

and has struggled to impose unity on diversity. Nevertheless, as indicated at the start, the sheer scope of coverage in the book is impressive. D'Arcy has drawn together, into one volume, many different literary works and the links between and among these, which he has suggested, will be debated at length and other fresh links will be perceived and, in turn, debated. D'Arcy has done a substantial service to the cause of promoting discussion of 'Old Norse Influence on Modern Scottish Literature.' His efforts deserve recognition and praise.

*Doreen J. Waugh*

David Stevenson

*Scotland's Last Royal Wedding. The Marriage of James VI and Anne of Denmark*

John Donald Publishers Ltd.,  
Edinburgh, 1997.  
158pp., £14.95.  
ISBN 0-85976-451-6.

The marriage of King James VI of Scotland and Anne of Denmark in 1589 is probably best remembered for the notorious witch-trials which followed in its wake. But as David Stevenson points out in his lively new book, James's biographers have shown surprisingly little interest in the detail of the marriage itself: an omission for which he takes them to task:

James's marriage and its context are particularly interesting and even entertaining in a number of respects. It was Scotland's last royal marriage, coronation and ceremonial entry into Edinburgh before the union of the crowns of 1603 led to the removal of the Stuart dynasty to London. The marriage was

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also the occasion of King James's only travels outside Britain. Given that he was endowed with more intellectual curiosity than many an entire dynasty, his only direct exposure to a foreign society and culture should be seen as likely to be noteworthy in seeking to understand James as man and ruler – not least, of course, because he was destined to become the first monarch ever to rule over the entire British Isles.

For those who remain unconvinced, he adds:

Looked at from other angles, the story of the marriage is full of dramatic and, yes, even romantic, incident. A child bride whose life is imperilled by storms at sea. A young bridegroom so anxious to prove that damaging rumours about his lack of interest in girls were untrue that he secretly deserted his kingdom to set off on a bizarre attempt to rescue his damsel in distress. An improvised royal wedding celebrated with provincial simplicity when they meet. A journey from Norway to

Denmark by sledge through frozen winter landscapes. A diplomatic incident on the Swedish frontier. Royal festivities and epic drinking in Denmark, with intervals of sobriety in which James indulged his passion for hunting and showed himself to be a culture-vulture, engaging in discussions with theologians, astronomers and other scholars, visiting castles, laboratories and cathedrals. The journey home to Scotland. The queen's coronation (with a touch of theological controversy) and splendid entry into Edinburgh. Macabre allegations of witchcraft being employed (in both Denmark and Scotland) to wreck the marriage.

Dull would he be of soul who could fail to read on, after such a build-up!

Dr. Stevenson attributes the lack of biographical comment on the marriage to the widespread belief that primary sources for the event are lacking. One of the selling-points of his book, accordingly, is the inclusion of a little-known

contemporary Danish account of the nuptials in a translation by Peter Graves, who needs no introduction to readers of *Northern Studies*. Three further relevant documents of Scandinavian provenance are inserted into this section of the book.

Four maps and sixteen black-and-white plates form an admirable complement to the text, while the cover is graced by an attractive portrait of the young James acquired by Historic Scotland as recently as 1996. The volume ends with 25 pages of informative notes and a detailed bibliography.

Dr. Stevenson sees the young James as determined to shake off his 'apprentice king' image, and he speculates that the unruly Scottish aristocracy were apprehensive lest the impressionable young monarch be overly taken with the law-abiding Danish nobility, whose powers were carefully regulated. Mighty drinkers and carousers they may have been, but a Danish equivalent to the half-mad earl of Bothwell, with his alarming tendency to burst into the king's private chambers,

unsheathed sword in hand, was unthinkable.

The narrative of James's voyage to the Danish realms, his marriage, the triumphal entry into Edinburgh and the aftermath (ominously entitled 'And they did not live happily ever after') moves along at a fair lick, marred only by a certain slapdashness of expression. There is no excuse for errors like 'failure to and exploit' (p. viii), 'Queen Annes's entry' (p. xvii), 'discrete' for 'discreet' (p. 3), 'per-eminence' (p. 47), 'effecting' (p. 59) and 'effected' (p. 60) for 'affecting' and 'affected' respectively: and what are we to make of a sentence like 'She was living off ill-gotten gains plundered by Protestant heretics from the Catholic Church she.??'

None of which detracts from David Stevenson's achievement in combining scholarship with compulsive readability: a goal often aspired to but seldom achieved by academic historians.

*Harry D. Watson*