

Maria Parr

WRITER NOMENEE
(NORWAY)



photo: Julie Marie Naglestad



Ill: Ashild Irgens

Content

Why Maria Parr is a worthy candidate of the HC Andersen Award	2
Biography of Maria Parr	5
Bibliography	6
List of awards and acknowledgements	7
List of translated works	8
Reviews	
Everyday magic	11
Astrid the unstoppable	14
Adventures with waffles	15
Big brother	16
Articles	18
Paving the way	18
Maria Parr: All Childhoods are equally important	21
Landscape and cursing in Maria Parr's Authorship	23
References	33



III: Ashild Irgens

The nominee

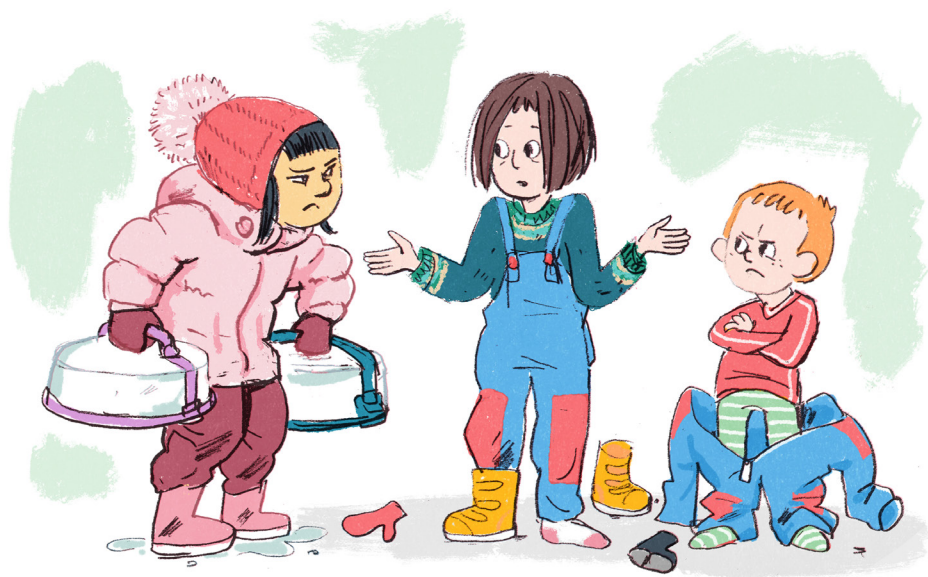
Why Maria Parr is a worthy candidate for the HC. ANDERSEN AWARD

Original text Ragnhild Malfang IBBY Norway

Translation by Tirill Gjetrang IBBY Norway

The board of IBBY Norway has for some time now considered Maria Parr as a potential candidate for international awards, but it has taken her some time to produce enough material that we have considered the minimum amount. We have said that any potential nominee should have published at least three books – One debut-book, a well-executed second book that has a lot of effort to it and finally, a third book that shows the development and maturation of the authorship – these are not to be in a series but standalone books. This speaks volumes of Parr's authorship, as we have longed and yearned since her second book came out – Parr is most definitely one of the best authors Norway has to offer.

Maria Parr writes with the young reader close to mind. The main characters of her stories live in small villages where the local community and residents become natural secondary characters. The safety net and sense of community in the village frames exploration, friendship, grief and loss across varying ages and experiences. The closeness to nature is important, and the dramaturgy is richly present. Parr describes the internal excitement children experience as so vivid and real that you naturally gravitate towards it. No supervillains are needed, no sudden surprises – the close and familiar can be exciting enough for a young mind. Parr is often compared to Astrid Lindgren



III: Åshild Irgens

and Anne-Cath Vestly. These women have one thing in common – the art of writing the completely mundane and ordinary motions of life into something exciting and truly magical. And like her predecessors, Parr has a personal approach to storytelling with gusto and excitement. References are used in a surprising, original and innovative way and ties other children's books into her own story.

Maria Parr's books touch the heart of her readers and create a safe space where you would love to stay – both adults and children alike. Those who live in small towns similar to the ones Parr writes about are reminded that their lives matter. For the ones who are living in troubling times with no trusted adults around, Parr's books provide an image of how things are meant to be and what children are supposed to worry about. The fact that Parr's heartfelt approach has resonated with children and adults alike on an international scale is made clear by the sheer number of translations and positive reception abroad.

Maria Parr paves her own way. As one of few authors in Norway she allows religion and church be a natural part of the story, because that's an important part of childhood in the part of the country she grew up in. In our heavily secular country, the stories that include religion that aren't meant to be missionary are few and far between, so the fact that some of the most highly praised and popular books in the country treat the topic in a way that feels as natural as it does, helps to build bridges between people.

Because it's exactly the people and their emotions that are recognized all over the world. Maria Parr shows a psychological instinct in how children think and react and manages to write this in a legitimate and familiar way – both for the children growing up today and adults who remember their own childhood. Parr's body of work provides comfort, encourages, humors, gives insight and touches its readers in a way that reaches beyond the borders of ethnicity, background and age. Her authorship has the power to touch the hearts of people and encourage values like tolerance, forgiveness, curiosity, love and empathy – values that are sorely needed in our troubled world of today.



III: Åshild Irgens

Biography

Born in 1981, Maria Parr grew up in the Norwegian coastal village of Fiskå. In her childhood she was already an enthusiastic storyteller and regaled her siblings with stories until late into the night, as well as writing down stories while at school. In early adulthood Parr studied Nordic languages and literature at the university of Bergen and received her master's degree in the subject in 2010. For several years Parr worked as a teacher and through this work she got to closely interact with children and youth. This has had a great impact on Parr's writing and has made her able to keep the perspective of children and how they view the world close to her heart. She is an author of high esteem and has been awarded several international awards including the Luchs, the silbernen griffel and the prix sorcière. In addition to this she is a record holder, having won the Brage Prize three times in her career.



Photo: Julie Marie Naglestad

Bibliography

BOOKS

- 2005 Adventures with waffles** (childrensbook), illustrations by Bo Gaustad, Samlaget Publishing house
- 2009 Astrid The unstoppable** (childrensbook) illustrations by Åshild Irgens, Samlaget Publishing house
- 2017 Lena, the sea and me** (childrensbook) Samlaget Publishing house
- 2019 Big Brother** (childrens book) Samlaget Publishing house
- 2023 Oscar and I** (childrensbook) illustrations by Åshild Irgens, Samlaget Publishing house

SHORTSTORIES

- 2005 Tonen** (The note) in Norsk Barneblad
- 2020 Eselet** (The Donkey) in Barnas Juleroser
- 2020 Snøball** (The snowball) in Barnas juleroser
- 2022 Oskar og Nisselueskrekken** (Oscar and the fright of Santas hat) in Barnas juleroser



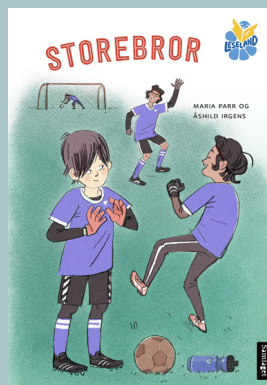
Adventures with waffles



Astrid the unstoppable



Lena, the sea and me



Big brother



Oscar and I

Awards and acknowledgements

Oscar an I/Oskar og eg

- Nominated to The Bookseller's Award 2023
- Nominated to The Nordic Council Children and Young People's Literature Prize 2024
- Winner of the Brage Prize 2023
- White Raven 2024

Lena, the sea and me/Keeperen og havet

- Winner of the Brage prize 2017

Astrid the unstoppable/Tonje Glimmerdal

- Winner of The Brage Prize for the best children's book in 2009
- Winner of The Norwegian Critics Prize for Literature 2009.
- The Mrs.Pepperpot Award, 2009
- Nominated to the Ministry of Culture's Prize 2009
- Nominated to Bookseller's Prize 2009
- The German LUCHS-prize 2010

Adventures with waffles/Vaffelhjarte

- The Dutch Zilveren Griffel
- The French Prix de Sourciere.
- Nominated to The Brage Prize
(The Norwegian Publishers' Association Prize) 2005.

List of translated works

Oscar an I/Oskar og eg

Translation rights sold to Italy, Germany, Serbia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Denmark, Russia, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Georgia, France, Spain, Slovenia, Faroe Islands, Poland, Belgium and Sweden

Big brother/Storebror

Translation rights sold to Belgium and Bulgaria

Lena, the sea and me/Keeperen og havet

Translation rights sold to: Belgium, Bulgaria, Catalonia, Denmark, England, Estonia, Faroe Islands, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Ukraine.

Astrid the unstoppable/Tonje Glimmerdal

Translation rights sold to: Bulgaria, Belgium, Catalonia, Georgia, Germany, Sweden, Russia, France, Iceland, India (Hindi), Denmark, Poland, China, North Macedonia, Ukraine, Slovenia, Estonia, Faroe Islands, South Korea, Spain, Italy, England, Serbia, USA, Turkey.

Adventures with waffles/Vaffelhjarte

Translation rights sold to: Russia, Sweden, France, Poland, Germany, Belgium, Faroe Islands, Denmark, Serbia, Japan, Catalonia, China, Ukraine, Portugal, United Kingdom, USA, Czech Republic, Iceland, South Korea, Sami language, Estonia, Bulgaria, Italy, India (Hindi), Lithuania, Slovenia, Georgia, North Macedonia, Latvia, Spain, Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Review



III: Åshild Irgens

Everyday magic

Original text by Ingrid Senje at Barnebokkritikk
Publishing date: August 29th, 2023.

