



Annika Thor

Sweden

Nominated for HC Andersen Award 2022
Author Category

Dear Jury Members and IBBY Secretariat

We are delighted to nominate Annika Thor to the Hans Christian Andersen Award in the Author Category 2022.

What stands out in Annika Thor's body of work is her strong advocacy for the children's and young adults' rights to be treated with dignity and respect. In her authorship, Thor centers on what it means to be human in relation to identity and belonging. The individual's struggle to find a place in existence works as motif, while the longing for love and community as well as loneliness are central concerns. With gripping realism and insight into children's way of approaching reality, she paints stories that are approachable and enjoyable. Not only for children, but to anyone who has ever been struggling to discover who they are, and where they belong in the world.

In the historical series about the Steiner girls, *En ö i havet* [A faraway Island] (1996), *Näckrosdammen* [The Lily Pond] (1997), *Havets Djup* [Deep Sea] (1998) and *Öppet hav* [Open Sea] (1999), Thor deals with themes that are as central today as during the events of World War II. In the context of a burning Europe, she portrays how young people's identity, as well as social and cultural belonging can develop, even in the most unforeseen environment. The series is about two young Jewish sisters who travel with a refugee transportation from Vienna, to a remote island in the Gothenburg archipelago. They stay in Sweden during the entire war, facing the challenges of encountering a new country and a new culture, at the same time as they are supposed to develop from children to young



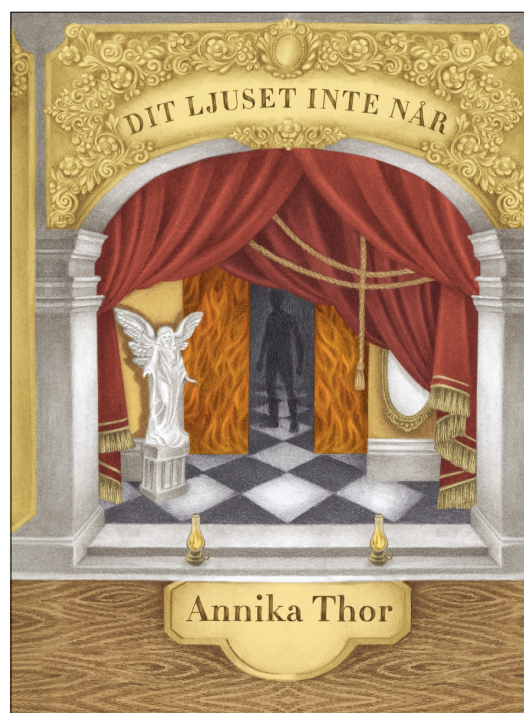
The four novels about the Steiner girls.

women. Their struggles are also colored by the worry for their parents, who remain in occupied Vienna.

The story of the girls' everyday lives as refugee children is painted at the background of a Europe at war. As the girls seek security in an unknown place, their inner journey is portrayed as a flow between childhood, adolescence and adulthood. In other words, the series talks about the girls' journeys in several layers; the spatial journey you do when moving from one place to another; the inner journey of the soul of one who's entire world is turned upside down; and finally the temporal journey we all make from childhood to adult life.

While telling the story about the girls' journey through cultures and religious spheres, Thor does not shy away from representing the complexity of life with concerns such as class, religion, and expressions of intolerance. All these aspects invade the stories, interweave and interact.

The series about the Steiner girls was the start of an authorship of literature for all ages. In the novel *Dit ljuset inte når* [Where the Light Can't reach] (2015), the orphan Johan starts question his life and existence. He dresses in girls' clothes and runs away from the orphanage he lives in. Portraying as the young girl Johanna he gets a job as dresser with a travelling theatre company. His life becomes a struggle to avoid being caught and exposed, but even more to find out who he really is, and where he truly belongs.



Dit ljuset inte når, 2015

In the moving narrative of *Flickan från långt ifrån* [The Girl from Far Away] (Illustrated by Maria Jönsson, 2014), every word makes its mark and tells a story that cuts to the bones and stays there. Again, Thor addresses the issue of daring to open the door to the unknown and letting in whoever needs a safe harbor. The young girl looking for a home represents the search of belonging, while the woman opening the door is the fear of letting in something new and unknown.

In her latest novel, *Odysseus pojke* [Odysseus' Boy] (2020) Thor tells the epic tale of Odysseus' travels through the eyes of a child and young man: Odysseus' son Telemachus. By doing so, she has the reader question the immortal tales of bravery and heroism. She also manages to let the story travel over thousands

of years, by showing the reader that the feelings of insecurity, struggles with friendships, worries about the future, and longing for an absent parent were as present in the ancient days as they are for children today.

Since the publication of the Steiner series, Annika Thor's books have been translated into about twenty languages. There have been made adaptations for film, the stage and radio. Thor's texts have made lasting impressions, and she has received a number of awards for her works, both in Sweden and abroad. The themes of her works; refugee children, war, and human intolerance, are sadly enough just as present today as it was during the second world war or under the ancient times. But so are the other themes of friendship, love, and hope for the future.



Odysseus pojke, 2020

Biography



Photo: Ulla Montan

Annika Thor was born in 1950, and grew up in a Jewish home in Gothenburg. She has been a librarian and an arts director, as well as a freelance writer in film, media and children's culture. Annika also writes drama and film manuscripts, often for children and young people. Since her debut, Annika Thor has become one of the most successful authors of books for children and young adults. Annika Thor's first book, *En ö i havet* [A Faraway Island]) was published in 1996. The story is set in the 1940s, and is about two Jewish refugee sisters who come from Vienna, Austria, to live on an island in the Gothenburg archipelago. It

met with great critical acclaim, and was nominated for the prestigious August Prize.

In all she has published more than twenty books for children and adults of all ages. Often they portray people in dire situations, struggling to find a place in this life, with psychological and existential conflicts strongly affected by the society in which they live. In her novel *Om inte nu så när* [If Not Now, When] she returns to the time before and during World War II that she depicted in her first book.

