what is this?
The publication you’re holding in your hand is intended to function as a
guide to really good Swedish literature, selected by independent, external
writers. The selection of books for children and young adults has been put

together by Sofia Gydemo, librarian at The Swedish Institute for Children’s

Books. Books for adults have been selected by Björn Kohlström, critic and
teacher. This is not a presentation of everything published in Sweden, it’s

an expression of the writers’ personal opinions on what they view as the
absolute best books published during spring 2015. Publisher and rights
information can be found at the end of each piece.

who are we and what do we do?
The Swedish Arts council is tasked with coordinating efforts to enhance
the status of Swedish literature abroad, and to support international liter-

ature exchange. We attend international book fairs, take part in interna-
tional networks, and provide grants for translations as well as for projects
and events focusing on Swedish literature abroad. A part of that work is
this publication – New Swedish Books.

support and grants
The Swedish Arts Council offers support for translations, projects, travels
for publishers, organizations and translators of Swedish literature. In the
back, you will find information about our various grants for Swedish liter-
ature in translation, as well as contact details for the rights holders. More
information about the Swedish Arts Council’s work with international
literature exchange, and previous editions of New Swedish Books can be
found online at www.swedishliterature.se.

spring 2015

enjoy!

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Children’s and Young Adult Literature

Reading books is an activity often associated with solitude, but recently, the social potential of reading has been widely practised and discussed in Sweden. Reading unites people, regardless of age and gender. A parent reading with their child, or a teacher reading aloud to a class, fosters a sense of togetherness. But even though literature itself can be a social activity, solitude is a recurring theme in Swedish children’s and young adult literature. This was one of the observations of the Swedish Institute for Children’s Books in its annual report on Swedish children’s and young adult books in 2013. In 2015, this tendency still prevails. In some cases the solitude is enforced, as in Ulf Stark and Stina Wirsén’s book about an unaccompanied child refugee in the Second World War. Meanwhile Cat, in Loka Kanarp’s comic Cat and Squirrel on Summer Island, enjoys solitude, at least to begin with. Kanarp’s comic is also an example of the apparent renewed interest in children’s and young adult comics, an area that’s long been underrepresented in Swedish publishing. The following selection features a number of titles from the range of children’s and young adult comics published this spring.

This spring’s titles also make space for other worlds. There’s a world that might not be visible at first glance, but which on closer inspection is crawling with little creatures, and it’s found in the picture books Bugball by Tove Pierrou and Joanna Hellgren, and Bone’s Walk by Jenny Wik.

There’s a noticeable trend, in recent years’ books for young adults, towards horrific visions of the future. This spring’s batch features authors with a real sense for language who take new approaches to the theme. Survival, courage and tension mix with strong portrayals of characters and society, as in Sofia Nordin’s As If I Was Fantastic. Tension abounds too in the books for children aged 9–12. Heavy stone statues that suddenly and inexplicably move send chills through the reader in Kristina Ohlsson’s Stone Angels. There’s a thrill too in But Still Exists, by Petter Lidbeck, the protagonist of which can become invisible, leading to a reading experience that’s pacey, to say the least.
With four books behind her, Klara Persson has quickly established herself on the Swedish book market. Her debut Molly & Sus won prizes both as a debut book and a picture book. Two previous titles, Maximilian & Min- 

imum, and Jag blir en bubla som blir ett monster som blir ett barn (I’ll Turn into a Bubble that Turns into a Monster that Turns into a Baby), were nominated for the August Prize. In Words—where are you?, the reader joins Solvej in her search for the right letters and words. Solvej wants to explain how dearly she loves Mitty. But the words are all gone! Solvej looks for the words. She tries small words and big ones. Nothing happens. Maybe Solvej could try whispering the words: “I like you more than badminton”. Words—where are you? is a charming story about nervously trying to express in words how much you love someone.

THE RIGHT WORDS

Klara Persson

WORDS—WHERE ARE YOU?

NEW SWEDISH BOOKS

SPRING EDITION 2015
Later, Mum says. Åse’s so tired of hearing the word later. Åse has found a squashed frog, which she’s now carrying around in a jar. First they have to go home and eat, Mum says. Åse’s story is high quality everyday drama. Ingrid Olsson, who has previously written mostly for slightly older children and young people, makes her picture book debut with Åse and the Frog. At her side is the experienced illustrator Charlotte Ramel, who with her deceptively simple style perfectly captures Åse’s wilfulness.

Ingrid Olsson (TexT), Charlotte Ramel (iLL)
Åse And the Frog
Lilla Piratförlaget
Rights LILLA PIRATFÖRLAGET

A dragonfly darts across the first pages. Everything else is empty. But there’s something missing. Rebus comes in with his toolbox. Rebus is an ape-like figure, who starts building a forest with a hammer, nails and a saw. Earth, trees, an ants’ nest, small rocks, big rocks and moss. Masses of birds, berries and other animals. Life grows fit to burst in duo Lena Arro and Sara Gimbergsson’s unusual creation story. When the children at last find their way to the forest, Rebus is finished. He slowly sneaks out of the picture, leaving behind a magical world for creatures big and small to discover.

