

Sundman wrote in an article in 1970 ("Om att övertolka" *B.L.M.*) that Olle Stensson, the "I" of *Två dagar, två nätter*, is not a wholly reliable narrator. He gives obviously wrong information time and again. So even if we read the text very closely we still have this extra factor to contend with.

But this is the strength of Sundman's writing. We are given exact descriptions of physical events, but there are almost no metaphors and no vague formulations about moral or aesthetic values. We aren't even sure when an action begins and ends. We don't know what is of particular significance. The result is that we read everything carefully, not wanting to miss any clues.

We also come to realise that our interpretations will differ from those of other readers; that because of what we are we'll notice or respond to some details and not others. In the end this leads at best to a realisation of the fact that no event is an open and shut case, which must surely be a healthy sign in a community which values human rights.

The following English translations of Sundman's novels have appeared:

The Expedition (Expeditionen) 1967, Secker and Warburg.
Two Days, Two Nights (Två dagar, två nätter) 1969
 Pantheon books.
The Flight of the Eagle (Ingenjör Andréés luftfärd) 1970
 Secker and Warburg.

Some Contemporary Swedish and Danish Literature in the National Library of Scotland

Stephen Holland

Traditionally the purchasing policy of the National Library has treated emerging authors with caution. We have not been in a position to buy the works of writers who fade away after five or six years of critical acclaim, but have preferred to concentrate our resources on authors of proven worth. Consequently our task in choosing contemporary literature is not an

easy one, especially in the Scandinavian field, where so many writers are currently active. An attempt is nevertheless made to reflect new trends and to purchase important new writing. I have noted here several Swedish and Danish authors whose work is now represented in the Library. A later article will deal with Norwegian literature.

Sweden

The concern in Sweden with documentary writing and 'reportage' which began to gather momentum in the mid 1960s is seen in Sven Delblanc's diary-novel *Åsnebrygga* (1969), written whilst Delblanc was spending a year as visiting professor at the University of Berkeley at the time of the student riots there. The author's personal experiences and impressions of the USA show the confrontation between a writer's own individuality and his political engagement, a confrontation central to Swedish literature at this time. Delblanc's travels also took him to Persia, a journey recorded in *Zahak* (1971). In *Trampa Vatten* (1972) Delblanc reflects on society and literature in a series of sketches, a genre increasingly common since the 1960s.

As editor until 1972 of the influential literary review Bonniers Litterära Magasin, Lars Gustafsson played an important role as a critic in the 60s and 70s. A selection of his criticism between 1965 and 1972 on literature, art and ideas — an analysis of modern Swedish society — has appeared in *Kommentarer* (1972). In 1971 he published *Herr Gustafsson själv*, a novel of confession, relating a Swedish intellectual's development from the 1950s to the 1970s, inexorable in its criticism both of the author himself and of contemporary Sweden. A similar work, *Yllet*, containing some of Gustafsson's most bitter prose, appeared in 1973. Gustafsson is also a poet of some note. A translation by Robin Fulton, *Lars Gustafsson: selected poems*, was published in 1972 and includes work from recent collections *Bröderna Wright uppsöker Kitty Hawk* (1968) and *Kärleksförklaring till en sefardisk dam* (1970).

In his collections *Ända* (1968), *Oktoberdikter* (1971), *Försök* (1972) and *Visor svarta och röda* (1972), Lars Forssell maintains his reputation as one of Sweden's leading contemporary poets. Perhaps equally interesting is his volume of

essays and journalism written between 1949 and 1968 and collected into *Nedslag* (1969), where the articles, covering literature, music and the cinema, as well as 'committed' impressions of America and Rhodesia, shows Forssell as a critic and journalist of the highest class.

Poetry has been consistently prominent in contemporary Swedish literature. Some of the work of Gunnar Ekelöf, acknowledged by many critics as one of the greatest lyric poets Sweden has produced, was translated by W.H. Auden and Leif Sjöberg and appeared as *Selected Poems* (1971) in the Penguin Modern European Poets series. Taken from two of his last collections, these translations emphasize Ekelöf's almost exclusive pre-occupation with oriental mysticism at this stage of his life. After his death in 1968 the poet's widow edited some of the many papers he left: *Partitur* (1969) contains previously unpublished poems written between 1965 and 1968, *En självbiografi* (1971) and *En röst* (1973) contains letters and notes.