She is widely praised both in Sweden and abroad and has received numerous prizes such as the August Prize and the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis. So far her books have been translated into over 20 different languages.

Interview

[Interview with Annika Thor, published on "The Little Book Worm: Book reviews for children", February 5th, 2010.](#)

*An Interview with Annika Thor,
author of the 2010 Sydney Taylor Honor Book "A Faraway Island"*

Annika Thor grew up in a Jewish family in Gothenburg, Sweden in the 1950s and 60s.



Annika Thor

Photograph © Cat Lein

She started work as a librarian, and then went on to work as a film and television critic, and finally dedicated herself to writing books, plays and screenplays for young people. She is one of Sweden's best known authors for young people. Her books have been translated into many languages, and have won many prizes.

"A Faraway Island," about Austrian refugee sisters, Stephie and Nellie, is the first in a series of four, and so far the only one to be translated into English. It has won awards in

Europe, and has been made into a television series in Sweden. It received two United States honors this year; not only was it chosen as one of two Sydney Taylor Honor Books for Older Readers, but it won the Mildred L. Batchelder Award for best book in translation.

It is my honor to talk with Annika Thor.

Hello Annika, Since many young people may not know much about the role of Sweden during World War II, I have a some questions about that, as well as questions about your book, and Jewish life in Sweden during the war, and immediate post-war period, as well as now.

Sweden acted in many contradictory ways as a supposedly neutral country during the war. Nazi soldiers were allowed to travel through Sweden during the war years, and Sweden exported ore to the German government, which was presumably used for the

building of tanks, airplanes, and weapons. On the other hand, Sweden rescued thousands of Jews through the work of Raoul Wallenberg and others, and saved almost all of the Jews of Denmark. Why do you think Sweden helped both the Nazis and the Jews during the war?

The principle that guided more or less all decisions taken by the Swedish government during the war was that of neutrality: of keeping out of the war at any cost. During the first years of the war, until the German defeat at Stalingrad in early 1943, this meant making concessions to various demands from the Germans, who were seen as the stronger party, such as permitting soldiers and materials (though in principle not weapons) to be transported through Sweden, and continuing exportation of iron ore and other goods (which, of course, was also in the interest of Swedish industry). After [the Battle of] Stalingrad [in which the Germans were soundly defeated], fear of the Germans became less dominant and the transportation of soldiers ceased in the summer of 1943. As it became increasingly clear that the Allies would eventually win the war, the Swedish government gradually changed its orientation.

However, this is not the full explanation for the efforts that were made in order to rescue Jews. As for the Danish Jews (and also those of the Norwegian Jews who were not already deported in the fall of 1942), the feeling of Nordic solidarity was an important factor, and when the “White Buses” started rolling towards the end of the war, the primary goal was to rescue Norwegian and Danish citizens – Jewish and non-Jewish – from the concentration camps; although in the end many other nationalities were also brought to Sweden on the buses. Finally, a few individuals played an important part. Without Raul Wallenberg himself, the Jewish businessman Gilel Storch, the Swedish count Lennart Bernadotte and many others, most of the rescue actions would probably not have taken place at all.

Can you explain what the “White Buses” were? What comes to my mind are the vans the Germans used to gas small groups of Jews before they began to use the gas chambers.

No, on the contrary! In the spring of 1945, the Swedish Red Cross, led by the Swedish count Lennart Bernadotte, drove buses (painted white with a red cross) to the concentration camps in Germany to bring prisoners back to Scandinavia. Permission to do this was negotiated with German authorities. Originally, the aim was to rescue Danish and Norwegian citizens only, but in the end at least 15,000 people (many of them women) of different nationalities were rescued. You can read more on: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Buses.

I find it interesting that you say that Nordic solidarity led to the concern for the Jewish populations of those countries, which was very much in contrast to the attitudes of other European countries who were only too glad to see the Jews as other, and to strip them of the protections of citizenship.

Yes, I think there was a difference in the way that Norwegian and Danish Jews could be regarded as “Norwegians” and “Danes” and therefore worthy of more concern than for example German or Polish Jews. Still, there was a lot of xenophobia and racism in Sweden as well, and some newspapers described the Danish Jews in a way that drew strongly on antisemitic stereotypes (for instance describing them as expensively dressed, in fur coats and with expensive jewelry ...) A very interesting doctoral thesis which was published a few years ago (“A brother, guest, and parasite”) deals with the interplay between antisemitism and “the Nordic idea” during and immediately after the war (unfortunately, it is written in Swedish with only a brief English summary). On the whole, there has been a strong interest in this period among younger historians for the past fifteen years or so!

Of the many stories you could have written about the Swedish rescue of Jews during the war, what inspired you to write this particular story?

Quite a few of the Jews who were rescued from the concentration camps have written down their own memories, in the form of autobiographies or fictional stories. I feel that these stories should be told by the people who experienced them, because they are beyond the imagination of us who did not. In contrast, very little had been written by or about the children who came with the Kindertransport before the war until I started to work on this theme (a doctoral thesis on the subject was published in the same year as my first book, 1996), and I felt that the experiences that they went through are in a sense more universal and more suitable to interpret for someone with a different background.

Also, in the early 1990's, there was an increase in the number of children and teenagers coming alone as refugees from countries like Iran and Somalia, and I felt that writing about the child refugees of WWII could also have some bearing on the current situation. Finally, the theme gave me the chance of contrasting Central European Jewish culture with Swedish ways of life, something which I myself experienced a generation later.

What was it like for you to grow up as a Jew in the immediate post-war years?

I was born in 1950, so by the time I became aware that I was Jewish and started to have some sense of what that meant, it was already the early 1960's and fifteen years had passed since the war. Unlike many in my generation, I was not the child of survivors – my

paternal grandparents had come to Sweden from Belarus at the turn of the century, and my mother came to Sweden in 1933, at the age of six, with her parents and younger brother. But the experience of the Holocaust was still very present in the minds of my parents, their friends and our relatives, so there was a kind of fear that was transmitted to me and other children. At one point in the early 60's there was a brief outbreak of anti-Semitism in the form of graffiti on the doors of the synagogue and so on, and I remember being frightened that worse things would follow.