Translation by Tirill Gjetrang IBBY Norway

With their new children's novel Maria Parr and illustrator Åshild Irgen prove that you don't need big dramatic scenes or over-arching conflict to make great children's literature.

Ida and Oskar are siblings and share a room in the big red house they live in. Ida sleeps on the top bunk and Oskar the bottom bunk, even though he would much rather sleep in the top one. After all, isn't it a bit unfair that Ida gets to have the best bunk just because she's the oldest?

This is how Maria Parr's new children's book, *Oskar og eg* begins – on a completely ordinary day. The novel, that follows the siblings Oscar and Ida through the better part of a year, has already received great reviews from several sources. Whenever Parr releases a new book there's reason to keep your eyes open. Her novels *Vaffelhjerte* (2005) and *Tonje Glimmerdal* (2009) are considered close to classics in children's literature. Having received uncountable reprints as well as being translated into more than thirty different languages, they have also been dramatized both on stage and for television. When Parr released a sequel to *Vaffelhjerte*, *Keeperen og havet*, in 2018 the book was referred to as "yet another classic" by book critic Anne Cathrine Straume in NRK.

Atmospheric colored illustrations

In *Oskar og eg Parr* establishes a new literary universe but keeps the same comforting landscapes of western Norway, where the forests, river and snow are the playground. The book is richly illustrated by Åshild Irgens, who was also responsible for the illustrations in *Tonje Glimmerdal* and the cover art for *Keeperen og Havet*. The style and lines are easily recognizable from Parr's earlier novels. This time Irgens got the opportunity to use color in her illustrations, which makes the book even richer.

The illustrations, that cover from a third of a page up to half a page, bring life and atmosphere to the village and characters. At the same time, they show the emotional changes in both Ida, Oskar and the other characters. Especially Oskar, with all his facial expressions and uncle Bulle with his glasses and beard, are vividly drawn. Parr and Irgens seem to have had a bigger focus on diversity in this book, which contains a broader scope of both skin color as well as foreign-sounding names than previous novels.

Focus on the relationship between siblings

Even though the narrator's voice in the novel belongs to eight-year-old Ida, her five-year-old sibling Oskar feels like just as much of a main character. Their relationship, complete with bickering, comfort and worry for one another, is depicted in a believable and touching way, whether the story is about Ida's anxieties about how it will be when Oskar starts going to school, or her envy when Oskar is gifted a trampoline by uncle Øyvind and uncle Bulle. It's rare to have children depicted so childlike as they are in Parr's novels, with their unique childish transparency and wisdom. Similarly to Parr's earlier works *Oskar og eg* is brimming with subtle life wisdom and philosophical reflections by both children and adults alike, for instance in how being afraid can feel less overwhelming when someone is there to watch over you, or how things that appeared big seem smaller as you grow older.

Arvid's cabin is so small and... ugly, I mumbled.

I thought mom might ask me what in the world I was talking about, but instead she responded:

It's because you're growing up, Ida. Things shrink.

Do they?

Yes, mom replied, as if this was the most ordinary thing in the world. – you know, like the roads you felt stretched for miles when you were younger, they don't feel that way anymore do they? And the things that scared you before, aren't frightening any more. And you're right, the cabins that used to be big and beautiful, are small and ugly, aren't they?

I stared at her in shock.

In that case, I never want to grow up, I said.

No overarching conflicts

Oskar og eg is divided into eleven chapters with accompanying interesting subtitles, like "The uncle house. Or: Adults who butt-bounce on trampolines" or "The sledding slope. Or: A stolen garage and the taste of yellow snow" – there's also a chapter about Christmas and dressing up as Santa Claus where Parr sympathetically has added a warning for families with children that still believe in Santa.

Every chapter has its own narrative structure with a beginning, middle and end, even though elements from earlier chapters are often brought up in later ones. The episodic nature of this novel is typical of Parr's earlier work, but what separates *Oskar og eg* from previous works is that it lacks an overarching conflict to bind the stories together. In the story we find everything from

dramatic floods, wounded deer and sledding accidents but most of the conflicts are resolved by the end of the chapter so that a new theme can be introduced in the next one. Even so, the story about Uncle Øyvind, who suffers from a lung-illness and eventually dies does appear in multiple chapters, but Parr decides against giving this plotline the center stage in the plot. Instead, grief is shown in small flashes in both Ida and her Mom, as well as uncle Bulle who is now on his own. Through choosing a tombstone and celebrating Christmas as a family, Parr shows that grief is also a part of everyday life, and that it's okay to laugh and be happy even though you're missing a loved one who has passed away.

A part of me would like to point out the lack of conflict as a weakness, as is customary in children's literature, but through Oskar og eg Parr shows that this rule is able to be broken. The story of Ida and Oskar completes itself perfectly, through its episodic chapter format that can almost be their own short stories, as well as a full story. After all, we live ordinary days through most of our lives, and any more conflict than what is shown over the course of a year between two siblings who love each other even though they can be incredibly annoying, isn't needed.

When Oskar finally gets to sleep in the top bunk in the last chapter of the book (Without me revealing how that story goes), and Parr writes it in such a way that the story ends as it begins, I'm not left with the impression of a lack of conflict, only the hope that this isn't the last we hear of Ida and Oskar.

Review

ASTRID THE UNSTOPPABLE

BY [MARIA PARR](#) ; TRANSLATED BY [GUY PUZEY](#) □ RELEASE DATE: NOV. 13, 2018

An excellent translation of a contemporary European classic.

A young girl uncovers startling secrets.

Astrid has long enjoyed being the only child in the small Norwegian village of Glimmerdal. The energetic 10-year-old spends her days skiing along the hillside and sledding through town, bringing laughter wherever she goes. Astrid's got lovely parents and an adoring godfather, Gunnvald, and doesn't want a single thing to change. Of course change does come, first in the form of a new family with children moving to Glimmerdal, and then a mysterious woman whom everyone else in town seems to know already. Astrid, resourceful as ever, digs for answers. Readers looking for a warm and cozy tale to bundle up with on the couch during the winter months will find plenty to enjoy here. Parr's original Norwegian text, published in 2009, has been compared to Heidi and Pippi Longstocking, and Puzey's translation effortlessly conveys that sense for American readers. The warm tone and endearing characters do most of the heavy lifting here: Parr's narrative is structured loosely and paced leisurely. Some younger readers accustomed to the snappy rhythms of American middle-grade fiction may feel an itch here and there for a quicker pace, but for those inclined to hang out with Astrid and Gunnvald—and this includes adults in the mood for a cheery change of pace—the rewards are plentiful. Glimmerdal's population is evidently all white.

An excellent translation of a contemporary European classic. (Fiction. 8-12, adult)

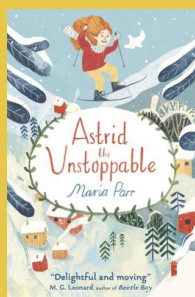
Pub Date: Nov. 13, 2018

ISBN: 978-1-5362-0017-1

Page Count: 320

Publisher: Candlewick

Review Posted Online: Dec. 15, 2018



Review

ADVENTURES WITH WAFFLES

BY [MARIA PARR](#) ; ILLUSTRATED BY [KATE FORRESTER](#) ; TRANSLATED BY
[GUY PUZEY](#) □ RELEASE DATE: MAY 12, 2015

Filled with both rollicking escapades and poignant moments, Parr's notable tale portrays a young boy's heartfelt...

Next-door neighbors in a small Norwegian town share mishaps and mischief.

Spanning a year in their lives, this lively tale details the escapades of Trille and his neighbor, Lena. Through the voice of pragmatic 9-year-old Trille, Parr deftly portrays her narrator's earnestness and Lena's insouciance as together the friends carry out their schemes with often humorous and occasionally regrettable results. Though they live in quiet Mathildewick Cove, the friends' dynamic imaginations lead to several exhilarating—and a few precarious—escapades, which range from seafaring ventures to a mountainside helicopter rescue. Amid these antics, Parr subtly reveals Trille's and Lena's innermost worries. Although Trille considers the irrepressible Lena his best friend, he wonders whether she reciprocates those feelings. And beneath Lena's vibrant exterior, she longs for a father, a dilemma that she attempts to resolve in her indefatigable, quirky fashion. Through several well-nuanced characters, Parr delineates Trille's extended family support and reveals the familial closeness that Trille so cherishes. Trille's relationships with his grandfather and his beloved "Auntie Granny" celebrate these multigenerational connections. With simply rendered illustrations that zero in on key elements of the story, Forrester extends the charm of this tale.

Filled with both rollicking escapades and poignant moments, Parr's notable tale portrays a young boy's heartfelt appreciation of family and friends. (Fiction. 8-11)

Pub Date: May 12, 2015

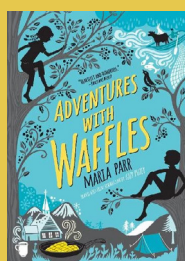
ISBN: 978-0-7636-7281-2

Page Count: 240

Publisher: Candlewick

Review Posted Online: Feb. 15, 2015

Kirkus Reviews Issue: March 1, 2015



Review

Stylish and short about being a big brother

Morten Olsen Haugen

Publisert: 30.08.2019 08:00 | Oppdatert: 02.09.2019 14:58

Translation by: Tirill Gjetrang

Maria Parr:

Big brother (childrens book)

Illustrated by Åshild Irgens

Samlaget

Ever since her debut with waffle hearts (2005) Maria Parr has received multiple awards and has been seen as the next big thing in Norwegian children's literature. We must admit she's a picky author, as she's only published two other books: Astrid the unstoppable (2009) and Lena, the sea and me (2017). In addition to this she has written a couple of short stories before now adding to Samlaget's Easy readers series Leseland.

