

it, it does not seek to master you, or to impress. But there is no doubt in my mind that it is a major work.

The other items in the volume vary in effectiveness. Several are descriptive, like our Academy watercolours, and seem to have little value beyond this. Three—"Autumn in Spring," and the two Thurlby poems—are linked in theme and manner with *The Estate*. *Duri Miles Ulixi* is a study of the "hero of the famous flash," an impression to be added to Glover's two poems on our "soldier for all service, mortal currency of time."

The Estate is a very Wordsworthian book. At the heart of it (Nos. xxiv and xxiv) is a mountain journey, where the "white inquisitors" question a man's motive and test his faith. Autumn trees foreshadow the "death of man's estate"; planted park and garden outline mortal hope and achievement. As Wordsworth did, Brasch finds peace and understanding through human companionship and in the natural scene where we "study silence, ask understanding," and "live from the pure spring of life."

An impressive achievement.

W. H. Oliver's *Fire Without Phoenix* gathers together poems old and new, written at home here and At Home abroad. In the longest, "In the Fields of My Father's Youth," Oliver weighs one Home against another. Which is really his? Every New Zealander who makes the journey back today makes it in the light of history, in time as well as in space. He has to stir up old waters, come to terms with ancestor worship. His past rises to meet him in English lanes, and with it that future now frustrated, the dead "pilgrim dream," which seems so faded in our descendant present. The pattern is familiar, but Oliver turns it a new way; although only his father's garden "full of surprising fruit" now stands as the outcome of the emigrant dream, "the dream flower faded, cynically abused, the song of equality become a bribe," yet the son affirms a double loyalty.

Can I who live by his slight relinquish either

The peasant's dream or the eloquent manor house?

Both were his first and every birthday gift.

The poet himself, at least, can keep an undivided allegiance; his fields are not disputed ground. Not yet, though "the breaking point, where loyalties depart," may well come soon. These are not the sentiments of Brasch's generation—so that the two poets are complementary.

Oliver has a gift for the untrammelled visual phrase, a poetry of clear bright objects turned this way and that, until an inner meaning glows. ("Sea Legend," "In Radcliffe Square," "Sleep Will Come Singly"). His figures are simple, and have an apocalyptic strength behind them, without the upholstery of some current rhetoric.

Then will the meek man find his blood restored,

Tall as an antelope walk through bright fields,

Speak with a flower in his tongue and listen to men

With a bird in the cage of his ear; on the limbs

Of improbable trees climb to heaven again.

We could do with more of this magic today. . . But how tired I am of sestinas!

S(sniff)F

SPACE, TIME AND NATHANIEL, by Brian W. Aldiss; Faber and Faber, English price 12/6. THUNDER AND ROSES, by Theodore Sturgeon; Michael Joseph, English price 12/6.

ARE you a Smoof or a Smot? You'll find out in Police Videofile B/1191214/AAA of sf-writer Aldiss's Criminal Record story just what they are. Maybe you have a yearning to win the shubshub race, which only a pseudo-man with the electronic consciousness

of an instrument can do, thus enabling him to function at one basic rate anywhere in the galaxy? Or find out what a Psyclops thinks—a spaceman's unborn child having a psychofetist confab with his old man. Then there's Pogsmith, and dear old Pogsmith is only a sort of planetary pig up to all the tricks of legendary Proteus. And there are Non-Men and Nittians. And young Alistair, who rightly decides against being elected to the August Order of Eunuchs in favour of being resident governor of the planet Acrostic I.

The stories in this book are full of fantasy and fun: Mr Aldiss has a youthful exuberance that even makes fun of the dreary problems of space. He throws in an introduction on sf which is earnestly ingenuous. "In its time, sf has been dismissed because it is idle fancy, mere gadgetry, basically unscientific, too scientific, paints too grey a picture, is too highly coloured, is not escapist enough, is just a modern fairy-tale." But, he coolly observes, "likely and unlikely are the same word. . . Like poetry: perhaps that's the best simile, for sf and poetry have much in common. Both have a sly, surprising music; neither are particularly easy to write." And certainly it would be difficult to put Videofile B/1191214/AAA into any Miltonic sonority on the creation or the universe.

Thunder and Roses and Theodore Sturgeon. "His, indeed, is the Way of Imagination, and it leads him, and us, to strange, far places," gravely announces Michael Joseph. But let's get down to it—the planet Lirht (with three moons, one of which is unknown) is inhabited by gwik, whose favourite pets are the huckle, and the prettiest of the huckle are blue; and space fiction whimsy, as Theodore Sturgeon writes it, is much more agreeable than the thin galactic milk of the 20-G men who always remind me of over-heated traffic cops, skimmed off here or there without a laugh. Thanks to science, both Sturgeon and Aldiss take us unscientifically into a world where chess would be playable without a board, and, anyway, the telephatic dog tells you how to build a spare part for a dubious sort of space ship (dear little doggie, plunging into the river to rescue the baby girl of the great big rich man who pays the bill for the gold-molybdenum spare part). And it's just this kind of mimsy-whimsy that inclines me back again to the Brick Bradford boys. In the title story we don't retaliate in the atomic war because a film star called Starr Anthim croons us into turning the other cheek:

You gave me the night and the day,
And thunder, and roses, and sweet green grass,

The sea, and soft wet clay.

The Enemy has annihilated us, presumably not listening—we, Starr-struck, forbear to pull the lever. Thunder and roses and holy Moses, I'd sooner eat my mushrooms off a short-handled spoon.

—Denis Glover

AS SAINTLY DOES

THEY HANGED MY SAINTLY BILLY, by Robert Graves; Cassell, English price 21/-.

THE subject of this biography, Dr William Palmer, was hanged in 1856—publicly, of course. His trial for the murder by poison of a boon companion was disfigured by the prejudice against him of the Lord Chief Justice and by the weakness and inconsistency of the Crown's medical evidence. In fact, Palmer had a grossly unfair trial; it is not a happy page in the annals of British justice. But that does not in itself make him innocent, as Graves seems to contend.

Robert Graves has written a very skilful pastiche of the style of mid-

(continued on next page)

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