to the spheres of everyday life as well as to the curious, both the inside and the outside, the domestic and the foreign. As such, they blur the borders between past and present, fact and fiction.

It almost seems the items are animated; at least they propose the possibility of movement and vitality, corresponding to the turmoil and unruliness that is so fundamental to Pippi as a character. The constant movement and energy of the main character, expressed in the text, is also reflected in the spatial compositions in the picture book *Känner du Pippi Långstrump* (1947; *Do You Know Pippi*)

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\(^\text{13}\) Cf. Siegert 2015, 164.
\(^\text{14}\) Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1945, 6.
\(^\text{15}\) Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1950, 12.
\(^\text{16}\) Cf. e.g. Stoichita 1997, 19–20.
\(^\text{17}\) Cf. Stoichita 1997, 104.
Longstocking?) (1999) where Vang Nyman’s illustrations range from large double-spread illustrations to series of small square images that resemble the panels of a comic. The depiction of Pippi’s kitchen is especially interesting since throughout the story, the kitchen is depicted from multiple angles and given different functions. Sometimes, Pippi is displayed on the kitchen floor, baking gingerbread cookies or writing a letter; she bakes pancakes, celebrates her birthday party, and plays with her friends Tommy and Annika. There is a a large dining table in the center of the room and a red cupboard is in the left hand corner. A porcelain vase, as well as a blue porcelain cat, are placed above; these are prototypical still-life objects.

What happens during the birthday celebration in Do You Know Pippi Longstocking? is a radical transformation of the kitchen and its function as the pictorial perspective of the room suddenly is flipped. The children decide to play the indoor children’s game of „Don’t touch the ground“, in which the players try to avoid touching the floor by climbing on furniture and objects. The focus on the play transforms the room. If we compare the two images of the kitchen – the first one depicted from the front side and the second from above – we see that the function of the space changes from kitchen to playground. Yet, the room itself and its objects remain the same. In this illustration, illusory perception, movement, and pictorial depth are of interest. Although the room is the same, the characters as well as the furniture and the room itself appear to be moving. The room extends itself as if it was testing its boundaries. Also, the arrangement of the objects in the image reverses the ordinary relation of foreground and background. The spatial framework changes as the children try to avoid the floor and focus on the potential pattern of climbing or dangling on things instead. It is a standpoint based on the rules of the game, with focus on the child character’s perspective and movements.

The way pictorial perspective has been used in painting, in particular a play with perspective, has often signaled a shift or a turning point in art history. Keeping in mind that Vang Nyman was trained in painting at the Royal Academy of Arts in Copenhagen18, what we see here is an artist who – rather than attempting to create a naturalistic illusion of depth – plays with the spatial order, and hence investigates and reinforces the self-contradictory arrangement of the image. The use of primary colors and strong, black contour lines in her illustrations reflects a number of influences such as the ornamental quality of Oriental as well as Asian art – especially Japanese and Chinese woodcut – with even color surfaces, cut-down shapes, and heavy contour lines.19 Furthermore, her interiors and compositions of objects often display a tendency towards a distorted use of space. Studying her interiors in relation to the still-life genre as well as to the motif of the „wunderkammer“ opens up a variety of discussion points such as the idea of display and pictorial representation, or issues of materiality of objects and images. Expressive and inventive spatial constructions, a focus on playing, and the anti-authoritarian and reversed perspective embed Vang Nyman’s work in a larger artistic context.

Curiosity Cabinets

As Stoichita has demonstrated, artworks with self-reflective qualities often investigate the topic of status and boundaries in painting. In his study he discusses the ways that paintings themselves commented on representation, on the techniques and signifying strategies of painting. In his analysis of interior images and still-life motifs, Stoichita shows how different framing devices such as windows, doors, mirrors and framed paintings are used.20 Similarly, Siegert discusses the functions of doors and windows as cultural techniques and argues that „the analysis of cultural techniques observes and describes techniques involved in operationalizing distinctions in the real.“21

But when studying an image in a picture book, what is the difference between inside and outside? Does it matter if we are offered a vision of a room that is tilted or viewed from above? It is noteworthy that in Vang Nyman’s interior illustrations to Do You Know Pippi Longstocking?, the outer boundaries of the setting are clearly defined. The windows and doors are closed or covered with curtains. When illustrating Pippi’s house from the outside, it is often drawn with its windows wide open, even at jar. But when showing the house from the inside, the windows are shut, and we are denied a view to the outside world. Like the frame of a painting, the composition defines the borders of this peculiar home, further emphasizing its unique rules and limits. Only once is someone depicted opening a window and using this potential entrance. And vehemently so when the two thieves Blom and Dunderkarlsson break in and climb through Pippi’s bedroom window in the middle of the night.22

