

NEW  
SWEET-  
DISH  
TITLES  
2008



THERE IS A RICH VARIETY OF DOCUMENTARY MATERIAL on offer among all the new titles in Sweden this year: biographies, documentary novels and some notable autobiographies. Lars Norén, Per Olov Enquist, and Anders Paulrud are the most revealing and yet the most private, while Helena Henschen, Carl Johan de Geer and Elin Boardy find inspiring subjects in their own family trees, and Ellen Mattson uses family history as her fictional starting point.

This year sees a number of ambitious biographies of major figures in Sweden and on the international stage, among them Ingmar Bergman, Sven Hedin, Victoria Benedictsson, Mahatma Gandhi and Madame de Pompadour.

Historical figures have also become the stuff of fiction. Per Wästberg brings one of Linnaeus's disciples alive in *Anders Sparrmans resa* (The Travels of Anders Sparrman) inviting the reader to join him on dramatic expeditions to China and Africa. Håkan Bravinger bases his first novel *Bära bud* (The Messenger of Peace) on the diaries of, and correspondence between, two siblings: Poul Bjerre who introduced Freud's work to Sweden, and his brother Andreas, a criminal psychologist. The result is a tense drama of human relationships, already sold to Denmark, Norway, Germany and France.

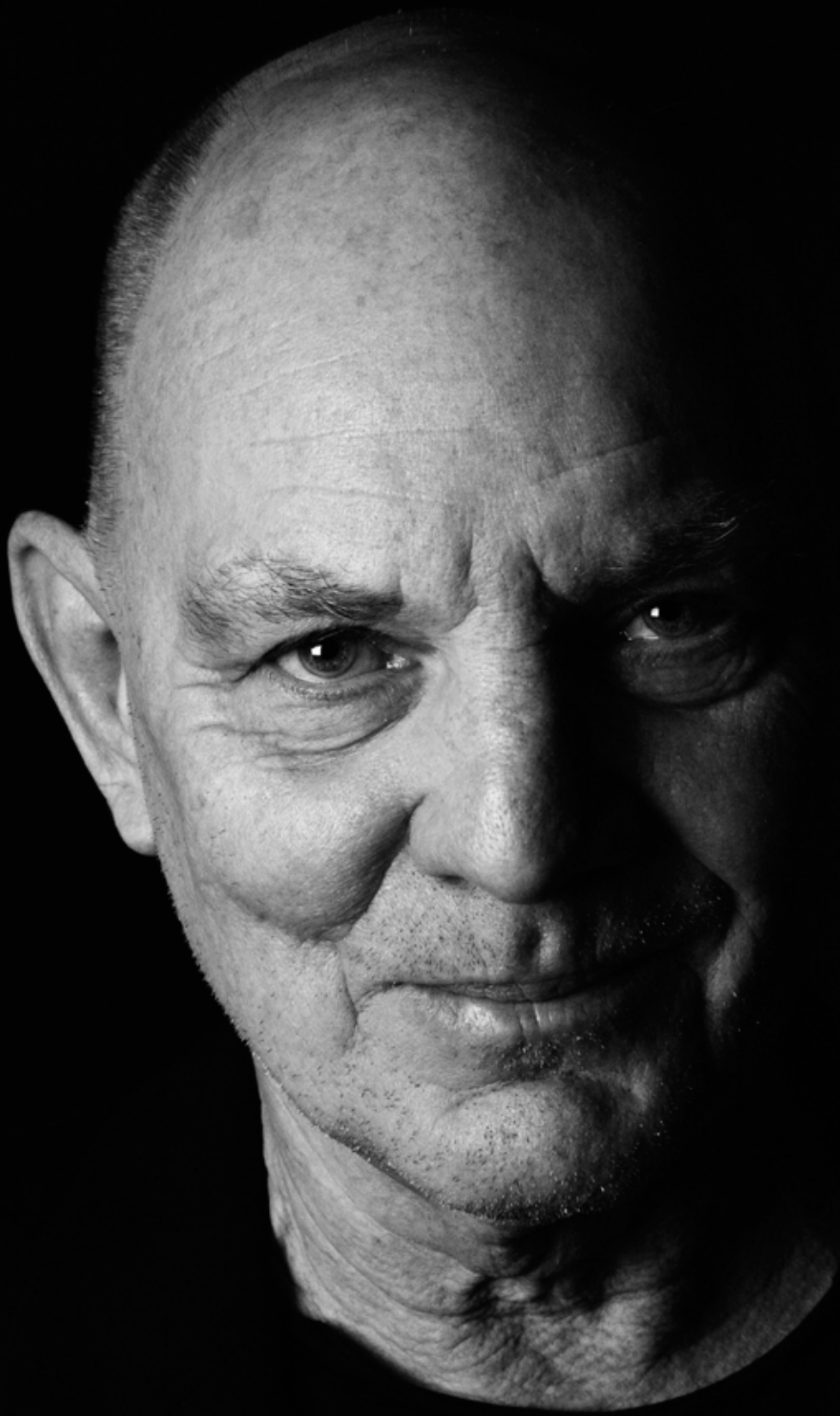
Ulrika Kärnberg's novel *Myrrha* (Myrrh) is a very different kind of interrelational drama. In Victorian England, servant girl Hanna meets Arthur, son of the upper classes, and becomes his maid and mistress. But who is really slave and who is really master in this arresting love story?

There is a more vibrant crop of poetry than usual this year. Many of our leading poets are back with masterly collections: Bruno K. Öijer's *Svart som silver* (Black as Silver), Marie Lundquist's *De dödas bok* (The Book of the Dead) and Jacques Werup's *Trötta mäns skönhet* (The Beauty of Tired Men).

Two members of the Swedish Academy have also published new collections of poetry: Jesper Svenbro's *Vingårdsmannen* (The Vineyard Man) and Katarina Frostenson's *Tal och regn* (Speech and Rain).

Ulrika Knutson has selected the books for inclusion in New Swedish Titles 2008, and the opinions expressed are her own. Further details of the books discussed can be obtained from individual publishers. Please do visit the Kulturrådet (Swedish Arts Council) stand 6.0 C918 at the Frankfurt Book Fair, or see us at the Swedish stand in Non Fiction in Moscow, for information about the translation subsidies that are once again available to publishing houses in other countries for the publication of Swedish literature. Subsidies are offered for all the following genres: prose, poetry, drama, books for children and young people, and literary non-fiction. The Swedish Arts Council also administers the support scheme for Swedish literature in other Nordic languages, financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers/Kulturkontakt Nord. To find out more, visit: [www.kulturradet.se](http://www.kulturradet.se).

*Helen Sigeland*  
Swedish Arts Council



# THE LITERARY YEAR 2008

BY ULRIKA KNUTSON  
TRANSLATED BY SARAH DEATH



A DRAMATIST'S DIARY  
by LARS NORÉN  
(photo left side by Sara MacKey)

In April 2008, a bomb exploded in the small world of Swedish cultural life. Just one book, but a big one.

“Is that the Bible you’re reading?”

My fellow travellers looked at the book open in front of me, a black house-brick of 1732 pages, small print on wafer-thin paper.

The Bible? Not exactly. It was **Lars Norén’s** *En dramatikers dagbok* (A Dramatist’s Diary).

Lars Norén is one of Sweden’s two great writers for the theatre. The other is Per Olov Enquist. Both have published an autobiographical volume this year. Two big books, very different from each other.

Let us start with Lars Norén. Ahead

of the book’s publication, rumours and whispers were circulating for months. About his hatred, about how outspoken he would be, about how he would hang out the dirty washing in public, but not only his own but also everyone else’s!

The book trade rarely gets a Christmas present like that. When the first copies went out to the papers, they were accompanied by a form which editors and reviewers were urged to sign, undertaking not to reveal the book’s contents prematurely, “on penalty of a 200,000 kronor fine”.