Lena Arro (TexT), Sara Gimbergsson (iLL)
Rebus Builds A Forest
Opal Bokförlag
Rights OPAL BOKFÖRLAG
WAR AND LOSS

When a major war breaks out, everything changes for Sirkka and Margareta. The two girls live on either side of a sea and Sirkka is sent across that sea. She’s going to live in a safer country, and comes to live with Margareta’s family. Margareta’s disappointed. She thought they were getting a dog, but instead, a sad little girl turned up. The two don’t get along, and the hostility is clearly visible in Margareta’s face particularly. The Sister from the Sea takes place during the Second World War, but issues such as unaccompanied child refugees, war and loss are as topical today as ever. Author Ulf Stark, who has been popular since the 1960s, has written a gripping tale about friendship, accompanied by Stina Wirsén’s illustrations, which capture the girls’ feelings and the hallmarks of the 1940s with deceptively simple brush strokes.

Ulf Stark (Text), Stina Wirsén (Ill)
The Sister from the Sea
Bonnier CarlseN
Rights: Bonnier Rights

EVERYDAY DRAMA II

Since the early 1990s, when Pija Lindenbaum’s first independently-authored book, Elsa-Marie och småpapporna (Elsa-Marie and the Little Dads) came out, she has occupied a special position in the Swedish picture book world. Pija Lindenbaum is phenomenal at giving feeling to her characters with only the slightest of shifts in her images. She often takes everyday occurrences as her subject, as in I’ll Get the Pacifier, in which Micke feels frustrated that his friend Manne’s little sister won’t stop crying. It makes no difference whether Micke gives her her dummy or makes silly faces. The little sister’s squeals turn into roars!

Pija Lindenbaum
I’LL get the PACIFIER
Bonnier CarlseN
Rights: Bonnier Rights
SAVE THE MINIBEASTS!

Everything about Omko says ‘I don’t want to play football’. His right shoe is too big and the ball hurts when it gets you. It makes no difference how much his family try to cheer. When the match starts, everyone runs to and fro. Everyone apart from Omko. When he bends down to pull up one of his socks, he finds a snail. It must be saved! Omko realises that the whole pitch is full of life. A beetle, a bumblebee, a grasshopper, a ladybird. Now Omko runs faster than anyone on the pitch. All the minibeasts must be saved. It’s lucky his right shoe is too big, it makes a perfect cubbyhole.

TOVE PIERROU (TEXT), JOANNA HELLGREN (ILL)
BUGBALL
NÄRUT & KULTUR
RIGHTS NÄRUT & KULTUR

A PHILOSOPHICAL PICTURE BOOK

Somewhere in a town there lives a girl. She’s in a park. With evocative images, the picture zooms out on the park, the houses around it, out of the town, up into the air and out into space and the solar system. Then the book turns and the pictures zoom in again on another part of the world. There’s a sea, an island, a forest, and – look – another park with another child. This breathtaking journey around the globe is illustrated with images by Emilia Östergren, who makes every line undulate, leading the reader on a voyage of exploration through a hubbub of life. Ylva Karlsson accompanies the images with sparse yet descriptive words. A philosophical picture book for children big and small.

YLVA KARLSSON (TEXT), EMMELIE ÖSTERGREN (ILL)
HERE’S THE WORLD
HIPPO FÖRLAG
RIGHTS: HIPPO FÖRLAG

THE LITTLE THINGS IN THE BIG PICTURE

An understated portrait of an odd little man. The book has a slow tempo, as the reader joins Bosse on an ordinary walk, with a black cat for company. Bosse’s enjoying himself – the sun is shining, it feels good to stretch his legs, there’s a beautiful bird in a tree – and suddenly, absurd, unexpected things start to happen. The beautiful bird poos on Bosse’s nose. An ant climbs across Bosse’s arm. There’s a ladybird sitting on a big flower. There are plenty of animals to discover. Bosse lets us come along for the ride and see the little things in the big picture. Jenny Wik is an author and illustrator, with a string of books for younger children to her name.