I was never explicitly told [about the Holocaust], but I knew anyway (and I did read a children's book by a Dutch author called "Star Children" which made such a strong impression on me that I never allowed my own children to read it ...) But I remember nightmares about Nazis coming to get me.

Also, in those days Sweden was not yet an immigrant country. I was the only one (or at least that is how it felt) in my class with brown eyes and black hair, and I felt different, which is a feeling that children usually do not like. I wanted to be like everybody else, and I hated it when strangers would ask me: "Where do you come from?" (I used to answer with the part of the city of Gothenburg where I grew up). But I think that this feeling of being different, of being an outsider, is very useful for someone who is to become a writer!

What is it like for Jewish children to grow up in Sweden today?

I am not really the right person to answer that question. My two daughters are now 33 and 28 years old, and their father is not Jewish, so they have not had the kind of Jewish upbringing that I myself had. But one negative thing that they did not have to experience is the feeling of being different that I just described. Today, there are many children and young people with brown eyes and dark hair in Sweden: some of them are Jewish, some are Kurdish or Turkish or Palestinian, or from Bosnia, Iran or Iraq – and my daughters have friends from most of these places. It is for this multicultural society that I write!

Were you surprised that your books about Stephe and Nellie are so popular in Sweden, and now in the rest of the world?

I was not so surprised that they became popular in Sweden – though neither I, nor my publisher could have foreseen the extent of their popularity, with still new editions being published after almost fifteen years and an even more popular TV-series which has now been broadcast for the third time. The books tell a story that has not been told before and that was not at all well known in Sweden when they were first published. At the same time, they depict events and emotions that are easy to identify with, even if

you were born in Sweden and lived here all your life. And for many immigrant children in Sweden, they have become a way of processing their own situation “at a distance”, which is sometimes easier than through a story that is closer to their own lives.

What really surprised me was that the books also became so popular abroad, not only in Germany (which is, after all, not so surprising), or in the Nordic and other European countries, but also in countries like Japan and South Korea, where there is no Jewish population at all. This spring, I am going first to Japan, then to Russia, in connection with the appearance of the fourth and final book in the series, and I am really looking forward to discussing the books with readers in those countries.

The scene where Stephie and Nellie are taken to the revival meeting is very disturbing. Was it common for host families to take their Jewish children to Church, and did they often try to convert them?

According to Ingrid Lomfors, the Swedish historian who wrote her thesis on the children of the Kindertransport, only a minority of the children could be taken in by Jewish families (there were not that many Jews in Sweden at the time). Most came to ordinary Swedish families, which meant that it was very difficult for them to maintain Jewish traditions (but of course, quite a few of the children, like Stephie and Nellie, came from more or less secular Jewish homes). The majority of the Swedish families were probably only conventionally Christian, and did not try to convert the children, though they probably took them to church on Christmas and other special occasions. However, a minority of the host families belonged to different evangelistic movements, and for them saving the children from the Nazis and “saving” them by converting them were more or less the same thing. The chapter about the revival meeting is based on a true story.

Actually, this scene is so shocking that I don’t think I would have dared to include it had it not been based on facts! I have had several interesting discussions with people belonging to evangelistic movements about conversions of the children; of course, nowadays even they agree that this was wrong.

I understand that you are the author of a great number of books besides the books about Stephie and Nellie. Do you often write about Jewish themes for children?

No, I do not consider myself a “Jewish writer” in that sense, though I believe that growing up in a Jewish family has affected my choice of themes and my manner of treating them profoundly. My father, a secular Jew who still identified strongly with the Jewish people, taught me that the essence of Judaism was to always support the weak against the strong. This is at the heart of my writing, along with moral questions and choices,

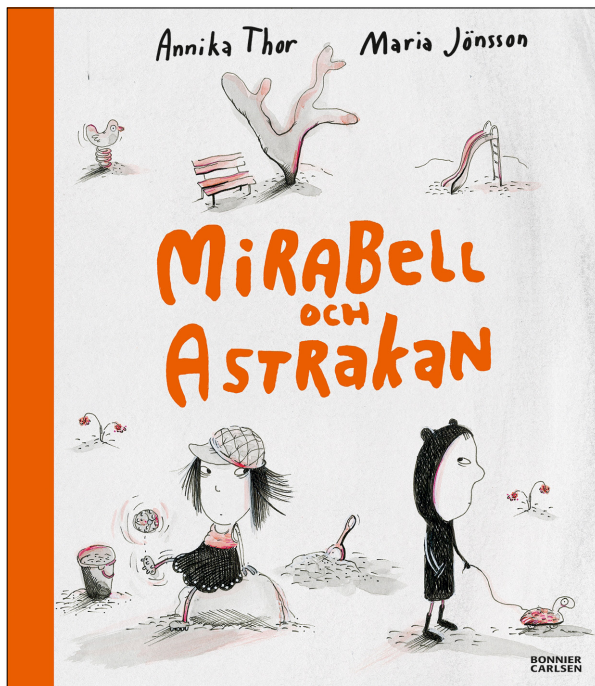
and the feeling of being an outsider, but the books about Stephie and Nellie are the only ones so far where I have treated these themes in a Jewish context.

