

# SWEDISH CONTEMPORARY NONFICTION

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SWEDISH  
LITERATURE  
EXCHANGE



# WELCOME!

What's the latest in Swedish nonfiction? Which authors are available to international readers? What are they writing about? In this overview publication, we give you the answers. If you're interested in Swedish nonfiction but aren't sure where to start, or if you've already published a Swedish nonfiction writer or two but would like to publish more, then this introduction is for you.

In this publication we present a selection of Swedish nonfiction authors who are important voices on the Swedish scene and who have already found an international readership. We also asked Beata Hansson, the head of the Swedish Writers' Union nonfiction section, to share some reflections on nonfiction in general and Swedish nonfiction in particular.

Alongside each author presentation, you'll find information about original publishers and representation. On the final pages we've provided contact details for the agencies handling rights for the authors presented here.

Grants are available for the translation and promotion of Swedish literature. If you would like to know more about these grants and how to apply, you'll find all the information on our website, where we also publish articles about other topics in Swedish literature: [www.swedishliterature.se](http://www.swedishliterature.se).

**Happy reading!**

Susanne Bergström Larsson  
Head of Swedish Literature Exchange,  
Swedish Arts Council

*Note: The authors presented in this publication were selected based on nominations by agencies and publishers who sell rights to Swedish nonfiction. Agencies and publishers were asked to nominate authors and books that have begun to reach an international audience. To ensure a good distribution across publishers and agencies, a group at the Swedish Arts Council made the final selection from among the nominees. Six independent critics contributed texts about the selected authors – our thanks to Henrik Brändén, Naima Chahboun, Olav Fumarola Unsgaard, Natalie von der Lehr, Patrik Lindenfors and Annika Persson.*

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# PER J. ANDERSSON

(b. 1962)

By train, boat and bicycle; by camel, horse and foot; less and less often by plane. Since the mid-1980s, Per J. Andersson has been travelling. Above all, he has been writing about travel. It was in the '80s that he started Sweden's leading travel magazine, *Vagabond*. Since then he has revolutionized and reinvented travel writing in Scandinavia. How? First, with passion, self-education and expertise; second, by turning a critical eye on travel as a behaviour and tourism as a multi-billion-dollar global industry. Before many of his peers, Andersson critiqued the idea of "alternative" travellers (himself included) who went "off the beaten path." In truth, you can never arrive first on the scene. Every place has a history, most often a colonial history of violence and oppression. Recently Andersson gained international attention for his book *The Amazing Story of the Man Who Cycled from India to Europe for Love* ('New Delhi–Borås', 2013), where he displays his signature mix of criticism and personal essay. Its successor is *Take the Train: Travelling through the Past, Present and Future* ('Ta tåget: på spåret genom historien, samtiden och framtiden', 2013). As the title suggests, the book tells a grand history of travel by rail. Amidst rising concerns about the carbon footprint of flying, it is a timely topic with more target groups than ever before.

Andersson is also an observer of society and culture, as we see in such recent books as *The Dream About an Island* ('Drömmen om en ö') and *Woman Travellers in History* ('Historiska kvinnliga resenärer', 2021). The latter originated, interestingly, as a series of reported stories in audiobook format, showing Anderson's desire to find new ways to connect with a variety of readers. Perhaps that readiness stems from his own background as an early active member of several Facebook groups and a frequently consulted expert for radio and television, where he dispenses tips and sage advice. One traveller to another.

Olav Fumarola Unsgaard



Foto: Johan Marklund



***The Dream About an Island***  
282 p., 2022, Ordfront  
Rights: Agentur Literatur  
Gudrun Hebel

Rights sold to: Germany

Per J. Andersson takes us on an exciting voyage to ten different islands. We journey from Gotland (Sweden) to Usedom (Germany), El Hierro (Spain), Amorgos (Greece), Bali (Indonesia), the island nation of Sri Lanka, Denis Island (Seychelles), Muravandhoo in the Raa Atoll (Maldives), and North Sentinel in the Andaman Islands (India).



***The World is Beautiful for Those Who Travel*** ('För den som reser är världen vacker')  
230 p., 2018, Ordfront

Rights: Agentur Literatur  
Gudrun Hebel

Rights sold to: Finland,  
Germany, Japan

Travel means being exposed to new sounds, smells and customs. It means learning that one problem can have many solutions. Now more than ever, with xenophobia on the rise, it is important to try to see the world from different angles. But we need to travel better: smarter and more sustainably.

# KARIN BOJS

(b. 1959)

Foto: Thron Ullberg



**Europe's Mothers: The Last 43,000 Years**

293 p., 2022, Albert Bonniers  
Rights: Agentur Literatur  
Gudrun Hebel

Rights sold to: Finland,  
Germany, Norway

Researchers are beginning to be able to distinguish how patterns of migration differed for Europe's fathers and mothers. The paths lead from chimpanzees in the rainforest to shieldmaidens in Scandinavia via Neanderthal sex, the earliest dogs, the beginnings of metal-working, the first domesticated horses and a 5,000-year-old case of incest in Ireland.