JENNY WIK
BOSSE’S WALK
KABELA BÖCKER
RIGHTS KABELA BÖCKER
Illustration from "Here's the World" by Viva Karlsson (text) and Emelie Östergren (illustrations), see page 11
How do you deal with your big brother when he starts to dye his hair blonde, wear big boots, changes his name to Viking and nails a swastika to his wall beside a picture of some old guy with a little square moustache? Saga thinks about it a lot. She had a pretty easy life before her big brother Noah’s transformation. She played with her best friend Anisa, went to nursery, baked pizza with Mum’s boyfriend Martin. But then Noah starts to get angry all the time. He’s mean to Anisa and says there’s something wrong with her. Anisa’s skin is a bit browner than Saga’s, and her hair’s a bit darker, and she’s the best friend in the world. Mum sits at home crying, and one day Noah’s gone. Together, Anna-Clara Tidholm and Joanna Hellgren have created a really topical book. Now, as the far-right tide sweeps over Europe, children and adults have an important book to read together, in the form of Saga’s forthright tale.
Leo’s granddad is dead, and Mum can’t stop crying. Nothing’s any fun. Dad promises they’ll do something fun together, but it never happens. One evening at bedtime, Leo discovers something odd underneath his pyjama top. He has a blue door in his tummy. The door leads into a sea. In a boat, Crossways, Lengthways and Taxi are floating about. The four of them become friends and go on voyages across the sea. Leo looks forward to bedtime when he can meet up with his friends – the daytimes are as solemn and grey as ever. August Prize winner Ellen Karlsson and illustrator Josefin Sundqvist sketches a lovely portrait of a child coming to terms with death and a sadness he can’t fully comprehend.

Ellen Karlsson (Text), Josefin Sundqvist (Ill) Inside My Blue Door Hippo förlag Rights: Hippo förlag

Eleven-year-old My has inherited a strange talent from her mum and grandma. She can make herself invisible. My is absolutely forbidden from showing anyone else what she can do. But her secret is discovered, marking the start of an adventure which takes My all the way to the USA and the White House. Nasty men want to get their hands on My, her mum and grandma, but they fight it. But how can three people defend themselves against a load of specially-trained secret police? Petter Lidbeck is famous for his absurd stories, which surprise, amuse and unsettle the reader. A linguistic acrobat who takes readers on an adventure.

Petter Lidbeck but still exists Rabén & Sjögren Rights: Rabén & Sjögren Agency

In Simona’s grandma’s garden, there are four large stone statues depicting two children and two adults. For some inexplicable reason, Simona has always felt afraid of the statues. This feeling grows one day as she looks out of the window and sees that the statues are arranged in a different way, even though no one’s been out in the garden. Kristina Ohlsson follows up on her success with The Glass Children and Silverpojken (The Silver Boy), about three friends called Simona, Aladdin and Billie. In the standalone book Stone Angels, it’s not just a case of statues that mysteriously move, but also of inexplicably audible steps, and voices on a cassette tape that no one can explain. A gripping page-turner for brave readers.

Kristina Ohlsson Stone Angels Lilja Mayforlaget Rights: Salomonsson Agency

A mangy cat changes everything for Miranda. The cat gets run over, but is saved by Idris the janitor, Miranda’s best grown-up friend. With a patch over its damaged eye, the cat becomes a pirate cat. An ugly pirate cat, according to the owner of the cat shelter where Idris and Miranda try to hand it in. An ugly cat that will soon be put down. Miranda goes crazy! No one’s going to be putting any cats down here. She smuggles the cat home with her, and into her wardrobe. Just as long as Mum doesn’t find it. Having a pirate cat in your wardrobe isn’t easy. A longing for and love of animals is a common theme in children’s books. Maud Mangold’s beautiful language and likeable protagonist come together to create a warm book that’s perfect for reading aloud.

Maud Mangold Miranda and the Pirate Cat Rabén & Sjögren Rights: Rabén & Sjögren Agency

For the brave

Saving a cat

The strange gift
**LIFE CHANGING DISCOVERY**

This is the first novel from Alex Haridi, who has previouliy written screenplays for television. Tensions run high from the very first page. A prologue tells the awful story of 13-year-old Jonathan Anderson who in 1992 cycled home from school, did his homework, and then hanged himself in the attic. Jonathan’s house has stood empty ever since, and the local children dare each other to go and knock on the door. Joel lives directly opposite the empty house. One day he sees a man entering the house with a bag, only to come out empty-handed later. A strong sense of curiosity drives Joel to the empty house. What he discovers there will change his entire life. Haridi’s debut is a psychological thriller about sadness, friendship and identity.

Alex Haridi
*The Anderson House*
Bonnier Carlsen
Rights: Bonnier Rights

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**The Seth secret**

A frozen winter landscape in northern Sweden is the setting for debut-novelist Therese Henriksson’s young adult novel. 17-year-old Saga lives in a little community where everyone knows each other and no one stands out. Slowly, Saga and Seth become close friends, and maybe something more. But she can’t understand why he disappears for long periods. What’s the secret Seth is hiding?

Therese Henriksson
*The Seth Secret*
OpaL bokförlag
Rights: OpaL bokförlag

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**Aftermath**

In a terrifying present, large sections of the populace have died from a horrible disease. A few teenagers are left, and by coincidence, they meet. They struggle to survive on a farm, with their solitude slowly hemming them in. *As If I Were Fantastic* is the third, standalone part of Sofia Nordin’s series about a group of teenagers after a catastrophe. Ella and Nora decide to leave the farm to go and search for other survivors. They’ve heard murmurs from the city of Umeå which indicate people might be alive. They’ve formulated a plan, but soon come to realise that their journey is going to be far from easy.

