

difference in the understanding of the soul's union with God between the *Cloud* and Walter Hilton.

This is an interesting and illuminating book and it is good to have it in English.

The fact that all quotations remain in the original (Middle English, Middle German, Latin) perhaps limits its potential readership more than is necessary or desirable.

ANDREW LOUTH

LETTERS FROM A "MODERNIST": The Letters of George Tyrrell to Wilfrid Ward 1893-1908. Introduced and annotated by Mary Jo Weaver. Patmos/Sheed & Ward. pp xxxiv + 192. £17.50.

I first became interested in the Catholic modernists during the 1920s. Then and for long afterwards it was regarded as an eccentric interest, which received little encouragement. But since Vatican II, I have found it difficult to keep up with the stream of books, articles and academic theses that have been appearing on the various aspects of the modernist movement or crisis and about the numerous personalities who were more or less involved in it. It has become a favourite hunting-ground for research students, especially in the U.S.A. And none of the modernists has been receiving more posthumous attention than George Tyrrell.

Professor Weaver does not explain why she placed the word "Modernist" in quotation marks in the title of this book. While the application of the term to several others to whom it has been applied may reasonably be questioned, there can be no question that Tyrrell was an outstanding modernist and will always and rightly be treated as one of the central figures in the movement. The present volume contains his letters to Wilfrid Ward of which only extracts have previously been preserved. At one stage in the development of this thought Tyrrell found himself in close accord with Ward. At the time they both looked upon themselves as disciples of Newman, and Ward continued to do so till the end of his life. The interest of these letters lies primarily in the light they shed on Tyrrell's final disagreement with Ward, but they have a wider interest than that.

Tyrrell was a rarely gifted writer with an extraordinarily lively mind, and everything he wrote is worth reading. Moreover, the questions that exercise his mind are

still very much alive, and are no less awkward now than they were eighty years ago, though they can be discussed in a less acrimonious manner. In 1900 Tyrrell wrote: "Men who are humble in themselves find compensation in cracking up their party or nation. Corporate pride and vanity is a great problem. It seems a condition *sine qua non* for the success of a cause yet ethically it is as indefensible as personal pride (pp 51 f)."

In addition to the letters to Ward there are included here (a) some letters from Tyrrell to other correspondents, (b) his hitherto unpublished article "Who are the Reactionaries?", and (c) the complete text of the Joint Pastoral Letter of Cardinal Vaughan and the bishops of the Westminster province on "The Church and Liberal Catholicism", which naturally agitated both Tyrrell and Ward and many other people, and from which few readers nowadays are likely to receive much edification.

Professor Weaver's introduction adequately supplies the background of the material here made available, and her annotations to the letters are ample to a fault; e.g. she goes so far as to explain that *substantia materialis* means 'material substance' (pp 38 f). There are however occasional inaccuracies and she ought surely to have explained the reference to "the bones of King Edmund" in this prophetic observation by Tyrrell: "As to the Joint Pastoral I think the issue of all the correspondence is that it will be quietly shelved and forgotten in some cupboard together with the bones of King Edmund" (p 70). The reference is to what at the time was the notori-

ous attempt of Cardinal Vaughan to acquire from France some bogus relics of St Edmund, King and Martyr, for Westminster

Cathedral. The episode is fully described in Snead-Cox's biography of Vaughan.

ALEC VIDLER

VIEWPOINTS: POETS IN CONVERSATION WITH JOHN HAFFENDEN.

Faber & Faber, 1981. pp 189. £7.50.

Enterprises of this kind are hazardous. Happily, Haffenden never loses sight of the possibility of sounding merely silly or portentous, and for most of the time at least keeps himself out of trouble. The dust-jacket blurb speaks of the poets "tempting the taboo against self-consciousness", and in most of the interviews Haffenden overtly challenges his men (there are no women) on the dangers of the sort of self-consciousness in which he is encouraging them. All agree that it is something to be avoided. Few writers in fact talk well about their own work and risk destroying their spontaneity for no commensurate rewards. It does not save the situation here simply to remind them of the dangers. Much of the talk makes poor reading, and it is all a good deal less illuminating than it is claimed to be: "Their views and reflections offer the reader unique insights into the poetic impulse, its art and craft, not explaining but exploring". This kind of imprecision augurs ill; "unique" does not mean enough here, and the "art" (and the "craft") of "the poetic impulse" is mere vagueness. In the event, however, the book is a good deal better than this promises.

Some of Haffenden's poets survive unscathed; interestingly, these are the best. Heaney has a kind of bluff but genuine humility which allows his wisdom to speak freely, and the book is worth buying almost for this one interview. He nevertheless observes:

I think that it's a very, very delicate matter for a writer – how to conceive and perceive himself, to what extent self-consciousness, self-knowledge, self-criticism, self-exposure, should be mixed or meshed; to what extent in an interview like this you should tell how much you know. You have to preserve

a cellarful of life of your own. (p 62)

Heaney speaks with easy assurance about matters involving fine judgment of poetry, where most of the others strive clumsily and in vain. In his case, it is possible to believe that genuine insights are being offered, as when he speaks of the pleasure of a poem being "in the rustle of the language itself". Larkin for many years wisely declined interviews, waiting till he could speak with an authority he could himself believe in. Even yet, he confines himself, and many readers will feel some disappointment with his contribution, the value of which lies chiefly in the revelation of background information. This must in each case interest some readers more than others. I was fascinated to discover that "At Grass" in fact describes Brown Jack; not surprised to find that he gets "endless trouble about 'Dry-Point.'"; relieved to find that he does not like "An Arundel Tomb" much and is prepared to say why. But the professional humility of his declaration that "The Whitsun Weddings" was "just there to be written down.... Anybody could have done it" is mildly offensive, like the calculatedly understated conclusion: "One does one's best, and lets the result stand or fall by itself". But most of it is pleasingly anecdotal, affording that kind of insight.

The difference between the Heaney and Larkin interviews may be further defined by saying that those who do not know Heaney's work will almost certainly be sent in search of it by reading what he had to say in response to Haffenden's promptings. The Larkin interview could mean much only to someone already closely familiar with his poems. Different from both, very regrettably, is the interview with Kinsella, who comes across