**My European Family: The First 54,000 Years**

485 p., 2016, Albert Bonniers  
Rights: Agentur Literatur  
Gudrun Hebel

Rights sold to: Czech Republic,  
Denmark, Estonia, Finland,  
France, Germany, Hungary, Italy,  
Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway,  
Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain,  
UK, US

Karin Bojs traces her family tree back – way back, following strands of DNA that connect her to prehistoric humans. The result is a book about Bojs and her family and all the rest of us too. For we are all family. Somewhere, somewhen, we all share a common ancestor.

As a researcher, I always felt secure with science editor Karin Bojs at the helm during her 16 years at Sweden's biggest daily paper, *Dagens Nyheter*. Too often, science reporting is neglected in the daily press, despite the fact that scientific findings have life-changing impacts on humanity, and scientific warnings, when they come, should carry critical weight. Bojs communicated the importance of science with passion and a keen eye for the main story as well as a finely honed sense of style.

I was thus not especially surprised by the success of *My European Family* ('Min europeiska familj'), a blend of genealogy, genetics, archaeology and history in which Bojs tells a story about the most recent 54,000 years of European history. Her later books on the same theme, *The Swedes and Their Fathers* ('Svenskarna och deras fäder', 2016) and *Europe's Mothers* ('Europas mödrar') are also well worth reading. In all, her books have been translated into 16 languages.

Bojs' books have a great deal to offer for anyone trying to figure out what modern genetic analysis can reveal about our origins. Our deepest history is recorded in our genes, making it accessible and comprehensible to modern genetic research. That history also differs for men and women, shedding new light on human migration and the historical roles of the sexes.

Bojs has received many prizes and distinctions for her science journalism and her books, including an honorary doctorate from Stockholm University, the August Prize, the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences' Hans Bergström Award and the Swedish National Encyclopedia's Knowledge Award. Alongside her work as a journalist and author, Bojs is engaged in the cause of promoting scientific communication and understanding.

*Patrik Lindenfors*

# NINA BURTON

(b. 1946)

The poet and essayist Nina Burton once said in an interview that she works with the ecology of ideas, and that is an apt description of her writing. A prodigiously informed writer (she has been called a Renaissance woman in more than one review), Burton ranges unencumbered through the intellectual history of the West, equally at home in the natural sciences and the humanities.

Perhaps it is Burton the poet who sends Burton the essayist down unique paths, turning a flash of an idea or a fleeting event into a text of almost encyclopaedic proportions. A conversation in a used bookshop or a blackbird in her country cottage garden can spark a question from which the whole of human society and human existence unspools – or animals, or plants – as Burton references and cross-references the laws of physics, currents in intellectual history, the sciences of biology and evolution, and the possible ways we and others can understand one another.

Burton's language is simple, her reflections expansive, whether her subject is accomplished women and their lack of impact in history, as in *The New Cité des Dames* ('Den nya kvinnostaden', 2005) or how species coexist on a patch of ground, as in *Notes From a Summer Cottage* ('Livets tunna väggar'). In 2016 she received the August Prize, Sweden's biggest book award after the Nobel, for *The Gutenberg Galaxy Nova* ('Gutenberggalaxens nova'), a book about Erasmus of Rotterdam (possibly Europe's most productive author) and the sixteenth-century media revolution.

Nina Burton is a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and the literary society Samfundet De nio. She is the recipient of many awards, including the August Prize as well as the Swedish Academy's Essay Prize, Stora Fackbokspriset, Sweden's largest nonfiction award (2012), and the Övralid Prize (2020).

Annika Persson



Foto: Caroline Andersson Renoud



**Notes From a Summer Cottage**  
272 p., 2020, Albert Bonniers  
Rights: Bonnier Rights  
Rights sold to: Bulgaria, China,  
Denmark, Estonia, Finland,  
Germany, Japan, Korea,  
Netherlands, Norway, Poland,  
Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia,  
Spain, UK

Nina Burton writes with boundless enthusiasm and a curiosity that inspires, enlightening the reader about the greater natural world. She transports us into her chirping, buzzing, humming sanctuary, letting us in on the hidden secrets of the animals who have taken up residence on our doorsteps and in our hearts.



**The Gutenberg Galaxy Nova**  
350 p., 2016, Albert Bonniers  
Rights: Bonnier Rights  
Rights sold to: Denmark,  
Netherlands, Serbia

Erasmus of Rotterdam was the author behind up to one fifth of the European books printed in his day, and the first bestselling author. He left us all an important intellectual heritage. Erasmus dreamt of a Europe without borders, where culture and science would tie an unbreakable knot.

# ANDREAS CERVENKA

(b. 1974)

Foto: Miriam Preis

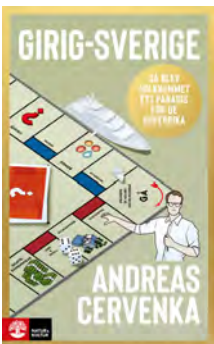


The economics writer Andreas Cervenka has emerged in recent years as a vocal critic of late capitalism and its negative sides. A multi-award-winning journalist who has also written three books, he challenges the idea that the market self-regulates and makes economics into popular entertainment.