The first part of the series, *En sekund i taget* (One Second at a Time), was nominated in 2014 for the Nordic Council’s Children and Young Adult’s Literature Prize, and the second part *Spring så fort du kan* (Run as Fast as You Can) was also praised by critics and readers alike.

Sofia Nordin
*As If I Were Fantastic* (Part 3 in a series, standalone)
Raben & Sjögren
Rights: Nordin Agency
The island of Gotland, off the south-east coast of Sweden, has been isolated from the rest of the country due to an epidemic that turns people into zombies. People’s actions towards one another put all thoughts of morality and humanity to one side. In her search, Emma has ended up with Captain Grip, a horrendous man who keeps his recruits in slave-like conditions. She manages to escape, and finds herself in the company of a man who claims to be a priest, and with whom other young people have taken shelter. But who is to be trusted? Magnus Nordin twists and turns the idea of humanity in his text, and grippingly depicts Emma’s struggle for survival. Lars Gabel’s illustrations are not for the faint-of-heart, the living dead almost walk off the page towards you.

MAGNUS NORDIN (TEXT), LARS GABEL (ILLUSTRATIONS) 
REvolution (FOurth and FinAl part) 
BERGHS FÖRLAG 
RIGHTS: BERGHS FÖRLAG
Comics

Ingrid!!
Cat and Squirrel are evidence that opposites attract. Cat is reserved, and likes to read and draw. Squirrel is energetic, has loads of friends and loves trying new things. The two meet on a sunny day on the beach. The squirrel can’t understand why Cat is just sitting still under a tree. There are loads of fun things to do on the beach! But Cat is shy and a bit scared. Things don’t get any easier when some other animals start being mean to Cat. Loka Kanarp has created a subtle comic on friendship, courage and getting the chance to be who you are.

Loka Kanarp
Cat and Squirrel on Summer Island
Raben & Sjögren
Rights: Raben & Sjögren Agency
REAL LIFE ISN’T ALWAYS ENOUGH. The trend of autobiographical writing among Swedish prose writers, previously so prominent, has ground to a halt this spring, to the benefit of novels that push the boundaries of the imagination, reminding us that the object of fiction is invention. Of course, personal experiences are not absent, but authors are now playing with reality. What they accomplish is a new kind of realism. One that, without bypassing magical realism, can still be said to create unbelievable moments in believable situations. An example of a novel that has its roots in reality is Hans Gunnarsson’s travelogue All Inclusive, in which the central character C.G. is a writer who shares the initials of his surname as well as other characteristics with his author. Despite this the plot has a tendency to veer towards the absurd and the fabricated. It’s like an autobiography kidnapped by fiction, and a story that doesn’t lack flashes of self-irony.

Myths and the Classics Among this spring’s publications are several examples of authors who begin with pre-existing myths or pre-existing literary works and give them new meanings. The myth that Ola Nilsson works with belongs among the most well-known in history: the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, which is used to describe the quest of two cousins to find each other in the modern underworld – the underground. Johanna Nilsson picks up the story where one of the great Swedish literary classics, the science-fiction novel Kallokan by Karin Boye, left off.

The Presence of History in the Now Another group of current writers turn to the past, amongst them Doris Dahlén with her fine portrayals of the development of Swedish society during the 1960s and 70s, and the first novel from Mikael Berglund set in the 17th century. Similarly, Lars Andersson’s novel about a crime committed during the Second World War exemplifies the tendency of writers to make a statement about our own times under the guise of the historical novel. All these books illustrate the ongoing debate about the long shadow cast by history over the present time, but equally how our current time is reflected upon through the historical setting. The extent to which there is a political agenda in these novels is left implicit.

Play as Literary Method One of the most playful novels this spring is Asa Nilsson’s novel on love. Love is put under the analytical microscope, but its most original feature is that the narrator is a part of the central character’s brain. This initiates a discussion about the exact location of love, and more generally about the relationship between sense and sensibility. Additionally, her novel is a play on the concept of the unreliable narrator. Beate Grimsrud also writes from within her characters, and her different narrators likewise illustrate a kind of unreliability despite the novel being written in a more traditional style.

On the Harshness of Life Depictions of difficult circumstances are not absent from this spring’s novels. Work as something destructive is described in two books. In Elise Karlsson’s novel The Line the narrator feels inadequate at her office, whilst Ola Nilsson gives us an unexpectedly illuminating account of the life of an underground train driver in Isidor and Paula. For Karolina Ramqvist the subject is the plight of the single mother, and the resulting sense of humiliation is left implicit. There is a political agenda in these novels over the present time, but equally how our historical setting. The extent to which these books illustrate the ongoing debate about the long shadow cast by history over the present time, but equally how our current time is reflected upon through the historical setting. The extent to which there is a political agenda in these novels is left implicit.

