

habitual pungency and zest. They come from the same careful workshop in which his poems were so gradually brought to their finished brilliance. But the most valuable feature of his examination of other poets cannot emerge from the printed page. His utterance of poetry, happily preserved by recordings, was unforgettable. I heard him once read Blake's 'Tiger' before a large audience in London. The words fell from his mouth with a slow prophetic grandeur, deep, resonant and forbidding. After this astounding interpretation the other readings, most of them by excellent performers, sounded tentative and unconvincing.

A far greater interest attaches to the first part of this book, a collection of autobiographical and personal scripts which includes the memorable 'Return Journey'. The object of this journey, the 'ugly, lovely town' of Swansea, where he was born, is, in fact, the subject of much of this material. It reveals, as the editor notes, a steady development in his use of radio as a medium in which he could examine the Welsh scene, a development which led to *Under Milk Wood*, published separately. But the scripts printed here are not significant merely as stages in that development. They all share the intense individuality and force of his best work. Anyone who has written for broadcasting, with the exception, perhaps, of one or two critics whose hostility is notorious, will recognize also the skill of a patient and hard-working craftsman. In all the richness and proliferation, the festoons of epithets, the gigantic sentences, he never allows his observation to relax, never permits a flat word to reduce the tension, to break the spell. The word 'spell' comes readily to mind, for the best of this autobiographical writing has the quality of incantation through which the past is brought back in images which shine with the radiance of remembered childhood. And, like *Under Milk Wood*, it is shot through with the humour and joy and love with which he looked out at the world he left too young.

DAVID LLOYD JAMES

WE ARE UTOPIA. By Stefan Andres. (Gollancz; 7s. 6d.)

FLESH AND BLOOD. By François Mauriac. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 10s. 6d.)

It is not surprising that the publisher of *We Are Utopia* should tell us that Mr Graham Greene has read it 'with great admiration', for this short novel re-states a theme that is almost his copyright: the impotence, as it seems, of the man who has chosen to disobey God and the providence that uses him in the end. The central figure of Herr Andres' swiftly-told story is a Carmelite priest who has left his order and finds himself, as a soldier in the Spanish Civil War, back in his

convent, in his former cell, as a prisoner. The officer in charge of the prisoners discovers the secret and asks the priest to hear his confession. For Paco this is an intolerable dilemma: he remembers the past and the wisdom of an old priest—‘You must make out the last cheque—and the book will be used up some day—to love, in some way, to love, to something that is not you but needs you.’ So Paco at last agrees: the officer’s burden is lifted, but only at the cost of the far heavier one of the death that he callously imposes on Paco and all the prisoners.

*We Are Utopia* is a powerful and brilliantly contrived allegory, fore-shortened as a picture, but intimately true within its own chosen limits. It is marred by irritating failures in translation, which speak of a priest as ‘consecrated’ instead of ordained, and of ‘St John looked down from the Cross’ for St John of the Cross.

No one can accuse Mr Gerard Hopkins of such clumsiness. His version of an early Mauriac novel, *Flesh and Blood*, continues his admirable work in providing a collected English edition of the French master. This time a former seminarian, Claude, son of a bailiff to a château in the Gironde, is the fulcrum in a conflict between sensuality and grace. Claude becomes friendly with Edward and May, the children of the Protestant owner of the château: he falls in love with May and he influences, and is deeply influenced by, Edward. May becomes a Catholic, makes a conventional marriage but retains many of her Protestant conflicts (and M. Maurois’ observation here is profoundly true). Edward becomes obsessively involved with a worthless woman and seeks out Claude at last. *Flesh and Blood*, early in M. Mauriac’s *oeuvre* as it is, reveals his extraordinary skill in unravelling the threads of motive and desire. He is in a deep sense the novelist of grace: a grace, it is true, that often carries overtones of Jansenist despair, but is yet the solvent of the stresses that a human person has power to impose on another and which he knows so well how to describe. And behind is the mysterious setting of the Landes, as always in Mauriac the silent and tragic commentary on what men must do and suffer.

I.E.