

METAPHYSICAL TO AUGUSTAN. By Geoffrey Walton. (Bowes & Bowes; 17s. 6d.)

This book found its origin in a piece of research done by Mr Walton at Cambridge in the years before the war and it has now grown into a fully detailed study of the poetry of the seventeenth century with the object of showing that the transition from Metaphysical to Augustan was not a process of rejection but of assimilation and consummation. When we read Mr Walton's tribute to Dr Leavis in the introduction we are reminded that it was Dr Leavis who some years ago wrote an essay to defend the idea (and very ably, too) that Pope was the last of the metaphysicals. Now Mr Walton is saying that Dryden did not reject but took up and transmuted the metaphysical notion. Cowley is the kingpin of the argument and as a result we have here a very sound and thorough study of Cowley as a poet and that alone is something new and valuable in the history of English literary criticism. Mr Walton's work is marked by abundant apposite quotation which not only makes his argument stronger but clearer. His distinction between the metaphysical element (at its peak in the poem on Crashaw) and the cavalier in Cowley is most illuminating, as is his use of lesser known poets like John Norris of Bemerton. This is one of the more valuable contributions to the history of sixteenth-century English literature.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

UNPROFESSIONAL ESSAYS. By J. Middleton Murry. (Cape; 15s.)

The mixture as before. In a leisurely though not slovenly fashion Mr Middleton Murry offers four substantial essays, on Fielding, Clare, Whitman and T. S. Eliot. The old humanism is there thinking highly and ideally—some would say with too facile an idealism—of human nature and human affairs, and we remember the good words this critic had to say for Chaucer in *Heaven and Earth*. He is still of the opinion that all things human on earth should mirror that 'pleyne felicittee that is in hevене above'. This makes him a valuable advocate; there is no sourness or narrowness, though there is a lively combative quality in his criticism. Fielding he defends, Clare he loves and Whitman he believes as a mouthpiece of modern man. With Mr Eliot it is different. He confines his attentions to the plays and cannot bring himself to approve of Mr Eliot's emphasis on pain and decay as necessary stages in the human journey. Celia's death he finds utterly fruitless. Perhaps we will agree with much that Mr Middleton Murry says about Mr Eliot, but for different reasons. He finds man wholly good, we find man fundamentally good; we may both take leave to wonder if perhaps Mr Eliot doesn't find him wholly vile.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.