Inside Pippi’s home, an abundance of paintings cover the walls. In the picture book, twelve different maritime images of yachts, ships, and small sailboats can be found. While some of them hang in the kitchen, others decorate Pippi’s bedroom. Some of the paintings have fallen off the walls or are partly obscured by a cabinet or the bed. Also, there are several blank hooks on the walls hinting at disappeared paintings – or even at potential future paintings (and journeys) to come. The paintings can be considered metafictional comments to the journeys of Pippi and her father which have taken place before the story. Furthermore, in the novel Pippi Longstocking, a framed portrait of Pippi’s father is shown on the bedroom wall. This portrait creates a mise-en-abyme-image connected to the father’s actual appearance in the second volume, Pippi Långstrump går ombord (1946; Pippi Goes on Board).23 The sheer amount of paintings in Pippi’s home is probably the most striking feature resembling the composition of the curiosity cabinet as a motif. Like paintings depicting this motif, each of

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21 Siegert 2015, 14.
22 While the novel Pippi Longstocking describes how the thieves enter the house through the kitchen door, Lindgren/Vang Nyman, 1945, 114, they climb in through the window in the picture book. The picture books discussed in this article are unpaginated.
23 In Pippi Longstocking, a framed portrait of Pippi’s father is featured in some later editions, see for example Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1968, 87. His actual entrance in the story takes place, and is illustrated for the first time, in Pippi Långstrump går ombord, 149. In the picture book Do You Know Pippi Longstocking?, there is no framed portrait of the father but rather a portrait of a man with a beard and a top hat. Even the decorated Chinese vase with a motif depicting a man and a woman under a cherry tree branch can be considered a mise-en-abyme. For the discussion of mise-en-abyme and metafictional framing in picture books, see Nikolajeva/Scott 2006, 224–227.
Pippi’s objects present an image that functions as a fragment of the encompassing collection, a composition that follows the theme of journeys and adventures, both within and outside the main story. As Stoichita writes, there are no curiosity cabinets without people. Instead, the determining factor of this pictorial genre is its subject and purpose: conversation. „The structure of the representation as a whole is dialogical“ Stoichita states. Curiosity cabinets were produced to create dialogue between objects, artefacts and images, „thus eliciting an intertextual reading“. Applying the idea of the intertextual dialogue on Lindgren’s and Vang Nyman’s story, the function of Pippi’s collection points at places, events and journeys that may (or may not) have taken place. The novels about Pippi Longstocking are full of colorful tales and anecdotes told by the main character. As Ulla Lundqvist has shown, although these tales are often alluding to existing foreign countries like India, Brazil, Egypt, and Indonesia, they are clearly made up and nonsensical, even outright fabrications. And even though these tales are often told in order to make a statement, Pippi’s views on fact and fiction are ambivalent to say the least.

It is noteworthy that the blurred lines between fact and fiction are an element inseparable of the curiosity cabinet. In fact, many natural science cabinets included fake items and forged natural history. Many of the European curiosity cabinets emerged during the 16th and 17th centuries. At the time of European expansion and exploration, they can be seen as precursors to modern museums. Nonetheless, attempts to scientifically categorize the items in these collections were not always the primary goal. Instead, they represented wealth, power, and a fascination for the extraordinary, the exotic, the curious. Nevermind if Pippi’s stories are true or made up, what is evoked through her collection of souvenirs and treasures are experiences and stories that have taken place in foreign and adventurous places, far away from the „tiny little town“ presented in the first novel.

Displaced Things

The images from Pippi’s kitchen that I have discussed initially signal an interest in investigating not only perspective but also spatiality. It is, however, significant that this room is a kitchen, a space that is often connected to a mother’s presence in children’s literature, to eating, cooking, warmth and security. How, then, is food and eating depicted here? A customary subject matter for the still-life genre is the grandiose display of food. Fruit, dead game, cakes, bread, beverages, and flowers are elements that are often loaded with symbolic value within the still-life genre and, furthermore,