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VEERING TOWARDS THE ABSURD When the relatively successful author bearing the initials C.G. wrecks his private life and can’t seem to finish his latest novel he accepts an invitation to travel to Guadeloupe in the Caribbean in order to write a book about the island. It’s all very cosy to begin with, but soon one person after the other dies. At the same time C.G. discovers that he’s been set up and that the mission is much more dangerous than he could ever have imagined. When a sense of doom sets in the reader can no longer make light of the absurd events. People are not to be trusted and their identities are unreliable in this novel that has the hallmark of the whodunnit as well as the horror film. Hans Gunnarsson has a good eye for mankind’s imperfections and he twists and turns the plot of this nightmarish novel.

HANS GUNNARSSON ALL INCLUSIVE ALBERT BONNIERS FORLAG RIGHTS HEDLUND LITERARY AGENCY
Society on high alert

Jerker Virdborg made his debut as a short story writer at the beginning of the noughties. Having written several well-received novels he now returns to the genre in which he is a master. In fifteen exciting short stories he explores a country not dissimilar from contemporary Sweden but in a state of high alert. Drama is created from everyday situations and from the suspicion that everything isn’t as it should be, that something awful is just about to happen, something threatening the illusory sense of safety. The city and the forest are the setting for these unavailing short stories written with a stylistic flair that showcases the vitality of the Swedish short story.

JERKER VIRDBORG
THE AIR-RAID SHELTER ON LUX STREET
ALBERT BONNIERS FÖRLAG
RIGHTS: HEDLUND LITERARY AGENCY

The past painfully present

In Doris Dahlin’s novels the past is always painfully present to her characters. Such is also the case in her new book, where Maria, an author, visits the place where she grew up in order to help the teenage daughter of her childhood friend, who has locked herself away in her room. There are clear parallels between the young teenager’s destructive experiences and Maria’s own adolescence, and the novel paints a fine picture of Sweden during the sixties and seventies. With the help of flashbacks to Maria’s difficult youth her present issues are brought into focus. We are allowed to follow in close proximity the protagonists’ struggle for independence, at the same time as the revelation that coexistence isn’t always to be taken for granted.

DORIS DAHLIN
THERE WERE NO CLOUDS IN THE SKY OXFORD
RIGHTS: CARINA DESCHAMPS

AUTHENTIC AND UNCOMPROMISING

If there has been a longing for a less well-mannered report from life as an immigrant, Neftali Milfuegos’s first novel definitely answers its call. The central character returns to his native Chile to study journalism, but spends most of his days taking drugs, having sex, and figuring out his half-Chilean half-Swedish identity. Aided by a language that’s energetic and uncompromising we get close to his passionate mindset, and the author doesn’t attempt to portray him in a favourable light. It’s more a case of showing us an authentic personality, a complete picture. He’s not just consumed by his own troubles, and applies his own analysis to the failures of the society around him.

NEFTALI MILFUEGOS
BREATHLESS THOUGHTS
WAHLSTROM & VIDSTRAND
RIGHTS: WAHLSTROM & VIDSTRAND
In the spring of 1944, a woman is found dead almost literally on the border between Sweden and occupied Norway. Police inspector Leonard Ringer returns to his former home town, in the county of Wernland, to investigate the crime. He soon discovers that the identity of the woman is not clear-cut. Is she a Norwegian refugee, or a German who served on the Eastern front, or someone else entirely? The diverse list of characters encompasses spies, refugees, dangerous women and Nazis, as well as the children’s author Astrid Lindgren, secretary to Leonard’s old teacher, Harry Söderman. **Lars Andersson** made his debut in the seventies and has received many prizes since. With this novel he has written a tense crime story, where we become aware of how historical atrocities remain frighteningly relevant to current events.

**Lars Andersson**

**Our ones**

**ALBERT BONNIERS FÖRLAG RIGHTS: ALBERT BONNIERS FÖRLAG**

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The brain scientist H, with the memory as his area of specialisation, is in love with the model D. But the coming together of beauty and brains is secondary. The novel’s defining character is instead its narrative perspective. The narrative voice is operated by a specific part of H’s brain, a narrator equally arrogant as charming as he quarrels with his neighbours in the nearby cerebral regions. As much as it’s a novel about love it’s also an essay on memory, and a lesson on the influence of our brain on our sense of reason and emotion.

**Åsa Nilsonne,** professor of psychiatry, balances entertainment with an informed sensibility in this experimental novel where the machinery of love gets its own MRI-scan from a playful expert.