It was a great publicity stunt, even though nobody signed. The book rapidly acquired contraband status. It failed

to reach reviewers; it got stolen in the post. That is how the powers that be protect a book.

A Dramatist’s Diary is a fascinating document – or rather, novel – about the personal drama of a dramatist, and about Sweden on the threshold of the twenty-first century. About the power of the media; about rumour, light-footed and greedy-tongued; about theatrical cannon fodder and a Swedish cultural elite, as soiled as any other special interest group. Represented here by a genius in a tight spot.

Lars Norén writes and directs, comes and goes, falls in love, breaks it off, falls in love again; is cursed by friends, actors

# “IS IT GOOD LITERATURE? IT’S FANTASTIC. ENGROSSING, HYPNOTISING, FRENETIC”

and journalists. Lars Norén is a *homo consumo*, neurotically shopping till he drops, cool black jackets by Yamamoto and Comme des garçons.

The insults fly, at reviewers, fellow writers, actors and workmen. Some of those closest to him will feel hurt, some of his admirers will be unhappy. But no one need take it to heart, because the venom flows generously over both the bad and the good.

Is it good literature?

It’s fantastic. Engrossing, hypnotising, frenetic. Some people might say deadly dull, but no one feels half-hearted about it.

A Dramatist’s Diary is like a marathon-length play with the piteous Lars in the leading role. He says that since his plays got shorter and tauter, he finds himself with material left over. The world is coursing between those large ears of his, demanding to gush out as language.

Lars Norén has been an accompaniment to our daily lives for a quarter-century. He has shown us the ruptures in Swedish mentality, politics and social development. His characters consist of our words, weaknesses, excuses, repressions and sorrows. Many of his plays are in the nature of requiems, tragedies. How often have we come reeling out of the auditorium and hardly dared open our mouths afterwards? It is so hard to stop Norén’s clichés from popping out as our own howlers. Much safer to say nothing.

Lars Norén makes it clear from the

outset that he hates, really loathes, one particular professional group, namely mine. He loathes journalists.

Is he justified in this? I do not know, but he clearly feels a need:

“They love violence, journalists. They think violence is sexy, and above all very uncomplicated. It goes down well. Violence is what they want. Will they never get enough?”

One might well ask. He happens to be right.

There is no escaping one particular Norén play. This was the production of *7:3* in 2001, a meta-performance about a director putting on a play with three prisoners serving long sentences. The prisoners had been convicted of bank robbery and grievous bodily harm and at least two of them were convinced National Socialists. They acted very threateningly and “convincingly” in their roles as themselves. The director was brilliantly played by Reine Brynolfsson, as convincing in his cowardice as in his self-defence against the feelings of discomfort threatening to overwhelm him. And there was a distinct sense of discomfort in the audience at every performance of *7:3*. It was an incredibly strong performance, one of the best I have seen. But my ambivalence was just as great. Was this a morally defensible experiment? To what extent was I as an observer participating in what was happening on stage?

Many critics refused to accept the premise – of letting young Nazis portray themselves and their pitiful master race

ideology. Leif Zern, the leading critic of *Dagens Nyheter* and Sweden’s authority on drama for years, had the strongest objections. He broke the magic circle of the theatre, built on complicity between stage and audience. Zern was not complicit.

The debate about *7:3* is still raging, you could say.

The production had a tragic epilogue. For a time, it seemed as if the boundaries between reality and fiction had been suspended.

At the end of the play’s run, two of the prisoners absconded and robbed a bank, with disastrous consequences. One of the actors in the Norén project was convicted of murdering a policeman. The play *7:3* turned into a long-running story in the press, and some papers presented the playwright Lars Norén as directly responsible for the police murder. This was ridiculous of course – but the whole situation had that moral ambivalence that leaves the audience on the verge of throwing up from the very act of taking part.

Lars Norén was very upset – by the behaviour of both prisoners and press. That much is obvious from his diaries.

But the “pull of reality” is not as strong as one might expect in this suggestive dramatist’s diary. The pull of the theatre, and of art, is stronger. And that pull is all-consuming.

Lars Norén writes that he does not want to be embraced, respected, or seen as an authority. He wants to dirty himself at any price, to let everything and

everyone down. He wants to write himself out of the establishment and into art. But it is easier said than done.

He is fascinated by wayward colleagues, those who have decided to be obstinate. Peter Handke in Germany and Thomas Bernhard in Austria, whose “hatred never stopped burning”. But he does not succeed in getting himself excluded in the same way. Compared to them, Norén comes across as politically correct, the Swedish people’s very own domesticated playwright.

He tries to pour scorn on national icons at every opportunity, but the effect is entirely the opposite. He detests Strindberg and despises Ingmar Bergman, yet they whine round his temples like mosquitoes on a midsummer’s night. Everything repeats itself. Lars Norén will have to watch out, or he may end up a popular favourite like them. Though it is probably too late.

Political correctness is, by contrast, a badge of honour for the ironic **Per Olov Enquist**, who has just published an autobiography entitled *Ett annat liv* (Another Kind of Life).

Juxtaposing his pitch-black book and Norén’s volume of the same hue creates some comic effects. Since the death of Ingmar Bergman, it is these two gentlemen who represent Swedish dramatic art in the world, but there is certainly no dialogue between them.

While Norén spits on Strindberg and Bergman, Enquist hugs them both. He is as ostentatious in his confessed membership of the Social Democratic party as he is disarming in claiming Ingmar Bergman for a good friend. Offensive conduct in both cases. And he has Sweden’s national poet to thank for his international success, which came with the play *Tribadernas natt* (*The Night of the Tribades*), with a savagely jealous August in the leading role.

Enquist’s new book is classic autobiography, but told in the third person. The author, born in 1934, is one of the most celebrated prose writers of his generation. He has his roots among devout, smallholders in the north of Sweden,



“WHILE NORÉN SPITS ON STRINDBERG AND BERGMAN, ENQUIST HUGS THEM BOTH”

PER OLOF ENQUIST, photo Ulla Montan

which, incidentally, is a very productive region in literary terms.

Many of his best-loved novels are set in the northerly province of Västerbotten, among small-scale farmers, foresters and preachers. His themes have also included sport, politics, and in the documentary novel *Legionärerna* (1968, *The Legionnaires*), the extradition of Baltic nationals to the Soviet Union after the Second World War. He has also written

plays about Hans Christian Andersen and Selma Lagerlöf, and a film script about Knut Hamsun.

The friction between duty and desire, guilt and mercy, power and betrayal can be felt in everything he has written. In recent years he has also won international acclaim for his historic novels *Livsläkarens besök* (*The Visit of the Royal Physician*) and *Boken om Blanche och Marie* (*The Book about Blanche and Marie*).

P.O. Enquist has many years' journalistic experience and is well versed in the workings of the modern media. But he is no confessor.

He must have hesitated over his choice of the autobiographical genre. Would it not seem too attention-seeking, or as the idiom of his childhood had it, "too full of yourself", for someone "whose humility is the greatest in Sweden", as he once travestied Strindberg, who spoke of his own fire as the greatest.

What made him hesitate must of course have been the challenge in terms of dramatic composition. What was there in a seventy-year writing life with a moderate consumption of relationships, to put it mildly, that could tempt the reader? Enquist, (1.97 metres tall) scans the wide plains and sees only one interesting hillock in the flat landscape of success: alcohol. The fact that he *de facto* almost drank himself to death before being saved into sobriety in 1990 – into "another kind of life".

While his colleague Norén frantically dishes the dirt on everyone, and most of all on himself, Enquist does the opposite. He dishes the dirt on no one, and barely on himself. The fact that it proves to be a readable book in spite of this is naturally a triumph of style. P.O. Enquist's drawling elegance, ironic at his own expense in every breath, with its repetitions, not least of the pious sayings of his childhood, and its constant understatements, is as much of a delight as ever. Anyone seeking a handsome portrait of a contemporary European intellectual from the provincial margins can read with confidence.

