

Nature [*in*] Writing

Swedish literary highlights
Presented by SELTA
Spring 2017 

Raven

by Göran Bergengren

with illustrations by Gebbe Björkman

Non-fiction/Essays



Swedish title: Korp

Publisher: Carlsson Bokförlag

Publication date: 2015

203 pages (hardback)

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Göran Bergengren is the author of over 30 books for children and adults. He gives talks to schools and other groups on nature-related topics and is a member of the Swedish Local Heritage Federation. Göran Bergengren is the recipient of numerous awards including an honorary doctorate from Linköping University.

In this volume of brief essays, Göran Bergengren builds up a multifaceted portrait of an evocative bird species. He blends detailed observations, personal reminiscences, scientific facts, historical accounts and folklore. There are fond recollections of an injured juvenile bird that took up residence on Bergengren's farm and acquired the name Corax, from the taxonomic specification for the raven.

Bergengren's lyrical essays are complemented by over 40 exquisitely detailed monochrome illustrations by Gebbe Björkman.

"Göran Bergengren is skilled at capturing details from nature, using simple strokes to paint images that immediately captivate. The adventurous language is also a great delight in his latest book."
—*Skånska Dagbladet*

Excerpt from *Raven* by Göran Bergengren

22. By the Soothsayer's Nest

By the time the bramblings hit the seed it is early afternoon. I ringed two dozen yesterday, but none of the late lunch crowd out there seem to be amongst the banded. It appears to me that these are new parties of travel companions drawn in by this service station. The males are a vision of high definition colour, and in a couple of days they will all be gone – to Sweden's northernmost church in Karesuando, to the Norra Storfjället mountain range, to the Rapa Valley, to the town of Kuusamo in Finland ...

It is April.

On this page of the almanac there appears my acquaintance the raven, who I gather has just begun feeding. Solitary and single-minded, he crosses Gustafsson's woods and our north pastures, crop full, uninterested. He has been flying for three days and it is now the tenth of April.

He is quiet – there is barely a raven's cry in spring.

Many have observed ravens' nests, egg laying and other domestic business. A study from Sörmland (Tage Wahlberg, 1993) tells us that the average hatching date is the fourth of April: counting backwards and accounting for around three weeks sat on the eggs means a laying date of the tenth of March. That's the case in this district, too.

Wahlberg also finds – not entirely unexpectedly – a correlation between the raven's soothsaying

tendencies and breeding. One year, he says, the ravens postponed their brooding by around a week, even though it was a perfectly ordinary month in weather terms.

Later, when the ravens would usually hatch, the countryside was wrapped up in a snowy tempest: newly hatched chicks would have been in real trouble. A week later – once all was calm again – the ravens hatched.

And Wahlberg writes: 'Talk about foresight! They already knew what the weather would be like on the fourth of April way back on the tenth of March. The Swedish Met Office has much to learn from the raven!'

Now the raven must have lived through every kind of storm spring can throw at them for millennia, taking their bumps and scrapes as well as their gains. The exciting thing is that the reputed powers of these black birds are so clearly delineated: myth, wisdom and legend permeate ornithology. Our lore about birds and animals says so much about us – about something that has been lost, that may be valuable.

At least as a concept.

Translated by Ian Giles

Also by Göran Bergengren:



Tree Sparrow

Reflections and facts about a familiar bird

Swedish title: Pilfink

with illustrations by Gebbe Björkman

Non-fiction/essays

Publisher: Carlsson Bokförlag

Pub. date: 2007, Revised & expanded ed. 2017

147 pages (hb)



Butterfly Summers

Portraits of 75 Swedish butterfly species

Swedish title: Fjärilssomrar

with illustrations by Nils Forshed

Non-fiction/essays

Publisher: Carlsson Bokförlag

Pub. date: 2012

218 pages (hb)