Annika, thank you so much for taking the time to answer these questions

Awards

- Augustpriset [The August Prize] Best children's book, 1997
(*Sanning eller konsekvens* [Truth or Dare])
- Bokjuryn [The Book Jury] The children's choice, age group 10-12 years, 1997
(*Sanning eller konsekvens* [Truth or Dare])
- Guldbaggen [Guldbagge Awards] Best Script, 1997
(*Sanning eller konsekvens* [Truth or Dare])
- Bokjuryn [The Book Jury] The children's choice, age group 13-19 years, 1998
(*Havets djup* [Deep Sea])
- Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, 1999
(*En ö i havet* [A Faraway Island])
- Nils Holgerssonplaketten [Swedish Library Association's Prize for Children's Literature], 1999
(*Havets djup* [Deep Sea])
- Nordiska skolbibliotekarföreningens Barnbokspris [Nordic School Library Association's Prize for Children's Literature], 1999
(For complete works)
- Bokjuryn [The Book Jury] The children's choice, age group 13-19 years, 2000
(*Eldfågeln* [The Fire Bird])
- Astrid Lindgren-priset [The Astrid Lindgren Award], 2000
(For complete works)
- Janusz Korczak-medaljen [The Janusz Korczak Medal], 2000
(The Books About Steffi and Nelli),
- Pocketpris, mest sålda ungdomspocket [Most Sold Paperback for Young Readers], 2001
(*En ö i havet* [A Faraway Island])

- Schullströmska priset från Svenska akademien [Award for Children's Books Authors from The Swedish Academy], 2004
(For complete works)
- Maria Gripe-priset [The Maria Gripe Award], 2005
(For complete works)
- Elsa Beskow-plaketten [Swedish Library Association's Award for Best Picture Book], 2015
(Flickan från långt borta [The Girl From Faraway])



Mirabelle och Astrakan, 2019



Flickan från långt borta, 2014

Bibliography

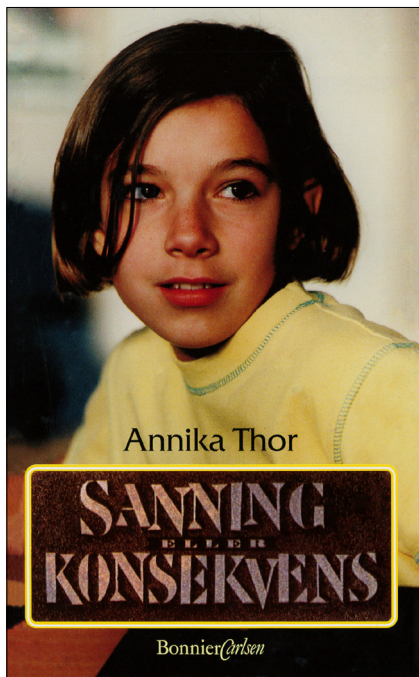
Own work

- *En ö i havet*, (A Faraway Island), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 1996
- *Sanning eller konsekvens*, (“Truth or Dare”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 1997
- *Näckrosdammen*, (The Lily Pond), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 1997
- *Havets djup*, (Deep Sea), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 1998
- *Öppet hav*, (“Open Sea”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 1999
- *Eldfågeln*, (“The Fire Bird”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2000
- *Sova över*, (“Sleepover”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2007
(Illustrated by Cecilia Torudd)
- *Roliga timmen*, (“Class Time”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2007
(Illustrated by Cecilia Torudd)
- *De nya skorna*, (“The New Shoes”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2008
(Illustrated by Cecilia Torudd)
- *Loves kanin*, (“Love’s Rabbit”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2008,
(Illustrated by Cecilia Torudd)
- *Fyren och stjärnorna*, (“The Lighthouse and the Stars”), Bonnier Carlsen,
Stockholm, 2009, (Together with Per Thor. Illustrated by Jakob Wegelius.)
- *Om inte nu så när?*, (“If not now, then when?”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2011
- *Rött hjärta, blå fjäril*, (“Red Heart, Blue Butterfly”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm,
2012, (Illustrated by Cecilia Torudd)
- *Pirr i magen, klump i halsen*, (“Butterflies in the Stomach, a Lump in the Throat”),
Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2012, (Illustrated by Cecilia Torudd)
- *Nu imorgon*, (“Now Tomorrow”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2012
- *Vad skulle du ha valt?*, (“What Would You Choose?”), Bonnier Carlsen,
Stockholm, 2012
- *Flickan från långt borta*, (“The Girl From Faraway”), Bonnier Carlsen,
Stockholm, 2014, (Illustrated by Maria Jönsson)
- *Dit ljuset inte når*, (“Where the Light Don’t Reach”), Bonnier Carlsen,
Stockholm, 2015

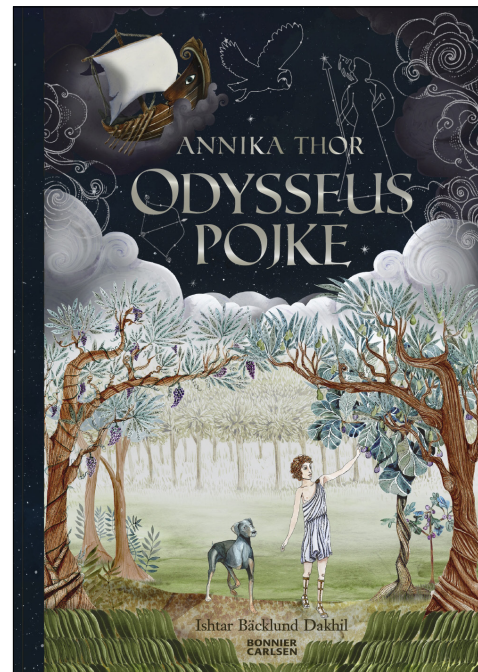
- *Odjuret i labyrinten (& andra grekiska myter)*, (“The Beast in the Labyrinth (& Other Greek Myths”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2016 (Illustrated by Jakob Wegelius)
- *Mirabell och Astrakan*, (“Mirabell and Astrakan”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2019, (Illustrated by Maria Jönsson)
- *Odysseus pojke*, (“Odysseus’ Boy”), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2020

As a translator

- *Bokbarnet*, (A Child of Books), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2018 (The original is written by Sam Winston and illustrated by Oliver Jeffers.)
- *Livet i Mumindalen*, (The Moomins: The world of the Moomin Valley), Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2018, (The original is written by Philip Ardagh, Tove Jansson & Frank Cottrell-Boyce and illustrated by Tove Jansson.)