The poetry of Tomas Tranströmer has become known internationally and has, through the translations of Robin Fulton, gained a place in the latest volume of the Penguin series, a joint selection of the poems of Tranströmer and the Finnish poet Paavo Haavikko. Tranströmer's previous collection, *Mörkerseende* (1970), was one of the most successful publications of the Swedish Writers' Cooperative (Författarförlaget). His latest, *Östersjöar* (1974), has been ordered and will be available later in the year.

After lifelong identification in his writing with the Swedish peasant/small farmer, Vilhelm Moberg published shortly before his death *Min svenska historia* (1970-71). This history of Sweden is not written from the standpoint of the professional historian, but, in the author's own words, 'has been mainly determined by my own experience of Swedish people, derived from my own background'. It is the history of the Swedish common man. A translation by Paul Britten Austin has been published as *A History of the Swedish People* (1971-73). Following Moberg's death in 1973, new editions of several of his earlier works were produced: those not already held by

the Library have been ordered.

New editions have also been published of many of the works of the joint 1974 Nobel Prize winners, Harry Martinson and Eyvind Johnson. Perhaps the best-known of these works is Martinson's space-ship allegory *Aniara*, written in 1956 and performed as an opera at the 1959 Edinburgh Festival. These editions should be available for consultation later in the year.

Denmark

Since his debut in 1956, Klaus Rifbjerg has become one of Denmark's leading authors, with work in all major genres. *Konfrontation* (1960, 3rd edition 1972) was a significant work in his development and in the development of recent Danish poetry. Confrontation has become a key word, although in this work the relationship of the artist to modern life lacks the political overtones it has since acquired. A selection of Rifbjerg's poetry, taken from eight collections written between 1956 and 1967, appeared in *I Skyttens tegn* (1970).

In an attempt to involve his readers in the composition of a work, Rifbjerg wrote in 1972 a telephone-novel, using suggestions from listeners during a series of six 'phone-in' radio programmes. *Rifbjergs lytterroman* records the development of this idea and includes the text of the telephone conversations.

Villy Sørensen has established himself as one of the best critical minds in Denmark and become one of its most successful imaginative writers. His production has maintained a consistently high level and has been influential in moulding critical opinion among his contemporaries. *Mellem fortid og fremtid* (1969), a collection of journalistic articles written between 1954 and 1968, can be seen as a chronicle of attitudes and opinions since the mid-50s. In his analysis of Kafka's work, *Kafkas digtning* (1968), Sørensen recalls the parallels he had earlier drawn between Kafka's writing and his own.

The documentary novel, so popular in Scandinavia in the 1960s, attempting to re-experience historical events without the imaginative free play of the traditional historical novel,

has its main Danish exponent in Thorkild Hansen. *Jens Munk* (1965), translated as *North West to Hudson Bay* (1970), relates Munk's seventeenth-century search for the Northwest Passage; *Slavernes Skibe* (1968) and *Slavernes Øer* (1970) are concerned with the Danish slave trade.

The anthology of poetry *Færøske digte 1900-1971* (1972), edited by Poul P.M. Pedersen, reflects the considerable literary activity in the Faeroes. It includes the work of the brothers J.H.O. and H.A. Djurhuus, of William Heinesen and Christian Matras. Later poetry by Heinesen, the Faeroes' most distinguished literary figures of recent times, is included in the collection *Panorama med regnbue* (1972).

Skýr

This Icelandic version of curd cheese must have been eaten in the Age of the Settlements and is still part of the daily food of most Icelandic families. It is remarkably filling and, in earlier times, probably went a good way towards satisfying hungry stomachs in a country where there was no porridge, pasta, rice or baked bread. The acidity of skýr may well have kept the Icelanders free of scurvy, for their diet was almost totally lacking in fruit or vegetables.

Skýr is a very dense cheese and needs to be diluted with milk or milk and water — Icelandic ladies take sides quite passionately about which is best. It is eaten in a bowl with pouring cream and sugar and is also excellent with fresh blaeberries or, indeed, with any soft fruit.

The following recipe has been kindly supplied by Mrs. J.T. Coppock:

2 pints of milk with the cream poured off.

1 teaspoonful of old skýr

1 drop of rennet

Boil the milk and let it cool to 40°C. for about 5 hours, until it has set like junket. Cut the curds and leave till cold. Tie a muslin cloth over a wide bowl, put the curds into it and leave to strain for 24 hours.