Cervenka's books start with basic questions that seem elementary. "What is money?" "What is a bank?" He combines a breakneck tempo with solid knowledge and a broad sense of humour. Reading him, I often wonder: have I come to a seminar or a stand-up show? Alongside math examples and graphs, Cervenka uses fiction's whole bag of tricks: dramatized scenes, daring metaphors, imagined dialogues. It is an accessible way to communicate a fundamentally democratic message. Cervenka repeatedly concludes that financial crises and bubbles, often painted as the unforeseeable effects of spontaneous market forces, in fact are predictable results of political actions. The insight slices through the dull buzz of finance reporting and offers a corrective to a politics that tends to fold in the face of finance capitalism.

We might call Cervenka a reluctant radical. He punctures the myths of the modern economy but takes his hammer from the economists' toolbox. He seeks not to overturn the market economy but to salvage it. Even so, his books make for tumultuous reading. Everyone can see the emperor is naked. Someone has to be the first to say it.

*Naima Chahboun*



***Greedy Sweden ('Girigsverige')***  
254 p., 2022, Natur & Kultur  
Rights: Albatros Agency  
Rights sold to: Finland

Andreas Cervenka tells the story of Sweden's improbable journey from a high-tax social democracy to a billionaires' paradise. With his characteristic sense of humour, Cervenka guides the reader towards an answer to the question: what happened to Sweden?



***What Does a Bank Do? ('Vad gör en bank?')***  
190 p., 2018, Natur & Kultur  
Rights: Albatros Agency  
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In 2008, the entire financial system was a hair's-breadth from total collapse. A decade later, the danger is past. Or is it? Andreas Cervenka shows why the global economy, in many ways, is even more vulnerable today.



# ULF DANIELSSON

(b. 1964)

"The most important point I want to make is this: we continue to discover the world around us," writes Ulf Danielsson in the preface to *Falling Stars and Apples* ('Stjärnor och äpplen som faller', 2013). He goes on: "Those who say science has reached road's end, and the deepest questions have found their answers, are simply mistaken."

Danielsson, a professor of theoretical physics at Uppsala University, conducts research on string theory and dark energy. It appears the universe is full of dark energy. We can detect it only indirectly. Yet dark energy is a major reason many physicists believe that our apparently singular universe is really one of a host of parallel universes. In these parallel universes, physical constants may have different values than they happen to have in ours, resulting in completely different conditions for life.

Danielsson presents a popular history of this theory in *Darkness at the End of Time* ('Mörkret vid tidens ände'). In other books he takes a broader view. *Falling Stars and Apples* surveys the history of physics from Ancient Greece to the present day. *The Best of Worlds* ('Den bästa av världar', 2008) discusses how modern scientific findings have affected both our worldview and the role religion plays in our societies.

One of his most recent books, *The World Itself* ('Världen själv'), explains why living organisms are not machines, why consciousness is not an illusion, and why he thinks humans do not have free will. He also argues against his fellow physicist Max Tegmark that mathematics has no existence independent of us.

Never simplifying to the point of inaccuracy, Danielsson still explains physics in gorgeous, delightfully transparent prose, garnished with cultural references, at every point interweaving scientific with existential and philosophical questions.

Henrik Brändén



Foto: Mikael Lundblad



***The World Itself***  
198 p., 2021, Fri Tanke  
Rights: Nordin Agency  
Rights sold to: China, Germany, Italy, Korea, Portugal, US

Can we ever truly comprehend the universe without first understanding consciousness and the wonders and limits of the mind? Ulf Danielsson challenges established worldviews and takes a fresh look at major philosophical debates, including the notion of free will.



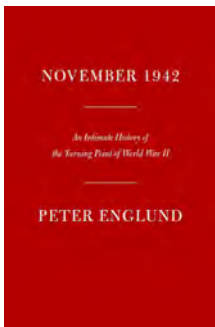
***Darkness at the End of Time***  
(*'Mörkret vid tidens ände'*), 187 p., 2020, Fri Tanke  
Rights: Nordin Agency  
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In *Darkness at the End of Time* we begin to explore dark matter and dark energy, of which physicists still know very little. We consider the dark ages before the Big Bang, get a glimpse of what happened when our universe was created and follow the story further into a distant and threatening future.

# PETER ENGLUND

(b. 1957)

Foto: Alexander Mahmoud



**November 1942 – An Intimate History of the Turning Point of WW2**

600 p., 2022, Natur & Kultur  
Rights: Hedlund Literary Agency  
Rights sold to: Bulgaria, China, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, UK, US

At the beginning of November 1942, it looked as if the Axis powers could still win the war; by the end of the month, it was obvious that it was only a matter of time before they lost. Just one month – but perhaps the most important of the entire twentieth century.



**The Beauty and the Sorrow ('Stridens skönhet och sorg')**

292 p., 2014, Atlantis  
Rights: Hedlund Literary Agency  
Rights sold to: Brazil, Bulgaria, China (simp.), Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, UK, Ukraine, US

An intimate narrative history of World War I, told through the stories of 20 men and women from around the globe – a powerful, illuminating, heart-rending picture of what the war was really like.

If any Swedish author can make us feel the reality of the great wars, it is Peter Englund. A historian and member of the Swedish Academy, Englund's first book was *The Battle That Shook Europe: Poltava and the Birth of the Russian Empire* ('Poltava, berättelsen om en armés undergång', 1988). The portrait of the pugilistic Charles XII of Sweden and his greatest setback – perhaps the greatest military loss Sweden ever suffered – became an immediate critical and commercial success. Englund had found a new way to write about war: by showing us individual people, their lives and dreams. He told history from the inside out and the bottom up.