Older brother and little brother

This is a stylish and accentuated story about the main character who really wants a big brother, a brother he can look up to and get help from, all the while being angry with his clingy little sister.

In the span of the 30 short pages we meet two friends, Ole and Sivar, and their respective older brothers. One of the brothers is dismissive, while the other is friendly and interested. This combined with other impressions from clearly accentuated scenes in the story leads the main character to come to the mature realization that: "I don't have a big brother, I thought. I am one".

Clear-cut illustrations

The book is fully illustrated like a picture book. Åshild Irgens has done a great job, letting the body language and eyes tell the story of an observant main character. She omits the background in her drawings and only shows us the people and props that the reader needs to understand the plot.

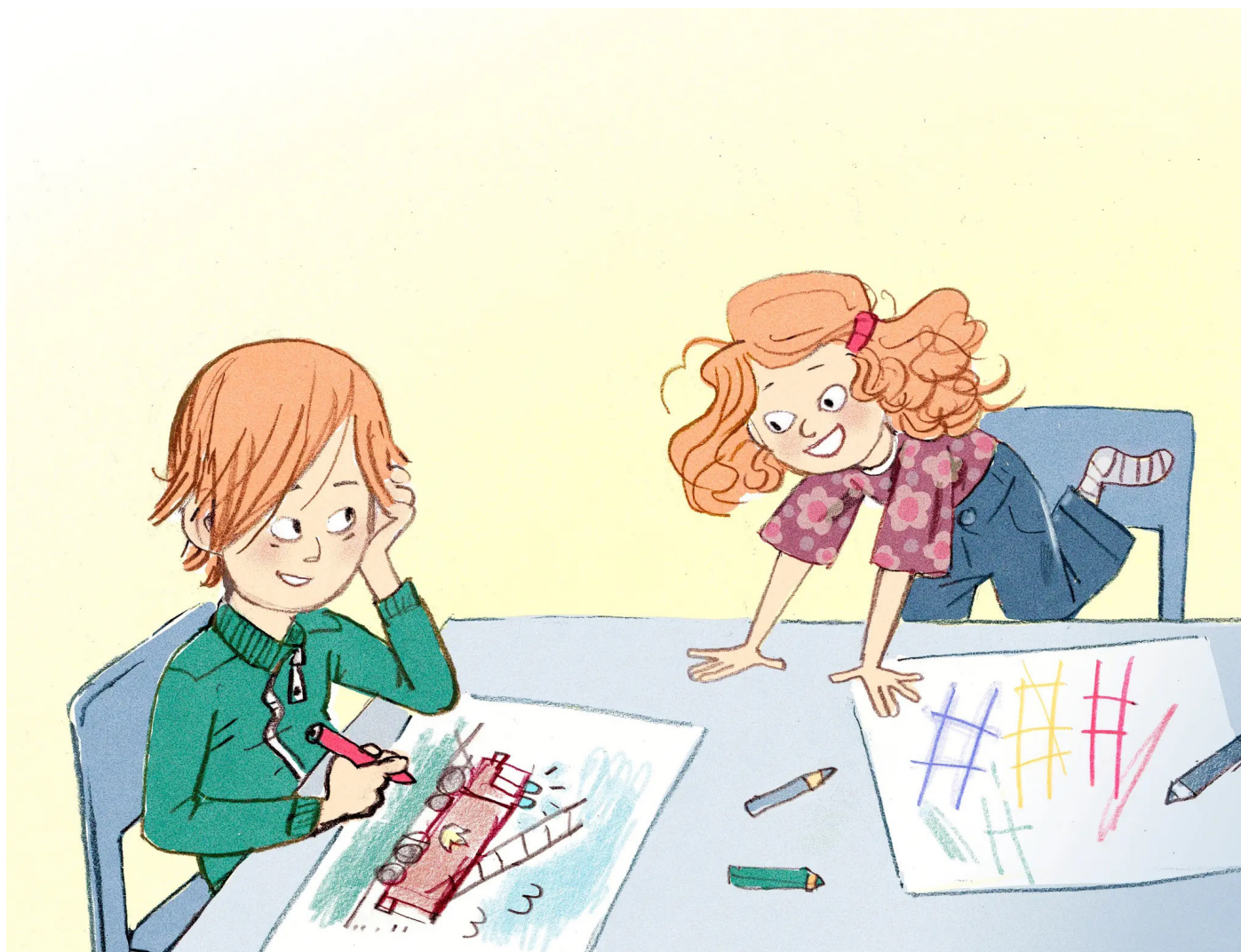
The Easy readers vary in length from smaller novels to short stories and some are only showcasing a single event. Some of the Easy readers are fitting for children who have just started to read, and others are for older children who struggle with reading. This particular book is one of the shortest ones, almost like an embellished anecdote, and can be read by six-year-olds and eleven-year-olds alike.

Parrs Voice?

Not much of Parr's typical style is shown in this story. She's known for her flourishing prose with playful and innovative not-quite curse words, as well as a wealth of dramatic storytelling. In this book she's tried something new, clear-cut text. The themes and environment resemble her previous works with the interactions between kids, and the changes of scenery between being with family and out with friends. This is a topic a lot of authors write about.

Over the past 30 years easy readers have taken a procedurally bigger part of the children's literature market. A lot of Norwegian authors contribute to this: Bringsværd, Egeland, Ragde, Svingen, Stai, Lindell, Flatland. As a rule, it's the publishing houses that invite the authors to write these books.

In this case, Samlaget and Maria Parr should be pleased with the fact that Parr accepted the invitation and found a new voice to add to her repertoire.



PAVING THE WAY

Original text by: Heidi Sævareid Barnebokkritikk Published: Aug 23rd 2017

Translation: Tirill Gjetrang IBBY Norway

It's possible to write good literature about a safe childhood too.

Lena, the sea and me is a novel about the exciting and dizzying part of life where you realize you're not always going to live the same life forever. It's about what happens when the small world of your childhood is growing bigger, and how it often feels like it's happening gradually and all at once at the same time.

Maria Parr introduced us to Trille and Lena in the highly awarded and film adapted novel Waffle hearts, and in this year's book we meet them again, a couple of years older this time. It's the last year of elementary school, and even though their friendship is still solid, a lot of things are different – and a lot of things will be different. The story starts at the end of summer break and ends at the beginning of the next summer break a year later.

An evolving friendship

Trille is the narrative voice in the story. He's a gentle, book smart fellow that usually stays at home on the family farm located in Mathildewick Cove, a fictional village set in western Norway. Lena is his polar opposite – loud, a natural extrovert, hot headed and bursting with ideas for adventures. That this causes some imbalances and clashings in their friendship is obvious already from the first chapter, when Lena comes home from vacation and excessively talks of her summer in Crete.

...And in Crete, it was so hot in the middle of the day that it was almost like standing right next to a midsummer bonfire all the time. "Oh drat, you should've felt it Trille!" "Yeah" I said and followed.

It was irritating that I had never been abroad on holiday, but I had something to tell her, too. I was excitedly waiting for Lena to ask if something had happened while she was away, but she didn't.

Even so, there's a balance in the imbalance in the sense that Trille and Lena have well-established roles in their friendship, roles they've spent years getting comfortable with. Lena, the sea and me is in many ways a story about what happens when these clear-cut roles are disturbed. The fact that Lena comes home and goes on and on about Crete is a foreshadowing of the changes to come – they are both in a phase of lie where the world is expanding and is getting bigger than Mathildewick Cove, and this leads to them having to adjust their established roles and points of view.

The world is expanding.

Its when a Dutch family with a daughter the same age as Trille and Lena move to Mathildewick Cove that the expanding world truly makes its presence known in the village. Birgitte has lived all over the world, including Kenya, and she's different from everyone Trille knows. He's deeply fascinated:

I thought more and more of Birgitte. It was almost like a soft bird had landed in our classroom, someone who looked past people's flaws.

Lena, who at this point is used to being the only girl in class, reacts anxiously to Birgitte's introduction into the village – partly due to jealousy, but also because this is the first time she is firmly acknowledged as a girl and not just one of the kids. Lena, who has always been the keeper in the village's football team is now benched as a new, more demanding coach takes over. Is it because she's a girl? Maybe she can't keep up with the boys? And another thing – why doesn't anyone appreciate her talents? As she says in the book:

"Nobody cares about what I'm good at. The only things that are important to them is music and moth and all the crap I can't do."

Trille also does a fair bit of pondering over what his future will hold. Is he going to stay in Mathildewick Cove for the rest of his life, or is he going to move out of the village? Is he going to study abroad like Birgitte is talking about doing? And can you really do that – just travel the world and do anything you want when you become an adult? These thoughts are new to Trille, and it overwhelms him. On top of this, he realizes that his grandfather who has been the rock in his life, won't live forever.

Above all, *Lena, the sea and me* depict everyday life, but between the ordinary occurrences both small and big dangers loom. A homemade raft is wrecked in the middle of the fjord, storms and a flood take the *charol singers* by surprise, a fishing line gets wrapped around grandfather's hand and Trille must safely bring a fishing boat to the docks on his own. The last story in particular will leave a lasting impression.

