

Book Reviews

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER. Intro. by Colin Laurie McKelvie; ill. by Esdaile Hudson. Ashford Press Publishing, 1987. £18.95.

Non-members of The Richard Jefferies Society might like to know of this book, published last year to coincide with the 100th anniversary of Jefferies' death.

Of 'coffee-table' format, with extensive watercolour and pencil sketches by Esdaile Hudson, this anthology is a formidable production that claims to represent in various sections all aspects of Jefferies' works. It certainly gives good cover to his country sports interests; fishing, shooting, game, guns, poaching and the like, but makes little or no mention of Jefferies the novelist and visionary, preferring to present him as a realist and unsentimental country sportsman. As a result of this the uninitiated will think that this was all there was to Jefferies, whereas the informed reader will be either annoyed or even enraged at the glaring omissions set against the claim that it is truly representational of the writer's whole output. If it is accepted within these limitations, it is a handsome and readable anthology, and Mr Esdaile Hudson seems to have been allowed lavish rein to illustrate the book with atmospheric watercolours and very nice sketches.

John Homan

UNDER STORM'S WING by Helen Thomas with Myfanwy Thomas. Carcanet. £14.95.

Admirers of Edward Thomas, or those wanting to know something of the man, may be tempted by this new edition of a previously told story.

Henry Williamson has recorded how he watched the opening of the Battle of Arras in a snowstorm on Easter Day, 1917. Not until long afterwards did he learn that the writer-poet Edward Thomas, who he much admired, had died on that day, and quite close by, when a German shell passing close by his body had destroyed his lungs. A sad and tragic death for a man who abhorred war but loved his country more, which made him volunteer for service and become a brave and reliable officer.

Having no pretensions as a writer it was something of a surprise when in 1926 Thomas's widow, Helen, published *As It Was*, followed a few years later by *World Without End*, which recorded their married life together. The literary world was impressed with the quality of her writing, but friends of the couple perhaps less so not only for what she left out (the books cannot be considered a biography of Thomas), but for the amount of intimate detail she recorded which shocked at that time. She wrote little of Thomas as a developing poet, nor the period of anguish he suffered before finally enlisting. Even so, the books made compelling reading in their day and are still as fresh now, with the bonus that both are combined under one cover and, for this edition, include for the first time letters and some later writings by Helen Thomas, and some letters of their surviving daughter Myfanwy.

John Homan

FRANCES HOROVITZ: POET. A Symposium ed. by Brocard Sewell. The Aylesford Press, 1987. £6.90.

There is a symbolic completeness of many threads twisted gently together and joined to become full circle in this simple, restrained testimony to the life of Frances Horovitz. Henry Williamson is one of these threads.

The body of the text is 'A Memoir' from Brocard Sewell, tracing the influences bearing upon her, and from her, with further illumination by her close friend, Jane Percival. Peter Levi encompasses her poetry saying that its innate essence was a 'chinese' quality. The symposium closes with a tiny selection of 'Poems in Memory' by close friends, including Dr Robert Gittings with whom she worked for over eight years in his recital *Thomas Hardy and his Women*.

It is appalling to read that further contributions had to be withheld on economic grounds, and hopefully these will be forthcoming in the near future.

AW

BEMUSED. Sylvia Bruce. The Aylesford Press, 1987. £3.90.

Members will recall Sylvia Bruce's penetrating essay 'A Frequency of Phoenixes' in Brocard Sewell's symposium *Henry Williamson: The Man, The Writings* and it is one of her essays that has had to be omitted from the *Frances Horovitz* symposium. Here she appears in her own right in a collection of her poems, some of which, like Frances's, had appeared in publications edited by Brocard Sewell.

AW

PAUPERS' PRESS is run on a shoestring, as its name suggests, by Colin Stanley, producing small booklets, some of original material and some reprints, which retail between £2 and £3. I have before me *The Musician as Outsider*, Colin Wilson, £2.75, which traces the philosophical and psychological processes that bear on the creative mind, in particular on the musically creative mind. It is not difficult to adjust the lines of thought to the writing mind, and to HW in particular.

Also there is *Brocard Sewell, Three Essays*, the first in a series of reprints from 'The Aylesford Review'. Colin Stanley feels strongly that it is important that this sort of material should reach a new audience. I only wish there had been a direct reference to the original issues.

A future publication should contain reprints of HW's contributions to 'The Aylesford Review'. Details of all publications can be obtained from Colin Stanley, Paupers' Press, 9 St Bartholomew's Road, Nottingham NG3 3EH.

FASCISM IN BRITAIN: A HISTORY, 1918-1985, Richard Thurlow. Basil Blackwell. £16.00.

Chap. 2 'The Lost Generation, 1914-1932' opens with a quotation from *A Test to Destruction*, and discusses how the First World War affected the outlook of three people in particular: Sir Oswald Mosley, A.K. Chesterton, and Henry Williamson. The HW Soc. 'Journal' is quoted as a reference source, as are Brocard Sewell's symposium, and some of HW's books.

This is *en passant* — we hope to carry a detailed review in a future issue.

AW

HOW GOOD IS HENRY WILLIAMSON'S TARKA THE OTTER AS LITERATURE? J.W. Blench, Durham University Journal, Dec. 1987, Vol. LXXX 1.

An erudite and detailed analysis of the subject. I draw your attention to it here but hope that we will be able to reprint this important piece in our 'Journal' in the near future, so do not propose a full review.

AW