Since his debut, he has moved forward in time from Sweden's age of empire to the era of the two World Wars. In book after book, alternating historical monographs with essay collections, he has followed individuals across the battlefields, walked at their sides and listened as they spoke of both hardships and happiness. Many scenes seem plucked from the pages of a novel, but when asked what he adds to the historical material, he has always said, "Nothing." Englund works from diaries, letters, and other personal historical sources. His latest book is *November 1942: An Intimate History of the Turning Point of WW2* ('Onda nätterns drömmar: november 1942 och andra världskrigets vändpunkt i 360 korta kapitel'). Weaving together some 40 histories of individuals on different continents who had completely different relationships to the events of the war, it reads almost like a collective novel.

Englund became a familiar face to many when he served as permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy – the person who announces the Nobel Prize in Literature. He held the post between 2009 and 2015. He is also a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of War Sciences.

Annika Persson

# SVERKER JOHANSSON

(b. 1961)

Sverker Johansson holds a doctorate in particle physics and has taught and written books on that subject. He has also written computer programs that have leveraged AI to create millions of Wikipedia articles on animal and plant species. Swedish readers, however, know him best as an explorer of big questions about language and linguistics.

Johansson burst onto the scene in 2019 with *The Dawn of Language* ('På spaning efter språkens ursprung'). It poses a series of fundamental questions about the origins of language. What problems did human language first solve for our ancestors? Did it help us to structure our thoughts, gossip, sing together, dominate one another, organize our work? Did language evolve through motivation or mutation? Gradually or in leaps and bounds? With or without an innate language instinct? The book addresses all these questions within the broader contexts of language structures, human evolution, the workings of the brain, and the interplay between nature and nurture.

Johansson's follow-up, *Walking in the Footprints of Language* ('På vandring i språkens fotspår', 2022) considers how languages can be so different in their design and construction, while still being so similar in function. Elegantly organized, the book dedicates each chapter to a single language group and to one big question illustrated by that group about the evolution and diversity of languages.

Johansson writes in transparent prose and his logic is clear and easy to follow – unerring even in subjects such as evolution and genetics that are far removed from his own. He argues clearly for his own views and also summarizes opposing views, showing us the dynamic nature of science as a process in which human knowledge evolves as we gather and test competing explanations.

Henrik Brändén



Foto: Jonas Teichloff

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osefin Antti Jie Christakds  
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## **What's In a Name? (‘Hur var namnet?’)**

**256 p., 2023, Natur & Kultur  
Rights: Albatros Agency  
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What is the story behind your name? In fact, why do you have a name at all? Sverker Johansson tells you. With an eye to evolutionary history as well as specific unusual examples, he ranges across time and space to capture the diversity of naming traditions.



**The Dawn of Language  
396 p., 2020, Natur & Kultur  
Rights: Albatros Agency  
Rights sold to: Hungary, Italy,  
Netherlands, Romania, Russia,  
Spain, Turkey, UK**

*The Dawn of Language* is a dizzyingly erudite and tightly woven story of one of humanity's greatest mysteries: the origins of language. Packed with astonishing examples, the book is an entertaining and stimulating deep dive for anyone who has ever pondered the question of why we speak the way we do.

# On Reading Nonfiction

**Beata Hansson heads the Swedish Writers' Union nonfiction section. On a trek through new Swedish nonfiction, she finds challenge, pleasure and sustenance.**



The paths nonfiction takes are gloriously unpredictable. The nonfiction author dresses hard facts and unadorned explanation in narrative clothing, weaving their way between appealing prose and undeniable truth.

The nice thing about literary nonfiction today is that we let it do some work: we let it teach us, while also being a pleasure to read. Such nonfiction is its own aesthetic category and we need specific tools to analyze and understand it. Consider two recent Nobel laureates, Svetlana Alexievich and Annie Ernaux, whose books often poise on thresholds between memoir, fiction and research. These authors create in the space where literature, sociology and history meet.

The best nonfiction penetrates the tangle of politics, faith and uncomfortable science. It turns over heavy rocks to look for big answers and discovers things that may seem small but give us great power over our lives. Such thought-provoking titles as Fredrik Sjöberg's *The Fly Trap* ('Flugfällan'), Patrik Svensson's *The Gospel of Eels* ('Ålevangeliet') or Katrine Kielos-Marçal's *Mother of Invention* ('Att uppfinna världen') put life under a microscope while keeping the bigger picture in sight. Reading books like these, I get a tingling feeling of discovery – like finding the best mushrooms in the forest.

Nonfiction is growing ever more popular among Swedish readers, and no wonder. Nonfiction is what gives us a foothold in troubled times, when we wonder what the world is coming to.

**CREATIVE NONFICTION ONCE** led an obscure existence, caught between various academic disciplines. Now it is recognized

as a discipline of its own, helping erase its spurious reputation as not 'literary' enough for literature studies. Conversely, the historically difficult nonfiction genre has also been surging up the bestseller lists.