**Åsa Nilsonne**

**Our ones**

**NATUR & KULTUR RIGHTS: NATUR & KULTUR**

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Twelve-year-old Vera is used to her dad disappearing from time to time. Then her mother travels to Russia and is never heard from again. Thirteen years later Vera is pregnant and decides to find out what happened to her mother. This debut novel from **Charlotta Larsson** is a tightly knit and evocative novel about disappearance, and the ingoring that loss causes. It offers an unusually mature perspective on the subject. The central character’s frustration surrounding the obscure circumstances of her mother’s disappearance is treated with great sensibility. The novel takes us on a journey from Vienna through to Stockholm and Paris with a thrilling conclusion in a forest outside St. Petersburg.

**Charlotta Larsson**

**THE TRANSFORMIERENNE FORUM RIGHTS: FORUM BOKFÖRLAG**
KALLOCAIN 2.0

Karin Boye’s dystopian 1940 novel Kallocain is one of the classics of Swedish literature. In Johanna Nilsson’s continuation one of its main characters, Linda Kall, has fled the totalitarian society described in the original, for the relative freedom of the Desert City. She gets a job as a gardener and is reunited with her daughters. But even here threats remain from both within and without. Together with her daughter Laila she, like her husband in Kallocain, develops a drug named Kallocain 2 to be used to pacify the citizens. The original’s pacifist message is renewed in this novel, without becoming a pastiche. Human beings’ free will is discussed with great poignancy alongside a thriller-like plot that reveals the continuing urgency of the theme.

Johanna Nilsson

THE GREENER ABYSS

RIGHTEOUS GRAND AGENCY

Personal evolution

Four lonely and slightly bruised people living in Stockholm make up the list of characters in this novel that rouses the reader’s sense of engagement and sympathy. The characters’ everyday lives are filled with small and large problems. The novel exposes the repercussions of being stuck in a rut and not daring to follow your dreams, when your emotional life is in danger of stagnating. The story doesn’t follow well-trodden paths. Instead it allows the reader to find new paths together with its uncompromising narrator, who also challenges our perception of normality. The tangible world is filtered through subjective impressions. Beate Grimsrud’s worldview may seem odd, but it is distinct and reveals the value of personal evolution.

Beate Grimsrud

THE FOREVER CHILDREN

ALBERT BONNIERS FÖRLAG

RIGHTEOUS ALBERT BONNIERS FÖRLAG

FREEDOM THROUGH ART

Birgitta Holm demonstrates in a number of newly written essays how art can function as a leap into freedom through its capacity to lift us up from our humdrum existence. She’s assisted partly by authors that write about freedom, and partly by the physical freedom offered by our own bodies, as illustrated through dancing or cycling. The book becomes a meticulous exploration of freedom, and involvement as aesthetic methods, in a prose that with great perspicacity describes these claims. As such the writing itself becomes an example of the freedom that’s in question. The book contains close readings of both well-known classics and some slightly less expected works, where the gap between Virginia Woolf and the Beatles is closer than you might have thought.

Birgitta Holm

THE LEAP INTO FREEDOM

ORDFRONT

RIGHTEOUS ORDFRONT

Personal evolution

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Birgitta Holm

THE LEAP INTO FREEDOM

ORDFRONT

RIGHTEOUS ORDFRONT

Personal evolution

Four lonely and slightly bruised people living in Stockholm make up the list of characters in this novel that rouses the reader’s sense of engagement and sympathy. The characters’ everyday lives are filled with small and large problems. The novel exposes the repercussions of being stuck in a rut and not daring to follow your dreams, when your emotional life is in danger of stagnating. The story doesn’t follow well-trodden paths. Instead it allows the reader to find new paths together with its uncompromising narrator, who also challenges our perception of normality. The tangible world is filtered through subjective impressions. Beate Grimsrud’s worldview may seem odd, but it is distinct and reveals the value of personal evolution.

Beate Grimsrud

THE FOREVER CHILDREN

ALBERT BONNIERS FÖRLAG

RIGHTEOUS ALBERT BONNIERS FÖRLAG

FREEDOM THROUGH ART

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Birgitta Holm

THE LEAP INTO FREEDOM

ORDFRONT

RIGHTEOUS ORDFRONT
Cousins Isidor and Paula grow up under difficult circumstances. The violence they witness as children follows Paula in particular throughout her adult life. Isidor is an underground train driver who searches like Orpheus for Paula’s Eurydice in the underworld, the place where the invisible people live. The mythical setting infiltrates the story so deeply that it’s hardly perceptible to the reader. Just as important is the description of a workplace, giving us insights into a world that’s not often given space in literature. With a discerning eye for the peculiarities of humanity, Ola Nilsson has written a novel about loss and about the pain you feel when the one you love is not present. On top of this it’s a story about friendship beyond illness and delusion.