Until that day it was like life had been a game. No matter what I got myself into there had always been an adult to sort it out. But on that day, on board in Troll, the only adult was lying unconscious on deck surrounded by his own blood. The troubled seas were all around us. I could've yelled until I was hoarse, and nobody would have heard it. It was just me, Trille Danielsen Yttregård, and the ocean.

Maturity and safety

Lena, the sea and me is not about becoming an adult but maturing. It's about gaining responsibilities and making decisions that have consequences, shaping your own life and paving your own way. Maturing also means that you must relinquish the need for control and realize that not everything in life is predictable. Another thing you realize is that not everything can be solved through the power of friendship. Lena and Trille having to face their internal conflicts separately and having different motivations for the future that cause them to not be like peas in a pod is depicted in a believable way.

Safety is a key word in Maria Parr's literary universe. There are no huge threats in Mathildewick Cove, other than the universal fear of losing a loved one due to old age. Parr doesn't depend on external threats or unusual events to write suspensefully – her depictions of everyday life shine bright because she so perfectly manages to show the world through the eyes of her main characters. She can portray how intense life can seem to a thirteen-year-old - How big the worries can be (a presentation in front of the whole class!), and how dizzyingly happy you can be (Jumping from the docks into the fjord!).

Feel-good

Parr's writing style is easily recognizable – brimming with humor, conversational and quotable. Lena Lid is very clearly the greatest example of the Parrian style of language – brimming with original expressions and exaggerations. It can feel like too much of a good thing occasionally, like when they're on the raft at sea and nearly crash with the ferry: "I'm going to smother that blasted ferry-bugger the next time I see her!" In this quote she sounds more like a cartoon character than a real-life child. On other occasions she also seems to sound so old-fashioned that she seems like she was born decades before the actual story takes place. There is something positively nostalgic about Maria Parr's novel, in both language and point of reference. Lena, the sea and me, is no exception. The goal might be to make timeless stories and she's successful in the attempt, but there is also a sort of 70s feel to her literary universe. She's not scared of adding sentimental scenes and overly sweet feel-good elements, and it never goes wrong despite a lot being at risk.

Like her predecessors Anne Cath. Vestly and Astrid Lindgren proved, it's possible to make good literature about safe childhoods too, and it's this tradition Parr writes herself into. Her books are easy to love and read, but I wish she took more chances in her stories – especially now that the characters are older. She's been compared to Lindgren, but Lindgren didn't limit herself to only be writing about Seacrow Island and The children on troublemaker street, she also wrote novels that aren't characterized by their idyllic prose or sense of humor. I think Parr is capable of this as well, so I'll allow myself to hope that she'll at some point give us readers something with a bit more zest.

Both Waffle heart and Astrid the unstoppable captured the hearts of the public and critics alike, and Lena, the sea and me will likely be no exception. Ten countries have already acquired publishing rights to the novel, and that's no surprise – the topics she brings up in her works are universal, and children from cultures far away from western Norway can recognize themselves easily.



Maria Parr: All childhoods are equally important

Original text: Svein Olav B. Langåker, Framtida.no

Published: 05.11.2015 - Updated: 24.05.2017

Translation by: Tirill Gjetrang IBBY Norway

I was so embarrassed that I had to change it

After the publishing *Adventures with waffles* in 2004 and *Astrid the unstoppable* in 2009 there's been a lull in books from Maria Parr. In the meantime, she's got a nice book coming out this fall consisting of classic fairytales that's been translated to new Norwegian, but when will she publish a new novel?

- *"I've been busy with my two children, and I will admit that I've been experiencing some writer's block. I do think it's nice to be writing again though, I feel like I'm on the right track."*

She can't promise a set date for when the next book is coming out, but it's in the works, and she hopes to get back to writing full time once she's done with maternity leave.

"To steal hope from children shouldn't be allowed"

Her first two novels caused a lot of "commotion" as she herself describes it. The theatre adaption based on the best-selling books has been sold out both in Oslo and Bergen.

In 2011 NRK made a tv-show based on *Adventures with waffles*, a novel now sold to 26 countries. Her second book *Astrid the unstoppable* has been translated into 16 languages. In Russia the only author that can compare to Parr fame-wise is Jo Nesbø.

This week Parr is the headliner for the new-Norwegian children's book festival Falturiltu, hosted in Stord, Norway.

The question is, what does one of the world's most popular authors in children's literature – who also holds a master's degree in the field – consider to be good children's literature?

- *"We often forget that children can be just as different from each other as grown-ups, and they enjoy different books. I believe that one of the things that good children's books have in common is that they communicate directly to the children – eye to eye. The story can be dark and sad, but there should always be hope. To steal hope from children shouldn't be allowed."*



Girls with confidence and a quick pace

Today, on a Thursday, Parr speaks about heroes and heroines at the Falturiltu-seminar at the Stord/Haugesund College. In *Adventures with waffles* the protagonist Lena held a quick pace and beamed of confidence, although Parr personally identifies more closely with Lena's best friend Trille.

Astrid Glimmerdal was meant to be a boy in the first draft of the story of Astrid the unstoppable, but during the writing process she read Nina Méd's master dissertation on how there's less heroines than ever in modern Norwegian children's literature.

- *"I was so embarrassed that I changed it,"* Parr says, and she believes Astrid made the book better.

"We shouldn't put a limit on children, and in turn, we shouldn't be so one sided. Children should be able to read about all kinds of people. All childhoods are just as important. Everyone has something worth showcasing." She adds.

No such thing as a perfect childhood

Maria Parr tells a story about how she and her family visited the Hunderfossen theme park, located outside of Lillehammer when she was little. During the trip she was given a milk carton that she had only seen on television before.

"I still remember how it felt like I was part of a movie, and that it was important since I had seen the carton on tv."

This is why she found it so touching when the tv series *Adventures with waffles* was taped in her home district of Sunnmøre.

- *"To think that they came all the way over here," I thought. "The best books make us wish that we were in them. I remember reading Astrid Lindgren as a child, and seeing the tv shows, and I really wanted to visit Seacrow Island. Now I think about how someone who's read my book or seen the show might want to come and visit my home district."*

Parr thinks there's a democratic aspect in having films and novels that show different childhoods.

"There's no such thing as a perfect childhood," she says assuredly.

Everyday occurrences

The main characters in her novels are raised religiously, a topic that isn't usually touched on in modern children's literature. Lena and Trille pretend-play "Noah's Smack", and Lena asks if she looks like Jesus when she's holding a lamb in her arms.

- *"It's a project for me to write about everyday things. To have faith is an everyday thing, at least in western Norway."*

She thinks a lot of authors might be anxious about writing about faith in children's literature without a missionary purpose.

"I feel like it's wrong not to at least mention it. Faith can be a big thing in the life of a child, and it's not a dangerous thing to talk about."

When NRK taped *Waffle hearts* they had a couple of discussions about how many christian references they could keep in the series. They kept a lot, like the jesus-picture over auntie-grandma's bed.

- *"We can't get to the point where we can't show religion in tv-series. To have faith isn't something extreme, it's an everyday occurrence."* Parr concludes.

Landscape and cursing in Maria Parr's authorship

Nina Goga

Nina Goga is an Associate Professor in Norwegian at Bergen University College

Abstract

This article investigates the compounds between the descriptions of landscape, the character's usage and the character's use of space in Maria Parr's *Vaffelhjarte* (2005) and Tonje Glimmerdal (2009). The main pillars for the study are various approaches to topographic literature and sociolinguistic and lexicographic studies of cursing.

Maria Parr's authorship so far comprises only two books: *Vaffelhjarte. Lena og eg i Knert-Mathilde* (2005) and *Tonje Glimmerdal* (2009). Her work has been both award-winning and critically acclaimed, also attracting international attention.¹ Her books have been translated into German, French, Dutch, Polish, Russian, Danish and Swedish, and are in the process of being translated into Chinese and Japanese. The numerous awards, consistently positive reviews and many translations can likely be explained by the fact that readers encounter texts that are both literarily and thematically rich and intricately woven. Apart from Harald Bache-Wiig's article "Fra Sveits til Glimmerdal. Maria Parrs Tonje Glimmerdal en gjenskaping av Johanna Spyris Heidi?" [From Switzerland to Glimmerdal. Maria Parr's *Tonje Glimmerdal*: a recreation of Johanna Spyri's *Heidi*?] (2010), no longer articles have yet been written about Parr's texts.² Based on the reviews, it appears that what particularly attracts the attention of readers and interpreters is Parr's storytelling ability and the books' "realistic combination of idyllic humour, dark undertones and *Lindgrenesque* defiance" (Jensen 2009). Several reviewers focus on identifying the setting of the books as rural villages in Western Norway and emphasise that the characters' relationship with the place is romantic and idyllic. Regarding Parr's narrative style, much attention is given to the humour and the sharp, outspoken dialogue or strong expressions in the books. However, as several reviewers note, there is "no profanity" (Lystrup 2009).³

This article will examine precisely the connection between the characters' seemingly idyllic use of place and their colourful but supposedly non-profane expletives. The basis for this approach to Parr's authorship is that she appears to establish strong ties between the characters and their surroundings, between the characters and the language they use and between the use of place and language. The descriptions of place seem to function as literary character portrayals, while

the personally coloured language, or cursing, serves as a stylistic marker of identity and local character.

Vaffelhjarte can be summarised as an episodic story about two nine-year-old neighbours, Trille and Lena, and their amusing and challenging life in a small village near both the sea and the mountains. Although Trille is the narrator of the book, Lena is the focal point and main character in Trille's story. Lena is Trille's best friend, but he is unsure whether he is hers. Lena and Trille get up to all sorts of antics, often to the frustration of the adults. When Lena's mother moves to the city with Lena to complete her art studies, both Lena and Trille are saddened. Lena runs away back home and ends up living with Trille and his family until her mother finishes her studies.