27 There are numerous examples of fakery within curiosity cabinets but also scientific publications where fictitious creatures were included side by side with existing species, see for example Conrad Gessner’s encyclopaedic work Historiae Animalium (1551–1558, 1587).
28 Similar kind of investigation of the construction of the image (and the concept of a home) is evident in the image of Pippi’s home in the second novel, where the front wall is removed, exposing the viewer the interior of the building. The illustration works like a cross-section of image, where we see several rooms simultaneously almost as if we were looking into a doll’s house or a theatre stage. Even here the coordinates of normal perspective are unsettling and wobbly, Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1946, 14.
connected to vanitas imagery. In Vang Nyman’s illustrations to the books about Pippi Longstocking, food is, by contrast, mainly connected to two things: its joyful and lavish consumption, or norm-breaking behavior expressed by its unconventional treatment. In several cases, food, cakes, and candies are used as a variation of the „wunderkammer“-motif. In the chapter „Pippi goes shopping“ in the first novel, also published as a picture book *Pippi går i affärer* (2014; *Pippi goes shopping*), the children visit a candy store. The store with its shelves, stocked with glass jars full of candies, sweets, and confections, becomes a cabinet of indulgence and pleasure. Pippi purchases no less than eighteen kilos of candy, sixty lollipops and seventy two caramels as well as one hundred and three chocolate cigars. She soon returns to buy another eighteen kilos of candies. The excessive quantity of food comes up repeatedly. Pippi bakes „minst femhundra pepparkakor“ („at least five hundred gingerbread cookies“) and dishes out long rows of lemonade, fifteen cream cakes and a huge pot with sausages during her farewell party. Due to Pippi’s unlimited resources both these scenes can be read as variations of the “Schlaraffenland” or Cockaigne motif, a classic topic in children’s literature, which is a variation of the fantasy land motif, i.e. of abundant amounts of toys, food, treats, and excessive laziness and pleasures.

For further discussion of food items in still-life painting, see e.g. Barnes/Rose 2002.

Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1945, 21.

Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1950, 18.

Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1946, 166.

In Pippi’s kitchen, food is prepared and cooked in unusual and unconventional ways. Karen Coats states that „Pippi offers queer protest to every cherished social and political norm she encounters, from school to coffee parties to housekeeping to child welfare services to the rule of law“. The way food is handled, prepared and eaten is often provocative, even offensive, in the books about Pippi. The character rolls out gingerbread dough on the floor; when baking pancakes she uses a bath brush to beat the batter while her hair is covered in broken eggs. During her morning chores, she lies on the dining table and eats upside down, her plate sits on a stool. The frying pan is on the hat rack, next to a screwdriver and a piece of cheese. Unexpected combinations of food items and animals occur, too. In the already discussed birthday scene in the kitchen, both Nilsson, the monkey and Lilla Gubben, the horse participate in the celebration. In Pippi Goes on Board the monkey becomes the center piece of the dining table during a joyful picnic scene. Another noteworthy scene in Pippi Longstocking is the coffee party at the Settergrens’, a scene that has received a lot of scholarly attention. Pippi, who has never attended a coffee party before, enters excited and nervous. Her red hair is compared to a lion’s mane, and her face is harshly painted with

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34 Coats 2007, 16.
35 For further discussion, see Maria Nikolajeva’s chapter „Matmästaren Astrid Lindgren“ in Nikolajeva/Bergstrand 1999, 213–250.
37 Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1946, 18.
38 Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1946, 76.
crayons, making her look clownlike and intimidating at the same time.\textsuperscript{39} She then literally attacks the coffee table:

Pax försten skrek Pippi och var framme vid bordet i två skutt. Hon rafsade ihop så många kakor hon någonsin kunde komma åt på en tallrik, slängde fem sockerbiter i en kaffekopp, tömde halva gräddekannan i kaffekoppen och drog sig sen tillbaka till stolen med sitt rov innan damerna ens hade hunnit fram till bordet. [...] Sen doppade hon friskt i i kaffekoppen och körde in så mycket kakor i munnen att hon inte kunde få fram ett ord, hur mycket hon än försökte. I en handvändning hade hon gjort slut på kakorna på faten.\textsuperscript{40}

„First!” cried Pippi and was up by the table in two skips. She heaped as many cakes as she could onto a plate, threw five lumps of sugar into a coffee cup, emptied half the cream pitcher into her cup, and was back in her chair with her loot even before the ladies had reached the table [---] Then she merrily dunked cakes in her coffee cup and stuffed so many in her mouth at once that she couldn’t have uttered a word no matter how hard she tried. In the twinkling of an eye she had finished all the cakes on the plate.\textsuperscript{41}

Instead of a social gathering, the coffee party becomes a performance, a race to devour as much food as possible in shortest amount of time. Not only does Pippi dress herself in a highly inappropriate and unladylike way, but her way of attacking the cookies, and later the cream cake, is also performative, exaggerated and inadequate. Vang Nyman’s illustration is interesting in many ways. In her ink drawing, the table setting is composed carefully as if to underline the delicate situation. Fine proper china used to be an important part of the Swedish bourgeois afternoon coffee tradition (preferably including seven different kind of cookies). Pippi’s indifference and her inability to understand and adjust to conventions concerning gender, childhood and social rules is emphasized by the image where she gobbles up the entire cream cake while the other guests just stand by and watch bewildered.

