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Anne-Li Lindgren, Anna Sparrman, Tobias Samuelsson and David Cardell

Linköping University Post Print



N.B.: When citing this work, cite the original article.

Original Publication:

Anne-Li Lindgren, Anna Sparrman, Tobias Samuelsson and David Cardell, Enacting (real) fiction: Materializing childhoods in a theme park, 2015, *Childhood*, (22), 2, 171-186.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0907568214524460>

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<http://www.uk.sagepub.com/home.nav>

Postprint available at: Linköping University Electronic Press

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:liu:diva-111433>

Enacting (real) fiction: Materializing childhoods in a theme park

Anne-Li Lindgren, Anna Sparrman, Tobias Samuelsson and David Cardell

Fiction and fantasy are highly valued in children's worlds. The capacity to *move in and out of* pretend play and to explore and understand fictive fantasy worlds is described as natural, normal and even desired in psychological, pedagogical and sociocultural, or anthropological theories about play (Cannella and Viruru, 2004; Lindgren, 2006). Yet, when it comes to children's computer gaming based on fictive fantasy worlds (Aarsand, 2007), pretending to be a pop star (Sparrman, 2002), or watching television (Pettersson, 2013), moral panics about whether children can see and comprehend differences between the real and the fictive arise. In addition, children's theatre can be blamed for luring children into fictive fantasy worlds where the lack of understanding about what is real and unreal is upheld as problematic (Helander, 2011). Even though fiction and fantasy are fundamental to how childhoods today are understood, this is a topic that is seldom explored either theoretically or academically. We want to address the question of how the relationship between real and unreal can be understood in new ways in contemporary society. We suggest that *fiction* can be understood in other ways than the hitherto dichotomized approaches to it, and our aim is to focus on the hybridity that is created through the interconnecting word *and*; as in fiction *and* childhood, material real *and* fictive real. We are particularly interested in how materiality as something real and fiction as real mingle, and thus we chose to talk about what we call the *fictive real* and *realunreality*.

In order to study fiction as a hybrid and interrelated phenomenon we have chosen a theme park created around the works of the prestigious Swedish author Astrid Lindgren; i.e. Astrid

Lindgren's World (ALW). ALW is just one manifestation of Lindgren's works that have proliferated on an everyday basis in novels, films, plays, games, broadcasts and on the Internet. The theme park ALW is situated on the outskirts of Lindgren's birthplace, the small Swedish town of Vimmerby, and it provides opportunities to walk through and explore the fictive fantasy worlds of Lindgren's famous novels in an imaginary and material model world (Sparman, 2011). The target group for the park is 'children 0–9 years with their families' (www.alv.se, retrieved 24 September 2012), signalling that this is a place that primarily addresses children and only secondarily adults. By taking this approach, the park attracts 450,000 visitors per year – mainly in the summer months – and prompts millions of people to document and share their experiences on the Internet (Danielsson et al., 2011). The built scenarios, or 'events', in the park are inspired mainly by the illustrations in the Swedish editions of the books, and to some extent by the settings from screen adaptations (Althén, 2010). There are also outdoor theatres continuously staging plays inspired by Lindgren's novels. Actors impersonate the fictional characters from Lindgren's novels, performing on one of the two stages or mingling with the visitors. In all the events, the actors – separately and together with visitors – enact fiction in different ways in the park. An important ingredient in this enactment of fiction is, we argue, the interaction between the embodiments of Lindgren's fictive childhoods and the real childhoods brought into play by the visitors (by children *and* adults).

Previous theme park research has pointed out that the incorporation of fiction serves to stimulate the visitor's imagination, a strategy designed to give the 'feeling of being transported to another place or time' (Lukas, 2008: 12-13), or being in a 'toy city' (Eco, 1998: 41). Another more common interpretation is that theme parks are about managing emotions in order to make the visitors consume (Cardell, 2013). In this paper we go beyond these interpretations with focus on how the visitor is lured by the theme park management. We

interpret ‘the hallucinatory’ effect that Umberto Eco (1998) refers to, not as a threat to realism or reality, but rather as part of contemporary childhoods, which are interconnecting with the fictive; a kind of fictionalization of childhood practices creating realunreality. Our focus is on how the material real and the fictive real mingle with childhoods in actual practices and what that might mean.