Compared to *Vaffelhjarte*, *Tonje Glimmerdal* appears more literarily complex, both in terms of structure and narrative technique. Briefly summarised, the book is about nearly ten-year-old Tonje and her relationship with the elderly neighbouring farmer and best friend, Gunnvald. When Gunnvald breaks his hip, ends up in the hospital, and believes he is going to die, he decides to give away the farm to a daughter he has neither seen nor spoken to – nor spoken of – in thirty years. While Gunnvald is in the hospital, his daughter, Heidi, arrives in Glimmerdal, creating confusion and crisis in Tonje's life. With Gunnvald's Heidi, Johanna Spyri's literary classic *Heidi* (1880) also comes into Tonje's life. And both Gunnvald's Heidi and Spyri's Heidi come to hold special significance for Tonje and for the relationship between Tonje and Gunnvald.

USE OF PLACE: THE TOPOGRAPHICAL TRADITION MEETS THE FREE-RANGING CHILD

The setting of the events in Parr's books is inscribed in various ways in their titles. While *Vaffelhjarte* localises its story in the subtitle *Lena og eg i Knert-Mathilde*, the title *Tonje Glimmerdal* doubly inscribes place. The title signals that the story is both about a girl named Tonje Glimmerdal and that this girl is intrinsically tied to the landscape, the topography, that constitutes the place Glimmerdal. The name Knert-Mathilde is a type of place name associated with so-called local geography. A similar naming convention can be found in Odd Børretzen's *Min barndoms verden* (1997), which is also adorned with a hand-drawn map on the endpaper. Børretzen writes that some "names in my childhood world were on the map [...]" But in my childhood world, there were many more names than that. Names that were certainly not on any map. Because everything and every place had a name" (Børretzen 1997, 73). On the hand-drawn map of Børretzen's childhood world, we find places such as *Dreper'n* [Killer], *Rumpa* [Butt] and *Skævvæn* [Forest]. A similar map also adorns the endpaper in *Tonje Glimmerdal*, where there are also elements of local naming. For instance, Tonje refers to the hill leading up to Gunnvald's farm as *Gunnvald-bakken* [Gunnvald Hill]. By naming in this way, place and person become closely linked. The text does not provide a definitive explanation for the place name Glimmerdal, but if one considers the word *glimmer*, which refers both to the mineral mica and to something that shines or glistens, one might be led to believe that the place is somewhat idyllic.

According to cultural historian Arne Lie Christensen (2002), how we understand what a landscape is depends on whether we adopt an embodied, internal perspective or a visual, external perspective. That is, whether the landscape is understood in light of human habitation and use or perceived as a scene, a picture or a backdrop. Although the internal perspective can be anchored in a premodern and pre-Christian era, and the external perspective originates in the Renaissance's landscape paintings, it is not uncommon to find that these different views of landscapes appear simultaneously in various aesthetic and socio-political expressions (Christensen 2002, 195–196).

The investigation of the connections between the use of place and language, between landscape and cursing, is here anchored in the tradition of topographical literature. In the essay “On the topographical poem. Or instead of a poetics” (2006), Øyvind Rimbereid describes this tradition as a lineage from antiquity’s pastoral and idyllic poetry, through the diminished status of place descriptions in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance’s exploratory approach to landscapes, to the Romantic landscape viewer’s subjective gaze on a standardised topography (Rimbereid 2006, 84–87). Although the landscapes in Parr’s books are fictional, much suggests that their literary construction is also based on established conventions of topographical descriptions.

Topographical literature describes different ways of viewing and approaching the landscape. This is referred to as the topographical gaze. The topographical gaze is a wandering gaze, one that traverses, sweeps over or moves through the landscape. The observer’s vantage point is often high ridges, mountains or tall buildings. Another way of registering and internalising a landscape is through physical movement, through walking. The landscape is recorded or inscribed in the body. Roland Barthes even argues that childhood bodily experiences are “the royal road by which we know a country best” (Barthes 1992, 9). The child’s exploratory nature, its movements, its hopping and darting about, resemble the cartographer’s work. The body functions as a measuring instrument in the child’s effort to orient itself in the world or to make the world orient itself around the child.

To assume a connection between language use and landscape can be anchored in a rhetorical tradition particularly linked to the rules of discourse and place affiliation known in European literary history as Virgil’s Wheel. This involves a division into, and connection between, high style and the city, middle style and the farmer’s cultivated land, and low style and the shepherd’s wilderness. Although both Lena and Tonje live in farming villages with proximity to town centres, their preferred playgrounds are the wilderness, the hills, the summer pastures and the mountains extending beyond the village’s cultivated plains. Tonje’s father even says that he, as one does with sheep and goats, “lets her out in the morning and hopes she comes back in the evening” (Parr 2009, 15). To highlight this tension between town, cultivated plains and untamed wilderness, Parr’s texts oscillate between different literary stylistic levels. Just as the free-ranging children Lena and Tonje prefer the uncultivated wilderness, they also enjoy and benefit from expressing themselves in an uncultivated language, in the linguistic wilderness, in the expressive force of everyday speech, also known as cursing.

Reviews of Parr’s books and interviews with the author emphasise her familiarity with children’s literature.⁴ That Parr’s landscape descriptions or topographical reflections have direct and indirect connections to other topographies in children’s literature is therefore not a surprising discovery. In Parr’s works, we find traces of Lindgren’s *Lönneberga*, *Bakkebygrenda* and *Bråkmakergata*, but perhaps also of Tove Jansson’s Moominvalley with *Grottan* and *Ensliga Bergen*. In Jansson’s books, as in Joyce Lankester Brisley’s *Milly-Molly-Mandy* books, and in Parr’s *Tonje Glimmerdal*, the endpapers are adorned with maps of the places where the stories unfold. Although Spyri’s *Heidi* does not contain a map, perhaps Parr’s clearest topographical model can be found in this book. The way Spyri, in the very first passage of *Heidi*, describes the village of Maienfeld, the mountain village, the mountain path and the mountains beyond resonates in Parr’s prologue in *Tonje Glimmerdal*. There, the narrator acts as a guide from the moment the reader disembarks from the ferry, through the town centre and up the road to Glimmerdal’s river and the upper farms near the mountains.

The cartographer's gaze is a coded gaze, and a fundamental feature of early maps is the way mountains, coastlines and rivers are marked or represented. The significance of these elements is evident from the very first passage of Spyri's book:

From the charming village of Maienfeld, a path leads across green woodland clearings right up to the foot of the high mountains, which on this side stand and gaze solemnly down into the valley. Where the mountain path begins, the heathlands soon appear, with short grass and sturdy mountain flowers. They exude a spicy fragrance to those who approach, for the path climbs steeply towards the high mountains (Spyri 2006, 5).

It is a similar perspective that guides the narrator's introduction of the reader to Glimmerdal. It is worth noting that the original full title of Spyri's book was *Heidis Lehr- und Wanderjahre*. Not only does this, as Bache-Wiig also points out, place it within a broader literary tradition of the Bildungsroman such as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/96), Pestalozzi's *Lienhard und Gertrud* (1781–87) and Rousseau's *Émile, ou De l'éducation* (1762) (Bache-Wiig 2010, 34), but it also underscores the book's theme of wandering and childhood movement. While Spyri's text is condensed and focused on the landscape, Parr's text is more anecdotal and slow-paced, seemingly attempting to capture an authentic walking rhythm:

If you step off the boat down at the quay, you will feel the wind from the valley right away. Even now, in the cold winter, you can feel it. Just close your eyes. It smells of pine. And spruce. Just start walking. You should follow the road that leads straight ahead, past the closed-down kiosk, the shop and Theo's hair salon, and continue along the river. At first, it's fairly flat, with a few houses. [...] Then there's more and more snow and forest, and fewer and fewer houses. The road becomes half as wide and twice as steep. You might start feeling a little sceptical, [...] (Parr 2009, 11).

Not only does this landscape resemble Spyri's topographical model landscape, it also parallels Trille's topographical description of Knert-Mathilde. Knert-Mathilde has

large fields between the houses and the sea. [...] Above the houses runs the road. And above the road, there are hills for sledding and skiing in winter. [...] At the top of the hills, far, far up, lies Hill-Jon's farm. [...] Even farther up are the mountains. And when you get past the top of the mountains, you can see our little cabin (Parr 2005, 17–18).

Perhaps the similarity in landscapes helps explain the character similarities between Heidi, Tonje and Lena. Given the significance of Spyri's book in the relationships between Tonje and Gunnvald, between Gunnvald and his daughter Heidi, and between Tonje and Gunnvald's daughter, it is not surprising that topographical parallels are established between the places where Heidi, Tonje and Lena feel a sense of belonging or that belong to them.