A similar kind of collision of worlds takes place in the third novel, \textit{Pippi Långstrump i Söderhavet} (1948; \textit{Pippi in the South Seas}). In her search for the mysterious creature „spunk”, Pippi climbs the wall of a three store building in order to look through a window. In the process, she scares two ladies who are peacefully drinking coffee by a dining table.\textsuperscript{42} The novel does not include an illustration for this encounter, but there is an unpublished sketch by Vang Nyman depicting the scene.\textsuperscript{43} In the draft, Pippi is peeping through the window and we see how the two startled ladies spill their coffee. Once again, she breaks with social conventions about gender and good/ proper behavior –

\textsuperscript{39} Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1945, 125.
\textsuperscript{40} Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1945, 127–128.
\textsuperscript{41} Lindgren/Vang Nyman 1950, 120–121.
\textsuperscript{42} Cf. Lindgren 1957, 65.
\textsuperscript{43} The sketch is available at the digital archive at the Royal Library in Stockholm („Pippi tittar in i ett fönster på tredje våningen och frågar två damer om de sett någon spunk”. In: Kungl. biblioteket. \url{https://www.kb.se/hitta-och-bestall/digitala-kollektioner/ingrid-vang-nymans-skisser.html}, 28.06.2023).
and ruins yet another afternoon coffee. Edström has pointed out that Pippi’s encounters with adult women usually come off as either comical or as failures. She suggests that Pippi’s character is used to highlight creativity and authenticity but also, to put into question rigid structures and societal norms.\(^\text{44}\) Even the character’s movement through space is extreme, as she suddenly emerges through a window, high above the ground.

As Kristin Hallberg points out, Vang Nyman’s illustrations depict a modern, liberated, and active child which symbolizes the pedagogical ideas of the 1930s and 1940s in Denmark and Sweden.\(^\text{45}\) But although Pippi reflects contemporary, modern ideas of the child, her body language and behavior suggest otherwise. Her corporeality constantly comes up as excessive and exaggerated, and is visualized in a spectacular and performative way. She has been compared to figures like the clown and the jester.\(^\text{46}\) The norm-breaking essence of the character is expressed by both the text and the images. Noteworthy about this illustration of Pippi interrupting yet another coffee party is a specific item placed on the window sill. It is the same, blue, porcelain cat we recognize from Pippi’s kitchen in the picture book *Do You Know Pippi Longstocking?* In fact, this porcelain cat is just one of many examples of objects that seem to move between different images, pages, even stories. A salt shaker in the shape of a small man, a straw hat with a flower, a blue key with heart-shaped bow and a yellow music box are shown several times in different contexts throughout the books discussed here. In some

\(^{44}\) Cf. Edström 2020, 82; 101–103.

\(^{45}\) Cf. Hallberg 2001, 26–44.

\(^{46}\) Cf. Edström 2020, 94.
cases, these items have a specific function in the story, but sometimes they do not seem to have any particular purpose whatsoever. And sometimes, like in the case of the porcelain cat, the items reappear in other books.\textsuperscript{47} We could see the blue porcelain cat as an intertextual element, but it seems more fruitful to consider the way it points at the artist’s actual work method – to study and draw everyday items and objects in her home – and thus features an interesting tension between reality and fiction, between objects within the books and others outside them. These objects seem to suggest that they are authentic items which the artist has observed and studied. The fact that Vang Nyman drew interiors and studied actual items in museums and different collections when doing her illustrations, offers one explanation to this kind of replication of specific artefacts.\textsuperscript{48} Not only is the protagonist in constant motion, but the items seem to be moving between different places, too. These items figure inside the story just as much as they point at items and interiors existing outside the text, outside fiction.

The Girl in the Mirror

In her study \textit{On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection} (1984) Susan Stewart points out that a collection „is not constructed by its elements; rather, it comes to exist by means of its principle of organisation”.\textsuperscript{49} The visuality and materiality of still-lives and the motif of „wunderkammer“ that this article explores, concerns surrounding material goods and objects that encompass disorder and order, norms and their breaking, but also issues of surface and depth, representation and the act of creating. If these principles are applied to Pippi’s collection of things, the spatial organization of its elements reflects the spontaneity and lack of control that characterizes Pippi as a character. Pippi’s home constitutes an enclosed unit, yet its owner is quirky and eccentric. There are sides to the character that remain a mystery to the reader, like events that have taken place before the start of the story.