In order to explore the position of fiction in the park, we discuss it as an enacted practice. By this we mean that fiction, in addition to being constructed in practice, helps to make what fiction ‘is’ through this practice (Law, 2004; Law and Urry, 2003). This means that fiction at ALW enacts and re-enacts specific and complex realities in which, for example, the *fictive* and *childhood* create each other, but also that the fictive and childhood are mingled and created in relation to materiality, semiotics and live actions. Through this approach, entanglements of fiction *and* childhood remap the boundaries between the material real and fictive real enacting ‘a contested gradient of realness’ (Law, 2004: 4), where *the fictive* stimulates real activity (Woolgar, 2002: 17) and, we add, vice versa. We explore this by posing two interrelated questions that will guide the analysis: What does the material real and fictive real assemblage of the theme park do? What kinds of enacted childhoods does the materialized fiction in the park enable?

The analysis is based on the places that the park itself refers to on maps and in the park guides as ‘events’. The material was collected as part of a research project aiming to make a visual documentation of the theme park (VR 2009-2384), since such places are not included in the documentation activities conducted by, for example, Swedish museums to preserve places, buildings and areas which are or might become parts of cultural heritage (ALW defines itself as a place of cultural heritage; Sparrman, 2011). Four researchers conducted the visual documentation; photographing and writing down key aspects of the constructed park events. The analyses of the place based on this visual documentation are supplemented with another

kind of visual material: films uploaded onto YouTube by parents after having visited the park. YouTube offers a number of films from ALW park visits. We have chosen to focus on two examples where the material real and the fictive real become intertwined in complex ways. These chosen examples are ordinary in their presence on YouTube, and do not stand out as unusual. They have each been viewed several thousand times. Thus, the specific phenomenon examined in this article is a theme park and the broader context is online and offline practices producing childhoods. We start with a general description of the park and an analysis of how the fictive real materialize in the park.

The parks material real and fictive real assemblages

Although ALW is situated on the outskirts of Vimmerby, near an industrial area (Sparrman, 2011), a sense of ‘being in nature’ or in the countryside is built into the park. An abundance of trees is growing, and in some spots it feels as if you are in a ‘real’ forest. Since Lindgren’s fiction presents stories from the early 1900s, when most of the population lived outside cities, the illustrations in the novels use traditional culture as a resource, and the events at ALW often replicate the book illustrations, and the environments are mainly, but not exclusively, rural.

Figures One and Two exemplify the sense of ‘real’ nature created in the park; the houses are situated on the outskirts of a forest where foliage encroaches on the ‘events’; the milieus built to embody the rural fictive worlds of Lindgren’s novels. Nature is, however, tamed and cultivated; this is emphasized by fences, the bridges that allow humans to cross supposedly ‘natural’ waterways, and the roads that make the landscape accessible while simultaneously restricting people’s passage to the outlined trails. At ALW, cultivated ‘nature’ is beautiful, nostalgic, innocent, clean, safe, pristine and under control; pollution, climate change or a threatening wilderness are absent (Andersson, 2009; Taylor, 2011). The specific cultivated

natures endow the fictive with normality, making the material real and fictive real mingle into realunreality.

[Insert Figure One about here]

[Insert Figure Two about here]

As demonstrated in Figures One and Two, cultivated nature from the world outside ALW is re-enacted *in* the park, contributing to the enactment of ALW as simulacrum of a real world (cf. Eco, 1998). What is not obvious from the pictures, however, is that the buildings are constructed on a smaller scale than ‘real’ houses – almost like miniatures – signalling to visitors that they are true visual copies but not full copies of real houses (see also Sparrman, 2011). The smaller scale also indicates that the houses are created for the primary visitors, the children, rather than the adults, a materialization that stresses the difference between adulthood and childhood. The material reminds visiting children and adults about the notion of children as other and fundamentally different from an adult norm. Difference is, in this milieu of clean, safe and innocent nature, enacted as unique and positive, and not as inferiority or lack of equal resources (cf. Näsman, 1994). We will give more examples of how the park reinforces notions of innocence, and its implications later in the paper. For now, we continue with our exploration of how the material real and fictive real assemblages unfold in the park.