Given the strength of nonfiction in Sweden, it comes as a surprise that our first professorship in nonfiction was created just this year. With Anna Jungstrand as pioneer in the post, we can expect a better map of the border between creative freedom and factual content that should put authors and readers alike on firmer footing.

**THE BOOKS THAT** have beckoned me into the woods of late have taught me to detect and decipher the language of nature. I have followed the beautiful but rocky trail from culture to nature to reconciling faith, hearing it whisper of the natural environments where life can thrive and learning to see what we project onto the wilderness, challenging my preconceived notions of good and evil. Reading Lars Berge's *Project: Wolf* ('Vargattacken'), I find it striking how much of our odd, conflicted view of wolves arises out of myth and emotion. Berge's examination of the case of a wolf who kills a zoo attendant shows what happens when business interests are left unchecked. In this case, zoo owners had begun letting visitors into the wolf pen unprotected, choosing to set aside the laws of nature: the laws of the wolves themselves.

I open David Thurfjell's *Spruce Forest People* ('Granskogsfolk') to examine my own concept of nature as a symbolic space that I fill with spiritual experience. Even for a secular Scandinavian like me, the belief in things unseen forms a major part of my search for meaning in the natural world. Answers others seek in church, I often find in nature.

Describing things invisible but real, while simultaneously arguing that mathematics and scientific equations have no existence outside the human mind, is a feat that probably only a born nonfiction writer like Ulf Danielsson could pull off. Johan Eklöf is another author who takes us out of the dark. In *The Darkness Manifesto* ('Mörkermanifestet') he explains with ease the science surrounding light pollution and why all



## BOOKS MENTIONED

**Lars Berge (b. 1974)**

**Project: Wolf**

229 p., 2018, Albert Bonniers  
Rights: Bonnier Rights  
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**David Thurfjell (b. 1973)**

**Spruce Forest People**

335 p., 2017, Norstedts  
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**Johan Eklöf (b. 1973)**

**The Darkness Manifesto**

261 p., 2020, Natur & Kultur  
Rights: Sebes & Bisseling  
Rights sold to: Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Spain, UK, US

living beings need the night. He makes it simple to understand why migratory birds are losing their way: artificial light sends them flying in the wrong direction. Artificial light is also what leads turtles astray as they swim for shore.

**TO UNDERSTAND WHAT** lies ahead, we sometimes look behind us. Authors who write about the past – its persecutions, wars, and other calamities – often uncover conditions that have shaped and continue to shape the Swedish self-image in crucial ways. In *And in the Vienna Woods the Trees Remain* ('Och i Wienerwald står träden kvar'), Elisabeth Åsbrink shares a history that holds more than a few uncomfortable national truths and falsehoods. The historical dramas that have played out around us bear in many ways on the events of today, as Peter Englund reminds us in his account of the devastating battle fought at Poltava in present-day Ukraine in 1709.

But how much of our future can be predicted by history? What about the influence of our genes? Human origins and genetic legacies are the subjects of *My European Family* ('Min europeiska familj'), Karin Bojs' thrilling genealogical investigation that follows strands of DNA all the way back to our ancient ancestors. Bojs tells us how the population of Europe was formed in a story of her own origins and the origins of all Europeans. Somehow, somewhere, we are all family.

**"I am drawn to the spaces outside the lines of the political maps, the grey areas that are the domain of logic and argument."**

On my trek through the nonfiction jungle I also find the physicist and linguist Sverker Johansson. He is searching not for human origins but for the building blocks of language: the tools we universally deploy to comprehend what may sometimes be an all too troubled world.

Growing side by side with history I find philosophy. I am drawn to the spaces outside the lines of the political maps, the grey areas that are the domain of logic and argument. Professors of theoretical philosophy who have taken up the pen help me recognize the normative role of

**"Poetry, like science, can fight ignorance; in fact poetry can be a kind of science".**

language. They guide my exploration of linguistic meaning, rules and norms. Åsa Wikforss administers a fortifying dose of popular philosophy that leaves me well equipped to confront those invisible enemies, knowledge resistance and alternative facts.

Poetry, like science, can fight ignorance; in fact poetry can be a kind of science. If the role of the written word is to enrich my life with information, then poetry is the mouth-watering bag lunch I unpack in the woods. A bit of bread and cheese, nicely wrapped and eaten in the sunshine, is all I need to be happy. Simple is often sublime.

**THE BORDER BETWEEN** science and the humanities could do with more exploring, as we saw when Nina Burton was appointed to be poet-in-residence for a year at KTH Royal Institute of Technology. On the cheese roll of poetry, Burton was the crisp bell pepper (it's a Swedish thing). She was there, in other words, to be a vitamin shot, an extra boost to help technology meet the challenges of the future. Poetry helps us see that we don't always need definite answers. We do need to ask more questions, change perspectives, look at how the parts interact with the whole, and let our minds roam free. A poet can bring this sensibility to the world of technology. Burton didn't become KTH poet-in-residence to write poems about concrete, but to lead seminars for students and professors on the languages of technology and poetry,



DAVID THURFJELL

# GRANSKOGSFOLK

Hur naturen blev svenskarnas religion

NORSTEDTS

## BEATA HANSSON ALSO RECOMMENDS

**Emma Frans (b. 1981)**

***The Expert Paradox***  
(‘Expertparadoxen’),  
200 p., 2023, Bonnier Fakta  
Rights: Salomonsson Agency  
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Over the past few years, many of us have turned to scientific authorities for definitive answers. We’ve learned that just like the rest of us, scientists can bicker and make mistakes. When should you listen to the experts? What happens when they’re wrong?



