

Mr Sharrock puts forward some fascinating ideas as to the link between the work of Bunyan and that of later writers, even Gide; but it is odd to find him dismissing Defoe's outlook as 'completely secularized'. What about the terrifying meditations of Robinson Crusoe alone in his cave with a high temperature?

RENÉE HAYNES

QUITE EARLY ONE MORNING. By Dylan Thomas. (Dent; 10s. 6d.)

In a talk on Welsh poets printed in this volume Dylan Thomas quoted these words from an unfinished play by Alun Lewis:

'Never stale your mind  
With prudence or with doubting.'

There was no need for him to take them to heart. They expressed the conviction which he carried into unregarding action from the moment when, in early youth, he determined to be a poet. The picaresque chaos of his life followed from that decision which permitted no compromise, ignored the immediacy and tried to deny the existence of the demands and pressures which make of most of us wage-earning conformists.

This attitude of mind had, apparently, nothing in common with the escapist's reluctance or inability to accept the more obvious aspects of the life of our times, grocer's bills, atomic energy, overdrafts, and a black suit for best. It was the characteristic expression of a forceful character, not the casual indifference of a preoccupied writer. He could appreciate in others qualities which made it possible for them to serve two loyalties. Of his friend Vernon Watkins he wrote:

'So many writers, because their own serious writing does not pay, live by writing about writing, lecturing about writing, reviewing other writers, script writing, advertising, journalizing, boiling pots for the chain-store publishers: Vernon Watkins writes nothing but poems. Very properly, he makes his living by other people's money: in a bank. He is proof against the dangers (so tempting to poets, such as myself, who are not qualified to extract their livelihoods other than by the use of language), the dangers of mellifluous periphrasis, otiose solipsism, the too-easy spin and flow of the paid word.'

The second part of this volume, edited by Aneurin Talfan Davies, B.B.C. Swansea Representative and producer of some of these scripts, presents the small body of broadcast work which, in spite of these tempting dangers, he devoted to other writers. There are studies of Wilfrid Owen, Walter de la Mare, Sir Philip Sidney, and other occasional pieces, thoughtful, sensitive, lively, illuminated by his

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