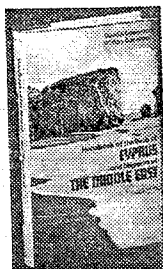


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Literature

English Poetry

A CHOICE OF SHAKESPEARE'S VERSE. Selected with an Introduction by Ted Hughes. *Faber*, £2.50 cloth. SBN 571 09426 0; £0.80 paper covers. SBN 571 09427 9. 1971. 18.5 cm. 212 pages. Index

This selection, by a very good poet from the very greatest, triumphantly justifies itself. The inclusion of what the editor calls 'passages of top pressure poetry which are also long enough and self-contained enough to strike up a life of their own' is varied and exciting, and excludes a good many hackneyed anthology pieces. By relegating sources to an appendix, each piece is made to stand on its own feet, and there are occasional startling juxtapositions. And if all this tends to produce what is effectively a new work by Shakespeare, a whole quite different from its parts, a fascinating yet unconvincing essay by Mr Hughes attempts, in a high Laurentian idiom, to relate the 'particular knot of obsessions' which he finds in his extracts to Shakespeare's total development. No one who enjoys Shakespeare should miss this eccentric and endlessly absorbing anthology. (821-33)

THE ESTUARY. Patricia Beer. *Macmillan*, £1.50 cloth. SBN 333 12580 0; £0.65 paper covers. SBN 333 12581 9. 1971. 20.5 cm. 48 pages

Patricia Beer is an unpretentious, skilful and honest poet. Her earlier volumes, two of which were Poetry Book Society choices, have a sharp social awareness which works within largely traditional forms. *The Estuary* is a far more personal work, exploring her childhood experiences, the pain of leaving Devon, the death of her mother, and the strains imposed on a sensitive woman by the dual demands of her role as a wife and her professional career. The self-knowledge, and the close observation of her own feelings and of the English world about her, are illuminated by irony and humour, which work through a variety of forms: half-rhyme, blank verse, free verse and syllabics. 'Self-Help' which wryly, but with feeling, comments upon her own progress from Devon grammar school to the guilty comforts of Hampstead Village, is a fine example of Patricia Beer's ability to discover a representative truth in her personal experience. (821-91)

T. S. ELIOT: THE WASTE LAND. A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound. Edited by Valerie Eliot. *Faber*, £5. 1971. 29 cm. 184 pages. SBN 571 09635 2

It had long been known that T. S. Eliot's friend Ezra Pound had helped him to cut down the original draft of *The Waste Land* and in 1968 the New York public library announced that it possessed the draft, with Pound's annotations. It came from the collection of John Quinn, a New York lawyer to whom Eliot had given it out of gratitude for Quinn's kindness to Pound, Joyce and himself. The transcript, very sensitively edited by

Eliot's widow who contributes an informative introduction, makes several things clear. Pound did not contribute any writing of his own to *The Waste Land*. He suggested, and Eliot accepted his suggestions, that three long passages which he found weak should be deleted, and also some shorter passages, and he indicated where the original draft of the poem as finally printed needed polishing. He was clearly right about a dull opening passage about pub-crawling and about an imitation of Pope. A passage about a shipwreck was more promising and contained some phrases and images which Eliot salvaged for later poems. But the first draft as it stands is a much weaker poem than the final draft and indicates, sometimes with painful clearness, the state of mental distress, partly arising from the difficulties of his first marriage, partly from overwork, in which Eliot wrote it. Pound emerges as a practical critic of unfailing acumen and as a staunch friend in need. (821-91)

TWELVE MODERN SCOTTISH POETS. Edited by Charles King. *University of London Press*, £1.25. 1971. 21.5 cm. 208 pages. Bibliography. Index. Paper covers. SBN 340 14774 1