**Clara Törnvall (b. 1976)**

***The Autists: Women on the Spectrum***  
(‘Autisterna: om kvinnor på spekrat’),  
220 p., 2021, Natur & Kultur  
Rights: Nordin Agency  
Rights sold to: Czech Republic,  
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Germany, Hungary, Italy,  
Netherlands, Poland, World  
English

The Autists is a personal essay about women with high-functioning autism. It examines how women with autism have been positioned in culture, mythology and reality. Who is the woman with autism, who has she been, and why has she been invisible for so long?



**Anders Hansen (b. 1974)**

***The Happiness Cure***  
(‘Depphjärnan’), 224 p., 2021,  
Bonnier Fakta  
Rights: Salomonsson Agency  
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Norway, Poland, Portugal,  
Romania, Russia, Serbia,  
Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain,  
Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, UK  
(World English), Ukraine

Anxiety and depression are natural conditions, adaptations that once helped protect us against death from starvation or infection. We are not designed to feel content and happy all the time. Yet Anders Hansen holds out hope that we can achieve wellbeing even in today’s stressful and digitally connected society.



**“I feel optimistic  
that a new era of  
curious travelling  
is at hand.”**

how we translate between them, and the doors that lead from one worldview to another.

**IF THE LEGACY** of the past shape our daily lives, so do the financial and political decisions we make today. The investigative financial reporter Andreas Cervenka lays out the facts about income redistribution and the current state of our cherished but crumbling belief in Sweden as a land of equality. In *Greedy Sweden* (‘Girigsverige’), he shows how chasing easy money has swiftly become the new popular movement of our day. Cervenka’s book opened my eyes and left me feeling both determined and able to change things for the better.

When I see where society is heading, I can act. As I read with fascination about new discoveries that offer inspiration and hope for our climate and our future, I feel optimistic that a new era of curious travelling is at hand. In this age of climate emergency, we still want to learn and discover. Per J. Andersson’s ecofriendly admonishment to *Take the Train* (‘Ta tåget’) could be just the ticket. Andersson takes us on an historical odyssey along our early railways. His paean to trains honours our efforts to prevent climate change while urging us to keep on traveling – just more sustainably.

**I THINK I** am not alone in viewing the future with wary curiosity. I am unsure of scientists, doubtful of experts. But the alternative is worse. A life where we could not access science, philosophy, or investigative journalism in the form of literary texts would be poor and dangerous indeed.

*Beata Hansson*



# KATRINE KIELOS-MARÇAL

(b. 1983)

Combining breadth of knowledge with a feminist perspective, Katrine Katrine Kielos-Marçal is a relevant and original voice in the Swedish public debate. Her books are information-packed exposés that follow winding paths through the modern history of ideas and brim with colourful anecdotes and cynical humour. Kielos-Marçal blends inquiry and an explorer's spirit with societal critique and an inexhaustible social fervour.

Kielos-Marçal takes it as read that women have been erased throughout history, and as a result we define "objectivity" and "universality" in terms of masculine experiences and interests. Guided by this familiar insight – which is, in fairness, by now rather old hat – Kielos-Marçal takes on our era, producing nothing less than a parallel historiography in which forgotten details emerge as decisive to the outcomes of modern history. Would we have eradicated world poverty by now, had the Chicago School economists modelled their theories not on men's behaviour but on women's? Would the electric car have superseded the internal combustion engine over a century ago, had the early 20th century not labelled it a "woman's car"? Questions such as these shed new light on history and remind us that another world is possible.

We might describe Kielos-Marçal's prose as polemic popular education or political essay: a bold reinterpretation of the world seen from the margins, her sights fixed on allegedly the objective truths of economics, science and the law. But it is also an invitation to an encounter with a reading, thinking author who inspires us in our own quest for knowledge.

*Naima Chahboun*



Foto: Anna-Lena Ahlström



***Mother of Invention***  
(‘Att uppfinna världen’)  
296 p., 2020, Mondial  
Rights: The Wylie Agency  
Rights sold to: Brazil, Canada,  
Estonia, France, Germany, Italy,  
Japan, Korea, Netherlands,  
Norway, Poland, Spain, UK, US

In *Mother of Invention*, Katrine Kielos-Marçal upends the prevailing ideas of our age about economics and technology. Digging deep into a range of topics, from whaling to climate change to AI, she demonstrates the way that fundamental ideas about masculinity and femininity have shaped and continue to shape today's society.



***Who Cooked Adam Smith's Dinner?***  
(‘Vem lagade Adam Smiths middag?’)  
206 p., 2020, Mondial  
Rights: The Wylie Agency  
Rights sold to: Australia, Brazil,  
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Korea, Netherlands, Norway,  
Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia,  
Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, UK, US

The father of economics, Adam Smith, wrote that the butcher, the baker and the brewer all made their products not from the goodness of their hearts but in order to make money. Self-interest, he wrote, puts dinner on the table. He forgot, though, who was actually putting dinner on the table: his mother.