As can be seen in Figure Two, there is an information sign just at the fence corner, creating interference between the material real and the fictive, disturbing the ‘realistic’ mimicry of the milieu, as information signs are not found in real gardens. The sign encodes the place as cultural heritage, it serves as a reminder that the visitor is visiting a replica of times past displaying memories of what once was (Sparrman, 2011; Schlehe et al., 2010; Watson and

Waterton, 2010). Moreover, the topic *Troublemaker Street* creates an assemblage where not only cultural heritage is present, but also the fictive. In this material fictive assemblage cultural heritage is paralleled with fictive notions of how things might have been. Conversely, the text on the information sign also encodes the place as real, implying that this is the real place where a human person named Lotta lives: ‘Lotta wakes up one morning and is frightfully angry’. The text on the information sign thus describes a fictional character as though she were a real person, presenting her by first name and assigning agency – implying a human agentive status. Lotta is, however, also a five-year-old fictional girl in the novel *Lotta on Troublemaker Street* (Lindgren, 1961). The story describes her as an agentive child in a setting epitomizing notions of a romantic childhood where childhood is separated from adulthood (Higonnet, 1998; Holland, 2004; Smith, 2012). Even though it is about a fictional character, the information sign enacts a sense of reality: this is a real place where real children, who have real feelings, live their real childhoods. The information sign is thus simultaneously disturbing the sense of reality and underlining the reality of fiction, making the fictive real (cf. Eco, 1998). As shown so far, fiction is materialized in the parks hybrid and complex environments where contemporary real visiting children and childhoods mingle with the fictive children and childhoods in the material real and fictive real assemblages enacted in the park. More can be said about how inter- and intrapersonal relations are enacted in these hybrid milieus.

Enacting childhood thorough realunreality

When the park opens its doors to visitors it becomes populated with both ordinary people (i.e. visitors) and actors impersonating the fictional characters in Astrid Lindgren’s novels. During the summer, more than sixty well-known humanized fictive characters are found in the park, mingling with the visitors or performing on one of the two stages. Thus, dramatic actors enact fictiveness side by side with ‘real’ ordinary humans – adults and children. The visual

documentation, together with numerous blogs on the Internet posted after a visit to the park, display how the visitors represent the real and take part in the enactment by walking around, exploring the events, observing, talking to, or in other ways engaging with, the environment and the actors (Lindgren, 2013). Visitors blend with ‘the whole imitative machine’ (Eco, 1998: 43) set up to make fiction and the real mix. The ‘real’ humans and the dramatic actors are, however, also entangled in multiple inter- and intrapersonal ways, as will now be explored more closely.

Films uploaded to YouTube by parents after visits to ALW show how relationships between the material real and the fictive real are enacted in the park. We will give two examples. The first example, in Figure Three, uploaded by a parent, shows how a young actor performs as the well-known fictional character Emil from Lindgren’s novels *Emil of Lönneberga* (Lindgren, 1963; 1966), and film adaptations (Hellbom, 1971, 1972; 1972). Emil is an eight-year-old boy who, because of his curiosity and urge to take his own actions, runs into problems evoking his father’s anger.

In the YouTube film, the Emil actor interacts with two visiting children and a female adult at the ALW park (YouTube, retrieved May 24, 2012). The young boy is talking with ‘Emil’, an older boy acting as the famous fictional character. In this practice, the ‘real’ boy and girl meet with the material real and fictive real character and vice versa. This moment was singled out by the parents for publication on the Internet and, when we retrieved it, it had attracted more than 151 000 viewers. This indicates that the meeting between the real and fictive was something the parents wanted to share with others, and simultaneously, others were eager to share with the parents. In this situation, blurring the boundaries between real and unreal was not regarded as a threat (see introduction), but rather as a resource and inspiration for parents to share with others in an online community. This represents a different way of doing the

material real and fictional real than the normative stance, which states that a blurring of real and fiction is a marker of abnormality or cause for panic or anxiety.

