

every effort to identify the persons of the poem with associates of either Leicester or Bishop Young of Rochester, Spenser being a member and sympathizer in both cases. Some of Professor McLane's suggestions are new and interesting but, though his evidence is always worth considering, there is rather too much dependence on hypothesis to carry complete conviction. Is it really likely that Spenser would have made extensive changes and additions as late as August 1579 in a poem licensed for printing in the December and which may well have been finished in May? In an article published when this book must have been already printing (in March 1961), C. T. Wright advances serious reason for identifying E.K. not with the writer's speculative Fulk Greville, but with Edward Knight. This book contains much interesting information, but interesting to the historian rather than the literary critic since this thesis whether accepted or not, leaves Spenser the poet where he was.

SR MARY PAULINE, I.B.V.M.

ARNOLD THE POET, by H. C. Duffin; Bowes and Bowes; 21s.

On the last page of this short study of Matthew Arnold's poetry the author remarks, 'For years I have carried a pocket volume of his poems, and to walk over the downs making distressful love with Matthew and Marguerite, to sit beside the sea and share the anguish of Tristram, to move majestically with Oxus and the River of Time while riding on the top-deck of a country bus - to do these things has lifted me, for a moment, a little nearer heaven'. This passage suggests something of the nature and limitations of Mr Duffin's approach; one recognizes the genuineness and sincerity of his response to Arnold's poetry, a response obviously rooted in long acquaintance; but one also recoils sharply from the impressionistic vagueness of his manner. Mr Duffin has, in fact, written a belle-lettristic study of an astonishingly old-fashioned kind, as though the revolution in literary criticism of the last forty years had simply never happened. We may be increasingly dissatisfied with many aspects of that revolution, but a performance like Mr Duffin's reminds us what an immense debt we owe to it for the infinitely greater range and precision of the ways in which we can talk about literature.

Careful discrimination is particularly necessary when discussing Arnold, whose total *oeuvre* in verse contains a great deal of fine - even magnificent - poetry, but rather few totally successful poems. Mr Duffin, to be fair, is aware that some of Arnold's poems are better than others, but unfortunately his criterion of poetic merit seems rather closely linked to the amount of cheerfulness a poem contains. Though one can sympathize with his irritation with what he calls the 'ingrained sourness' of much of Arnold's verse, his approach to 'Dover Beach', not only Arnold's finest poem but one of the great poems of his age, is grotesquely inadequate. He allows it a certain merit, but complains

about the 'sordid assertion' that the world has 'neither joy nor love'. So much for Arnold's shattering realization of the nature of a world from which God has been banished. And Mr Duffin makes matters worse by his crude and offensive remarks about the account of the poem that a more sensitive critic, Mr J. D. Jump, has given us: 'I observe that Mr Jump, with gloating approval of the "best" philosophy, concludes that this is Arnold's greatest poem'. It is Arnold's greatest poem, and I imagine most readers would recognize it as such, whether they were Christians or agnostics. Mr Duffin's comment is merely stupid; and by no means untypical of this naive, garrulous and useless book.

BERNARD BERGONZI

MORTE D'URBAN, by J. F. Powers; Gollancz; 21s.

THE CLIMATE OF BELIEF, by Jennifer Lash; Gollancz; 16s.

Mr Powers is the chronicler of American presbytery life, but he is - improbably, with so constant and restricted a theme - a writer of astonishing virtuosity, alarmingly exact in his perceptions and the possessor of a spare and devastatingly ironical style. Up to now he has only written short stories, and *Morte d'Urban* retains the care for detail, the inquisitive inspection of flecks of character that mark his special genius. But it is an organized and important novel and demands the most serious critical attention.

Father Urban belongs to the Clementines, a dim religious order that has hardly made the grade in the competitive world of brand-new novitiates and holy publicity. He is fifty, is elegant and intelligent, ambitious for some improvement in the Clementine image. A stupid Provincial banishes him to the latest white elephant, a retreat-house in Minnesota, and here he suffers from the cold and the discomfort, is made to paint the walls and bide his time. But he has friends, and in particular Billy Cosgrove, an archetypal Catholic tycoon, an impulsive buyer of property and donor of coloured television for the Fathers he thinks worth backing. The retreat-house begins to flourish, the people come, the bishop takes notice, and Father Urban resumes his role as the acceptable speaker at Catholic gatherings, the obvious choice for the special sermon. But he has to suffer ludicrous indignities (he is knocked unconscious by the bishop's golf-ball on the course that Billy has provided for the Clementines: he falls foul of Billy in the end, when he is left stranded on a fishing-trip; he is humiliated by a rich and eccentric lady benefactor, whose lapsed daughter tries to compromise him - and succeeds, in a way).

But Father Urban ends up as Provincial all the same. His career has been a success, it seems, but what about *him*. The title, with its Arthurian overtones, is the answer. Father Urban towers over the rest of Mr Powers' characters, brilliantly observed as they are, and in him he has explored a whole universe of