But those who want to know more about P.O. Enquist will feel cheated, as always. He stays silent, lays false trails, and cleverly makes the reader look the wrong way. Yet we are forever catching

glimpses of the corner of a skirt, that of his old mother, the energetic village schoolteacher. Why he started drinking remains a mystery. Boredom? A genetic quirk? Or was it Mother's fault?

When I interviewed him fifteen years ago, he told me about his old addiction, but did not want to see anything about it in print:

"How would that look in the headlines? I don't want to give alcoholism a face."

Now he has been in the headlines for weeks in this little country of ours, but he seems to be finding it bearable.

The section about an alcoholism that endureth all things, that suffereth long and is kind, and vaunteth not itself, as long as it gets its percentage proof, makes harrowing yet comic reading. He keeps everything to himself, lying and smiling his way to the bottle. He runs away from three clinics on the Minnesota model, frustrates his therapists and refuses to be ground into dust to achieve a new life. Traces of his pious childhood are terrifying. He writes beautifully of his fellow patients and flees barefoot out into the snow from a clinic in Iceland. But one day, he abruptly stops drinking. We are doubly glad that he does not stop writing. And we wish his liver some peace.

All other current literary projects are dwarfed by comparison with Norén's diary and Enquist's life, though many Swedish writers this year and last have ambitiously tackled the dissolving boundaries between reality and fiction, or dug deep, wherever they found themselves. The memoir genre is flourishing, and extending into later life than ever.

There have been several fine books about death, for example. "A human life is neither shorter or longer. Life just lasts a lifetime. For everyone."

So writes **Stig Claesson** in *Döden heter Konrad* (Death is Called Konrad), an excellent little book among all his 102 excellent little books. Stig Claesson died in the New Year, after 79 years. He made good use of those years. Like Georges Simenon he wrote quickly, constantly and evenly.

Among his last novels was *Godnatt, fröken Ann* (Goodnight, Miss Ann) in 2006.

Saying goodnight to Miss Ann is a euphemism among old boxers. It means it is time to hang up their gloves. Stig Claesson's book is a resigned match against old age and death. He pretended to be a bit stiff, but his footwork was

## SEVERAL FINE BOOKS ABOUT DEATH

better than it had been for a long time.

Stig Claesson, or Slas as he was known, was what one might call a popular writer, with the common touch. In the 1970s he achieved cult status with *Vem älskar Yngve Frej?* (*Ancient Monuments*). The plot centres on some superannuated old folk, in the ruins of a Swedish "People's Home" that seems superannuated, too. The shoemaker and the rest of them idle away their time in the ruins, like ancient monuments themselves. The effect is blackly humorous. That was the start of modern-day Sweden, thirty years ago.

Slas had the popular touch, but he was far from jovial. He was melancholic and sharp; a democrat and – a snob. A very personal voice.



Top: STIG CLAESSION, photo Leif Claesson Above: NIKLAS RÅDSTRÖM, photo Cato Lein Right: ANDERS PAULRUD, photo Sara Ringström

*Om vänskap funnes* (If Friendship Existed) was the title he gave to his book about his friend, the author Per Rådström, who died back in 1963. The latter's son, **Niklas Rådström**, became a writer too, and his latest book *En handfull regn* (A Handful of Rain), is also about friendship – and death. About his childhood friend Bengt who committed suicide almost thirty years ago.

Rådström's book is also a tribute to the creative game, an insight into the author's workshop. It is one of Niklas Rådström's finest books. It also provides an insight into the spirit of the age, simply because Rådström and his friend – both vaguely left-wing but with anarchist-humanist leanings - do not

really fit in with the spirit of the 1970s. They navigate freely and happily between Frank Zappa, Dylan and the Marx Brothers, while the anti-authoritarian revolt is merely marking time.

The word "novel" does not appear on the cover, so one has to assume that Niklas Rådström wants his readers to take what he tells them as the truth. The middle-aged author comments on bygone times, on his younger self and his still grieving present in an open and inviting way.

This is not just a book the author felt a need to write, but also one that we need to read. An argument for living – like all really great literature.

Spring 2008 saw publication of

another compelling little book about death, about the act of dying itself:

**Anders Paulrud's** *Fjärilen i min hjärna* (The Butterfly in My Brain).

The butterfly is pictured on the jacket as an X-ray image of the author's brain with the void left by the removal of the brain tumour. Though he died not of that, but of lung cancer. He ran out of time to give up smoking.

Anders Paulrud reached the age of 56. He was the editor of the arts pages of the evening daily *Aftonbladet*. He made his literary debut "late", as they say, but then there was no stopping him. He wrote six novels, of which this is the last.

What is it like to die, according to Paulrud? It is trivial and sublime by

turns. The most shocking thing is when he says he feels “a slight sense of expectation about death.”

A good critic to the last. Scepticism is not the main thing, expectation is more important. Death is, after all, a new experience, perhaps exciting, definitely interesting.

Where death and illness are concerned, I have soon had enough. I do not read death announcements and I am very poor at condolences. But Anders Paulrud’s little book on the art of dying kills the terror dead. You shut it at the end, happier than when you opened it.

There, it’s happening again – the dead comforting the living.

This is a theme of poet **Magnus William-Olsson’s** prose anthology *Jag talar till de döda* (I Speak to the Dead). It is slightly creepy to be apostrophised as if one were dead – for that is what he does to us here. But perhaps it is a kind of mark of respect, and a hope. Death

the living sound in the kingdom of the dead?”

I promise that this is a book to bring even the stone dead back to life.

It offers 92 small pages of pragmatic, shimmering, personal prose, constantly prompting and challenging the reader’s memories.

The piece about the lost letter from the critic Olof Lagercrantz is interesting – and horrible. Almost all Swedish authors writing about “Olof the Great” do so coquettishly, but not William-Olsson. He positively fawns, by contrast, on the equally dead poet Karl Vennberg, who bears it better.

One piece succeeds in 55 short lines in being both a superbly pedagogical essay on Constantine Cavafy, the homosexual poet from Alexandria, and a display of Magnus William-Olsson’s highly personal poetics. An androgynous metamorphosis: we really can hear the “ringing, virginal laughter” (to quote

Finland-Swedish poet Edit Södergran) issuing from the throat of the somewhat plump, middle-aged male poet.

It is very well done.

The cultural influence of the new Swedish left in the 1960s and 70s is hard to overestimate, but also hard to scrutinise critically. Many of the men – and the occasional woman – of the left have chosen to remain silent or frenetically busy themselves with other things, when the discussion needs to be had.

So it is nice when somebody has a go. **Håkan Arvidsson** is a senior lecturer in history at the University of Roskilde in Denmark. He was a leading “maoist” and Vietnam debater in the university town of Lund in the early 1970s. But he soon became critical of the movement’s authoritarian tendencies, and got himself ejected. He calls his intellectual memoir *Vi som visste allt* (We Who Knew It All).

His book answers a clear need. It



MAGNUS WILLIAM-OLSSON, photo Cato Lein

will unite us all. The addressees are relatives, lovers, poets and a faithful old female servant. The author haunts the dead, asking questions that could not be put into words until he was absolutely sure there would be no answer.

In a fantastical dream in which the author fishes great salmon that are actually human corpses out of a river, he has a sudden insight:

“How does the sluggish speech of



HÅKAN ARVIDSSON in Malmö 1967, photo Jan Dahlander, Sydsvenska Dagbladet archives

has been a source of frustration that the Swedish left has not been properly analysed, either in literature or in scholarly research. An embarrassing amnesia reigns unchecked. The task of remembering has been better done in Denmark and Norway, for example in Dag Solstad's *Gymnasielärare Pedersen och den stora väckelsen som hemsökt vårt land* (Sixth Form Teacher Pedersen and the Great Revival That Afflicted Our Land).