Ola Nilsson
ISIDOR OCH PAULA
NATUR & KULTUR
RiGHTS: NAStUR & KULTUR

With an exceptional sense of style

Karolina Ramqvist (left) made both her critical and popular breakthrough with the novel Girlfriend from 2009. The story centred on the young woman Karin’s love affair with a criminal man. In this sequel Karin lives alone with her daughter Dream in the big, expensive house that the man left for her. The money is dwindling and the house is about to be seized. In despair Karin pleads with the man’s accomplices. At the same time she tries her hardest to be a good mother to her child. The cool elegance of the prose is juxtaposed with Karin’s desperation. With an exceptional sense of style Ramqvist has succeeded in portraying how security is replaced by insecurity, and the humiliation felt when realizing how little one matters to one’s friends.

Karolina Ramqvist
THE WHITE CITY
NORSTEDTS
RiGHTS: AHLANDER AGENCY

LOSS AND LONGING, MYTH AND REALITY
THE DESOLATE NORTHERN LANDSCAPE

Judit is a single mother of twins, Niila and Rigmor, and lives in Norrland in 17th century Sweden. She’s driven and stubborn – qualities that are essential if you intend to survive the desolate northern landscape. In southern Sweden a state of war prevails, and Judit meets both wandering nomads and threatening wolves and bears. People live in harmony with this hostile nature, grateful for the little gifts it brings. With an acute attention to detail the story comes alive, and brings with it an important message to the people of today. With restrained language debut novelist Mikael Berglund draws a convincing portrait of a person’s desire to survive in straitened circumstances.

MIKAEL BERGLUND
AN OBJECT’S STORY ABOUT UNREQUITEDNESS
ALBERT BONNERS FÖRLAG
RIGHTS: ALBERT BONNERS FÖRLAG

On the edge

An interrogator is trying to figure out what happened by questioning two parents who have separately kidnapped their own children. The father has taken his daughters to save them from a conventional upbringing and the mother wanted her son to escape the bullies at school. Their good intentions have gone overboard in this novel that illustrates the uncanny mechanisms of obsession. Viktor Johansson is one of Sweden’s most talented young writers, with both poetry, novels and film behind him. His writing is both composed and daringly innovative in this existential drama about the good and bad side of parenthood. The novel uses the characters’ dialogue to illustrate sinister patterns of behaviour and leaves a lasting impression on the reader.

VIKTOR JOHANSSON
BONSAI CAT
WILDERNESS RIGHTS: MODERNISTA

One of Sweden’s most talented young writers

 Ebba is a fifteen-year-old girl spending the summer in a community where the factory has closed and all opportunities have gone. Her boyfriend’s off to Norway for work, and her dad finds it difficult to look after his child. Her cousin Edith moves to town, on temporary leave from an existence filled with self-harm and social services. Ebba is vulnerable and insecure, and the novel paints a strong portrait of a young person on the cusp of adulthood but with no goals in sight. Felicia Stenroth’s second novel is both dreamy and evocative yet is skilfully composed and provides a clear-sighted depiction of a life on the edge of hopelessness.

FELICIA STENROTH
INDIAN GAMES
MODERNISTA RIGHTS: NONSTEDTS

NEW SWEDISH BOOKS 38 SPRING EDITION 2015

NEW SWEDISH BOOKS 39 SPRING EDITION 2015
Joining the dots

With a collection of more than 500 short text pieces the internationally renowned playwright Lars Norén presents us with his new work. It’s not strictly speaking an assembly of aphorisms, but rather fragments according to the German romantic tradition – texts that might be perceived as either defective or unfinished. The themes explored are recognisable from his theatrical repertoire and we are given access to his perceptive thoughts on language, memory and art and religion, but also on society and human interaction. The work gives us a snap-shot of a person, if not as a full-length portrait then fragmented, allowing the reader to join the dots and complete the picture.

Lars Norén
FRAGMENTS
ALBERT BONNIERS FÖRLAG
RIGHTS: MARGARETA PETTERSSON

The way forward

Matti is a middle-aged journalist who feels that he’s failed both in his role as a professional and as a family member. He abandons his wife and kids and escapes to a desolate cabin for a few days. There he’s tormented by self-contempt and memories of his childhood. The isolation is supposed to help him find his way back to his closed off feelings. Later on he’s visited by the ghost of his father, who committed suicide when Matti was a teenager. Together they attempt to reconcile and find a way for Matti to finally emerge from the dark shadow cast by his father. Jörgen Hjerdt has written a novel that recreates the feelings of allowance in a man faced with death as an escape route, and about what it actually takes to move on when all seems hopeless.

Jörgen Hjerdt
LIBERATED
WEYLERS FÖRLAG
RIGHTS: WELLYER FÖRLAG

HOLD THE LINE

The office is a hotbed of intrigues, gossip and competition for favours. The main character Emilia is employed by a publishing company that publishes self-help books. But helping herself turns out to be more difficult. She starts affairs with her colleagues, but has no idea how to proceed. Her existence is put on standby. At the same time, the office appears to become increasingly allegorical as it prepares for financial cuts, and we begin to see how the society outside the office’s walls is perceived as a threatening force by those within it. Elise Karlsson has already published two unyielding novels and continues to write along the same lines – books that explore worlds we know, but in ways that allow us to discover new perspectives on the familiar.