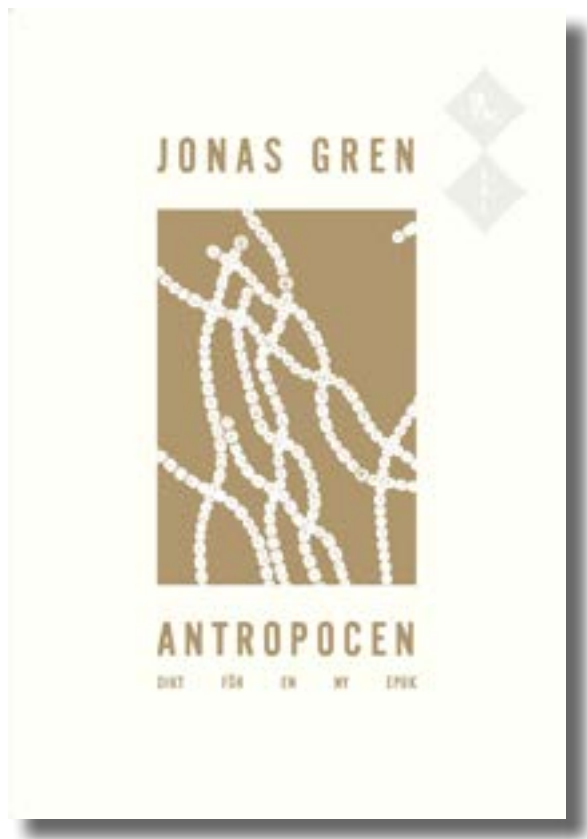


Plus... travel writing, numerous children's books about animals and the natural world – more than 30 titles in all!

Anthropocene. Poem for a new epoch

by Jonas Gren

Poetry



Taking its title from the human-influenced geological epoch in which we now live, this volume examines our impact on our world, climate, plants and animals. Jonas Gren draws on the language of science – biology, geology, astronomy – to address humankind’s place in the universe and the effects of industry and other man-made phenomena on the natural world.

Repetitions and short lines create a feeling of urgency and directness reminiscent of pop music, and there are ‘samples’ borrowed from classic Swedish poets. The final section of this volume, entitled ‘Necrocene’, adopts the structure of Allen Ginsburg’s *Howl*. Elements of humour and hope are present as well, with constructive suggestions: by replacing our arrogance with humility, we may have a chance of surviving as a species.

Swedish title: Antropocen. Dikt för en ny epok

Publisher: 10tal

Publication date: 2016

96 pages (paperback)

Rights contact: Madeleine Grive, 10tal

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Jonas Gren has published two highly-regarded volumes of poetry and contributed to several poetry anthologies, as well as devising a ‘telephone service’ with accompanying poems. He is also an editor and frequent contributor to the literary journal *10tal*. In addition to his work as a poet, he is a journalist on the editorial staff of *Effekt* magazine, which deals with climate and environmental issues.

“Gren’s achievement lies in not letting the material get bogged down by gravitas. He writes challenging poems that are nonetheless easy to take in by virtue of their grounding in expert knowledge. I believe in the power of literature to effect change. I believe in poetry. I believe in Jonas Gren.” —*Jönköpings-Posten*

Excerpts from *Anthropocene. Poem for a new epoch* by Jonas Gren

The Goldilocks zone
The perfect distance Between star and planet

They call it that Like in the story
about the creature
who flew through space
curls flowing
bombarded by ice-covered comets
and meteorites miles wide

You thought How amazing it would be
if there was a zone
for creatures like you
Habitable atmosphere
Near a star
with radiation weak enough
for the air
to cool your skin Strong enough
to warm your porridge

Goldilocks
The creature from outer space
who broke a hole in time
Curls cut to form particles of rock
fusing in the explosions
that created
this bedtime story
across the galaxy

Like the birch grows into the seasons
I sit rooted

attached to nebulae
and amoebas

No earthly eternity
Solar hydrogen finite

But there's
The pike The permafrost The plankton

How the jackdaw
finds its way in the flock

Room enough to turn
Close enough

Translated by Kate Lambert

Also by Jonas Gren:



The Land Survey

Exploring civilisation and ecosystems

Swedish title: Lantmäteriet

Poetry

Publisher: 10tal

Publication date: 2014

120 pages (pb)



Everywhere I will be in the centre

Poetry and telephone-based reading service

Swedish title: Överallt ska jag vara i centrum

Publisher: Non förlag

Publication date: 2015

25 pages (pb)

For more info, visit www.nonforlag.se

Anthology:



Blue Lightning 2: Towards this Sun

Edited by Casia Bromberg, Sanne Näsling

Six new Swedish poets

Swedish title: Blå blix 2. Mot denna sol

Poetry

Publisher: Brombergs

Publication date: 2013

122 pages (pb)

Walking Tune

by Elin Olofsson

Novel



Swedish title: Gånglåt

Publisher: Wahlström & Widstrand

Publication date: 2016

287 pages (paperback)

Rights contact: Elisabet Brännström, Bonnier Group Agency

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Elin Olofsson is a journalist and author of three novels. Her work features female characters who move between fast-paced life in Stockholm and the countryside in Jämtland, north-central Sweden. She wrote a regular column for the *Östersunds-Posten* newspaper and frequently appears as a panel speaker and moderator. Her most recent award nomination is for the Länstidningen Culture Prize, and she is a 2016 recipient of a cultural grant from Östersund municipality.