[Insert Figure Three about here]

We argue that what makes the event taking place in Figure Three special has to do with how the *real* boy and girl meet with a supposedly *unreal* Emil who is now appearing in the flesh. The boy touches Emil's body and the girl touches his famous cap; while the boy is talking to Emil the girl is observing him, and scrutinizing him with her gaze. The girl carefully touches Emil's cap, as if checking that this is for real. She does not touch his skin, as the small boy does; instead she connects with Emil by touching the material extension (Emil's famous cap) of the materialized fiction. The boy and girl thus enact the real and fictive real in different ways; by verbal communication, gazes and physical touch. What makes the situation extraordinary is that the fictional character of Emil has come to life, making sensory experiences between real and fictive real possible, and thereby transgressing the distinction usually upheld between the fictional in books and on screen with first-hand sensory experiences.

Being able to enact bodily connections between the real and fictive unreal, we argue, blurs understandings of what a thing 'is' – in an ontological sense. In the actual meeting, the material real and the fictive real become blurred and interrelated not as fiction or fantasy imaginaries but in real practice. The attraction, we argue, lies in the way in which the fictive, unreal childhood enacted by the real fictive character mingles with the real childhoods enacted by the boy and girl – the reality of the event itself. Fiction and real coexist and mingle, not in people's heads, but instead in a real place where others can take part in the enactment and share the experience (cf. Lindgren, 2006) – offline and online, in play and outside play, in private and in public – making the unreal real; creating *realunreality*. This

means that fiction, fantasy and the everyday real become inseparable and that ideas about children's inability to separate the real from the unreal (see introduction) indicate children with identity disorders no longer apply. In the context of ALW, there seem to be no such fears. Instead, the interrelatedness between material real and fictive real is supported by the adult community. We want to highlight the active role played by parents in making the enactment of material real and fictive real come together both online and offline; being in the film; as producer of the film and as uploader of the film.

The second example, Figure Four, shows a visiting girl dressed up as the fictional character Pippi Longstocking, famous from several of Lindgren's novels (for example Lindgren, 1945; 1946), film adaptations (Gunvall, 1949; Hellbom, 1973; Riley 1998), television series (Annakin, 1988; Hellbom 1973; Riley, 1998) and computer games (PC & Macintosh 1997; PC 2002). The film was uploaded to YouTube by a parent (retrieved May 24, 2012). The girl, performing Pippi Longstocking in a similar way to the actors present in the park, wears replicas of Pippi's characteristic clothing, and a wig highlighting the Pippi hairstyle and red hair colour. The hairstyle and colour of the hair signal assertiveness and that Pippi is a special child (Lundqvist 1979). Except for the contemporary trainers, the girl is covered with visual markers identifying her as part of the fiction and/or the actors present in the park. Material objects are thus used to lend authority to the girl to play out being a fictional character, personifying it through her own body and performance. The girl's own 'real' appearance is re-made to create a similarity with a fictional character, supporting an identity where 'real' self and fictive real become interrelated. We will explore this in more detail.

The film begins as the girl is mounting a play horse, serving as a replica of Pippi Longstocking's horse, Lilla Gubben, a white horse with black spots that lives together with Pippi and her monkey in her home, Vilekulla Cottage (Pippi's mother is dead and her father

lives on an island in the Pacific Ocean). The replica of the horse, together with the clothing and the wig, are, as already mentioned, materializations of the fictive real.

[Insert Figure Four about here]

The girl pretends to ride the horse and says: ‘I’m arriving at Vilekulla Cottage’. She dismounts from the horse and enters the model house, Vilekulla Cottage: a materialization of fiction making it possible to engage with it. The girl is, we claim, using materiality in complex ways to gain authenticity from the fictive to actually be a fictive character herself. Her actions are different from the experience of reading or listening to a novel: She is naming a fictional place, positioning herself in it, and acting like the fictional character she ‘is’. The uploading parent’s comment on the film is: ‘The cutest Pippi in the world’, thereby confirming that the girl *is* Pippi and even better than the original as she is cuter than the real fictional one.