Elise Karlsson
THE LINE
NAUTA & KULTUR
RIGHTS: NAUTA & KULTUR
Poetry

Poetry in general is by and large concerned with questioning and searching for new modes of expressions. Such is also the case this spring with several interesting examples of poets fulfilling high expectations in terms of linguistic and conceptual renewal.

The Past, the Present, and the Future

For her unusual story about a saint Åsa Maria Kraft has found inspiration in the middle ages, yet isn’t satisfied with only depicting the past. There’s also a glimpse of a future here. Jesper Sagfors’s motivation is the Finland-Swedish poet Edith Södergran, yet he writes in a form that’s free of external influences.

Autobiographical Poetry

With her second book about Violencia Lina Hagelbäck confirms her position as one of this century’s most promising Swedish poets. By celebrating the imagination and utilising all the advantages of poetry she revitalises the autobiographical trend previously so prevalent in fiction.

The End is Nigh

Wilfred Owen wrote in the foreword to his collected poetry that: “All a poet can do today is warn”. This is the starting point for Niclas Nilsson, who writes apocalyptical poetry for an ignorant mankind. Fredrik Nyberg also focuses on the volatile nature of our future in his ongoing project Coils & The End of the World.

Margaret the virgin was martyred in Antioch at the beginning of the 4th century. According to legend she fought the Devil, who in the shape of a dragon, swallowed her. Her fate is described with great poignancy in Åsa Maria Kraft’s poetry collection. She starts off from the myth in order to tell a story about a period in time that then extends on through the middle ages and into the future, to the 2020’s when bees have become extinct. Different voices speak through the poems, showing the way in which transformation can act as survival mechanism, and how clever humans are at adjusting to unexpected situations. The poems are written in a richly figurative language in order to recreate the past and make it present to our current time.

Åsa Maria Kraft
Marginal Miracles
ALBERT BONNERS FÖRLAG

Fighting the Devil

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Åsa Maria Kraft
Marginal Miracles
ALBERT BONNERS FÖRLAG
RIGHTS: ALBERT BONNERS FÖRLAG
**Death as a source of hope**

To the Swedish poetry reader Karelia is known as the place where Edith Södergran, the dying poet, lived. The place where Finland meets Russia becomes a resting place for death. But poetry has no home, it finds its way across geography. Poems about death and the dead are carved from a steadfast realism, creating a death fugue that gravitates towards life. Hunger and hardship might work against the human, but for those who have a constructive mind there’s still hope. In the presence of death life is at its strongest.

Jerker Sagfors’s first collection illustrates a unique life, strengthened through difficult circumstances.

Jerker Sagfors
**THE DEAD ARE FROM KARELIA**
**Wahlström & Widstrand**
**Rights: Wahlström & Widstrand**

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**Voices orchestrated around a theme**

From the bible we read that “you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.” The poet Niclas Nilsson takes this as a word of warning. His new poetry collection encompasses a multitude of references from poets, philosophers, critics, rock songs and films. That the polyphony of voices become a homogenous collection is the result of an editorial doctrine, with the poet himself as one of many contributors. The fragments are held together by a theme that identifies a world fast approaching its end, without being able to decode its discreet warning signals.

Niclas Nilsson
**Mene Tekel**
Wahlström & Widstrand
**Rights: Wahlström & Widstrand**

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**Violencia returns**

Violencia is sarcastic and quick-witted. She’s a dangerous character in a world that’s equally beautiful and demonic. We remember her from Lina Hagelbäck’s much talked about 2013 debut. This is a similarly exceptional shimmering prose poem where the volcano Violencia decides to travel through Europe in search for her father. They unite in poetry writing, but she confronts him about his disloyal abandonments and the confrontation is violent. It’s a story that crosses boundaries and uses a spell-bound, lyrical language in order to write in a general way about loss.

Lina Hagelbäck
**VIOLENCIA AND HER FATHER**
Brombergs
**Rights: Brombergs**

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Lina Hagelbäck
**VIOLENCIA AND HER FATHER**
Brombergs
**Rights: Brombergs**
PLAYFUL AND PROFOUND

That which is about to vanish from right under our noses is described with a most original sense of humour. Written with the playful seriousness that has become Fredrik Nyberg’s trademark as a writer, he constantly invents new words to suit his style. We’re invited to share his thirst for exploration, in a direct address that’s reader-oriented and filled with colloquialisms, alliterations and rhymes. His collection is a celebration of reading out loud. At the same time, there’s gravity to the project, where the impending doom as a writer, he constantly invents new words to suit his style. We’re invited to share his thirst for exploration, in a direct address that’s reader-oriented and filled with colloquialisms, alliterations and rhymes. His collection is a celebration of reading out loud. At the same time, there’s gravity to the project, where the impending doom