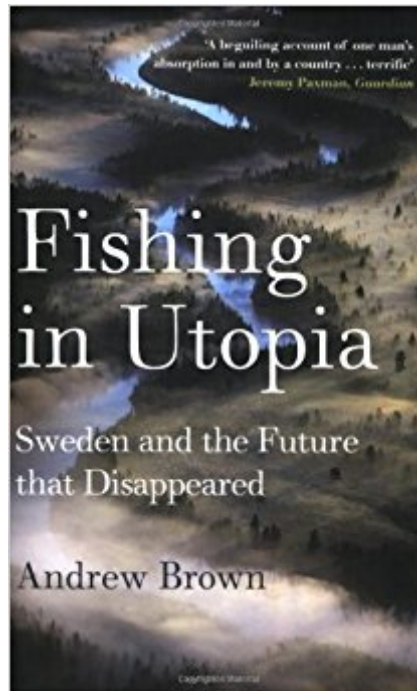




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Fishing In Utopia: Sweden And The Future That Disappeared



Synopsis

From the 1960s to the 1980s, Sweden was an affluent, egalitarian country envied around the world. Refugees were welcomed, even misfit young Englishmen could find a place there. Andrew Brown spent part of his childhood in Sweden during the 1960s. In the 1970s he married a Swedish woman and worked in a timber mill raising their small son. Fishing became his passion and his escape. In the mid-1980s his marriage and the country fell apart. The Prime Minister was assassinated. The welfare system crumbled along with the industries that had supported it. 20 years later Andrew Brown traveled the length of Sweden in search of the country he had loved, and then hated, and now found he loved again.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'... Mr Brown's prose is as clear and bewitching as the lake waters which he learns to fish ...

Readers who know the Nordic countries will delight in the author's keen ear and eye for the nuances of language, landscape and social customs' - Economist' - he is a deft writer with a real descriptive talent and a humorous touch - this is an affectionate and insightful portrait, offering a much deeper understanding of the country than the usual, often politically motivated, tendency to stereotype' -

Financial Times'Fishing in Utopia is a lament for a lost Eden. But it is more than that. Essentially it is a story of modern rootlessness and the search for something to believe in. The fact that that something turns out, absurdly, to be fishing only makes it more tragic. I can see it becoming a cult book, and not just among anglers' - Sunday Times 'His evocations of his early years in the country are miracles of sensuous recollection' - Telegraph

Andrew Brown writes for The Guardian and is the author of The Darwin Wars and In the Beginning Was the Worm.

He has some really good insights into Sweden. The book is referenced by others for how he is able to convey their way of life. Another book along these lines is The Almost Nearly Perfect People: Behind the Myth of the Scandinavian Utopia by Michael Booth. And specific to Denmark: The year of living danishly: Uncovering the Secrets of the World's Happiest Country by Helen Russell. The Russell book is very woman perspective (she's pregnant in Denmark) where Brown is very guy-ish: he's got some long details on fishing which you can skip. All three are English, which is a good kick to Americans as the English have their own pecking order that Americans need to get some perspective. All three are very good.

Would not recommend. Almost died of boredom.

as advertised

Very interesting incites into Swedish attitudes.

'Provincial, evangelical Christianity [in Sweden] was constructed around the absence of alcohol much as Solomon's temple was built around the empty tabernacle.' That's a taster of the style Brownian. Gibbonian, no? This book occupies an uncategorisable niche. Think of it as an extended essay, or meditation, not about Sweden or fishing - neither of which interest me in the slightest - though of course it is, but more of an elegy for 'the kind of spacious, useful and honourable life' (restricted, yes, but organic) that 'all went to hell' after the euphoria of 1989 and the quaintly named 'neoliberal' wave that succeeded it. No doubt there were other factors besides the wall coming down - globalization, containerisation and so forth were already at large - but in all this we (read: our representatives) lost sight of the human factor, blinded by dollar signs. Like any essay, and the best memoirs, this is itself organic - life writing at its finest

An interesting story of Sweden written by a British journalist with maybe "a little axe to grind." Andrew Brown spent many years as a resident of Sweden in the 1970s-80s. Went back to Britain a bit disgruntled, remained there for awhile, then got the urge to try Sweden again. He found Sweden

had changed. FISHING IN UTOPIA is a lament for a lost Eden. It is a journey into the past. You may appreciate this book for countless reasons: contemporary state of affairs of Sweden and vivid descriptions of the country's nature because of somewhat unusual fishing trips for fish. For a well written book that is both educational and entertaining; this is one to read now! Dag Stomberg
St. Andrews, Scotland

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I grew up in a household where Swedish was still spoken, my Grandmother and my paternal great grandparents having come over on the boat. As I read the book I felt like I was finally coming to understand my childhood and Swedish heritage. First of all, Sweden was never really socialist, if by that one means public ownership of the means of production without the dictatorship of the proletariat. Britain and France were the leaders in that department. Sweden's welfare state was not an economic policy but a cultural one and my understanding of that was improved dramatically, although perhaps only viscerally, by this book. The financial implications were just a part of a broader culture of adamantly enforced conformity and uniformity. The fact is an entrepreneur could do at least as much, and often times more, in this Utopia than in Britain or France, he just couldn't keep the profits. His description of his experience of why this was so and his brief mention of the theory behind it, the laws of "Jante", was spot on. Perhaps it's because this English cultural "spy" could also speak to the side of me that is of English extraction, but I do think it is accessible to many. I'm not into fishing, but the fishing stories are more about the people who fish and the many places it took the author than the fish themselves. His contrasts with fishing in Britain were instructive. The Swedes I know have no self awareness and if forced to develop it become extremely combative. This may have been what changed Olaf Palme while at an American college. They don't like this in themselves, so they instead become extremely insular and the explanation for the dynamic of the welfare state becomes reduced to mere finance, which is not. The author does

give a good explanation of why this is disappearing, but it is brief as his return to Sweden was brief and thus may not be readily understood without someone with a Swedish background.

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