What is of particular interest here is the way in which it is not only the park that encourages this mingling of real and unreal on several different levels at the same time but also that the adult filming the girl’s activity engages in, and encourages, the interaction between the real and fictive real. This means that the realunreality does not solely belong to children’s play but, in addition, to adults’ ideas about what childhood as well as adulthood should be. Children should live in and with fiction and adults should support this process. Adults, thus, encourage children to interact with the materialized fiction, and give their support by documenting it (Economou and Hergli, 2010; Lindgren, 2013), standing by as observers and by doing so marking their adult positions (Lindgren, 2012; Sparrman and Lindgren, 2010) and forming practices where realunreality enact childhood in new ways.

When the parents upload films from their visit onto YouTube they are also publishing their own versions of these children’s cultural products, which are legendary in Sweden today;

these parents are publishing their own versions of the film *Emil* and the film about *Pippi Longstocking*, with their own children participating in different ways. This form of demotic presence stands out as innovative in the mingling of material real and fictive real, as well as the way in which it positions their children in the media. What these kinds of films have in common is an enactment of realunreality with the parents' own children as the main characters. The real material and fictive real assemblages enacted in the park thus creates new childhood practices and ways to 'do' contemporary childhoods.

We will now turn to the more unusual – in the ALW context – urban environment to discuss how the fictive urban realities enact childhoods and childhood innocence.

Assemblages of realunreality and contemporary childhoods

The model town and event *Tiny Town* differs from the other events in the park in that it is not a rural setting, as is most common in ALW. The *Tiny Town* setting consists of several houses in traditional style with gardens, street scenes, a city hall, hotel and town square – to mention but some of the attractions. In some of the houses there are passages so that children can enter and cross through to another street, and there are also sound effects on one of the streets, where you hear real children's voices telling stories, singing and giggling, thus prompting a sense of reality in this 'toy city' (Eco 1998: 41) within a 'toy city' – the park itself. The sense of being in a fantasy world is enhanced by the fact that a visitor cannot enter the shops but only look in through the windows. In this section we will explore how the material real and fictive real intertwine with past and present enacted as part of the same time and space; a pastpresent (King, 2012). Past and present continually converge, collapse and co-invent each other, where the node holding them together is fiction *and* childhood.

It is a romanticized image of history (Giroux, 1997: 56) that is staged in *Tiny Town*: a history where the streets were clean and organized, children played and went to school and adults

worked. Candy and toys were what children dreamt of. It was a world without inequalities or hardship. The information sign describing Tiny Town emphasizes the realistic dimension, that it is a duplicate of the town of Vimmerby near which the ALW park is situated. In addition to presenting this model world as cultural heritage, a replica of a real town from the early nineteenth hundreds, the information sign simultaneously makes connections with Lindgren's fiction: 'The small shops and streets, the hotel garden and the marketplace are all to be found in different books.' The reasoning is that the real model world can be traced to fiction; one can discover these 'real'-life duplicates in the fiction. A link is construed between historical time as reality and as an inspiration for fiction and then back to real life as enacted in the model worlds (which constitute lived experiences for the visitors). The information sign is thus an agent in the mingling of history, fiction and lived worlds.

In Tiny Town, a sign on a traditional Swedish-style house signals the presence of an exhibition on Astrid Lindgren's SOS Children's Village, Bouar, in the Central African Republic. The exhibition is located inside the building (one of the few buildings that can be entered) and consists of texts and photographs covering the walls. Information in English tells us that the Central African Republic is 'one of the poorest countries in the world' where '280,000 children have lost one or both of their parents'.