In the novels Pippi frequently encounters phenomena that are strange for her, like attending afternoon coffee, going to school, visiting a circus. The character is thus used to question societal expectations of ideas about children, adulthood, societal norms and gender.\textsuperscript{50} Having been raised on a ship by her father and other sailors, Pippi does not have the knowledge and upbringing most children have and thus functions as a catalyst in the story: a catalyst that highlights norms, standards and expectations about children and the societies that surround them. It is not only the items in her home that are strange and wonderful, it is also Pippi herself who comes over as strange, exotic, and curious.

As already discussed, multiple paintings cover Pippi’s walls, a visual element that is an important part of the book’s mise-en-scène, the arrangement of actors and props on a stage. Yet another

\textsuperscript{47} For example, the blue key (or a variation of it) is depicted three times in \textit{Do You Know Pippi Longstocking}? but also in the school book \textit{Nu ska vi läsa: Andra boken} from 1948, illustrated by Vang Nyman.

\textsuperscript{48} Cf. Vang Nyman 2003, 16.

\textsuperscript{49} Stewart 1993, 155.

\textsuperscript{50} Cf. Edström 2020, 128.
representational surface is introduced in the picture book *Do You Know Pippi Longstocking?* that can be considered a key-image for understanding Vang Nyman’s play with pictorial representation. On the title page of the picture book, Pippi is shown lying on the floor and looking in a small rectangular mirror. Above her the book title is composed in colorful letters: „Do you know Pippi Longstocking?” This paratextual composition is significant. Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott suggest that objects or characters placed on the title page can amplify a certain interpretation of the story. On a narrative level, this image introduces the main character of the story. But more significantly, the image also offers the reader the chance to see a fragment of the character (looking at herself) from our vantage point, a technique in painting that, again, raises questions about representation. In this opening scene, Pippi is uncharacteristically motionless and composed, as if she was waiting for the story to start. She is depicting her reflection in the mirror. But is her gaze turned towards herself or is she also „watching us“?

In painting, the mirror often functions as both a symbol and an image. It is a motif that is symbolic, not only in arts and literature but also in theatre. The mirror’s symbolic value is complex, often signifying self-awareness, but also mortality, and in painting it is often matched with mediation on representation. In still-life paintings the mirror is often used to reflect a fragment of a whole. It is used to address the dialectic „between truth and illusion, between reality and image“, as Stoichita writes. Portraying Pippi both gazing in a mirror and letting us get a peak of her reflection, can be considered a self-reflective or metafictional motif. Here, the mirror becomes yet another representation within representation. The image also places Pippi in the center of the story, with all other elements, both letters, objects and characters swarming around her. Once more, she becomes the organizing principle for the world around her.

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Bibliography

Primary Sources

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Fig. 1 Early cover for Astrid Lindgren and Ingrid Vang Nyman’s Pippi Långstrump (1945), © Ingrid Vang Nyman/The Astrid Lindgren Company.
Fig. 3 Pippi goes shopping. Sketch by Ingrid Vang Nyman, National Library of Sweden, Astrid Lindgren-collection: HS L 230:21 IVN 7:22. © Ingrid Vang Nyman/The Astrid Lindgren Company.
Fig. 4 Pippi climbs through a window. Sketch by Ingrid Vang Nyman, National Library of Sweden, Stockholm. Astrid Lindgren-collection: HS L 230:21 IVN 7:34. © Ingrid Vang Nyman/The Astrid Lindgren Company.

Abstract

Astrid Lindgren’s and Ingrid Vang Nyman’s novels and picture books about Pippi Longstocking are filled with swarms of objects, both every-day items and exotic treasures, which are gathered around the main character in a jumbled and joyful disorder. In this article, the constellations of every-day objects and artefacts, food, and treasures are studied in relation to the tradition of still-life painting and the motif of curiosity cabinets. The article argues that the norm-breaking essence of Pippi Longstocking is expressed not only in the text but also by the way the interior of Pippi’s home is organized both spatially and materially. Furthermore, a self-reflective and intertextual context is brought to the fore. Here, art historian Victor Stoichita’s theoretical work will be used as a standing point for the analysis, alongside research about the text-image interaction in picture books and illustrated children’s literature. Lindgren’s unconventional character functions as a catalyst in the stories which highlight norms, standards and expectations. However, in doing so, the character herself is portrayed as strange, exotic, and curious – very similar to the strange and wonderful things surrounding her.