Sonia ‘Salida’ Sallström, a well-known singer-songwriter, takes time out from her hectic career in Stockholm and returns to her family’s farm in Jämtland in north-central Sweden to write her memoirs. She is accompanied by her young assistant Harpan. Sonia has promised Harpan he’ll have a carefree summer holiday in an unspoiled idyll.

When they arrive, they are met by Sonia’s elder sister Gun-Britt, who runs a small rural second-hand shop and café. She is a no-nonsense type who thinks everyone ought to pull their socks up – not least of all Sonia. Gun-Britt’s daughter Jenny has promised to help her aunt Sonia write her book, but spends most of the summer preoccupied by a remote mountain cabin. What’s more, there are bears roaming the area, digging through the rubbish and causing a general stir.

As the summer goes by, it becomes clear that it will be a time of discovery, of rekindling old relationships, of desire, discord, and music – as if the world is veering in and out of the rhythm of time’s own melody.

“Elin Olofsson’s strong point is her eye for people’s weak points. She picks them open with humour and language, using a toolkit that contains sharp instruments. *Walking tune* is beyond just readable.” —*Dagens Nyheter*

Excerpt from *Walking Tune* by Elin Olofsson

It looked as though someone had pinched out the middle of the mountain so the road could find a way through. It sneaked out from between the two mountain peaks and then veered sharply to the left before gradually descending into the valley.

Right there on the sharp curve they had had to widen the road as far as possible and build a lay-by complete with railings so that no-one could topple over the edge. Tourists always stopped and here and got out to look at the view. He and Sonia had also stopped to look, though there was nothing new for her to see. She wasn't in fact looking for anything new. She was looking for the past. Powerlines stretched like taut strings over the forest and far away on the horizon there was the blue of the firs.

"Everything we make we send south. Timber, electricity and singers," Sonia's father had said all those years ago.

And she had followed the flow of the current. Travelling through the same forest she was now going through but in reverse. Was that the sort of thing they hoped she would tell them? About the train that rattled the life out of her before she arrived in central Stockholm? About the stain on her top from the beetroot dripping out of the sandwich she'd taken with her? About how they brought a singing teacher to the studio to correct her pronunciation at the first recording session.

About how unclear her future had seemed then.

Everything she'd felt so keenly that even now it still hurt.

Or had they wanted something else to happen?

Words without music. A sequence of events with no melody.

But what was left of her life?

Sonia found it tough to answer.

Translated by Hannah Charlton

Also by Elin Olofsson:



And then I think of Sigrid

Leaving the big city, facing one's past

Swedish title: *Då tänker jag på Sigrid*

Novel

Publisher: Wahlström & Widstrand

Publication date: 2013

255 pages (hb)



To the Girls in the Lake

Is it necessary to revisit the past to become free of it?

Swedish title: *Till flickorna i sjön*

Novel

Publisher: Wahlström & Widstrand

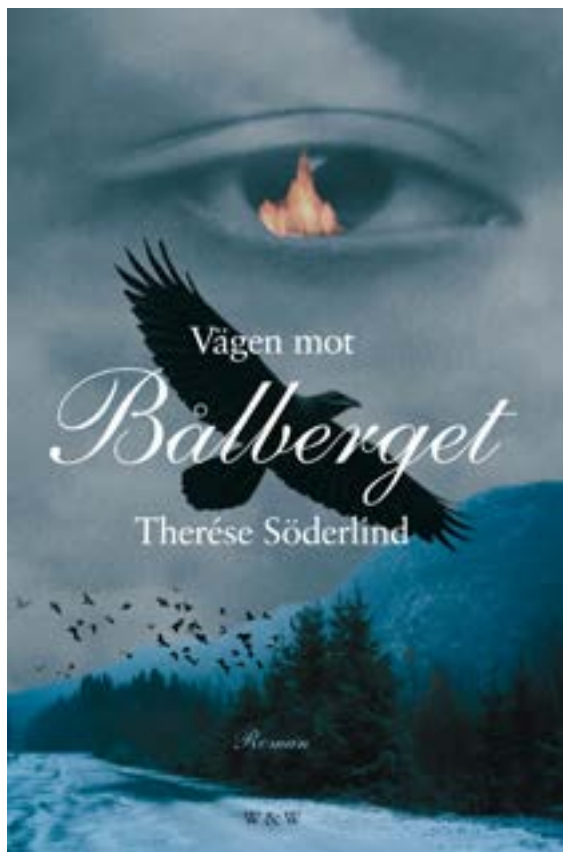
Publication date: 2014

238 pages (hb)