[Insert Figure Five about here]

The presentation tells us that the initiative to support and build the village was part of the centenary celebration of Astrid Lindgren's birth and Figure Five displays how a 'model shows the new village'. What is happening here is that a model world built to support and save children and their families is presented in the context of a model of a fictive world alleged to present a traditional Swedish village in historical time. The intermediary links between these 'worlds' are Astrid Lindgren and notions of childhood in fiction and in contemporary society.

In addition, in order to show what the legacy of Astrid Lindgren has produced and contributes to, the exhibition seeks to evoke interest in funding a second new Astrid Lindgren's Children's Village in the Central African Republic.

The second part of the exhibition aims to raise funds for a new project. It presents the ways in which contemporary children and childhoods are created and affected by Swedish efforts in the name of the children's novelist Astrid Lindgren. The links between 'here' and 'there' are explicit: 'Help us to build Astrid Lindgren's second child village. Noisy Village in Bossangoa'. As the quotation shows, the imagined *new* village in the Central African Republic is named after one of the events in the Astrid Lindgren's World fictionalizing the novel with the same name: Noisy Village [Sw. Bullerbyn]. In doing this, the builders are establishing complex connections between fictive imagined worlds based on Lindgren's authorship with its specific notions of childhood, and an imagined new real village for real living children in another part of the world in contemporary time. A reference to Pippi Longstocking's renowned 'treasure chest' [Sw. skattkista] establishes these connections: 'If you want to help us, please leave a coin in the treasure chest.'

Links are also established between the children who have received help from the first Astrid Lindgren Children's Village and those who will live in the second, planned one. Images of good outcomes and continuing needs are presented side by side: for example, statements that 'Children are safe in their new families' are paralleled by a presentation of the facts that other children are abandoned and need education, new homes and new families. A childhood occupied by work is held out as a negative reality that these children need – and they themselves want – to escape: '49 percent of children between 10 and 14 years of age are working'. This statement is reinforced by a boy seated in the lower right-hand corner of a photograph covering the wall (Figure Six), speaking in his own voice while looking directly into the eyes of the ALW visitor: 'It's more fun to be in school than to work in the

marketplace.’ A distinction is implicitly made between these children in need and those having access to ALW.

[Insert Figure Six about here]

At ALW, play – not work – is the key activity for children visiting Lindgren’s fictive worlds. It is about ‘being able to play when you want to, having nature and the sea always nearby, and about how happy these simple things can make you feel’ (Park Guide, 2011: 18). The African villages built in Lindgren’s name similarly seek to give children a ‘happy childhood’, and one that is safe and secure: ‘here they can stay until they are grown up.’ An implication is that the children – at ALW or in the Central African Republic – are being protected by adults, and by Astrid Lindgren’s world and legacy. The experience enacted for both children and adults is a traditional western childhood, where children are dependent on adults who know and translate what children’s best interest are: Children should want to play and not work (cf. Cannella and Viruru, 2004). The notion of childhood enacted here is in accordance with dominant western discourses of childhood, in which children are presented as inherently innocent, protected and not taking part in productive work (Cannella and Viruru, 2004). At ALW, historical and contemporary childhoods, ‘our’ and ‘the others’ childhoods, national and foreign childhoods, are simultaneously enacted in a material real and fictive real setting. A shared feature of all these sets of concepts, related by *and*, is innocence. The material real and fictive real together produce multifaceted layers of innocence; the innocence of childhood is intertwined with historical innocence (of childhood) and nostalgia.

To conclude, Tiny Town is a complex environment where traditional Swedish nostalgic and sentimental notions of how a good social/natural milieu serves to create good childhoods meet – in historical and contemporary, material real and fictive real time – contemporary notions of how children in need in foreign countries ought to be helped. The poor foreign children can be

protected and saved in the same way that Swedish children in historical time were protected and saved while living out their good childhoods, childhoods now re-enacted in the park. Fiction is the source of a Swedish model world, while a fiction writer inspires the creation of material real worlds (presented as models in Tiny Town) in contemporary foreign countries. Fictive worlds created as part of children's childhoods generate an interplay and interconnectedness between time and space and between what is material real *and* fictive real, past *and* present, close *and* far away. These fictive materializations construe new alignments between historical and contemporary notions of children's needs: Children need protection in order to be or become innocent children; to experience a 'romantic childhood', the most valued childhood in western societies, where children are innocent, playing and learning (Cannella and Viruru, 2004; Higonnet, 1998; Holland, 2004; Taylor, 2011). These enactments include a re-enactment of the colonization of the non-western (Cannella and Viruru, 2004), enacted through a mingling of the material real and fictive real. At ALW, realunreality created in materialfictive assemblages becomes part of the western post-colonization of the South.