# FREDRIK SJÖBERG

(b. 1958)



Foto: Sofia Runarsdotter

Fredrik Sjöberg has established himself as a unique voice in Swedish nonfiction. Drawing on his expertise in both art and entomology, he has succeeded in creating books as enjoyable as they are thought-provoking.

The trilogy that began with his acclaimed breakthrough book *The Fly Trap* ('Flugfällan') is an autobiographical exploration of his fascination with the hover fly and the act of collecting. *The Fly Trap* is a love letter to insects and an investigation of our own place in nature and why some people feel the need to collect and categorize the world around them. It was followed by *The Art of Escape* ('Flyktkonsten', 2006) and *Raisin King* ('Russinkungen', 2009).

Besides his trilogy, Sjöberg has written many other books and essays about science, art and literature – a trio of subjects that he reveals to be deeply interconnected. His intelligent, humorous, insightful style has earned his books a spot in the hearts of many readers.

Sjöberg's contribution to Swedish literature is impressive and unique. Combining passion and expertise on a range of topics, he has created literature that moves, inspires, and conveys insights about both nature and our own unending quest for understanding. Sjöberg's books remind us that our world is a constant give and take between nature and culture, and there is great beauty in exploring this exchange.

Fredrik Sjöberg has received many awards for his writing and holds honorary doctorates from both the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Lund University.

*Patrik Lindenfors*



***Mama is Crazy and Papa is Drunk*** ('Mamma är galen och pappa är full')

232 p., 2018, Albert Bonniers  
Rights: Agentur Literatur  
Gudrun Hebel

Rights sold to: Germany, Italy, Norway

A painting, lost for nearly a century, resurfaces. It portrays two depressed 15-year-olds on the French Riviera: cousins Hanna Gotten and Lillan Arosenius. Fredrik Sjöberg sees the painting and immediate senses a hidden story, one that grows into a family history about love, coincidence and forgetting.



***The Fly Trap***

233 p., 2004, Norstedts  
Rights: Agentur Literatur  
Gudrun Hebel

Rights sold to: Catalonia, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Spain, Turkey, UK, US

*The Fly Trap* is both an autobiographical look at the collector's psyche and an amusing attempt to explain why certain people go searching for islands even where no islands exist. But ultimately it is a book about ambition and the art of narrowing our focus in an age of infinite possibility.

# PATRIK SVENSSON

(b. 1972)

A literary sensation. About eels. That won Sweden's biggest book prize, became a bestseller and received an opera adaptation, all at record speed. *The Gospel of Eels* ('Ålevangeliet') is a tender story about the author as a young boy. Growing up with his father, he is gradually inducted into the mysterious world of eel fishing. For better or worse, the two did not talk about much else. At the same time parallel, Svensson unfolds a skillfully, erudite, thought-provoking history of that strange creature, the eel. Between these two horizons the book winds like an eel, finally taking on modernity, the end of the welfare state and the threat of extinction. The narrative takes fire when people meet sea. What will happen to the eel, and to us, as our oceans turn inexorably warmer and more acidic? The ravages of climate catastrophe leave the realm of abstract science and enter concrete reality. Fewer fish. No eels. Yours will be the last generation ever to experience the magic of eel fishing.

Svensson's next book, *The Blue Marble* ('Den lodande människan'), returns to the ocean's edge, not necessarily to find fish but rather to understand the role of humans as sea creatures: organisms who sail on, eat from and dirty the water around us. Compared to the personal, biographical *Gospel of the Eels*, *The Blue Marble* more closely resembles a learned, impassioned essay. Yet it evinces the same skill, the same manner of addressing the reader, and the same passion – especially in the chapters about pollution, global warming and climate change and how they affect both the animals and the people of the sea.

On my shelf Svensson occupies a place between the American Mark Kurlansky and the Icelander Andri Snær Magnason, two of the finest portraitists in recent decades of the conditions of human existence in the Anthropocene.

*Olav Fumarola Unsgaard*



Foto: Emil Malinberg



***The Blue Marble***  
265 p., 2022, Albert Bonniers  
Rights: Bonnier Rights  
Rights sold to: Catalonia, China, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain

How did people start exploring the sea? What passed through the minds of the first sailors to follow the stars into the great unknown? And what do we really know about the creatures that, over the course of their evolution, remained below the surface?



***The Gospel of Eels***  
278 p., 2019, Albert Bonniers  
Rights: Bonnier Rights  
Rights sold to: Arabic, Brazil, Bulgaria, China (simp. and comp.), Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Israel, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, UK, US, Vietnam

In this blend of memoir and nature writing, the author's journey to understand the eel becomes an exploration of the human condition that tackles overarching questions about our roots, our destiny, and, ultimately, how to handle the biggest question of all: death. A gripping and slippery narrative that surprises and enchants.

# ÅSA WIKFORSS

(b. 1961)



Foto: C Sturmark



**Why Democracy**  
352 p., 2021, Fri Tanke  
Rights: Grand Agency  
Rights sold to: Hungary, Norway  
In *Why Democracy*, Åsa Wikforss clarifies the role of knowledge in democracies and explains why and in what way threats to knowledge represent a threat to democracy.

*Why Democracy* is a clever, passionate, active defence of the only form of government that is actually in our own hands.