Sanning eller konsekvens, 1997



Odysseus pojke, 2020

Translated Editions

En ö i havet:

- *En ø i havet*, Fremad, København, 1998 (Danish)
- *Eine Insel im Meer*, Carlsen, Hamburg, 1998 (German)
- *Een eiland in zee*, Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 2000 (Dutch)
- *En øy i havet*, Omnipax, Oslo, 2001 (Norwegian)
- *Oyggjin i havinum*, BFL, Tórshavn, 2001 (Faroese)
- *Un'isola nel mare*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2001 (Italian)
- *Saari meren keskellä*, Tammi, Helsinki, 2001 (Finnish)
- *Une île trop loin: roman*, Thierry Magnier, Paris, 2003 (French)
- *Umi no shima*, Shinjuku shobō, Tokyo, 2006 (Japanese)
- *Sesang k'ut' oeddan söm*, Sigongsa, Soeul, 2006 (Korean)
- *Ostrov v more*, Samokat, Moskva, 2006 (Russian)
- *A Faraway Island*, 1st American ed., Delacorte Press, New York, 2009 (English)
- *A Faraway Island*, 1st Yearling ed., Yearling, New York, 2011 (English)
- *Uma ilha no oceano*, Galera Record, Rio de Janeiro, 2011 (Portuguese)
- *En una isla remota*, Pearson, Madrid, 2012 (Spanish)
- [Unknown title] Grafoproduct Stamparija, Serbia and Montenegro, 2004 (Hungarian)
- [Unknown title] Dong A Culture Company, Hanoi (Vietnamese)
- [Unknown title] Novyi Samokat Publishing House LLC, not yet published (Ukrainian)

Sanning eller konsekvens:

- *Waarheid, durven of doen*, Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 1998 (Dutch)
- *Sannleikann eða áhættuna*, 1. útg., Æskan, Reykjavík, 1999 (Icelandic)
- *Le jeu de la vérité*, Casterman, Paris, 1999 (French)
- *S P elle K: sannleiki ella avleiðing*, BFL, Tórshavn, 1999 (Faroese)
- *Lek på ramme alvor*, Omnipax, Oslo, 1999 (Norwegian)
- *Sandhed eller konsekvens*, Fremad, København, 1999 (Danish)
- *El juego de la verdad*, SM Ed., Madrid, 2000 (Spanish)

- *Totuus vai tehtävä*, Tammi, Helsinki, 2000 (Finnish)
- *Prawda czy wyzwanie*, Janec Santorski, Warszawa, 2001 (Polish)
- *Egiaren joko*, Elkar, San Sebastián, 2002 (Basque)
- *Nora, 12 sani no aki*, Komine Shoten, Tokyo, 2002 (Japanese)
- *Chinsil keim*, Mulgunamu, Söul, 2003 (Korean)
- *Ich hätte nein sagen können: Roman*, Beltz und Gelberg, Weinheim, 2006 (German)
- *Obbligo o verità*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2007 (Italian)
- *Pravda ili posledstvija*, Samokat, Moskva, 2011 (Russian)
- *Action ou vérité*, Casterman, Paris, 2013 (French)

Näckrosdammen:

- *Åkandedammen*, Fremad, København, 1998 (Danish)
- *Eine Bank am Seerosenteich*, Carlsen, Hamburg, 1999 (German)
- *De lelievijver*, Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 2001 (Dutch)
- *Lo stagno delle ninfee*, 1. ed., Feltrinelli, Milano, 2002 (Italian)
- *Lumpeenkukkalampi*, Tammi, Helsinki, 2002 (Finnish)
- *Nykrósutjørn*, BFL, Tórshavn, 2002 (Faroese)
- *Vannliljedammen*, Omnipax, Oslo, 2002 (Norwegian)
- *L'étang aux nénuphars: roman*, Thierry Magnier, Paris, 2005 (French)
- *Yönggoch' yönmosgaesö*, Sigongsa, Seoul, 2006 (Korean)
- *Suiren no ike*, Shinjuku shobō, Tōkyō, 2008 (Japanese)
- *Prud belych lilij*, Samokat, Moskva, 2008 (Russian)
- *The Lily Pond*, 1st American ed., Delacorte Press, New York, 2011 (English)
- *The Lily Pond*, Yearling, 2012 (English)
- *El estanque de los nenúfares*, Pearson, Madrid, 2013 (Spanish)
- [Unknown title] Novyi Samokat Publishing House LLC, not yet published. (Ukrainian)

Havets djup:

- *Havets dyb*, Fremad, København, 1999 (Danish)
- *In der Tiefe des Meeres*, Carlsen, Hamburg, 2000 (German)
- *Havsins djúpi*, BFL, Torshavn, 2002 (Faroese)
- *Havets dyp*, Omnipax, Oslo, 2003 (Norwegian)
- *Meren syvyyksissä*, Tammi, Helsinki, 2004 (Finnish)

- *Mare profondo*, 1. ed., Feltrinelli Ed., Milano, 2004 (Italian)
- *De donkere diepte*, Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 2005 (Dutch)
- *Les profondeurs de la mer: roman*, Thierry Magnier, Paris, 2006 (French)
- *Sojunghan saramdül*, Sigongsa, Seoul, 2006 (Korean)
- *Umi no fukami*, Shinjuku shobō, Tōkyō, 2009 (Japanese)
- *Glubina morja*, Samokat, Moskva, 2009 (Russian)
- *Deep Sea*, 1. American ed., Delacorte Press, New York, 2015 (English)

Öppet hav:

- *Åbent hav*, Fremad, København, 1999 (Danish)
- *Offenes Meer*, 1. Aufl., Carlsen, Hamburg, 2000 (German)
- *Op open water*, Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 2002 (Dutch)
- *Opið hav*, BFL, Tórshavn, 2003 (Faroese)
- *Åbent hav*, Omnipax, Oslo, 2004 (Norwegian)
- *Oltre l'orizzonte*, 1. ed., Feltrinelli, Milano, 2005 (Italian)
- *Vers le large: roman*, Thierry Magnier, Paris, 2006 (French)
- *Ddo tarūn sesangūro*, Sigongsa, Soeul, 2006 (Korean)
- *Avoimille vesille*, Tammi, Helsinki, 2008 (Finnish)
- *Taikai no hikari*, Shinjuku shobō, Tokyo, 2009 (Japanese)
- *Otkrytoe more*, Samokat, Moskva, 2013 (Russian)

