

carcinoma. strength in playful wit derfully var- with "Splin- performing p his great left me here ave lived: a su, the days dances with ce wittily in is be sure: I almost senti-

Norris has some elegant, superbly crafted verses here on Wittgenstein and Walter Benjamin, Mallarmé, Roland Barthes and a host of other theoretical luminaries.

It all seems a far cry from Philip Larkin. No doubt many readers will expect these pieces to be ponderous and obscure. In fact, however, the volume is full of wit, playfulness and intellectual agility. A number of the poems are written in that most exacting of forms, *terza rima*, and Norris has to bend and twist his language to meet its imperious demands, yet there's hardly a clunky rhyme in the whole book. It's a hugely ambitious, arrestingly original work, which turns criticism into poetry and poetry into critique.

MARK FORD

as a literary science, the s has now he author of erse-essays" s a mite pre- he Winnow- reinvent the antic, post- etic and the l as antago- with sensu- speculations, l have come Johnson, or prejudice,

The *Astroplanets* (Pressed Wafer) is a slim pamphlet that collects the handful of lyrics the American poet Douglas Crase has deemed fit for publication in the three-and-a-half decades since his astonishing debut, *The Revisionist* of 1981. Although it runs to only eighteen pages, it packs a powerful punch. Crase is the master of complex, sinuous sentences that twist and loop and unfurl in the most unpredictable of ways – indeed navigating his poetic idiom can feel a bit like riding the rapids. The title poem in particular succeeds in conjugating the mysteries of our planetary existence with an eloquence and sweep I found at once dizzying and uplifting.

ROY F

Daniel Beer's *The Siberian exile* (Allen Lane) is both a gripping feat of scholarship with the scope and er appositely, as both Do are part of Siberia's sto as well as the grand terrible swathe of l history. The lower de are brilliantly evisce *This Is London* (Picac grim times. Urban in Clair Wills's riveting *An immigrant histor* (Allen Lane); Wills r munity newspapers, oral histories from I Pakistani and other c making new identities: old ones, and helping) country. The Little currently in their po take note.

PETER

Le Carré fans are in) Characters from th George Smiley but A ley's lieutenant Peter (*Legacy of Spies* (Peng