The British geographer, cartographer and map historian John Brian Harley argues that “all maps state an argument about the world” (Harley 1992, 242). Landscape descriptions, landscape paintings, prospects and maps can all serve as arguments in disputes over land rights. The way a landscape description or map surveys, diminishes and simplifies reveals both a geographic self-understanding and a topographical awareness. A place provides space for and encompasses multiple understandings of place. Knert-Mathilde is used, experienced and understood by the farmer (Uncle Tor), the fisherman (Grandfather), the artist (Lena’s mother) and the child (Lena and Trille). Glimmerdal is used, experienced and understood by the farmer (Gunnvald and Tonje’s father), the campsite owner (Klaus Hagen), the hairdresser (Theo), the loafer (Nils) and the child (Tonje). “To be excluded from open spatiality is to be deprived of something fundamentally human. It is to be deprived of the vitality of place” (Rimbereid 2006, 80). Both Tonje and Lena fight to maintain their sense of belonging and to safeguard their ownership of their homeplace. This is, first and foremost, a battle for the child’s way of being, the child’s way of life and the child’s bodily and linguistic understanding of place. The campsite owner Klaus Hagen’s technified, metered perspective – an outsider’s view of Glimmerdal – is a threat to Tonje’s grasp of place, her freedom of movement and her spatial and linguistic vitality.

It is therefore significant how Parr allows language to mark the proprietary connection between the protagonists and the locations in both books. In Trille’s first introduction to the bay of Knert-Mathilde, he refers to his grandfather’s claim that “Knert-Mathilde is a kingdom. Grandfather mostly tells tall tales, but I like to think he’s right and that Knert-Mathilde is a kingdom, *our* kingdom” (Parr 2005, 17, my italics). This perspective on Knert-Mathilde is echoed in the book’s final chapter, where it states, as if from a king on a palace balcony: “Everything was ready and right that day when Midsummer’s Eve came again. I stood at the wide-open window in my room and looked out over the kingdom” (op. cit., 191).

Both landscape and cursing seem to play a more existential and crucial role in *Tonje Glimmerdal* than in *Vaffelhjarte*. Perhaps one could say that *Vaffelhjarte*’s year-round life in Knert-Mathilde is in every way a light-hearted and harmless warm-up for the grave seriousness of life that permeates *Tonje Glimmerdal*. While Knert-Mathilde is a collective kingdom – “*our* kingdom” – Glimmerdal is Tonje’s *Dovregubbens hall* [Hall of the Mountain King].⁵ Tonje’s concluding mumble “my mountains” (Parr 2009, 45) after the narrator’s panoramic view of the landscape, particularly the mountains forming the valley’s backdrop, establishes a strong character bond between Tonje and the mountains. The parallel between Tonje and the river is also articulated and confirmed in the text through Tonje’s exclamation “My river”, after stopping at the riverbank and watching “the wild water. Roaring, thundering and foaming” (op. cit., 168). Other traces of this ownership relationship between Tonje and Glimmerdal are found in Tonje’s violent encounter with the new boy Ole when “[h]e attacks her! In her own valley! Oh, you blackest black water, how furious she becomes” (op. cit., 54). Or when campsite owner Klaus Hagen abandons his development plans and says to Tonje: “Do you know how sick and tired I am of your Glimmerdal now?” (op. cit., 261).

LANGUAGE USE: SØREN TA, FY FLATE AND HERSENS ELENDIGE JURBETENTE HELSECAMPING

In a discussion of Einar Økland’s poem “*Tors torevær*”, it is asserted that poetry is the textual space of angry and rebellious children, a playground and meeting place for unstable, flashing and

roaring language (Goga and Nyrnes 2010, 135). In the relationship between children and adults, consciously poetic rebuking, a furiously well-formulated rage and resounding cursing may be more threatening than overtly aggressive behaviour. Through language, children can be stronger – and more powerful – than adults. Children who master language make their language dominant. Lena and Tonje master language. Through language, they claim places and landscapes as their own, and by the way they combine words and expressions, they turn language into a tool or weapon they control. They craft striking retorts and impactful comments (note the power and violence-related verbs in these expressions: *impactful* comment, *striking* retort).

In the article “*Banning – makt eller avmakt?*” [Cursing – power or powerlessness] (2004), linguist and lexicographer Ruth Fjeld argues that power and cursing are closely connected, stating that “[a]ll who hold power arm themselves, and cursing can be used as a weapon” (Fjeld 2004, 33). Lena and Tonje arm themselves with language, or reinforce themselves through language, to challenge, confront or outmanoeuvre threatening or authoritarian opponents such as Kai-Tommy in Lena’s class and Hagen at Glimmerdal’s health camp.

When certain linguistic markers in Parr’s authorship are here categorised as cursing, many may react and protest, since there is not a single actual curse word in Parr’s texts. There is no *faen* [damn] or *satan* [Satan] or *helvete* [hell], but there is an abundance of *søren ta* [darn], *fy flate* [oh shoot], *forbarka* [confounded], *fordundre* [blasted], *for den gande* [for the love of], *svarte* [black], *honden-dondre* [by thunder] and *drit* [dirt]. In other words, the kind of creative linguistic expressions that, instead of full-fledged cursing, fall under the category of “near-cursing”, yet remain inextricably linked to the original curse words. As linguist and author Ingrid Kristine Hasund points out in *Fy Farao! Om nestenbanning og andre kraftuttrykk* [Oh Pharaoh! On near-cursing and other strong expressions] (2005), the force of near-cursing depends on its clear reference to what it is not (Hasund 2005, 49). According to Fjeld, the words “*bann*” [curse] and “*bønn*” [prayer] share the same origin [in Norwegian], suggesting “a connection between curse and blessing” (Fjeld 2004, 30). Fjeld interprets cursing as speech acts that we resort to “when we feel powerless or out of control, or fear losing the power we already have. [...] curse words [can] have a soothing effect” (Fjeld 2004, 30). Hasund emphasises that cursing serves more than just an emotional relief or a demonstration of power. She refers to the type of cursing that functions as a stylistic identity marker as “social cursing” (Hasund 2005, 22) and argues that cursing, particularly near-cursing, is also an expression of “great linguistic creativity” (Hasund 2005, 45–46). From this perspective, it is interesting to study Parr’s fresh and salty language – that is, as socially and situationally aware word formation – as a language that defines both the speaker and the situation, the social space or location where the speech act takes place.

Both Lena and Tonje have their distinct preferred linguistic markers and strong expressions. While Lena consistently resorts to *søren ta*, Tonje has a more varied repertoire, though *fy flate* remains closely associated with her in much the same way as *søren ta* is with Lena. Both expressions appear on Hasund’s list of near-curse words. *Søren ta* is considered one of the most common euphemisms for *Satan*, though the connection between *Satan* and *Søren* is deemed weakened in modern Norwegian (Hasund 2005, 61). The phrase *fy flate*, with variants such as *fy(tti) fillern/farao/fabian/fela/feite*, hints at *fy faen* [damn it] and thus also at *fanden* [the devil] or the evil one and his domain (Hasund 2005, 56–60).

Lena’s use of *søren ta* characterises her as an engaged, fiery and impressed girl. She uses the

expression when she is angry or perhaps afraid, such as when she falls from the zipline she and Trille have rigged between their houses. *Søren ta* is, fittingly, the first thing she exclaims as she emerges from the hedge she crashes into – “That was *søren ta* your fault, Trille [...]” (Parr 2005, 10). This scene, introduced in the book’s first sentence: “On the first afternoon of summer holiday, Lena and I made a zipline between our houses” (Parr 2005, 7) – not only parallels Pippi’s macabre plank dance or her tightrope act at the circus, but also foreshadows the reader’s first encounter with Tonje.⁶ After initially appearing as “a black dot about to make noise” (Parr 2009, 14), Tonje launches herself downhill on skis from the foot of Vardetind. Her speed increases, her confidence is challenged and she soars through the air before crash-landing “like an upside-down gummy bear in a cream cake with way too much frosting” (Parr 2009, 18).

Lena also turns to her favourite expression when she is surprised or impressed. For example, *tante-farmor* [Aunt Grandmother] astonishes and impresses her with her waffle-making tactics when Trille, Lena and Grandfather play war games with her while the village adults are at a choir gathering. Within minutes, Trille hears Lena exclaim both “She’s *søren ta* making waffles!” (Parr 2005, 61) and “She’s *søren ta* broken into my house!” (Parr 2005, 62). The waffle-making tactic ultimately forces Trille, Lena and Grandfather to surrender and raise the white flag.

Lena knows how to combine *søren ta* with other strong expressions, often in insults. After the class gets a new teacher, the young and smiling Ellisiv, Lena strikes back at Kai-Tommy – the boy who constantly teases her for being the only girl in class and often hints that “the class would be perfect [...] if Lena weren’t there, because then it would be all boys” (Parr 2005, 98). With Ellisiv as the new teacher, Lena retorts: “We have *søren ta* Ellisiv, you circus llama! Isn’t she a girl, huh?” (Parr 2005, 98).

That Lena’s way of expressing herself is perceived as rude language is evident in Trille’s reflection when, after hitting her head hard while playing a crashing figurehead at the bow of a ship, Lena regains her senses and comments on Trille’s rowing in the following way: “You row *søren ta* like a fool!”. Trille informs the readers with relief that “[I] have never before been so happy that someone has said something so rude to me” (op. cit., 91).

Just like Lena, Tonje uses her favourite expression both when she is angry and when she is impressed and excited. The first instance of *fy flate* in *Tonje Glimmerdal* occurs during Tonje’s reckless ski run toward the edge of Veslehammaren. She is both terrified and exhilarated by her speed: “Oh, *fy flate* this is fast!” Tonje thinks (Parr 2009, 17). Another example occurs in a moment of awe when Gunnvald’s stubborn ram, Gladiator, needs to be moved to the summer barn. In an attempt “to cheer up the old fool” (op. cit., 107) and her best friend, Tonja first tries to move Gladiator up to the summer barn herself. This results in Tonje needing to flee to the roof of the barn. From the roof, Tonje sees Gunnvald approach Gladiator with the red, cross-stitched Christmas tablecloth she sewed for him: “‘*Fy flate*,’ whispers Tonje when she realises Gunnvald’s plan” (op. cit., 114). She is impressed that “an old grump” like Gunnvald takes on something as daring as “bullfighting in Glimmerdal. Granted, without weapons and with an old and stiff bullfighter and a mad ram from Barkvika instead of a bull, but still” (ibid.).