Arvidsson, too, calls it a revivalist movement, this phenomenon of thousands of young Swedes, products of the prosperity of the post-war era and free, vitamin-enriched school milk, chucking tradition onto the rubbish heap and throwing themselves into the arms of Mao Tse Tung and China's Cultural Revolution. Their motives were laudable – they wanted to do something for the oppressed of the world. For some as individuals it brought moral credibility – and a career on the speaker's rostrum.

It is a strange career, without economic gain or social prestige beyond one's own ranks – really nothing but a philosophical glass bead game in the spirit of Hermann Hesse. With a kind of perverse beauty. Because it did have its perverse side, the left, as Arvidsson sagely observes; many had to decide to forget what they knew of the genocides and human rights abuses of existing socialist regimes – crimes in the name of good.

There is a hair-raising chapter about when Arvidsson, then an eloquent top dog in the students' Clarté League, fails against the extreme rebels of 1968. When argument no longer has any effect on those who are "saved", who have stopped thinking, and do nothing but speak in tongues and wave Mao's Little Red Book. Stirring times.

Artist **Carl Johan De Geer** also belonged to the left, though to a more anarchic wing, a fact that needs no

apology in his view. It is always right to rebel! His gripping and highly readable autobiography is entitled *Jakten mot nollpunkten* (The Chase To Point Zero).

The De Geer clan have been known as skilful entrepreneurs ever since the seventeenth century, when their forefather Louis de Geer fired up the furnaces of mid-Sweden's iron foundries. The demand for cannonballs and muskets in Sweden's Age of Greatness was huge, and Louis De Geer has become known as the father of Swedish industrialism.

In this book, his descendant Carl Johan throws wide the De Geers' double doors and fetches all the skeletons out of their cupboards.

What we see is a frustrated nobleman battling against his own privileges all the way to the coats of arms in the Chamber of Nobles. But resisting your own roots is not easy. He has chosen a graphic Mao quotation as the motto of his book: "Sense of class is deeper than the ocean."

**“IT IS ALWAYS  
RIGHT TO  
REBEL!”**

As in Carl Johan De Geer's art, the artist balances elflike on the edge of a precipice; anguish and humour co-exist.

He describes his childhood milieu, above all his paternal grandfather's castle in Skåne, where cousins of various ages were parked by their busy, post-war parents. Grandfather shot deer from the window and waged war on moles with exhaust fumes from the car. In the local village school, the young baron Carl Johan was beaten up for his background by the farm labourers' children and pushed into the ditch full of dung.

The young baron also tells us of his maternal grandmother, who encouraged his artistic ambitions by giving him beautiful art magazines from the Germany of the 1930s, with golden swastikas. Grandmother remained a fervent Nazi, long after Hitler was gone.

But it is the two grandmothers who



CARL JOHAN DE GEER, photo Cato Lein

turned out to be the young baron's saviours. After the many ups and downs of a full artistic life, Carl Johan de Geer comes to the point zero of tragedy. His mother was mentally ill, and barricaded herself behind decomposing rubbish and foul-smelling myths in her fashionable apartment. The children fared badly and could never stop hating. They denied their mother a grave, and threw her ashes into the sea. Which is where they now rest. At point zero.

The smouldering theme of crises in love and trust is much in evidence in this year's crop of books.

Is it just a coincidence that this is the very year in which scientists have found "the gene that causes unhappy marriages"? I am only joking, but the media have taken great delight in this nasty little gene, previously only identified in one species of vole.

But there is no doubting that the gene is to be found in the double helix of Mats, husband and father of two in **Helena von Zweigbergk's** novel *Ur vulkanens mun* (From the Mouth of the Volcano). This is a man who cocoons himself in surliness and waits for death. He is a largely unsuccessful author, and his life's sour siege mentality actually suits him quite well. Needless twittering is not for him.

But what gene can be identified in the woman, Anna? She makes constant efforts and compromises, and is adapt-

able *in absurdum* as the magma smoulders. It is a further irritation that she has enjoyed success with her sentimental books of photographs about day-to-day happiness, little tips for feeling good.

Helena von Zweigbergk is a moral philosopher with a keen ear and sharp eye for today's forms of expression, both the genuine and the false. *From the Mouth of the Volcano* is an urgent intercession for people who do not allow themselves to mature.

It is not too late, claims **Elsie Johansson**, relieved yet ashamed, in her new novel *Sin ensam kropp* (Her Lonely Body). Marie-Louise is seventy something and a widow. She wants more out of life, and her body has its longings. Elsie Johansson manages to be both exhilarated and furious, resigned and rebellious – often all in the same sentence. Her poetic prose is like nobody else's.

**Per Planhammar's** novel *Blekaste aning* (Faintest Idea) shows one way out of a marriage that has ground to a halt.

Ann Stjärnvik is bored, so she leaves, abandoning her life in the big, detached house in Vellinge, the wealthiest municipality in the land:

"The spirit of the place is a piece of rotting meat and that part of me has been torn away."

Dismal in the extreme.

The spirits of the place are dancing instead in Greece, where Ann re-

encounters the love of her youth, and life acquires meaning and direction. But what direction?

John, the man she loves, is a former priest engaged in "idealistic missions", smuggling refugees between Albania and Greece.

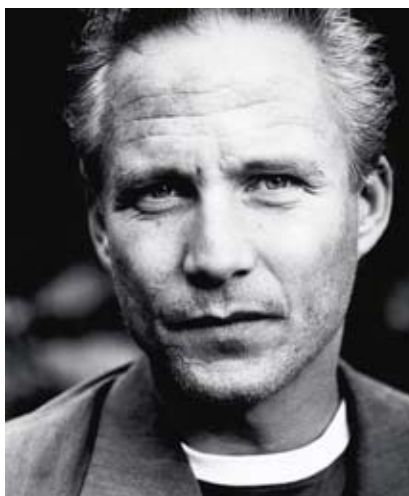
One of the operations goes wrong, resulting in death and injury. Ann wakes up in a Greek police interrogation cell. There is no sign of her beloved, and she sees the awful implications of his beautiful credo: "God only exists if I myself act. More action than mystery. Something like that. Nothing strange at all."

Per Planhammar tackles weighty moral philosophical issues. I read *Faintest Idea* both as Ann's personal story, and as an allegory for European middle age, not least the media user. Does God exist in the television news? How does information overload affect us? What impact can my action have amidst the tragedy of the world? And should acts of love ideally be small and grey, if heroic gestures play into the hands of the terrorist devil?

**Helena Henschen** also depicts a marriage of two people of very different temperaments, namely her own grandparents on her father's side. Grandmother Signe takes the leading role in this documentary novel *Hon älskade* (She Loved). Documents, letters and diaries are important for conveying Signe's voice, but her granddaughter



ELSIE JOHANSSON, photo Gustav Karlsson Frost



PER PLANHAMMAR, photo Cato Lein



HELENA HENSCHEN, photo Sandra Ovist



*“AN URGENT INTERCESSION FOR  
PEOPLE WHO DO NOT ALLOW  
THEMSELVES TO MATURE”*

HELENA VON ZWEIFBERGK, photo Thron Ullberg



ELIN BOARDY, photo Kristin Lindell

# “A CREDIBLE PICTURE OF A VULNERABLE, MARGINALISED FIGURE”

Helena Henschen employs literary methods as a medium, suggesting herself back into Grandmother’s time and mind when the documents run out.

The novel is set in a dramatic period between two world wars, in circles full of dramatic potential. Signe Thiel was born the eldest daughter of the eccentric banker, art collector and Nietzsche translator Ernest Thiel. He went bankrupt and lost everything. His friends all let him down, with the exception of the writer Hjalmar Söderberg, atheist and stylist. He carried on coming to play chess as before. Today, Thiel’s Stockholm home and art collection constitute one of the city’s finest galleries of *fin de siècle* art, with works by the leading names in Sweden, but also Degas, Rodin and Edvard Munch. And Nietzsche’s death mask grinning on the wall.

