

outer world of other men, nature, and eternity. There is torment in this, and few poets knew it better than Muir, but it is also man's only hope of redemption and of happiness.

Professor Butter's short study of Muir and his work is worthy of its subject. He approaches the poems with respect and with intelligence, but he never makes the mistake of trying to separate the writer and the man. Perhaps Muir's own lucid, profound and resonant last poems are the best coda to his Harvard lectures. Their allegiances are often rooted in the past, but their urgency speaks poignantly yet confidently to our contemporary world.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

A PREFACE TO THE FAERIE QUEEN, by Graham Hough; Duckworth; 25s.

This book seems to be, at least in part, modelled upon Professor C. S. Lewis' *Preface to Paradise Lost*, and like that work, is intended as a corrective. Mr Graham Hough is of opinion that Spenser's great poem is less known and less loved than it should be, and that to restore it to its true position, the reader should be led to approach not through the allegory – the line taken by several recent books – but by way of its genre as a romantic epic.

In setting forth this view the author gives an exposition of the romantic epic as such, and of Spenser's Italian models, which should be exceedingly useful to students, especially those who have no Italian. His insistence on Spenser's essential independence of all the poets and philosophers whose work he draws upon so freely, is timely and important.

But no one can exhaust the riches of the *Faerie Queene* in one book and Mr Graham Hough, being obliged to play down something, has played down the allegory and the special purpose Spenser avows, to which playing down a somewhat Grundyish conception of morals has contributed. Concentration on the narrative and on the human aspect of the persons keeps Mr Graham Hough rather on the surface of the poem, but this may be all the better if the readers whose approach has been thus made easy, are led to seek the depths for themselves.

SR MARY PAULINE, I. B. V. M.

JUST OFF THE AISLE – The Ramblings of a Catholic Critic, by Richard A. Duprey; Newman Press; \$3.95.

Philistinism laced with self-righteousness, a Jansenist conscience and a handbook of moral theology – these, in the opinion of too many Catholics, are the proper qualifications of a critic of the liberal arts. Their possessor is automatically entitled to write letters of bitter complaint to the press about plays or films he has not seen, and books he has no intention of reading; to censure the judgment, taste (and even the good faith) of professional Catholic critics whose lives are spent in grappling thoughtfully with just those problems which (it is assumed)

can be disposed of in a moment by the application of a few rule-of-thumb methods.

This deplorable attitude is, it appears, so prevalent in America as to induce Mr Duprey to begin with three chapters of spirited attack. These chapters are, in fact, the best part of the book, and provide a very useful and valuable summary of the whole question. From a number of excellent and highly quotable remarks one might select a brief extract from an editorial in *Commonweal*: '... the Catholic tradition is not a Puritanical one. The Church is the mother of the arts, not their policeman'. Such things need to be said, and said often; not least in England, where there is a dearth of 'popular' books about Catholic criticism of the arts. We have, for example, nothing equivalent to the admirable works of the American Jesuit fathers William Lynch and Harold C. Gardiner.

The rest of the book is a little disappointing. The very obvious trouble is that the author bites off a great deal more than he can comfortably chew, attempting as he does a wide-ranging evaluative sweep of the whole contemporary theatrical scene in both American and Europe, with occasional forays into the cinema as well. The omissions, over-simplifications and lumpings-together are too many, and too irritating. For example, can Samuel Beckett – even if one dislikes him – really be shrugged off in one short paragraph? Can Robert Bolt – even if one admires him – really be described as 'a sort of theatrical Aquinas, Christianizing the new mimetic Aristotle, Brecht'? And how *can* one publish a book of this kind in which Sartre is simply left out, without apology or explanation?

Furthermore, the vigour of the style too often degenerates into mere stridency, and we get the sort of thing Hopkins described as 'the air and spirit of a man bouncing up from the table with his mouth full of bread and cheese and saying that he meant to stand no blasted nonsense'; as when Mr Duprey writes: 'Edward Albee, brash young novice, has torn off the white veil of humility and is confidently belching in the sanctuary of art'. About which it is enough to say, it is not the way a mature critic ought to write.

However, Mr Duprey is not usually as bad as this, and he does provide reasonably thorough and informative surveys of a number of modern dramatists as far removed from each other in space and *Weltanschauung* as, for example, Tennessee Williams and Henri Ghéon. The book as a whole has an air of close engagement and intellectual excitement which is attractive and stimulating; and, for the first three chapters if for nothing else, it is well worth reading.

KEITH MITCHELL

**CAESARS AND SAINTS: The evolution of the Christian State, A.D. 180-313,** by Stewart Perowne; Hodder and Stoughton; 25s.

As a guide to the history of the period, this book is excellent. It is vividly and clearly written, finely illustrated, and uses the abundant sources, both primary