It is not only speed and excitement that make Tonje resort to the expression *fy flate*. Genuine rage also manifests in her language. What the following examples have in common is that the use of *fy flate* is linked to the way Tonje encounters new people in Glimmerdal. She guards her

territory. Intruders or newcomers are threatening, particularly before she gets to know them. When the brothers Bror and Ole arrive for winter holiday at Hagen's health camp, her first meeting with them ends in a fight between Tonje and Ole. And even though Tonje later declares, both in her evening prayers and towards the sky, that she "doesn't give a darn about them", she still finds it "completely impossible not to think about them" (op. cit., 68). This frustration ultimately makes her exclaim: "'No, *fy flate* [...]' before she rushes past Sally's house, through the enchanted forest, and all the way down to the campsite" (op. cit., 69). Her encounters with Gunnvald's daughter, Heidi, are marked by a similar but more fundamental and threatening frustration, and again, it is Tonje who seeks out and follows the intimidating newcomer. The moment when Tonje follows Heidi to Glimmerdal's waterfall marks the first turning point in their encounter. Because Tonje becomes scared when Heidi disappears into the secret cave beneath the waterfall, she first calls her a *hespetre* [shrew, old hag] and then storms off "so furiously enraged that she fears what she might do. *Fy flate*, what a troll of a woman" (op. cit., 176). Just then, while Tonje is at her angriest, Heidi surprises her by running after her and apologising. Tonje's characterisation of Heidi as troll-like serves as a reflection of both characters. Heidi's secret cave also resembles *Dovregubbens hall*. Heidi, too, has been Glimmerdal's thunder – strong and passionately connected to the place, with a wild mane of hair and a tempestuous temperament.

We have seen that Lena and Tonje do not merely assert themselves through their signature expressions; they also take linguistic control over others by defining their identities, calling them *sirkuslama* [circus llama] (Kai-Tommy), *lumus* [dimwit] (Trille), or *staur* [stick], *gnaur* [grump] and *tosk* [fool] (Tonje about Gunnvald) and *hespetre* [shrew, hag] (Tonje about Heidi, Heidi's mother Anna Zimmermann and Aunt Dete in Johanna Spyri's *Heidi*). One of the most powerful defining insults in Parr's books may be Tonje's characterisation of Klaus Hagen's campsite as that "[d]arned miserable udder-infested health camp" (op. cit., 38).

LANDSCAPE AND CURSING

Already in the first chapter, when Tonje stands ready beneath Vardetind with her ski tips pointed towards Veslehamn, the reader is introduced to what can be understood as both Tonje's and the book's motto: the phrase *speed and confidence*. The words come from something Tonje's aunt, Aunt Eir, once said: "One needs two things in life [...] Speed and confidence" and "Tonje thinks that is wisely said" (op. cit., 16). Just as Tonje throws herself into the landscape with speed and confidence, she also throws herself into language. Tonje is not only shaped by the landscape – with her long, cascading curls, her agile and strong physique, and her sharp, slightly stubborn temperament. With her characteristic speed and confidence and her topographically constructed body, she is part of a language-body-landscape *trialectic*, where language shapes the landscape, the landscape shapes the body, and the body shapes the landscape, which in turn shapes the language.⁷ Through her use of the landscape – her skiing and sledding, her "doodles and streaks all over Glimmerdal" (op. cit., 15), her practice "of everything that has to do with speed and confidence" (op. cit., 16) – Tonje shapes the landscape with her body and imbues it with language. Parallels can be drawn to Lena in *Vaffelhjarte*, who, despite being on the run, cannot resist the temptation to race downhill when, after being smuggled to the top of the sledding hill by Trille, she looks out over the bay and sees that the sun has "just disappeared behind the mountains, painting the whole sky pink beyond the fjord" (Parr 2005, 151).⁸ According to Lena, it would be shameful not to go down. The sledding run ends with Trille getting a concussion, something Lena believes "was about darned time Trille tried" (op. cit., 153). And when Grandfather describes their speed, he exclaims that they "got such a blasted magpie's flight of speed that I've never seen the like in my



III: Åshild Irgens

whole life!” (op. cit., 154). Just as bodies shape the landscape, the landscape and bodies shape language – it is flung out, it cascades, it roars. The topography of the landscape and the poetics of cursing are, in my view, mutually reinforcing both in *Vaffelhjarte* and *Tonje Glimmerdal*.

Tonje’s grandfather believes that Tonje and her aunts should stay “on the flats like other folks” (Parr 2009, 247). But that is not what Tonje is made for; she affirms her connection to Glimmerdal in her surname – she is Glimmerdal. When Parr opens the first section with a long topographical description of Glimmerdal, it is also a description of Tonje’s topography, her character and her distinctive language. Tonje is steep, challenging and rugged like the mountains, lively like the waterfall and river, and sensitive like the sounds, tones and music of the river and the place. The place and Tonje are the sum of the three topographical descriptions that introduce each section of the book. The first section, titled “The Letter”, has a letter as its symbol. This part opens with the previously cited description of the road from the ferry landing to Gunnvald and Tonje’s farms. The second section, titled “Heidi”, has a book as its symbol. The title “Heidi” can refer both to Tonje’s deepening engagement with Spyri’s novel and to the arrival of Gunnvald’s daughter, Heidi. This part begins with a description of Heidi’s secret cave above the Glimmerdal summer farm. The third section, titled “The Music”, has a musical note as its symbol and opens with a description of Glimmerdal’s sounds – those created by the river, the wind, the trees and “a red-haired girl who sings” (op. cit., 229). Tonje’s Glimmerdal is thus described as a personal landscape, characterised by mountain speed, waterfall speed and fiddle speed.

This is mirrored in linguistic expression – it is personal, and it is fast-paced. The episode with the goat Gladiator (p. 108–118) illustrates both the range of the linguistic register and the interplay

or temperamental shifts between the story's two most important characters, Tonje and Gunnvald. The episode is a power struggle between Gunnvald and Gladiator (both of whom are stiff and furious) and a test of the friendship between Tonje and Gunnvald. Gunnvald goes into battle, both to get the ram inside and to help Tonje, who has fled to the roof of the summer barn. Gunnvald wonders "[w]hat in all the blackened, burnt Saturday porridge [...]" she is doing up there (op. cit., 112). And after subduing the animal, which "gives in" (op. cit., 111), and mangling his language in the process – "By thunder, I'm going to get this psychopathic ram into the summer barn" (op. cit., 115) – he ends up breaking his hip. This fracture also brings about other forms of rupture. Tonje's perception of Gunnvald is shaken, and Gunnvald's belief that he acted rightly toward his daughter Heidi is also fractured. It is the hip fracture that sets off all the other fractures, cascades and upheavals to come in Tonje and Gunnvald's lives.

Gunnvald is Tonje's best friend and mentor. Tonje's *fy flate* can be seen as a milder variant of Gunnvald's *for dengande* [by thunder], which perhaps more clearly signals the violence or forcefulness inherent in cursing. Tonje struggles to master the intensity and speed in both her body and language. If she can master these, she can also master the landscape, the slopes – skiing over Veslehammaren and sledding down the road to the ferry. She must build confidence to master speed, and with each new detail of the terrain she conquers, her confidence grows. Perhaps it is easier, less physically dangerous, to explore or test the forcefulness and speed of language rather than of the landscape? Perhaps the tempo, intensity, and poetry of language, of swearing, provide her with the confidence she needs to master speed in the landscape? Perhaps the speed and confidence of cursing prepare her to face the power of the landscape, but also the unruly, winding and jagged nature of Gunnvald, Heidi and herself?

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

This article has navigated a specific area of Parr's textual landscape. It has primarily moved through the terrain that constitutes the texts' outfields, following textual traces related to *landscape and cursing*. This excursion confirms that there are clear exchanges between the way the author literarily shapes the landscape in which the characters move and the way she allows the characters' physical and verbal movement through the landscape to be part of shaping it. Tracing Parr's literary exploration of place and language, of landscape and cursing, challenges the notion that the books cultivate or present a Norwegian western idyll populated by healthy, romantic Norwegian children. By demonstrating how Parr, in both books, creates parallels between the use of place and the use of language – how the landscape and the understanding of it both shape and are shaped by language and linguistic comprehension – it has been argued that Parr, in *Vaffelhjarte* and *Tonje Glimmerdal*, emerges as a tradition-conscious literary topographer and a situationally aware wordsmith.

