

CV, Stefano Foconi

Author

I have been writing full time since 1990 and have at the moment published 17 literary books. I live in Stockholm and do not exclude any literary genre from my attention.

Published work:

Lergök (Clay ocarina), Bonnier 1991. The subtitle of this book is "natures", a cuckoo in the fauna of literature, a collection of textual mutations from the animal kingdom, ranging from fairly simple organisms to the higher branches on the tree of evolution. Clay ocarina puts a special focus on parasitical relations between various species and individuals.

Inga vildar (No savages), Bonnier 1992, is a human ABC in the form of a series of quasi-anthropological surveys of what was once called "primitive cultures" ranging from Australian hunter gatherers to Native American tribes of Alaska. Every group of humans is obviously impregnated with culture, even those most unlike our own seemingly so successful one, but for that matter not necessarily less violent. If there is at all any populations today with practices of their own, then their rituals are taking place in our midst.

As can be seen from the title of **Vitahusår (White house years)**, Bonnier 1993, this unconventional novel – the last piece in a trilogy about life on earth from creation to apocalypse – takes place in Washington DC, since I wanted to hint that the very crescent of creation could be exemplified by the persona of Ronald Reagan, while the real protagonist is a missile carrying strategic submarine hidden in the depths of the ocean, awaiting order to release its deadly cargo in a nuclear Armageddon.

In 1998 Bonnier published an account of an Italian childhood between the two world wars, called **Rå umbra bränd umbra (Raw umber burned umber)**, an episodic version of my father's youth in Umbria and Rome, eventually resulting in his final escape from the tempestuous family life to that land of ice and desolation called Sweden.

My first collection of poetry was published in 2006, named **Människa strax (Human instantly)**, Symposion, about death observed from the perspective of a prolonged withering away of a father being immediately followed by a younger brother's more sudden and unexpected decease. What does death do with us while we live? What is the relation between the living and those that have gone before us? These poems mould with rage and astonishment how death transforms life while it goes on.

Om trädgårdskonsten (On the art of gardening), Themis 2011, is the first in a series of four essays about the human existence. Experiences from growing more than 300 different species of exotic trees from seed permeates a narration that relates to the genre of garden books as the roar of laughter to anxiety, or the abyss and defiance towards assured faith and the decorative.

Hade en bror (Had a brother), Themis 2012, with its subtitle a son, a man, a love, is a collage of voices in three parts: a novel in the first person singular, an inquiry into a murder case and a dramatic dialogue. From many perspectives the question about the value of a human life is asked. Another mayor theme is an exploration of the borders between truth and lie in a relationship. Is the psychopath perhaps the ultimate symbol of our own narcissistic, exhibitionistic and consumistic era? The Inferno of Dante is here and now. Hamlet is you and I. The mosaic of witnesses is without end.

Together with colleague Tomas Andersson I have travelled in the Middle East (taken in its grandest sense) since 1999. We have published five books on the region. These are no conventional travelogues. We have striven to merge literary impressions and roaming with interviews and essays in culture history. The composition is fragmented and the perspectives many. The reader is supposed to put the details of the "carpet" together on his or her own. We show the richness of the Middle East, giving a face to strong and individual persons and voices against the background of brutality, traditions and rapidly changing circumstances.

These five books of more than 2 000 pages are called **The man in the ceiling, aspects of Iran** (Tranan 2003, translated into Persian by Namdar Nasser, published by nordient 2011), **Café Musa, Egyptian travels** (Leopard 2007), **Land of the Turks, Anatolian portraits** (Leopard 2009), **The Levant, the Middle East without borders** (Dialogos 2016), portraying – with today's borders – contemporary Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel/Palestine and **In the shadow of the wall – Israel/Palestine**, a special study on the Israeli/Palestinian territory through the ages (Carlsson, 2021).

My monography on the city of Istanbul was published by Dialogos in 2014. The title is **Istanbul, vandringar i Europas största stad/strolls in the largest city of Europe**. The analysis of this unique former capitol of three empires tries to explain why the city looks as it does today, why it has always evoked strong feelings among Europeans and is today of mayor concern for everyone interested in history and urban life. During six meandering walks in time and space the reader will clench with Istanbul and learn many of its oddities and unknown treasures.

The second thematic essay about what it might mean to be human was published as **Om kokkonsten, On the art of cooking** (Daidalos 2017). It is a book about culinary transformations from a global perspective, starting some 500 000 years ago with the taming of fire, leading up to the present delicate moment on the brink of ecological disaster. In this study of our attitudes towards food I show how culture always permeates what, how and when we eat, as well as what is disregarded.

The third book in this series is called **Om kärlekskonsten, On the art of love** (Daidalos 2020), an essay on sex and eroticism from the stone age to the present analysing as various items as the culture history of the genitals, procreation from an evolutionary perspective, phenomena as falling in love, jealousy, intersex, queer theory, prostitution, pornography, celibacy/promiscuity and perversion.

Three short novels taking place in the future (**Senilia, Tvåtusentjugoåtta/Twothousandtwentyeight and Neutronstjärnan/Star of neutrons**) was in 2023 published under the title **Tre dystopier, Three dystopias** (Ultima Esperanza). What happens when there is no longer, again, national states or the value of the individual is reduced to almost nothing?

The last essay on being human came out in 2024, as **Om dödskonsten, On the art of dying** (BoD). The book is about dying and death in the Occident from Rome during emperor Nero and philosopher Seneca to the present. The books attempts to answer what our awareness of the forthcoming death does with us while we live, how the modern secular world, with its medical achievements has changed our perspectives and in fact threatens the individual's exclusive right to its own death – on this side of suicide – as a unique experience.

Stockholm May 2024

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