

me.' Mr Anson's genial and racy narrative is exactly suited to the telling of the life of a man who had made so many surprisingly effective descents from the clouds of his imagination, appearing with his invariable sense of style, and his unbounded confidence that the next adventure would be more exhilarating than the last. It was Aelred Carlyle's unusual talent for involving other people in these astounding flights that enabled him, for periods of varying length, to make so many of his dreams come true. The monastic buildings on Caldey are an abiding witness to it. As an old man he had not changed. 'He still day-dreamed. He appeared to possess almost unlimited funds upon which he could draw, and talked as if he were in the happy position of being able to assist anybody.' It would be easy to represent as an almost unmitigated scoundrel the man whose imagination had in the past found so many ways of being magnificent with other people's money, were it not for this redeeming quality of spontaneous personal generosity towards others which enabled the ex-abbot eventually to find himself in work in the docks in Vancouver and the Oakalla Prison, of which one or two moving stories are told towards the end of Mr Anson's book. This is a biography which has more than a family interest for those who have connections with Caldey or with the Benedictine community of which Fr Carlyle was the founder, for it deals with one of the personalities of a unique phase in the history of the Church in England. The book's reticences are perhaps dictated by a more than ordinary discretion (Mr Anson clearly does not tell us all he knows) for, apart from the hidden workings of grace, there was probably no way of explaining how a career which must often have come close to personal disaster should seem in the end to have turned out so well. As Aelred himself said: How curiously mixed are all our lives, and what adventures we have, and hair-breadth escapes, known only to ourselves, but never to be truly understood until all the secrets are revealed.

ÆLRED SQUIRE, O.P.

T. S. ELIOT: A SYMPOSIUM FOR HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY. Edited by Neville Braybrooke. (Hart-Davis; 21s.)

This symposium, which is well-intentioned and cordial, perhaps raises the question again: how suitable is *Festschrift* (that the word must still go into italics expresses the idea's reluctance to become domiciled amongst us) to English ways and manners? And what does it accomplish—and particularly when the object of homage is not a *savant* but a poet? But if, forgetting the German in the name of another language, we conclude that we can drink together to the health of Mr Eliot in this fashion (as well as, of course, quite literally), even welcoming it as one of 'the gifts reserved for age', we might still feel that the taste of two of the members of this party is doubtfully good and that one

‘tribute’ in verse and another in prose is likely to cause more embarrassment than pleasure to recipient and admirers, so pointing the force of  
 ‘Then fools’ approval stings, and honour stains.’

It will be remembered that in 1948 to greet Mr Eliot’s sixtieth birthday there was a similar undertaking, viz. *T. S. Eliot: A Symposium compiled by Richard March and Tambimuttu* (Editions Poetry London). Now, how does the present collection by Mr Braybrooke compare with that? For a comparison between the two volumes ought, in several theories, to reveal a lot: it ought to reveal what has happened to Mr Eliot’s earlier work after the lapse of a decade; it ought to reveal how we have altered during that period—remembering that *the*, or at least *a*, main agent of such alteration has been Mr Eliot as dramatic and reflective poet (and, secondarily, as literary and social critic); and it ought to reveal the change that has come about in the relationship between the poet and his readers, and between the poet and that larger public influenced only derivatively, i.e. through the poet’s disciples.

As a basis for a study of variation in perspective, we note that whereas the 1948 volume gave relatively more space to ‘The Four Quartets’ than to ‘The Waste Land’, the 1958 volume seems to find the plays more important and interesting than either. Now it is true that nearly all Mr Eliot’s recent poetry has been ‘poetry of the theatre’, but it may also mean that either ‘The Waste Land’ has been, at least sufficiently temporarily absorbed into our beings, or that further attempts to relate it to the later work have been postponed. However that might be, as far as the present book is concerned, it is a film-director, Mr George Hoellering (‘Filming “Murder in the Cathedral”’), a producer for the stage, Mr E. Martin Browne (‘From “The Rock” to “The Confidential Clerk”’) and an actor, Mr Robert Speaight (‘Interpreting Becket and Other Parts’) who have most to say of genuine and compelling interest. Of these Mr Browne, indeed, had contributed to the 1948 volume, but had then nothing later than ‘The Family Reunion’ to work on. Now he develops his reflections after the experience of producing ‘The Cocktail Party’ and ‘The Confidential Clerk’ and, apart from the value of his remarks to practising men of the theatre, he indicates the extent to which each member of the series of Mr Eliot’s plays—to which series of plays is now added a sixth (or seventh, depending on how we behold ‘Sweeney Agonistes’)—react the one upon the others; how each play, as it is added to the corpus, illumines its predecessors, and is itself illumined by those predecessors; indicates how the themes have developed and how the development is revealed in the pattern of speech and movement on the stage. But, if we set against Mr Browne’s essay Mr Speaight’s, we get another view of

that development. Of the poetry of 'The Waste Land', Mr Speaight says, 'It is far more dramatic—I am tempted to say far more theatrical—than anything he has written for the stage.' And Mr Speaight concludes: 'T. S. Eliot has arrived in Shaftesbury Avenue and the English actor owes him much. But if he had chosen to go elsewhere, I think that gratitude might have been even greater.' By implication, Mr Speaight naturally intends, not only the actor but all of us—now and henceforth.

This book has interesting essays by Mr W. F. Jackson Knight ('T. S. Eliot as a Classical Scholar') and Mr J. M. Cameron ('T. S. Eliot as a Political Writer'). On the whole let us be generous and say Mr Braybrooke has managed pretty well—but it is clearly on the issue raised between Mr Browne and Mr Speaight that discussion can be—will be—pursued for years to come.

FRANCIS BERRY

WILLIAM BLAKE: A SELECTION OF POEMS AND LETTERS. Edited with an Introduction by J. Bronowski. (Penguin Books; 3s. 6d.)

The time had come for a 'Penguin Blake' and Dr Bronowski has now produced one; a selection from Geoffrey Keynes's *Complete Writings of William Blake* for the Nonesuch series. His choice has been guided by a sound principle; to show as many aspects of this many-sided mind as possible, to present Blake as 'a single person who did different things and did everything in his own way'. Any selection from Blake is tantalizing. One cannot help being aware of what is left out. But the purpose of such a volume should be to draw the reader on to the complete Blake and Dr Bronowski's book will probably have that effect.

His introduction, however, gives the same rather misleading picture of Blake's situation as appeared in his earlier *William Blake, A Man Without A Mask* (though in the meantime Dr Bronowski has developed much more sympathy for Blake's prophetic poetry). It is simply not true to say 'his work was not liked' and to describe his way of combining text and illustrations by illuminated printing with the comment, 'and no one cared for either'. Blake had his period of prosperity. While living at Lambeth he was the victim of robbery, and from the accounts of what was taken, was evidently worth stealing from. Isaac D'Israeli, Benjamin's father, seems to have built up quite a collection of Blake's prophetic poems in the original. Butts, the Muster-Master General, bought so many pictures that in the end he had no more room in his house for a single extra one. (Collecting was in Butts' blood. He was descended from Sir William Butts, Holbein's patron.) Also Blake *did* receive commissions from people like the Countess of Egremont. We must not forget too, that his poetry was