Conclusion: Realunreality, materialized fiction and materialized childhoods

In this paper we have discussed how childhood practices enacted at a Swedish theme park based upon the work of novelist Astrid Lindgren produce new combinations of the material real and fictive real. Astrid Lindgren's World (ALW), in Vimmerby, Sweden, is a place where fiction *and* childhood are enacted in multiple interpersonal and personal-material relationships when real childhoods (visiting children) and fictive real childhoods (childhoods in fiction) meet and co-exist. Materialities invested with real and fictional childhood innocence – happiness, playing, being close to nature and nostalgia – mingle with lived childhood innocence and generate a setting in which the fictive stimulates real activity and vice versa; the real stimulates the fictional. ALW enacts the material real and fictive real as

interconnected, making what we refer to as *realunreality* part of contemporary (western) childhoods.

At ALW, we argue, the fictive is enacted in real terms, exhibiting complex interrelations and interconnectedness with cultural history, contemporary times, and the national and foreign. The enacted materialized fiction at ALW is achieved through an abundance of fictiveness that mingles the material real and the fictive real. ALW is not fiction and it is not philosophy: ALW is a real place where fantasies and cultural understandings are enacted. If ALW has an ‘origin narrative’ (Haraway, 1989: 370), it is about enacting fictive materializations entangled with childhoods where material real and fictive real become intertwined.

Enacting childhoods and fiction reinforces traditional notions of innocence and nostalgia. In doing so, traditional power relations are re-enacted that position adults as in control and with power, and children as the controlled and the ones given power *when adults want to do so*, in Sweden and in foreign countries. Adults are the providers of children’s worlds and perspectives (Cannella and Viruru, 2004; Smith, 2012). Such a notion does not fit well with the contemporary call for new perspectives on children *and* adults as both complete and incomplete, with the aim of blurring the distinctions between adulthood and childhood and making both more equal (Cannella and Viruru, 2004; Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008; Halldén, 2007; Smith, 2012). Instead, the new forms of realunreality that children and adults enact together become an obstacle for child empowerment. Innocence, nostalgia and euphoria, fuelled by ‘safe’ fiction, create a condition where the socially enforced aim is not change, but conservation.

To conclude, in parallel with the hybridity and interconnectedness in terms of how the material real and the fictive real are enacted in the park, traditional categories of separation between adults and children are reproduced. This is not done as a result of anxiety about

mingling reality and the fiction, as often suggested in other studies (see introduction). On the contrary, adults are supporting and co-creating the material real and the fictive real where children play out childishness and adults play out slightly new versions of adulthood, as documenters providing and staging safe and secure childhoods. What the emphasis on innocence does is to re-inscribe adults as inherently powerful. At ALW this is mainly achieved through multiple investments in childhood (and nature) innocence, nostalgia and romanticized history.

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Figures and Captions (1-6)



Figure 1: Junedale. Lindgren's nostalgic and pristine countryside. Visual documentation 2010.



Figure 2: Troublemaker Street. Houses on the outskirts of a forest, with fences and signs. Visual documentation 2010.



Figure 3. Emil of Lönneberga meeting visitors at Astrid Lindgren's World. YouTube, retrieved May 24, 2012.



Figure 4. Girl dressed up as Pippi Longstocking. YouTube, retrieved May 24, 2012.



Figure 5. Model of the Astrid Lindgren's Children's Village in Bouar in the Central African Republic. Visual documentation, 2010.



Figure 6. Exhibition about the Astrid Lindgren SOS Children's village in Bouar, Central African Republic. Visual documentation, 2010.