The Road to Fire Mountain

by Therése Söderlind

Novel



Swedish title: Vägen mot Bälberget

Publisher: Wahlström & Widstrand

Publication date: 2013

590 pages (hardback)

Rights contact: Amanda Bértolo Alderin, Bonnier Group Agency

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One late summer's day in 1975, Jacke and his teenage daughter Veronica climb up Fire Mountain in their family's home district of Nyland in Ångermanland, northern Sweden. People say the mountain was the site where women accused of witchcraft in the seventeenth century were executed and burnt at the stake.

The narrative then shifts three centuries back in time. Malin lives in Nyland, near the mouth of the Ångerman River on the Baltic coast. In 1674 she is accused of witchcraft and imprisoned. As she awaits her fate, she reflects on her life and her never-ending struggles against oppression. Another source of anguish is her unruly daughter who repeatedly runs away.

One of Malin's accusers is her neighbours' son Olof. Like all children, he has a lively imagination and often invents fanciful stories about Malin's daughter. But the line between fantasy and reality is crossed when an older boy arrives with tales of another world populated by mysterious forces and creatures. Suddenly Olof finds himself drawn into a horrific witchcraft trial.

Only in his old age is Olof able to look back and recall the role he played in the mass hysteria that devastated an entire community.

The Road to Fire Mountain spans several centuries. It is a novel about four people – four destinies – one rural hamlet. What is the role of history and of family? Therése Söderlind's epic tale, based on real-life events, examines the notion of origins and roots.

Recipient of a grant from the Vilhelm Moberg Society in 2014



Therése Söderlind grew up in the north of Sweden, which is also the focus of much of her writing. In 2008 she completed a Master's Degree in Creative Writing at Lund University. She has received several awards for her two novels, which explore roots, nature and history in isolated villages in northern Sweden. She has also published short stories. Before becoming a full-time writer she spent many years abroad, but today she lives in the Swedish university city of Uppsala and goes back north every summer.

Excerpt from *The Road to Fire Mountain* by Therése Söderlind

Winter arrived, black and bleak. By the time the snow had settled, Yule was nearly upon us, and since all the signs pointed to an early spring, we felt we could afford to celebrate Christ's birth with sausage, fish and dried meat, and we lit a few tallow tapers and our faces reddened from the light, the ale and the brandy. But no-one set out a bowl of porridge for the household sprite, and Erke laughed in my face when I said I wasn't easy in my mind about that. My grandmother on Father's side had set great store by a Yuletide treat for the sprite, but Erke reminded me that the new chaplain, Master Lars, had explicitly forbidden such things. The household sprite was a fiend sworn to the Evil One himself, and it wasn't right to feed it. I was in two minds. The new chaplain was such a vigorous man, and he spoke with such authority about the importance of serving God, and it suited me not to keep up the

tradition when we had barely enough for ourselves anyway – but even so I felt it was tempting fate.

Then we tightened our belts again. During the weeks when dawn met dusk with scarce a glimmer of light in between, our footprints linked the cottage, the barn and the outhouse. All around lay unblemished snow. There might have been the odd hare's track or patch of bird's droppings, but nothing else. Finally, the edge of the forest emerged from the shadows long enough for Erke to make his way past the hay barn and go out to see if he could catch any birds.

Despite all the signs, the winter was long. Even with the return of the light, the snow refused to melt in March and let the grass start sprouting in April; as Easter approached, we still had snowdrifts piled against the north side of the cottage.

Translated by Fiona Graham

"Therése Söderlind moves among the historical milieu of Ångermanland so assuredly, one almost suspects she has found a time machine. With considerable psychological acuity she unearths events that are still capable of sending shock waves into the present day – events we cannot afford to ignore." —*Göteborgs-Posten*

Also by Therése Söderlind:



The Melancholy of Norrland

A childhood trauma has far-reaching consequences

Swedish title: Norrlands svärmod

Novel

Publisher: Wahlström & Widstrand

Publication date: 2010

447 pages (hb)

Winner, Norrlands litteraturpris 2011

Anthology:



Letters to my daughter

Edited by Elcim Yilmaz

Women writers share their life experience and advice

Swedish title: Brev till min dotter

Non-fiction/essays

Publisher: Forum

Publication date: 2017

224 pages (hb)