The family was part of Sweden’s top cultural elite, with friends among all the authors, artists, scientists and politicians who mattered. A liberal, assimilated, modern Jewish family. While still a schoolgirl, young Signe is testing out the short skirts and long, assured strides of the “New Woman”. She is a bluestocking, a supporter of votes for women, and a disciple of philosopher and educator Ellen Key, who preached free love and in 1900 wrote the international bestseller *Barnets århundrade* (Century of the Child).

But something forces the new woman in Signe to slow the pace. Her first marriage is a humiliating failure. Her second also ends in a chilly absence of trust. But as a divorced mother of six she embarks in the 1920s on a lifelong, passionate relationship with the married German brain scientist Oskar Vogt, Berlin’s most sought-after hypnotist! Helena Henschen brings to life the per-

sonality of a woman who conformed, yet also went beyond the boundaries of a woman of her class and era.

In her first novel *Allt som återstår* (All That Remains), **Elin Boardy** tells the story of *her* mother’s grandmother, a farmer’s daughter from the island of Orust on the west coast of Sweden. The documentary evidence is scant. Family tradition concealed a secret, and it emerges that Emma suffered from a nervous disorder, and ended up in a hospital in Vänersborg. Elin Boardy carefully teases out for us a credible picture of a vulnerable, marginalised figure.

Historical fiction is enjoying a boom. Coincidence brings us another historical novel from the same province, set several decades earlier, in the 1820s. **Ellen Mattson**, too, tries to untangle her family’s narratives in her seventh novel *Glädjestranden* (That Joyous Shore). Perhaps this book marks her real breakthrough, for it is a powerful, compelling novel. Frank walks in front with the scythe; Tora follows, binding the harvested rye; hired boat-builders hammer planks to the timber frame to make a new vessel, and the farmers of the district go wolf hunting. Arvid dreams



ELLEN MATTSSON, photo Cato Lein



HERMAN LINDQVIST, photo Sara Mac Key



HASSAN LOO SATTERVANDI, photo Sandra Qvist



AMANDA SVENSSON, photo Paul Ström

himself away with the help of strong liquor.

Ellen Mattson professes herself fascinated by the pre-modern era. The time before the advent of democracy, and particularly of psychology. A time when people had to submit to their fate in highly concrete form. There was no possibility of constructing or deconstructing yourself, changing lifestyle or even contemplating self-fulfilment, beyond your own fate. There was no language for such dreams and experiences, so central to our own time. And yet people lived, worked, grew, dreamed and hoped. They submitted, or resisted. They were broken, or withstood. Ellen Mattson has also said she is fascinated by the struggle for one's daily bread, something for which we seldom spare a thought; we simply take the bread for granted.

Because the author's huge and thrilling ambition in *That Joyous Shore* is to describe her characters in a spirit of

solidarity, in a modern idiom that still remains theirs in content, and not to borrow shortcuts from our psychologism, she has created a very sensual novel. Smells, tastes and sounds did in fact play a more major role for the coastal farmers of the early nineteenth century. *That Joyous Shore*, with its tales of work and love, bodies and dreams, is a novel of great stature.

A woman who blew apart the conventions of her age. That is of course one of the ways of describing Madame de Pompadour, Louis XV's official mistress. **Herman Lindqvist** has produced an elegant biography of her and her era: *Madame de Pompadour: Intelligens, Skönhet, Makt* (Madame de Pompadour: Intelligence, Beauty, Power).

Being a royal mistress was a truly top job in the seventeenth century. And no one retained the title as long as Jeanne Poisson, to use her maiden name. Since Poisson means Fish, everyone howled with laughter. The most scandalous

thing of all was that Jeanne was not a noblewoman, but an ordinary girl of the bourgeoisie. She bought her title of Marquess in the line of Pompadour.

Louis XV was not all that interested in war and politics, but Jeanne had a strategic eye, and took the helm. Soon she was the one appointing ministers and declaring war.

Conquering the King's heart was easy work, but conquering Versailles was harder. That temple of artificiality could make or break a career. Everyone was competing for the King's favour, watching each other and growing paranoid. It was crucial to be attractive: freshly ironed, combed, powdered and rouged on the outside, while the fleas made merry in your armpit and the lice nested in your wig. But the mask was maintained, and nobody was allowed to scratch.

Jeanne fell ill and the lovemaking had to stop, to the genuine sorrow of the sexually voracious Louis. But he was

too much in love to end the liaison. Instead, Jeanne set up a royal brothel, with young girls parading for him. Louis and Jeanne still spent every evening together, like some hardworking old married couple. Setting a very modern example, one might even say.

When Jeanne died of tuberculosis in 1764 at the age of 42, she had had time to confess, and repent her sinful life. But the Pope never forgave her, and continued whip up condemnation of her depravity. It was unfair. Jeanne Poisson de Pompadour was definitely not the worst child of Versailles.

Another child of the Enlightenment was Abraham Niclas Edelcrantz, chancery secretary, opera boss and inventor of the optic telegraph. **Malte Persson's** novel about him, *Edelcrantz förbindelser* (Edelcrantz Connections) is a lively and entertaining read. This solitary inventor is no fiction, he really existed, and Malte Persson's book is both a stimulating novel of ideas and an exuberant pastiche. It also reminds us that we are all pathetic captives in the net of time, no matter what the direction from which we view history. "It is our Enlightenment that makes us see nothing but Flies, where our Forefathers saw Eagles. – O the ring of titles! Lustre of the blood! Splendour of the stars!... Your time is no more," writes Persson, quoting the great poet of the Enlightenment, Johan Henric Kellgren.

**Amanda Svensson** tackles modern manipulations and myths, but also the longing for trust and identity, in her clever, funny first novel *Hey Dolly!* (*Hey Dolly!*), which has been unanimously praised by

the critics for the humour and vitality of its language, a musical delight.

Dolly – loosely after Parton – is a precocious teenager who feels as fit as a fiddle in a sick world. All those around her have disorders: eating disorders, nervous disorders, sexual disorders. Dependence disorders. Amanda Svensson succeeds in portraying Dolly as wholly understandable and totally charming in all her megalomania and pretensions to world domination. But even the Dollies of today have to take long strides in short skirts. And make their blunders as true women and human beings.

**Hassan Loo Sattarvandi's** first novel *Still* (Still) is set among boys of the Stockholm suburbs. They have lost everything: hope, meaning, self-respect. Drugs and violence provide the only content in their lives. Sattarvandi adds T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* to his armoury, to show how serious things are.

Still is what might be termed a mature debut – stylistically assured, rhythmic, poetic, pitch black. Life literally stands still. The only things moving are the fists and the flick knives, and the joint as it is passed round the gang. This is a display of sheer linguistic bravura, but no one should make the mistake of calling Hassan Loo Sattarvandi's prose "idiomatic Rinkeby Swedish", the language of Stockholm's most multicultural suburb. This is the idiom of existential exile, applicable way beyond any particular city district. The book ends in a social programme, but we are left with an Eliotian sob trembling across the wasteland.





SARA MANNHEIMER, photo Sara Mac Key

**Sara Mannheimer** has also won wide acclaim for her novel *Reglerna* (The Rules). Mannheimer, born in 1967, works as a glass designer, but this is her literary debut. A densely written novel of many layers: lyrical, humorous and extreme. Sara Mannheimer's *rules* go beyond the characters' little manias and compulsive thoughts, though there is

certainly no shortage of those. The main protagonist picks at her health food grains and cuts her apple into minute segments then winds thread round the pieces. Her friend Eje pedantically folds everything she comes across, from empty plastic bags to clean washing.