That Parr's texts also allow for other interpretations will likely become evident as different readers step into her authorship from different vantage points and make diverse analytical choices. For example, her works could be studied by following the girl protagonists, Lena and Tonje, and analysing or reflecting on their similarities with other literary girls, such as the linguistic acrobat Pippi, the enterprising Lotta from Troublemaker Street and the outdoor-loving Ronja, or the mountain goat Heidi, the hothead Little My and the red-haired tomboy Anne of Green Gables. The depictions of childhood in the books are also open to interpretation. Are they romantic, nostalgic

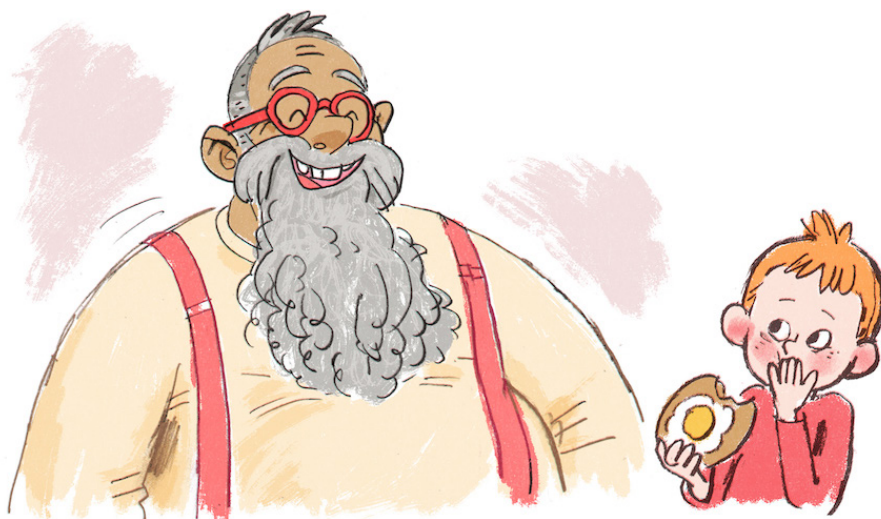
or realistic? Perhaps it is Parr's narrative techniques that capture readers' interest – the episodic structure of *Vaffelhjarte* and the dramatic knots or “cliffhangers” in *Tonje Glimmerdal*. The books' read-aloud qualities could also be explored in relation to the intergenerational encounters they depict, such as the one between Trille and his grandfather in *Vaffelhjarte* and the one between Tonje and Gunnvald in *Tonje Glimmerdal*. And perhaps, as a challenge, Maria Parr could be read as a new, modern agricultural evangelist following in the footsteps of Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil*?

In other words, the possibilities are many – the work of mapping her authorship has only just begun.

1. About *Vaffelhjarte*, critics wrote, among other things, that “[t]he story is so good that one feels like proclaiming the arrival of a rising star!” (Østenstad 2005). The book was nominated for the Brage Prize in 2005 and received the Noregs Mållag Children's Literature Prize the same year. In 2010, it was awarded the French *Prix Sorcières* in the category for best children's/young adult novel. For *Tonje Glimmerdal*, Parr received the Critics' Prize, the *Teskjekjerring* Prize, the Brage Prize for best children's and young adult book of 2009, and *Die Zeit*'s prestigious LUCHS Prize in 2010 for best children's book in Germany. Critics described Parr as a “wise and authoritative author” (Haugen 2009) and called the book a “masterpiece” (Jensen 2009) and “already a classic in its own time” (Isaksen 2009).
2. In the article, Bache-Wiig conducts a thorough exploration of the intertextual interplay between Spyri's *Heidi* (1880) and Parr's *Tonje Glimmerdal*.
3. See also Gerd Elin Stava Sandve's review in *Dagsavisen*, 18 November 2009.
4. See, for example, Ingeborg Mjør's review “*Nyskriv klassikartradisjonen*” in *Dag og Tid*, 9 October 2009, and an interview with Parr in *Dag og Tid*, 21 August 2009, p. 15.
5. The description of Tonje Glimmerdal as “Glimmerdal's little *dunder* [thunder]” (Parr 2009, 15) provides a basis for such a reading, as *dunder* is also a name for the devil. See <http://www.dokpro.uio.no/perl/ordboksoek/ordbok.cgi?OPPdunder&nynorskS%F8kiNynorskordboka&ordboknynorsk&sn&alfabetn&rensetj> (accessed 20 September 2010).
6. The reader has likely already seen her depicted on the book's cover – an image that probably shows Tonje mid-air, as she takes off down from Vardetind. A curious detail in this context is the resemblance between illustrator Åshild Irgens' cover drawing of *Tonje Glimmerdal* and her version of *Heidi* on the cover of Aschehoug's edition of Spyri's *Heidi* in the series “*Berømte bøker*” [Famous books]. Both girls have reddish curly hair, rosy cheeks, slightly upturned noses and a bouncing posture.
7. The concept of *trialectics* is understood here as my own extension of the concept of *dialectics*, but it can also be discussed in relation to the geographer and urban planner Edward Soja's concept of trialectics, as developed in his book *Thirdspace* (1996).
8. I only point to the parallel between this description of the sun and the mountains and a similar description in Spyri's work. In a scene where Heidi experiences the mountain landscape for the first time at sunset, she exclaims: “It's burning, it's burning! All the mountains are burning, and the vast expanse over there is burning – and the sky. Oh, look! Look! The mountains are glowing completely! And the beautiful snow – it's burning!” (Spyri 2006, 42).

Bibliography

- Bache-Wiig, Harald. "Fra Sveits til Glimmerdal. Maria Parrs Tonje Glimmerdal en gjenskapning av Johanna Spyris Heidi?". BLFT Nordic Journal of ChildLit Aesthetics, Vol. 1, 2010 DOI: 10.3402/blft.v1i0.5872
- Barthes, Roland. "The Light of the Sud-Ouest". Oversatt av Howard, Richard. Originalens tittel: "La lumie`re du sud-ouest". I Incidenta. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, s. 39.
- Brisley, Joyce Lankester. Ikke sant du er venn med MillyMolly-Mandy. Oversatt av Zinken Hopp. Bergen: J. W. Eides forlag, 1950 (1932).
- Børretzen, Odd. Min barndoms verden. Frifant Forlag, 1997.
- Christensen, Arne Lie. Det norske Landskapet. Om landskap og landskapsforståelse i kulturhistorisk perspektiv. Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2002.
- Fjeld, Ruth. "Banning makt eller avmakt?", I Språknytt nr. 34. 2004, s. 3033.
- Goga, Nina og Aslaug Nyrnes. "Omslagsspekulasjonar", I Fløgstad, Kjartan, Sverre Tusvik og Jorunn Veiteberg (red.) Skriftest Einar Økland 70. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2010, s. 127135.
- Harley, John Brian. "Deconstructing the map". I Barnes, Trevor J. og James S. Duncan (red.) Writing Worlds. London og New York: Routledge, 1992, s. 231247.
- Hasund, Ingrid Kristine. Fy Farao! Om nestenbanning og andre kraftuttrykk. Oslo: Cappelen Forlag, 2005.
- Haugen, Morten. "Glimrende fra Glimmerdalen", Adresseavisen, 21.9.2009, 2009.
- Jensen, Kjell Olaf. "Frisk bruk av forbilder", barnebokkritikk.no (lagt inn 23.09.2009), 2009.
- Isaksen, Kristin. "Fart og sjølvtilitt", Bergens Tidende 31.8.2009, 2009.
- Jansson, Tove. Trollkarlens hatt. Stockholm: Alfabeta, 2004 (1948).
- Lindgren, Astrid. Pippi Langstrømpe. Oversatt av Hans Braarvig. Oslo: Damm, 1995 (1946).
- Lystrup, Marianne. "Glimrende fra Glimmerdal". Vårt Land 9.09.2009, 2009.
- Mjør, Ingeborg. "Nyskriv klassikartradisjonen", Dag og Tid 9.10.2009, 2009.
- Parr, Maria. Vaffelhjarte. Lena og eg i Knert-Mathilde. Illustrert av Bo Gaustad. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2005.
- ***. Tonje Glimmerdal. Illustrert av Åshild Irgens. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2009.
- Rimbereid, Øyvind. Hvorfor ensomt leve. Oslo: Gyldendal, 2006.
- Sandve, Gerd Elin Stava 2009. "Glimrande!". Dagsavisen 18.11.2009.
- Seinnes, Cecilie. "Gammaldagse barnebøker", Dag og Tid 21.08.2009, 2009.
- Spyri, Johanne. Heidi. Oversatt av Trond Winje. Illustrert av Tomi Ungerer. Oslo: Aschehoug, 2006 (1880).
- Østenstad, Inger. "Strålende debut!", barnebokkritikk.no (lagt inn 30.11.2005), 2005.



III: Åshild Irgens

References

<https://www.samlaget.no> Maria Parr Archives - Saga Literary Agency

[Magien i kvardagen - Barnebokkritikk.no](#)

[Å stake ut ny kurs - Barnebokkritikk.no](#)

[Landskap og bannskap i Maria Parrs forfatterskap | Barnelitterært forskningstidsskrift](#)

[«Fjella og elva og havet som stig»: En nymaterialistisk lesing av antropocene overtramp i Maria Parrs Tonje Glimmerdal \(2009\): Barnelitterært forskningstidsskrift: Vol 14, No 1](#)

[Fra Sveits til Glimmerdal: Maria Parrs Tonje Glimmerdal – en gjenskaping av Johanna Spyris Heidi?: Barnelitterært forskningstidsskrift: Vol 1, No 1](#)

[Maria Parr praised in the US - NORLA](#)

[ADVENTURES WITH WAFFLES | Kirkus Reviews](#)

[ASTRID THE UNSTOPPABLE | Kirkus Reviews](#)

Helgesen, Petra; Haugen, Morten O.; Bjorvand, Agnes-Margrethe: *Maria Parr i Store norske leksikon* på snl.no. Henta 16. januar 2025 frå https://snl.no/Maria_Parr Maria Parr: Alle barndommar er like viktige Bokanmeldelse: Stilrent og kort om å være en god storebror

[Maria Parr: – Jeg skal ikke legge skjul på at jeg har strevd litt.](#)