Additional titles of interest



Live Like a Farmer. 100 Steps towards Natural Living

by Niklas Kämpargård

Practical tips for outdoorsy folk and urban hipsters

Swedish title: Lev som en bonde

Illustrated non-fiction/how-to

Pub. by Norstedts, 2016

223 pages (hb)

Rights contact: Katrine Bech-Taxholm, Norstedts Agency

katrine.bech-taxholm@norstedts.se



Wild Boar

by Hannah Lutz

Allegorical invasion by a herd of destructive animals

Swedish title: Vildsvin

Literary fiction – novella

Pub. by Förlaget (Finland), 2017

99 pages (hb)

Rights contact: Cecilie Højmark,

Gyldendal Group Agency cecilie_hoejmark@gyldendalgroupagency.dk



Beasts and Other Stories

by Stina Stoor

Earthy outsiders in rural northern Sweden

Swedish title: Bli som folk

Literary fiction – short stories

Pub. by Norstedts, 2015

211 pages (hb)

Rights contact: Linda Altrov Berg, Norstedts Agency

linda.altrovberg@norstedts.se

English extract published in Swedish Book Review 2016:1

Nominated for the August Prize 2015



That Which Does Not Grow Must Die

by Jesper Weithz

Human fragility in the face of a looming crisis

Swedish title: Det som inte växer är döende

Fiction – eco-thriller

Pub. by Natur och Kultur, 2013

260 pages (pb)

Rights contact: Nina Eidem, Natur och Kultur

nina.eidem@nok.se

English extract published in Swedish Book Review 2014:2

About SELTA

The Swedish-English Literary Translators' Association (SELTA) was founded in 1982. Today SELTA has over 60 members including award-winning translators of literary fiction and Nordic Noir as well as postgraduate students and emerging translators. SELTA holds two meetings per year, plus occasional special events.

SELTA's key aims are to promote the publication of Swedish and Finland-Swedish literature in English and to represent the interests of those involved in the translation of Swedish literature into English.

About Swedish Book Review

Swedish Book Review (SBR) is an independent literary journal. It was launched in 1983 and is published twice annually, in spring and autumn. The main aim of SBR is to present Swedish literature to the English-speaking world and to other countries through the medium of English. It carries translated extracts from the works of Swedish writers as well as related articles such as author interviews, translation topics and news features.

Each issue includes an extensive reviews section edited by an expert in the field. SBR's reviews are a valuable source of independent information about recently published Swedish titles.

Sources of translation grants and other support

The Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet)

The Swedish Arts Council offers translation grants to publishers as well as production grants for illustrated non-fiction, graphic novels and children's picture books. Publishers can apply for travel grants to bring authors over for book launches and festival appearances. Applications are via an online form, and there are several application periods each year.

The Swedish Arts Council also administers a fellowship programme for publishers to visit the Gothenburg Book Fair in late September. The application deadline is in early May each year. Participants receive a travel allowance, hotel accommodation and entry to the book fair. There is a programme of talks with time left for participants' own meetings.

kulturradet.se/swedishliterature/

SELTA's website contains a news section and a blog where members can contribute articles about their work and other events in the literary translation world. There is also a members' directory with individual profiles. Publishers can use the directory to find and contact translators for their own projects.

Visit the SELTA website: www.selta.org.uk

SELTA on Twitter: @SELTAtweets

Selected articles and translated excerpts from the print journal are published on SBR's website. The website also contains a searchable database of book reviews that have appeared in the journal.

SBR is published by Norvik Press and is the house journal of SELTA. Copies are distributed at book fairs including London and Frankfurt. Annual print subscriptions are available at £20.

Visit the SBR website:

www.swedishbookreview.com

SBR on Twitter: @swedishbooks

The Anglo-Swedish Literary Foundation

Grants are available to support translations of Swedish literature into English as well as visits by Swedish authors to the UK. Application letters and materials should be submitted by 1 May or 1 November.

The ASLF also funds the Bernard Shaw Translation Prize, awarded every three years to the best English translation of a work of Swedish literature published in the UK.

Google **Anglo Swedish Literary Foundation**

FILI – Finnish Literature Exchange

FILI supports and promotes the literature of Finland abroad, including Finland-Swedish literature. FILI awards translation grants, production grants and travel grants. Applications are via an online form, with several application periods each year.

www.finlit.fi/fili/en/

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**SWEDISH
ARTSCOUNCIL**



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