But that is only one aspect of the rules. The author says she is strongly

inspired by the Talmud. Judaism lived in rules, as Christianity did in prayer. With the rules, one maintained contact with the Creator, and reinforced the border keeping chaos at bay. Sara Mannheimer's *The Rules* is a novel about creativity at all levels: relational, artistic and erotic. And a child is also conceived, in accordance with all the... rules of that art.

# “AS LONG AS THE FAIRYTALE STICKS TO ITS OWN RULES, IT CAN TAKE AS MANY LIBERTIES AS IT LIKES”

Fairytales have had their own set of rules since time immemorial: repetitions, things in threes, metamorphoses. As long as the fairytale sticks to its own rules, it can take as many liberties as it likes. **Inger Edelfeldt** is one of Sweden’s boldest modern prose writers, shifting Puck-like between different genres. Novels, short stories, poetry, picture books, comic strips, fantasy – and now regular fairytales. She likes to be unnatural at times, but never affected or laboured. And that in itself requires great labour.

*Namnbrunnen* (The Well of Names) is the title of her collection of fairytales. Here we encounter kings, princesses and oriental story sellers, as well as mermaids, talking animals and lost vampires. We find deep sorrow and light-hearted farce, sometimes within the same story, even within the same paragraph. We also find an almost provocative faith in the power of the fable, where psychology and irony definitely go hand in hand with magic. Those seeking to interpret Inger Edelfeldt’s work cannot fail to be disarmed by her enthusiasm.

A good translator has to empathise with all things human, and a proof-reader, too, has to embrace everything. No wonder proofreaders will soon be things of legend too, or at least things of the past.

The main character in **Erik Andersson’s** *Den larmande hopens dal* (The Valley of the Raging Horde) is a young journalist on the local paper Varas Värn. She digs deep, uncovering bog burials, Bronze Age shields and frustrated farmers. But above all place names, road directions and – property. Another archaic form of human organisation. It never ends; place names and names

run through the earth like mycelium. Reporter Ina Ljung finally digs too deep, and as a punishment is ordered to the proofreading department. Or is it meant as promotion?

Erik Andersson is a brilliant translator. He has recently completed the mammoth task of producing a new Swedish version of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. A task that has required skills not only in philology, but also in diplomacy.

Hands off our Shire! Wars have started over less.

The Valley of the Raging Horde is neither fantasy nor fairytale nor peasant realism, but a pure linguistic fantasia, in rich soil. And a global local folklore novel. Very funny, both on the surface and between the lines. Presumably untranslatable.

The interest in biography shows no sign of waning.



INGER EDELFELDT, photo Moona Björklund ERIK ANDERSSON, photo Ola Eriksson

# “WITH THE STAMINA OF A HUNTER, THE HEART OF AN ENGINEER AND THE BRAIN OF A BOY SCOUT”

*Äventyr på riktigt. Berättelsen om upp-täcktsresanden Sven Hedin* (Adventures in Earnest: The Story of the Explorer Sven Hedin) is the title of a major biography by **Axel Odelberg**. Sven Hedin was a big celebrity in his time, a global hero. You might say that the world could be divided into what Hedin had already discovered, and those few white patches on the map and their native inhabitants, still waiting to be found. His most famous book was *Från pol till pol* (From Pole to Pole), once a much-loved book in Swedish elementary schools.

Sven Hedin is one of those great Nordic heroes of the turn of the previous century, with the stamina of a hunter, the heart of an engineer and the brain of a boy scout. *Andrée* who reached the North Pole and met his death in his hot air balloon is one of them, Alfred Nobel with his gunpowder-scented dreams another. There are a dozen more adventurers, not least from Norway. But Hedin was the greatest; he went the furthest. And on a camel.

His whole life is one long achievement – in sporting more than in scientific terms, but his contemporaries were more generous than ours. Feats were seen as great in their own right. On that subject, Odelberg’s biography – that, too, a feat in its own right – provides ample food for thought about what the ultimate point was of Sven Hedin chasing the wind in the Takla Makan desert or the Himalayas.

Hedin collected grains of sand, natives, shamans, yetties, lakes and mountains, depths and heights. He collected other great men. Sadly, Hitler became his fate.

“He fails to see that the white patch is inside himself,” writes P.O. Enquist, who pops up again as the author of a piece



SVEN HEDIN, photo Imagebank Sweden

about Odelberg’s book. “In England, sudden criticism of his so-called scientific findings: where is their substance? He takes against Englishmen; his development bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Knut Hamsun, who also drew political conclusions from personal criticism. Englishmen are not only imperialists, but also arrogant readers.”

But in Germany it was all approval and praise.

Who has the right to throw stones at Sven Hedin for such behaviour? Only those of us prepared to embrace our surliest critic.

Publication this spring of **Aleksandra Kollontaj’s** diaries in Swedish, translated from the Russian by Lars Olsson, attracted a lot of attention. She was the Soviet Union’s envoy to Sweden from 1930 to 1945, the world’s first female diplomat, and a true survivor. It was a small miracle that she did not die in Stalin’s purges in the 1930s.

Stockholm at that time was a centre of intelligence for Europe, and spies

abounded. Not least in the Soviet Embassy, where Kollontaj complains that her dear KGB agents are nervous and trigger-happy.

In 1917 Kollontaj became the first ever female minister, in Lenin’s Politburo in Petrograd. Of that inner circle, she was the only one to die a natural death apart from Lenin, and Stalin himself. The rest died suspiciously during the purges, among them two of her former lovers, and one husband.

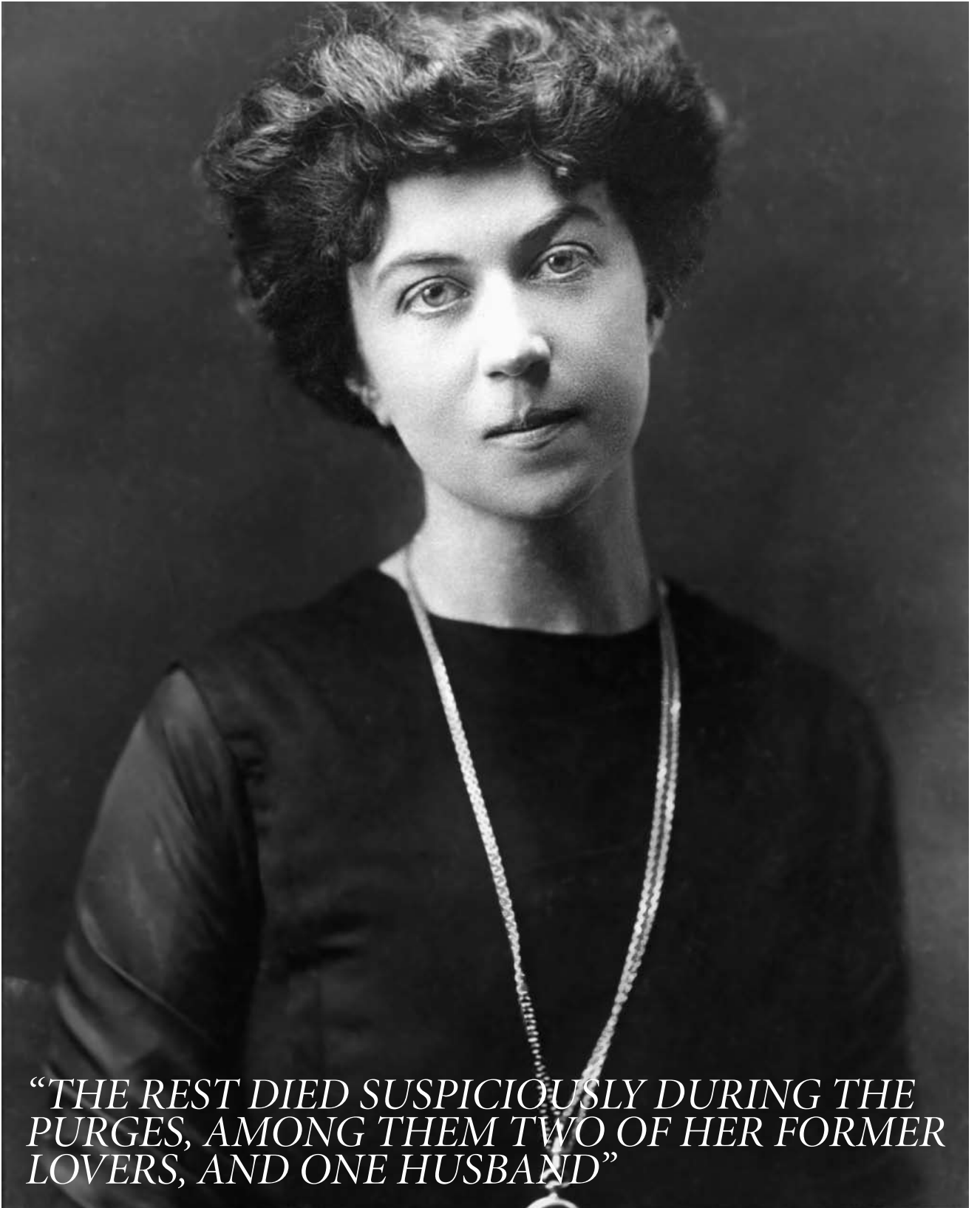
In 1938 she had a close call. Called to Moscow for consultations, she wrote to her good friend, Dr Ada Nilsson:

“Can you take charge of my private papers? Just think if I were to die – you never know what might happen on a journey...”

That was the understatement of the age, and a lie besides. Kollontaj knew exactly what Moscow activists could expect at that time. But she did come back.

She had to suffer for her passions. Respected Soviet historian Simon Sebag Montefiore reduces her in his Stalin biography to a flirtatious vamp in a footnote, but that is far from justified. She was a skilled diplomat, original writer and good psychologist. Against her will she became a witness to history. With at least some degree of conscience. In 1930 a guest from Moscow told her of the deportation of the *kulaks*, or landed farmers, to Siberia. She wrote in her diary:

“Our guest has left. But after his accounts I cannot sleep at nights, seeing constantly before my eyes the mothers with infants freezing to death, and other horrors. - - - All those children who died – why? I feel unwell. Have a sense that I, too, am responsible for this.”



*“THE REST DIED SUSPICIOUSLY DURING THE PURGES, AMONG THEM TWO OF HER FORMER LOVERS, AND ONE HUSBAND”*

ALEKSANDRA KOLLONTAJ, photo Vladimir Kollontaj

# “THE GENIUSES ASSEMBLE LIKE JACKALS AND TEAR CHUNKS FROM THE BODY OF THEIR DEAD FEMALE COLLEAGUE”



LISBETH LARSSON, photo Sofia Runarsdotter

Aleksandra Kollontaj should not be given any moral dispensation, of course. She remained loyal to Stalin. But she deserves better than a disparaging footnote.

Literary scholar **Lisbeth Larsson** takes up the theme of how a woman's biography can become a reductive trap. Her chosen subject is Victoria Benedictsson, a nineteenth century Swedish authoress about whom much has been written. Lisbeth Larsson focuses on her image – and her death – in *Hennes döda kropp* (Her Dead Body).

Writer Victoria Benedictsson took her own life in a Copenhagen hotel room on the night of 22 June 1888. She cut her throat with a blunt razor. Just a few days later, August Strindberg checked into the hotel to do “research”. What he found was inspiration, for *Miss Julie*. That other great dramatist of the age, Henrik Ibsen, also borrowed material for his *Hedda Gabler*, though Hedda chose a pistol rather than a knife.

The geniuses assemble like jackals and tear chunks from the body of their dead female colleague when her blood is scarcely cold. It is certainly not just writers of our time who teeter greedily on the boundary line between fact and fiction. That dubious trafficking has gone on for a hundred years.

The image of poor, dead Victoria haunts her writing persona like a shadow. Perhaps it fitted too well with the iconography of the age, among female corpses, white as Gothic horror heroines, on the dissection table of Paris or in the Pre-Raphaelites' paintings of dead Ophelias. The female body, lovingly christened “the most poetic object” by Edgar Allan Poe, father of the Gothic romance.

At any event, rumour and gossip



ZAC O'YEAH (right), photo Anja Liljefors

knew why she had done it. It was her unrequited love for Scandinavia's greatest literary critic, Georg Brandes, and she could not bear his calling her latest book *Fru Marianne* (Mistress Marianne) a "ladies' novel".

In her will, Victoria made her fellow writer and colleague Axel Lundegård her literary executor. She was to earn him a large amount of money, millions of kronor in today's terms. He published Victoria's diaries, text fragments and short stories – and often finished them himself. He was a parasite, in Lisbeth Larsson's view.

A close reading of the fragments that became the famous short story "*Ur mörkret*" (Out of the Darkness) leads her to conclude that Axel wrote almost half the text. Including the much quoted sentence: "The fact that I am a woman has been the curse of my life."

That line has been the starting point for many scholars' interpretations of Benedictsson, her time and the dilemma of the modern woman, and seen as a

confession of the whole female sex. The only problem is, it was Axel wielding the pen.

What would Victoria have said? Well, she was the one who wrote the will.

Who is the most vivid political figure of the twentieth century? There is tough competition between Stalin, Hitler and – Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi, the London-educated lawyer with a loincloth and a spinning wheel, who non-violently led the Indian struggle for freedom, which resulted in independence in 1947. He was shot the following year by a Hindu extremist.

Gandhi was an inspirational figure for both Lech Walesa in Poland and Nelson Mandela.

Sixty years after his death, we finally have a complete biography of Gandhi in Swedish. Its title is *Mahatma!* and its author is **Zac O'Yeah**, a Swede who has lived in Bangalore for many years. His biography is personal, fact-packed,

teeming with life – and very funny. Gandhi was a humorist. But not everyone was amused. His humour was not to Churchill's taste.

Churchill detested Gandhi, whose deployment of non-violence and media stunts turned the Jewel in the Crown – India – into the British Empire's wobbliest loose tooth.

Gandhi was popular, even so. In the 1930s he went on a triumphal tour of England, charming half the country. The Archbishop of Canterbury, asked if he wanted to convert Gandhi to Christianity, replied:

"Convert him? He is more like Christ than almost anyone I have met."

The Mahatma was good at one-liners, too. On his visit to London, a reporter asked him what he thought of Western civilisation.

"Well, it sounds like a good idea."

And "everybody" loved him – except Churchill, and his own family. He kept his sons in severe check and denied them the sort of education he had had. He forced his wife to share his peculiar diet of just onions, or just rice. She developed stomach problems and protested. His eldest son Harilal ended up an alcoholic, sleeping rough, seemingly out of sheer cussedness.

Turning the other cheek was something he had learned from Jesus, and his way of doing it made Muslims, Hindus and the British choke. When India was on the verge of independence, he suggested its first president should be an Untouchable – and a woman!

In Zac O'Yeah's hands, Mahatma Gandhi takes the role of the long-lost sixth Marx Brother...



INGMAR BERGMAN, photo Karl Heinz Herrried, Imagebank Sweden

# “IT TAKES A SHARK TO KEEP A SHOAL OF HERRING IN ORDER”

Ingmar Bergman is the Dalarna horse of Swedish mind, said film director Bo Widerberg once when he wanted to be really nasty. A painted wooden horse, instantly recognisable as a Swedish tourist souvenir.

Today it seems much more like the highest form of praise.

*Lusten och dämonerna – Boken om Bergman* (The Lust and the Demons – The Bergman Book) is the title of the first major Bergman biography in Swedish. Nobody has dared try before.