Eldfågeln:

- *Ildfuglen*, Fremad, København, 2001 (Danish)
- *Wie ein brennender Vogel*, Carlsen, Hamburg, 2004 (German)
- *Eldfuglurin*, BFL, Torshavn 2005 (Faroese)
- *Ildfuglen*, Omnipax, Oslo, 2006 (Norwegian)

Sova över:

- *Overnatte*, Omnipax, Oslo, 2008 (Norwegian)
- *Geschichten von Anton*, Carrlsen, Hamburg, 2009 (German)

Roliga timmen:

- *Kosetimen*, Omnipax, Oslo, 2008 (Norwegian)

De nya skorna

- *Geschichten von Lena*, Carlsen, Hamburg, 2009 (German)

Fyren och stjärnorna:

- *Der Leuchtturm unter den Sternen*, Carlsen, Hamburg, 2012 (German)
- *Majak i zvezdy*, Samokat, Moskva, 2013 (Russian)

Om inte nu så när?:

- *Si ce n'est pas maintenant, alors quand?*, Thierry Magnier, Mayenne, 2012 (French)

Rött hjärta blå fjärl:

- *Ein rotes Herz, ein blauer Schmetterling*, Carlsen, Hamburg, 2003 (German)
- *Rødt hjerte, blå sommerfugl*, Omnipax, Oslo, 2003 (Norwegian)
- *Rødt hjerte blå sommerfugl*, Forum, København, 2003 (Danish)
- [Unknown title] Feltrinelli, Milano, 2003 (Italian)
- *Rood hart, blauwe vlinder*, Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 2005 (Dutch)
- *Tugëndogün hössarang*, Haewa namu, Seoul, 2005 (Korean)
- [Unknown title] Wydawnictwo Czarna Owieczka, Warszawa, 2014 (Polish)

Pirr i magen, klump i halsen:

- [Unknown title] Feltrinelli, Milano, 2003 (Italian)
- *Kiling i magen, klump i halsen*, Omnipax, Oslo, 2004 (Norwegian)
- *Ein Kaninchen für Alva*, Carlsen, Hamburg, 2005 (German)
- *Kildren i maven, klumper i halsen*, Forum, København, 2005 (Danish)
- *Kitlar i bukinum klumpur i halsinum*, BFL, Torshavn, 2005 (Faroese)
- *Vlinders in je buik, brok in je keel*, Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 2006 (Dutch)
- [Unknown title] Wydawnictwo Czarna Owieczka, Warszawa, 2014 (Polish)

Nu i morgon!

- *Nu, i morgen!*, Forum, København, 2006 (Danish)
- [Unknown title] Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 2007 (Dutch)
- *Nå, i morgen!*, Omnipax, Oslo, 2008 (Norwegian)

Vad skulle du ha valt?:

- *Entscheide dich!*, Beltz & Gelberg, Weinheim, 2010 (German)

Flickan från långt borta

- *Pigen fra langt borte*, Klematis, Risskov, 2015 (Danish)
- *Das Mädchen von weit Weg*, Oetinger, Hamburg, 2016 (German)
- *La niña de muy lejos*, Gato Sueco, Madrid, 2016 (Spanish)

Dit ljuset inte når:

- *Vorhang auf für Johanna!*, Urachhaus, [Stuttgart], 2017 (German)

Odjuret i labyrinten

- [Unknown title] TB Publishing, not yet published (Simplified Chinese)

Mirabell och Astrakan

- *Mirabel og Astrakan*, Turbine, Aarhus, 2020 (Danish)

Odysseus pojke

- [Unknown title] Verlag Freies Geistesleben & Urachhaus GmbH, Stuttgart, not yet published. (German)



Fyren och stjärnorna, 2009

Ten Important Titles

- *En ö i havet* (A Faraway Island), Bonnier Carlsen, 1997
The two Jewish sisters Steffi and Nelli are twelve and seven years old when they are shipped from their home in Austria to an island in the Gothenburg archipelago to escape the Nazis. They dream of a paradise but are faced with a harsh reality.
- *Näckrosdammen* (The Lily Pond), Bonnier Carlsen, 1997
The second novel about Steffi and Nelli. Steffi looks forward to beginning the studies at a higher education in Gothenburg. But above all, she looks forward to meeting her secret love. At the same time, she misses her parents. Will the family ever be united?
- *Sanning eller konsekvens* (Truth or Dare), Bonnier Carlsen, 1997
When Nora starts sixth grade, nothing is like it used to be. Her best friend Sabina suddenly only wants to hang out with Fanny and the cool kids. Karin wants to be friends with Nora. But does Nora want to be friends with Karin? Nora is drawn into a mess of lies, secrets, and intrigues. She finds herself betraying Karin and is part guilty of a gruesome revenge.
- *Öppet hav* (Open Sea), Bonnier Carlsen, 1999
The fourth and final book in the series about Steffi and Nelli. The war has ended and Steffi graduates from school. It is time for her to decide where she belongs. Is it in Sweden, in Vienna, or perhaps with their relatives in America? Her decision is made even harder by the fact that Sven shows up, and feelings she thought were long dead blossoms once again.
- *Eldfågeln* (The Fire Bird), Bonnier Carlsen, 2000
In 1462, Mathias is sent from his home village in the German countryside to the faraway North. He is meant to be working in a German trading house in Bergen and will stay there for fifteen years before he can have any hope of returning to his home and family. Mathias has no choice, to disobey his father is not an option. When he finally reaches Bergen, he finds himself in another world.