Charles King's selection from modern Scottish poets is very impressive indeed. The best known of his dozen are Edwin Muir, Hugh MacDiarmid, Norman MacCaig, Sydney Goodsir Smith, George Mackay Brown and Iain Crichton Smith. From each of these he has chosen a widely-ranging ten or a dozen poems conveying the particular flavour of each poet, yet allowing for the occasional surprise. The remaining six, though also established poets, are not quite so well known: William Soutar, George Bruce, Robert Garioch, Tom Scott, Edwin Morgan and Alexander Scott; it is possible to form from this book a clear view of their quality. A 'Scots style sheet' at the beginning helps to elucidate the poems in Scots, about half the total, as do the editor's footnotes. A few are previously unpublished poems, though most come from collections by the individual poets. There are poems here closely related to the anonymous ballads and lullabies of the Scottish inheritance. There are keen satires, using the Scots to make a double point ('Did Ya See Me?' by Garioch being an excellent example), and there are complex and very moving poems like Tom Scott's 'Orpheus', the richer for the Scots. The notes on the poems at the end sometimes fall silent when the going is hardest; the bibliography however is very thorough and useful. (821-91)

THE GARRYOWEN. Roy McFadden. *Chatto & Windus: Hogarth Press*, £1.05. 1971. 22.5 cm. 40 pages. SBN 7011 1764 8. (*Phoenix Living Poets*)

This is an assured collection, and a testimony to the vitality of poetry currently being written in Northern Ireland. Like many Irish poets, Roy McFadden works within a lyrical idiom, but it is one which can encompass the complex fate of an Irishman born into the social and political contradictions of Belfast, now as a father living through the agonizing repetition of the Troubles. Not that *The Garryowen* is political poetry: politics and self-made myths—Sir Roger Casement, Brendan Behan, John Synge—are simply as inescapable a part of his poetry as the rural society and countryside of Ireland. Its cutting edge is the sharper for its refusal to seek outside sympathy: his poems speak simply of what he knows. Roy McFadden's disregard of the English or foreign reader is a sign of maturity, and the effect is to force the non-Irish audience towards a sense of the ambiguities and paradoxes of the Irish poet's position. (821-91)

TAKE THIS ORANGE: Poems and Ballads. John Pudney. *Dent*, £1.50. 1971. 22 cm. 64 pages. SBN 460 07836 4

John Pudney was once chiefly known as a very popular war poet. His collection of a few years ago, *Spandrels* (1969), showed that war and the effects of war were moving to a less prominent part of his poetic awareness. In this new collection, he reassesses his attitude to it in a few poems, but in the main concerns himself with the acute joys and pains and confusions of life now. The poems are compressed, sometimes rather opaquely personal, but at their best move in a few strokes from a simple concept to a subtler underlying one. 'Garden Seat' does this especially deftly, as does the very short but intense poem 'The Noah'. John Pudney's poems are harder to interpret now than those of his earlier styles, and if not generally so neat, they are more rewarding. (821-91)

COLLECTED POEMS. W. R. Rodgers. *Oxford University Press*, £3. 1971. 22.5 cm. 176 pages. SBN 19 211809 9

W. R. Rodgers died in 1969. During his lifetime his work was respected by a few discerning critics but was never widely known. This very welcome collection shows that he had one of the most original and attractive voices of his time. Rodgers came from Northern Ireland and his work displays a typically Irish delight in words. His flair for puns and verbal acrobatics immediately reminds one of Joyce and also of another Celtic writer—his friend, Dylan Thomas. There are several mythological narratives from the 1940s which exhibit a marvellously confident extravagance. However, the effects are sometimes over-ripe and the verse becomes clogged by its own richness. In his shorter poems the richness is more effective not least because it is balanced by the wittily colloquial tone which Rodgers so often achieved in later years. The book is also notable for a strong view of religious poetry. As a whole it should be of interest not only to students of Irish literature but to all readers of English poetry. (821-91)

THE GENEROUS DAYS. Stephen Spender. *Faber*, £1. 1971. 22.5 cm. 48 pages. SBN 571 09847 9