**Mikael Timm’s** book is the closest one can get to an official biography, the maestro having grunted his consent and given the author many interviews over the years. Official or not, the result is a well-written, independent book. But I think it would have benefited from other points of view; the work of other commentators is conspicuous by their absence.

Mikael Timm believes Bergman’s work is almost always rooted in his biography. People, places, and events from his life recur in his films and writings. But that does not mean everything lends itself to a biographical interpretation: “Rather than interpreting the narratives as covert autobiographies, it seems reasonable to speak of autobiographical scenography: houses, parts of town, living habits, rooms, clothes and meals.”

IB has never let us stroll freely around his settings and scenes. He draws the map himself. We have accepted that now. He is our One Great Myth, and we must take care of him. We collect legends of his swearing, his marriages, his divorces and his stomach. I do not think you even have to like his films to be capable of enjoying the Bergman myth.

As a young man, Ingmar Bergman could hardly have imagined a future as

a popular figure. He wrote poetry, and suffered the same 1940s angst as all the other boys of his generation. He admired Lars Ahlin and Stig Dagerman for their gloom. But then he failed to get his poems published, and got angry.

So instead he started heckling the “refined” poets instead – “who live on advances, have print-runs of 300, never need to look their public in the eye, still less endure its coughs and rustles, and show off their Cold War neutrality or so-called ‘third stance.’”

He went off to the world of theatre and film, “the whoring and butchering trade”, as he called it, with apparent satisfaction. Mikael Timm lays due emphasis on Bergman the craftsman, the perfectionist, the man who loves to work, secure in his own personal scenography. But this, too, is part of the myth. His pedagogical outbursts of anger, like those described by his friend, the actor Erland Josephson, were not a myth.

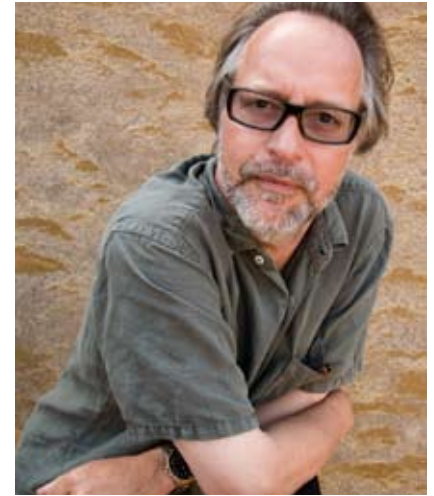
Bergman would initially be all sweetness and light, and then suddenly let out a roar – he was as regular as a metronome in his rants at photographers, sound engineers or reporters. Sensitive souls were traumatised; raw recruits went pale.

Mikael Timm asked him why he shouted so much at those he worked with.

“It takes a shark to keep a shoal of herring in order,” came Bergman’s cynical reply.

I did not know Ingmar Bergman myself, though I did interview him a few times.

Once we were talking about O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, which he was staging at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm. To judge by the rehearsals, he intended toning down any



MIKAEL TIMM, photo Cato Lein

hint of Irish slapstick – the jokes were to be rationed. I did not say this out loud, but I was thinking it. Then Ingmar Bergman struck, like a cobra:

“I can see you drawing your conclusions before the premiere. Well you can bloody well stop!”

I had time to register a thought that shot through my mind: it’s true, he can read people’s minds – see inside their heads! So this was the famed Bergman intuition, which all the actors loved, I tried to write with utter clarity in my head, though what I really felt like writing was: you old devil...

Then he smiled and looked genuinely kind and avuncular again. I also remember thinking: it must have been highly dangerous being in love with you in those days.

But of course I dared not think it until I was out of the door. Imagine how embarrassing it could have been otherwise.

### **The Literary Year 2008**

Andersson, Erik: Den larmande hopens dal (Albert Bonnier)  
Arvidsson, Håkan: Vi som visste allt, (Atlantis)  
Boardy, Elin: Allt som återstår, (Wahlström & Widstrand)  
Bravinger, Håkan, Bära bud (Wahlström & Widstrand)  
De Geer, Carl Johan: Jakten mot nollpunkten (Albert Bonnier)  
Edelfeldt, Inger: Namnbrunnen (Norstedts)  
Enquist, Per Olov: Ett annat liv (Norstedts)  
Frostenson, Katarina: Tal och Regn (Wahlström & Widstrand)  
Henschen, Helena: Hon älskade (Brombergs)  
Johansson, Elsie: Sin ensamma kropp (Albert Bonnier)  
Kollontaj, Aleksandra: Dagböcker 1930-1940, translated from Russian by Lars Olsson (Albert Bonnier)  
Kärnborg, Ulrika: Myrrha (Natur och Kultur)  
Larsson, Lisbeth: Hennes döda kropp: Victoria Benedictssons arkiv och författarskap (Weyler)  
Lindqvist, Herman: Madame de Pompadour: Intelligens skönhet makt (Albert Bonnier)  
Lundqvist, Marie: De dödas bok (Albert Bonnier)  
Mannheimer, Sara: Reglerna (Wahlström & Widstrand)  
Mattson, Ellen: Glädjestranden (Albert Bonnier)  
Norén, Lars: En dramatikers dagbok (Albert Bonnier)  
Odelberg, Axel: Äventyr på riktigt. Berättelsen om upptäcktsresanden Sven Hedin (Norstedts )  
O'Yeah, Zac: Mahatma! Eller konsten att vända världen upp och ner (Ordfront)  
Paulrud, Anders: Fjärilen i min hjärna (Albert Bonnier)  
Persson, Malte: Edelcrantz förbindelser (Albert Bonnier)  
Planhammar, Per: Blekaste aning (Wahlström & Widstrand)  
Rådström, Niklas: En handfull regn (Albert Bonnier)  
Sattarvandi, Hassan Loo: Still (Albert Bonnier)  
Svenbro, Jesper: Vingårdsmannen och hans söner (Albert Bonnier)  
Svensson, Amanda: Hey, Dolly! (Norstedts)  
Timm, Mikael, Lusten och dämonerna: Boken om Bergman (Norstedts)  
Werup, Jacques: Trötta mäns skönhet (Albert Bonnier)  
William-Olsson, Magnus: Jag talar till de döda (Wahlström & Widstrand)  
Wästberg, Per: Anders Sparrmans resa (Wahlström & Widstrand)  
Zweigbergk, Helena von: Ur vulkanens mun (Norstedts)  
Öijer, Bruno K.: Svart som silver (Wahlström & Widstrand)

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### **The Swedish Arts Council**

The Swedish Arts Council is a government authority with the principal task to implement national cultural policy determined by the Parliament.

The Council is responsible for:

- The allocation of state cultural funding to theatre, dance, music, literature, arts periodicals and public libraries, and to the fine arts, museums and exhibitions.
- Providing the Swedish government with the basic data it needs to make cultural policy decisions, by evaluating state spending in the cultural sphere, etc.
- Providing information about culture and cultural policy.

Visions and Guiding Principles:

- To promote art and culture with the aim of ensuring everyone's right to a broad spectrum of high-quality arts and culture
- To be a dynamic authority in the development of Swedish cultural policies
- To be noted for high degree of competence, respect of legal rights and excellent civic services
- To be efficient and flexible in order to enable its operations to be quickly and easy adopted to changing conditions in the outside world.

The Swedish Arts Council supports, develops and initiates co operations between the state, the regions, municipalities and representatives for cultural life in Sweden, e.g. libraries, museums and performing arts centres. The aim is to safeguard and develop Swedish national cultural policy, and to promote cultural diversity and an even geographical spread in cultural provision.

### **The Swedish Authors' Fund**

The Swedish Authors' Fund distributes grants covering travel costs for translators of Swedish literature and sample translations. More information on [www.svff.se](http://www.svff.se), contact [svff@svff.se](mailto:svff@svff.se)

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