- *Fyren och stjärnorna* (The Lighthouse and the Stars),
Bonnier Carlsen, 2009
Blenda's father has been missing for seven long years. No one knows where he is. Blenda and her brother Erik wait for him every day, but their mother has lost all hope. One day she introduces them to a man that will be their new stepfather, the lighthouse-keeper Carl. He is a vicious man, and on the small island far out in the sea, Blenda's longing for another life keep growing.
- *Flickan från långt borta* (The Girl From Faraway),
Bonnier Carlsen, 2014
One day a young girl knocks on the Grey One's door. She asks if she can stay, but the Grey One is used to be alone, that is how she prefers it. But outside it is deep snow, cold, and windy. No place for a lonely child.
- *Dit ljuset inte når* (Where the Light Don't Reach),
Bonnier Carlsen, 2015
Johan has been living at the orphanage for as long as he can remember. He decides it is time to escape, and dressed as a girl, he leaves in the middle of a night. Johan has become Johanna, but who is he really? Where did he come from and where does he belong?
- *Mirabell och Astrakan* (Mirabell and Astrakan),
Bonnier Carlsen, 2019
Two children are waiting for Someone. But who is Someone? Are they actually waiting for each other? A chamber-play in picture book format with clear references to *Waiting for Godot*.
- *Odysseus pojke* (Odysseus' Boy), Bonnier Carlsen, 2020
Telemachus, Odysseus' son, does not have many friends his own age in Ithaca. He thinks a lot about his father, Odysseus, who went off to war in faraway Troy and still hasn't returned to the island. Sometimes in the evenings his maid sits on his bed and tells him fantastic stories of Odysseus' heroic deeds and Telemachus fantasize about his father coming home again. But the years go by. Soon Telemachus is a young man and has to take responsibility for his own and his country's future. Should he follow in his father's footsteps?.

Sent To the Jury

- *En ö i havet* (A Faraway Island), Bonnier Carlsen, 1997
- *Öppet hav* (Open Sea), Bonnier Carlsen, 1999.
- *Flickan från långt borta* (The Girl From Faraway), Bonnier Carlsen, 2014
- *Dit ljuset inte når* (Where the Light Don't Reach), Bonnier Carlsen, 2015
- *Odysseus pojke* (Odysseus' Boy), Bonnier Carlsen, 2020

Reviews

A faraway island series by Annika Thor

Review by Miss Mahee's Library of Reads, November 12th 2019



Hello all, this week my review is about a group of stories featuring a pair of sisters from Austria who find safety in the wild coast of Sweden during the Second World War. I hadn't realised that the child evacuation program they had in those years had extended to different countries until I read this book. Stories of siblings along based on historical events always tug at my heartstrings so I hope you enjoy my review below!

Titles: A faraway island, The lily pond,
Deep sea

Author: Annika Thor Translated from Swedish by Linda Schenck

Publication details: Delacorte Press; NY, 2009, 2011, 2015

What these books are about: It's the summer of 1939. Two Jewish sisters from Vienna, twelve-year-old Stephe Steiner and seven-year old Nellie, are sent to Sweden to escape the Nazis. They expect to rejoin their parents in six months and flee together to America. But as the war intensifies, the girls must remain with their host families, on a rugged island off the western coast of Sweden. The first book, A faraway island tells of how each sister adapts to their new situation. Young Nellie quickly settles in to her new surroundings but Stephe finds it harder and worries more – mainly for her parents, and whether she will ever see them again. We meet them a year later in The lily pond where they have finally adapted to life on the Swedish island they call home. Stephe has enrolled in a school on the mainland and finds herself falling in love. While navigating a sea of new emotions, Stephe must grapple with what it means to be beholden to others and discover who her true friends are. Deep sea takes us four years ahead and the Steiner sisters are older but still finding their place. Ste-

phie struggles with her faith, and Nellie is more distant from her sister, and growing up to become a troublesome child.

My review: A gorgeous story of the Second World War in Sweden and the refugee children that called it home. Some really good characters depicted here with an interesting story. The one thing that struck me was the influence of the Pentecostal religion on the two girls. Stephie's struggle with this quite vividly described. I hadn't known much about this until now. Reminiscent of the Anne of Green Gables style of story but truly unique in the portrayal of the wildness of the Swedish coast and the people who lived there at the time. According to the author's note, the story is loosely based on her mother's story. Apparently 500 children and young people were brought to Sweden from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. And more than half of that ended up spending the rest of their lives there. Most managed to get an education and job and have a family. Despite the pain of losing their loved ones in the war, these young refugees broke their silence fifty years after their escape to tell their stories. Annika Thor interviewed about twelve of the real refugees as well as her parents to bring us Stephie's tale. And with her signature style of unique storytelling, Annika Thor gives her readers a better understanding of the vulnerable situation in which refugee children continue to live in. I found the second and third stories even more interesting as they described the blossoming life of Stephie along with the Swedish class system that was evident during those years and the extent of human bravery. Great to find out that Swedish TV had adapted these books into a popular TV-series. An inspiring collection of books!!

My rating for all three: 5 stars

Additional notes: A Faraway Island has won the Mildred L. Batchelder Award for an Outstanding Children's Book originally published in a foreign language in 2010. The Lily Pond was nominated for the Mildred L. Batchelder in 2012.

One last note: Apparently there is a fourth companion book titled The Open Sea which more or less wraps up the series.

A Faraway Island

Kirkus Book Review, November 2009



At the onset of World War II, Jewish Stephanie and her younger sister, Nellie, are sent to a Swedish island to live with separate host families while they await their parents' visas to America. Even after the turmoil of Vienna, Stephe struggles with separation from her sister and living with strict Aunt Marta in lonely isolation, while Nellie quickly finds friends and comfort. As time passes and her Swedish improves, Stephe learns more about why her circumstances are more difficult than Nellie's. While the parents encounter multiple barriers to reuniting the family, some small adjustments are made in the girls' daily lives to ease their situation. The increasing involvement of Sweden in the war

provides a commonality between the girls and the villagers, allowing Stephe to look outside her pain to find an inner strength and determination that she never knew she had. Straightforwardly told in the present tense and easier for tender hearts than the brutal stories of concentration camps, this still conveys the reality of war and the suffering of those displaced by it.

