

Netherlands, the quieter William, who had been at Cape St Vincent and ends the book in Malta learning of the death of both his father and his brother. There are his sisters: Mary, who piously eloped with a future moderator to avoid the temptations of Vanity Fair; and Elizabeth, whose husband had burned down a town in America during the war of independence. Beyond this are glimpses of the earl of Morton and his scientific inclinations, the Dundases, Henry and Sir Lawrence, Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, Thomas Balfour's in-laws the Ligonier family, and even Charles James Fox, briefly MP for the Northern Burghs, elected in Kirkwall.

Dr. Fereday handles the overpowering wealth of material with an immense sureness that seldom deserts him. Occasionally there is repetition – we are twice told where the parish of Bolton is – and there do seem times when a slightly more select approach to quotations might have been advisable. Moreover, it does seem odd in view of this last point to find a letter of William Balfour described as ‘a vigorous histrionic performance highly charged with emotive blackmail’, which yet remains unillustrated, as in this instance does Balfour’s ‘literary talent, natural melancholia and paternal concern [which] enabled him to strike Garrick-like notes of tragedy and despair well-calculated to wring the heart of a friend, even a lawyer’ (his own representative Samuel Mitchelson). However such points can only rarely be made; elsewhere the judicious use of the material causes the characters of the principals to shine clearly through.

As a volume, the book is an attractive one, well produced and with few literal errors. It has four good photographs of family portraits, including the Raeburns of Thomas and David Balfour, and a copious index. Although, rather oddly, the page headers do not include chapter titles, there are old-fashioned but agreeable synopses of chapters in the contents list (very useful for a reviewer!). All in all this is an indispensable addition to any library on Orkney and Shetland and a splendid contribution to the inspiring current work on the islands’ history.

Peter D. Anderson

A Note on the Swedish Book Review

If you want to keep up with Swedish fiction, poetry, and drama, indeed, with the world of Swedish books generally, where do you turn? One obvious answer is the journal Swedish Book Review. Founded in 1983 with the aim of ‘presenting Swedish literature to English-speaking readers in an informative and stimulating way’, the journal appears twice a year, the second issue accompanied by a supplement. During 1990, Swedish Book Review has presented novelists such as Agneta Pleijel, Sara Lidman, Kjell-Olof Bornemark, and Sigrid Combüchen; Combüchen’s Byron was due to be published in English in April this year. The 1990 supplement, generously illustrated and running to 92 pages, focuses on Swedish children’s literature, from classics such as Elsa Beskow’s picture books, Astrid Lindgren’s Pippi Longstocking, and Tove Jansson’s Finn Family Moomintroll to more recent favourites such as Gunilla Bergström’s Alfons Åberg – sorry, Alfie Atkins – and much else.

Swedish Book Review originates from the pioneering journal Swedish Books, published in Gothenburg from 1979 to 1982 by Jeremy Franks. Swedish Book Review is published on behalf of SELTA, the Swedish English Literary Translators’ Association, which was established in 1982. Since its foundation, the journal has been edited by Laurie Thompson, a lecturer in Swedish at St. David’s University College in Lampeter, Wales, as well as a translator. The

contributors are chiefly professional translators and academics based in Britain, the United States, and Scandinavia.

A typical issue of Swedish Book Review contains a wide range of material. Authors are usually profiled in introductory articles which are followed by extracts in translation. In the case of poetry, the Swedish original is printed alongside the English translation. Over the past eight years, the journal has provided a remarkably comprehensive picture of contemporary Swedish writing, encompassing novelists such as Ivar Lo-Johansson, Birgitta Trotzig, Gerda Antti, Sven Delblanc, Theodor Kallifatides, Per Gunnar Evander, Kerstin Ekman, Per Olof Sundman, Stig Claesson, Per Wästberg, and Per Olof Enquist, and poets such as Tomas Tranströmer, Kjell Espmark, Kristina Lugn, Marie Louise Ramnefalk, Eva Runefelt, and Elisabet Hermodsson. The regular surveys of new Swedish fiction and poetry offer a most useful means of keeping up to date, as do the book reviews and the SELTA book reports, i.e. short reports on new Swedish books read by SELTA members. At intervals, moreover, Swedish Book Review publishes extensive bibliographies of recent English translations of Swedish literature and of books in English on aspects of Sweden.

As its title suggests, Swedish Book Review also highlights works of non-fiction. The front and back covers, for example, provide an effective means of introducing illustrated books. Thus the first issue for 1990 boasts Eugene Jansson's famous painting 'Dawn over Riddarfjärden', which is reproduced from a new study of Nordic art at the turn of the century and which, at the same time, heralds an extensive survey of recent books about Stockholm. The journal also keeps its readers up to date with what is happening in the Swedish publishing world, the small – and exciting – publishers having received particular attention over the years.

With many eminent translators among its contributors, Swedish Book Review frequently contains stimulating and challenging articles about the complex art of translating. Notable among the authors have been Joan Tate, one of Britain's most prolific translators of Swedish fiction, and the late Mary Sandbach, who achieved a world-wide reputation as a translator of Strindberg.

Most of the comprehensive supplements, often edited by specialist guest editors, have focused on novelists from the second half of the twentieth century, among them P.C. Jersild, Stig Dagerman, Torgny Lindgren, and Göran Tunström. The 1989 supplement was devoted to the poet Johannes Edfelt, while the 1987 supplement provided a wide-ranging exploration of contemporary Swedish drama, involving specialist articles, translated extracts, and a survey of the problems attendant on translating plays. August Strindberg, playwright, poet, and novelist, has also been the subject of an appropriately multi-faceted and exciting supplement.

With Swedish literature traditionally having received less attention in Britain than, say, in Germany or France, Swedish Book Review is making a crucial contribution. In the autumn of 1990, moreover, Sweden applied for full membership of the European Community, and there is no doubt that familiarity with Swedish literature and culture will soon be a necessity rather than a mere luxury. Swedish Book Review is clearly in the vanguard of a major new development.

Helena Forsås-Scott

(The 1991 subscription rate for Swedish Book Review – two issues plus a supplement – is £10. Anyone interested in subscribing should get in touch with the Editor, Laurie Thompson, St. David's University College, Lampeter, SA48 7ED, Wales.)