Stephen Spender's first new collection since 1949 should be a major poetic event. In fact, it is a disappointment. Several poems obviously date from the war, which leaves us barely thirty pages of more recent verse. This is a thin hoard after so many years. Much of it takes the form of bagatelles or short sketches. Though some of these are neatly realized, others are merely doodles for poems. Among the longer pieces there is a fine translation from Stefan George and an interesting celebration of Auden. Occasionally one catches glimpses of the younger Spender and of his talent for combining precise observation with romantic sensibility; but most of these poems are slight and the romanticism is often no more than a dignified nostalgia. (821-91)

English Drama

WILLIAM CONGREVE: THE WAY OF THE WORLD. Edited by Brian Gibbons. *Benn*, £1.05 cloth. SBN 510 33671 X; £0.65 paper covers. SBN 510 33672 8. 20 cm. 152 pages. (*New Mermaids*)
The text of Congreve's last and most famous play presents few editorial

problems, but the vocabulary is more difficult than is sometimes realized and there are many topical allusions which call for explanation. These points are capably dealt with in the notes which are aimed at the general reader. The introduction gives a brief account of Congreve's career and of the theatre of his time and discusses the numerous literary influences which were absorbed into the composition of the piece. There follows a thorough analysis of the characters and plot, in which the editor finds more of the spirit of romantic comedy than is customarily attributed to Congreve. Brian Gibbons is a lecturer in English at the University of York. (822-4)

HILDA TABLET AND OTHERS: Four Pieces for Radio. SBN 563 10163 6. **THE STREETS OF POMPEII** and Other Plays for Radio. SBN 563 10164 4. Henry Reed. *B.B.C. Publications*, £2.10: £3.15. 1971. 25 cm. 208: 336 pages

The ten plays in these volumes, dated between 1950 and 1958—though a new version of *The Streets of Pompeii* was broadcast as late as 1970—are the work of one of the most excitingly adaptable dramatists British radio has known. Mr Reed is a poet, as the second volume proves; he has been always able to write for the ears (in the words of Housman, from another context, 'to sign with conflagration the viewless fields of air'). These Italian plays; whether in verse or prose, have a steadily summoning quality, particularly the pair on Leopardi and, from the dying fall of the Renaissance, *Vincenzo*. But Mr Reed has another gift: he is a social comedian and a witty satirist; and listeners to the B.B.C. during the 1950s were cheered regularly by his Third Programme pieces about an inquiry into the life of a 'poet's novelist' by a conscientious, burrowing biographer called Reeve. Now, in four of the plays, we meet a remarkable bevy of personages on and round the artistic fringe, especially a hearty 'composeress', Hilda Tablet. Mr Reed was able to bring them up on radio in a few sentences and to keep them, more or less affectionately, before us; they come from the page with the same swift ease. The volumes are from the meridian of radio-playwriting, and it is pleasant to recognize the author's long partnership with his director, Douglas Cleverdon. (822-91)

English Fiction

CRITICS ON D. H. LAWRENCE. Edited by W. T. Andrews. *Allen & Unwin*, £0.85. 1971. 21.5 cm. 128 pages. Bibliography. Paper covers. SBN 04 801013 8. (*Readings in Literary Criticism*)

This book claims to be 'mainly a record of the development of Lawrence criticism in England and the Commonwealth' as distinct from American criticism, though the nine critics representing the past two decades include two Americans. The selection covers sixty years of writing on Lawrence, divided into three chronologically equal sections. Nearly half the volume is devoted to post-1950 criticism, which accords well with the editor's belief (following Mark Spilka) in a modern 'critical Renaissance' of Lawrence. The criticism is confined almost entirely to the novels, though there is a slight piece on the *Last Poems* by George Panichas. The book may be useful to those who are unable to acquire the far more varied comprehensive selection by R. P. Draper, *D. H. Lawrence: The Critical Heritage* (1970). (823-91)