**Alternative Facts**  
276 p., 2020, Fri Tanke  
Rights: Grand Agency  
Rights sold to: China, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Korea, Norway, Slovakia, Spain (World Spanish), Taiwan, Turkey, Vietnam

As the world floods with fake news, conspiracy theories and science denial, we look for a solution. From a philosophical and a psychological perspective, the book aims to provide an accessible guide to the phenomenon of post truth and how we can best counteract it.

Åsa Wikforss is the philosopher who got mad and wrote a book.

A professor of theoretical philosophy at Stockholm University, Wikforss had no immediate plans to write a popular book. Then came 2016. Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as US president shocked the world. Both events were preceded by the spread of disinformation on social media. Wikforss responded by writing the book *Alternative Facts* ('Alternativa fakta'), which dissects such concepts as facts and knowledge and asks how valuable knowledge really is. Wikforss deploys philosophy as a tool for clear thinking in daily life. She has brought this approach from academia into the public debate, where her voice is frequently heard.

Wikforss' second book, *Why Democracy* ('Därför demokrati'), co-authored with her brother Mårten Wikforss, makes a connection between knowledge and democracy. Knowledge, Wikforss argues, plays a central role in any functioning system of self-governance. A threat to knowledge is a threat to democracy.

Wikforss advocates for common sense and she has mastered the art of combining profound philosophical logic with the sober and interested observation of our age. She is humble and realizes that humans are oftentimes governed by emotion. A discussion of fundamental values and democracy can only happen if people's fears are taken seriously. Wikforss writes about questions that span multiple academic disciplines – epistemology, political philosophy, psychology – but her prose style is accessible and readers will recognize many situations from their own daily lives and from the contemporary debate.

Åsa Wikforss is a member of the Swedish Academy and the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

*Natalie von der Lehr*

# ELISABETH ÅSBRINK

(b. 1965)

"Never pity yourself," wrote Elisabeth Åsbrink's father in a letter to his daughter when she was ten years old. He himself was ten in 1947, when the second World War was raging and he was living in a refugee camp for Jewish children. Both he and Åsbrink's mother came to Sweden after the war as Jewish refugees.

The year 1947 is in focus in Åsbrink's *1947*, which puts short stories about events in world politics into dialogue with scenes of individual destinies. The Paris Peace Treaties are signed, the Palestine question must be solved, and Hasan-al-Banna, the son of an Egyptian watchmaker, introduces a plan that still represents the jihadist ideal. Åsbrink's father, ten-year-old Jozsef, must make a fateful decision about his future.

*And in the Vienna Woods the Trees Remain* ('Och i Wienerwald står träden kvar') is a book about the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust during the 1930s, as reflected in the microhistory of one family. Two parents do everything in their power to secure a safer future for their son Otto. In 1939, they send him to Sweden.

Åsbrink skillfully interweaves different levels of narrative, describing political events in both Austria and Sweden, including the rising tide of Jewish persecution and growing tolerance for Nazi ideology, while also giving space to personal relationships and emotions within the family. The story takes the reader to an era whose discussions about refugee politics remind us only too strongly of the tone being struck in many European countries today.

Her father's exhortation not to pity herself has led Åsbrink to write books that explore her own history and the history of her family. She combines macro- and micro histories to bring us a deeper understanding of issues that will never stop being important: human rights, democracy, social justice.

Åsbrink's style has been called both intellectual and poetic. Her books are stylishly written, a pleasure to read, and very hard to put down.

Elisabeth Åsbrink's books have received multiple awards, including the August Prize (2013) and the Ryszard Kapuściński Award (2013).

*Natalie von der Lehr*



Foto: Eva Tedesjö



**1947**

**296 p., 2016, Natur & Kultur**  
**Rights: Nordin Agency**  
**Rights sold to: Australia, Brazil, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, UK, US**

From seemingly disparate events, Elisabeth Åsbrink has crafted a story of a world where good and evil take shape, where ideas about democracy and participation are born and die in a moment, where an old order falls and a new one rises. The year is 1947, where now begins.



**And in the Vienna Woods the Trees Remain**

**331 p., 2012, Natur & Kultur**  
**Rights: Nordin Agency**  
**Rights sold to: Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, US (World English)**

On the eve of World War 2, a Jewish boy named Otto is sent from Austria to Sweden, where he becomes best friends with Ingvar Kamprad, the future founder of IKEA.

Elisabeth Åsbrink shows how anti-Semitic sentiment permeated Swedish society and how families are sundered by war and the politics of asylum.

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The Swedish Arts Council works to promote Swedish literature and drama in translation. Under the name Swedish Literature Exchange, we do this through grants, information, networking, translator activities, and attendance at book fairs and other international cultural meetings and events.

For information about our grants, please visit [www.swedishliterature.se](http://www.swedishliterature.se).

We look forward to applications regarding:

- Translation and production costs
- Events about Swedish literature abroad and the promotion of translated works
- Participation in international fellowship programmes
- Translators' travel and training, sample translations and mentorship projects

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Annika Persson is a journalist and author. She has written for *Dagens Nyheter*, Sveriges Radio and *Vi* magazine, among other outlets. She is the author of biographies of the actress Lena Nyman and the textile artist Märta Måås-Fjetterström.

