

Wordsworth texts in mind, but there's no sense of the general statements tailored to fit the poems. The book's process, from abstract to specific, may be the reverse of what it shows Wordsworth's to be, but it has the same honesty in exposition.

The rest of the book is concerned with using the idea of sincerity to illuminate various aspects of the poetry. Wordsworth's views on the creative process are obviously relevant: the attempt at total spontaneity in composition reflects the concern with charting authentic feeling. His psychology of belief is based on a disregard for objective criteria of truth and a reliance on a sense of inner conviction – again sincerity is the crucial term. And the discussion of objective and subjective takes us to the nature of consciousness and language: in a brilliant chapter Perkins shows how Wordsworth veered uneasily between the Coleridgean conception of language as a creative force shaping experience and the traditional 'counters' theory, stuck ultimately to the second position, and thus aggravated his struggle towards sincerity by undermining his faith in the word itself.

The final chapters deal with Wordsworth's audience-relationship and analyse particular poems, but at this point the theme of sincerity seems to get lost and doesn't reappear with any force until the final chapter. This is a pity, because much of what the book has to say about both audience and poems is relevant to the overall theme but isn't geared to it in an obvious way. Sincerity is obviously modified by a sense of audience, but the point isn't made forcibly, and if there is to be a chapter on Wordsworth and his audience it's surely more to the point to discuss the important changes in the reading-public of the early nine-

teenth century than to quote the remarks of a cheerful rustic who confessed that Mr Wordsworth's stuff was beyond him. This overstrained use of biographical detail is, incidentally, a feature of the book: there's a dreadful lapse at one point into a description of Wordsworth's flashing eyes, and some acute remarks on the nature of the creative process are eked out with stories about William keeping the dinner waiting while he scribbled away in the parlour. On the other hand, there's an ingenious account of how the poetry is influenced in rhythms and syntax by the fact that Wordsworth often composed aloud while walking, which compels a wary belief.

The closing analyses of individual poems, including the often neglected late poems, are usually excellent: the author has a close inward feeling for Wordsworth's methods, and this enables him to see a specific poem (the daffodils poem, for instance, or 'The Solitary Reaper') in the atmospheric context of the whole work, pointing skilfully to the deep meanings beneath particular images and situations. There is a glancing reference to the bad poetry and the bathos, but surprisingly Mr Perkins misses making the obvious point here, that the awkward involved literalness of Wordsworth's inferior poetry is just sincerity seen from another angle.

This is a deceptive book in some ways: the relaxed method, the lack of high-pressured dramatic organization, belies the real insight and intelligence at work. But the relaxation has its particular defects: a more tightly-organized study would have brought out the unity of approach in a way which would add more force to what remains a powerful work.

Terry Eagleton

FAITH AND FICTION by Philip Stratford; *University of Notre Dame Press*, \$5.95.

Although it leaves only a pale flavour in the mind, this book will remain essential reading for students of Greene and Mauriac. Professor Stratford drives these writers in double harness, and balances their performance at every turn in the

road. After a Comparative Preface he discusses their childhood, telling us that the experience of growing up forced them to the same conclusion – 'that life was an imprisonment, and that the dream of evasion, although it might be necessary, was a

chimera.' Four chapters on their adult development as artists lead to a discursus on 'Catholic Themes' and on 'The Catholic Novelist and Creation'. Professor Stratford compares their work for stage and screen, and ends with a chapter called 'The Novelist and Commitment'.

The author has gathered a mass of minor writings, so far accessible only in the *Spectator* and the *Nouvelle Revue Française*; and he makes them work for him: one of the most cogent parts of the book is that which deals with Greene's criticism.

The chapters on the relationship between art and religious belief are a bold foray into wild territory, and Professor Stratford comes home with some useful, if not amazing, conclusions. He writes well on the analogy – stressed by Mauriac – between the liberty of the novelist and the unpredictability of the characters he creates; and forwards the enquiry even if he does not placate the enquirer.

Among the felicities that this book strikes up – for example, the significance in the change in direction that Mauriac's *Bonheur du Chrétien* represents; or the account of Greene's wilful complication of 'the issues, the allegiances' in *The Man Within* – one senses that Professor Stratford is not much concerned with questions of value. Graham Greene has described Mauriac's characters as possessing a peculiar power of existing apart from the plots through which they develop; and M. Mauriac has invited us to learn from Greene that 'l'absurdité d'un monde fou . . . n'est au vrai que celle d'un amour sans mesure.' The tight, obsessive vision of Mauriac's novels will be permanently interesting. But Professor Stratford, while putting much evidence before us, is inhibited by the novelists' mutual praise from concluding that Graham Greene's talent is of a different – and lower – order.

John P. White

ST AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, by Gerald Bonner; *S.C.M. Press, 50s.*

This book cannot be too highly commended as an introduction to St Augustine's theological teaching. It discusses with admirable fairness and largeness of mind his response to three doctrinal challenges, from the Manichees, the Donatists, and the Pelagians. That is the chief aim of the book, doctrinal rather than historical, but an ample biographical sketch puts the presentation of Augustine's ideas in their historical context.

The author is eminently fair to his subject's enemies, but is fortunately immune to that generous enthusiasm for lost causes – any lost causes – which makes it so hard for some learned writers on the same subjects to be fair to Augustine. The chapters on the Pelagian issue, while lucid and informative, and as judicious as the rest, are the least satisfactory. The points raised in this controversy have remained as tender spots in the Christian consciousness of the West ever since, and so it is next to impossible for any Christian to be objective about them; but it does seem as if

the author in his assessment of them has not entirely freed himself from inherited and hackneyed judgments. Thus he writes of 'the sombre eloquence of Augustine's terrible words' (on unbaptized infants); and says 'nothing is to be gained by attempting to defend his doctrine of predestination, which remains a terrible one . . .'. Now this use of the word 'terrible' is just, but only if we are not left with the implicit suggestion that more comfortable words and consoling a doctrine are available to the orthodox Christian in these matters. Surely there is a built-in terribleness in the teaching of the gospel – the terribleness of the doctrine of hell, that it is the permissive will of the eternal omnipotent and merciful God, who is love, that some of his creatures should be cast for ever into outer darkness, 'where their worm dieth not'. There is the terror, and not in Augustine's statement of predestination.

Edmund Hill, O.P.