Annika Thor's Picture Book Debut is Both Beautiful and Melancholy



*A Review from Litteraturmagazinet,
written by Erika Wallman, April 29th 2014*

A cold winter night it knocks on the door. It's a lonely girl who wants to come in. The Gray thinks she can go somewhere else but still opens the door. She prefers to be alone, it's the most beautiful time. Or? She gives the girl a cup of warm milk and lets her stay overnight. First on a mattress but then she takes the girl to the bed. The girl thinks she should stay, but The Gray tells her to leave, to find someone else who wants to take care of her. The girl leaves the house, out to the cold. Nice to be alone, The Gray thinks. But everywhere in the house there are things and scents that remains of the girl ...

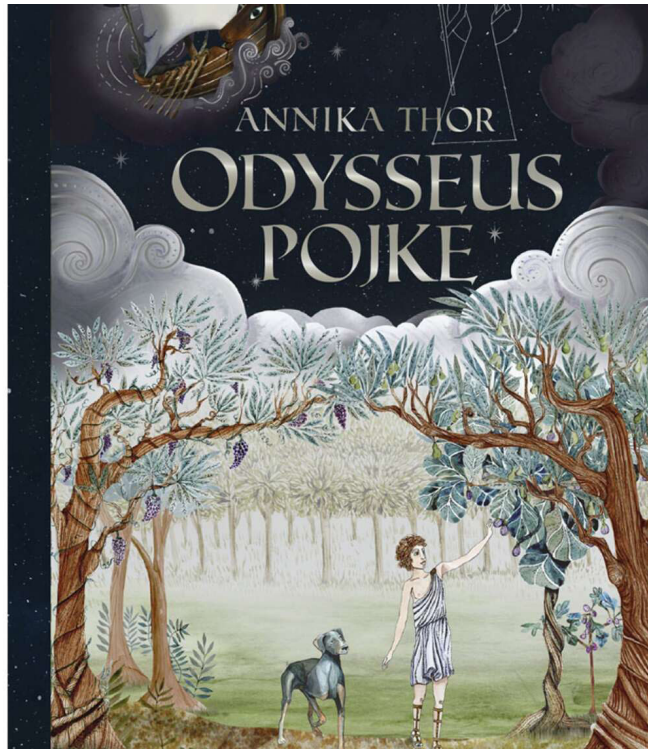
"The girl from far away" is a beautiful book about different kinds of loneliness, about finding something you didn't know you were missing, about the desire for affinity and not knowing how to get there. You quickly understand how the book is build; the stranger who wants to be alone, the conflicting feelings, the eviction. Then you think you know how it will end up, the long-awaited happy ending. But after the happy end, another turn of page and the end will be even happier. But not in any sugar-sweet way at all, it is a melancholy and atmospheric tale in both text and image and the feeling remains in the end. The book is merged with relief and confidence. There is hope for humanity.

Annika Thor is Sweden's most beloved writer, especially acclaimed for her youth books "Truth or Consequence" and "An Island in the Sea". This is her first book with illustrations, created together with illustrator Maria Jönsson, and what a fantastic debut it is. Although much is left untouched, there are no loose threads, the reader is always there, caught and engaged. What first hurts the stomach is changed to a heat, then cool and then heat again.

The simple, sleepy pictures, the stripped but subtle text, the symbolism of the small details - I think we will look back at "The girl from far away" as one of this year's best children's books.

The Iliad and the Oddysey in an Intelligent Remake for Children

Review of "Oddyseu's Boy" written by Lotta Olsson, and published in Dagens Nyheter December 4th 2020



Annika Thor tells the Iliad and the Odessey for children, from the perspective of Oddyseu's son. His father has been away in war for ten years, and then has been disappeared for another ten. Who knows when he will come home? And who the son has become by then?

The classical tales about the Greek war against Troy, and Odysseus' following journeys are tales about grown men, war, honor, and adventure. Odysseus' son Telemachus is just a small child when Odysseus leave for war; and it will be twenty years before he returns.

Left on Ithaca is Penelope and her son. And the people of Ithaca idolizing the wise Odysseus, the warrior who is stronger and more skillful than anyone. But when Odysseus never returns from the war, people start to wonder if it is time to realize he is dead. Maybe it is time to name a new ruler, a new husband for Penelope.

The story is well-known, Homer's epos *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* have been sung,

told, read, written about, and reinterpreted ever since the 7th century BC.

And yet, Annika Thor dares to write about it in children's book version, from the perspective of Odysseus' son. And the way she does it! In just over three hundred pages, she retells the most important tales, while simultaneously give the boy Telemachus his own, much needed, coming-of-age story, where he soon begins to ponder about his mighty, absent father. Why did Odysseus choose war before family? And that's the starting point for the old story: the one where Odysseus pretended to be mad to escape going to war. Wisely enough, Annika Thor then chooses to begin by telling the more exciting stories from *The Odyssey*, like the one where Odysseus fool the cyclops, when he makes his way between the ocean monsters Scylla and Charybdis, and when he escapes Kirke's cunning. The illustrations by Ishtar Bäcklund Dakhil are obviously deliberately classic, clean and in greyscale.

But, as a parallel is Telemachus life: how he grows up with an absent hero father, the kind of hero he himself can never hope to be. Instead, he is a skinny, powerless boy with a shrill voice. How do you grow up?

Eventually, the tale about the Trojan war is also told. Skillfully, Annika Thor describes the way Telemachus' image of his father start to crack: What is the different between a brave hero and a ruthless slaughterer? Does Telemachus even want to become one of those?

Finally, Odysseus returns home.

"Odysseus' Boy" manages to tell the old story in a light, ingenious, and rebellious version. There is a genuine big love for the old heroes, but also a sad realization of how different the scarred war hero is in reality.

Just telling the classic tale would have been enough, but Annika Thor also lets it become a universal, wounded account of how hard it is to unite the love the son feels for his father with the young man's conviction that his father's path can never be his own..