

COMMUNITY JOURNEY. By George Ineson. (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)

Although this book is written in the main by one person, it is aptly named; not only is it the account of the journey of a community towards the most perfect community of all, the Mystical Body, but it was the idea of community which dominated the conscious search; though Eastern mysticism and Western psycho-analysis played their part in easing the way, in making and revealing the pattern, what is now a community of Benedictine Oblates began as a practical experiment in socialism. Other members of the community have contributed short notes of their own personal and interior progress, but it was in the experience and solution of communal difficulties, material and spiritual, that human wisdom and prudence, themselves developing found their need to be complemented by, transformed by, the divine wisdom and prudence which come with grace. For example, the community began by making no distinction between families and unmarried members, all lived in common; now a balance has been found between the equally God-given units of family and community.

This was no doubt a difficult book to write since the intimate life of so many others beside the author is involved. One feels that the full story has not been given, but then, how can it be? And the prominence given to the author's dreams tends to baffle a reader who has not been trained to interpret them; one would like a series of notes by the psychologist who befriended and guided the community. But all in all, this is a very interesting book, and the last chapter in which the community is seen at Easter Mass is very moving.

BENET WEATHERHEAD, O.P.

NEW LINES. An Anthology edited by Robert Conquest. (Macmillan; 12s. 6d.)

It is a measure of the interest aroused by the nine poets collected in this volume that one would wish to write an individual review of each. Is Mr Amis really as lacking in ear as the selection here reveals?—even the technically clever 'Against Romanticism' is not pleasant to read aloud. Does Miss Jennings ever cease her honest but over-intricate self-examination? does her quiet music ever fail her? Does Mr Holloway often produce a poem as fine, faultless and traditional as 'The Shell'?

But they are collected here less as individual than for what they have in common as evidence of a new attitude, as indications of a new climate in poetry. Mr Conquest, in his Introduction, admits that 'the standpoint is not new, but merely the restoration of a sound and fruitful attitude to poetry, of the principle that poetry is written by and for the whole man, intellect, emotions, senses and all'. This

understood and applauded, with its consequences—the greater part allowed to the intellect and intelligibility, care and precision of statement, stricter discipline and often considerable beauty of verse structure—the poems in this book are with few exceptions pointedly contemporary. Their ‘reverence for the real person or event’ may be seen at its best in Mr Gunn’s ‘On the Move’, a meditative poem about a gang of boys on motor-cycles such as those in the film ‘The Wild Ones’:

‘A minute holds them, who have come to go . . .’—
or in Mr Larkin’s ‘Church Going’, which begins (devastatingly)—
‘Once I am sure there’s nothing going on
I step inside . . .’—

But where the real person is oneself or the real event is within one’s own mind, a tendency to over-intellectualize appears. A poem ostensibly ‘about’ a place or thing becomes a poem ‘about’ one’s reaction to the place or thing, instead of being in its poetic mode that reaction. But this tendency, by which a few only of these poems are spoilt, is perhaps due to a more general over-carefulness of imagination, a refusal of colour for fear of being flashy.

A similar refusal, this time for fear of being over-emotional, seems to dictate the prevailing quietness. There are of course exceptions to this too—the momentary slash of Mr Davie’s ‘Too Late for Satire’:

‘Whom I have knives for could begin with you’,—
but if passion is lacking, there is much affection and much compassion, though here again (as in his novel *Lucky Jim*) Mr Amis seems noticeably at fault.

Considered as a manifesto, the volume is not startling in the way one expects—no sudden enlarging of the poetic vision, no striking technical experiments—but it does manifest an impressive amount of very competent and sometimes very beautiful verse in a shared and contemporary idiom. It is the amount that is startling.

BENET WEATHERHEAD, O.P.

PROUST. By J. M. Cocking. (Bowes and Bowes; 7s. 6d.)

Professor Cocking’s avowed purpose in this compactly academic work is to examine the evidence available in the recently published *Jean Santeuil* and *Contre Sainte-Beuve* which he believes illumines the reality of Proust’s vocation. He attempts to sketch that reality, interpret the fiction and explore some of the ways in which they are related. As a piece of detection this is accomplished. It is a thorough and painstaking work but at the same time it makes extraordinarily dull reading, and the detective methods employed—the examination of Proust’s works in terms of his life, feelings, complexes, etc.—makes