

bald as such a summary might seem to suggest. His method is one of analysis, and apart from its other merits, *Man and Literature* is a useful guide to what has been written in the last fifty years. It is unencumbered by the pointing of obvious morals, for the authors are left largely to speak for themselves, and in doing so they provide Mr. Nicholson's thesis with the best of all authorities.

'Liberal Man and Natural Man are both simplifications of the real nature of man. They are attempts to explain his being and purpose on one plane—that of progress or that of animal desires.' Hence the last group, who see man as imperfect and somehow in need of redemption, despite their frequent violence and seeming blasphemy, yet represent a return to a conception of man that is at least negatively consistent with a traditional and Christian view. In such a writer as Rex Warner the Fall may be expressed through strange analogies, and the Original Sin of Graham Greene may seem an original obsession—yet here, fundamentally, is something far truer to man's nature than the progressive microbe of Wells or the retrogressive one of Lawrence.

Mr. Sheed's anthology of Catholic poems by Catholic authors, from the Anglo-Saxon *Dream of the Rood* to Gerard Hopkins, is, too, concerned with the nature of man. Perhaps his purpose has been hindered unduly by the very terms of his choice. Have Dryden or Pope or Oscar Wilde, *because* of their Catholicism, a better claim to poetical understanding of the nature of man than Herbert, say, or Browning? There appears to be a taste in America for Catholic categorising in unlikely fields, and the American public for which *Poetry and Life* is apparently primarily designed, will certainly get from it a useful picture of 'what man's life has looked like to the Catholic poets.' A curious transposition of type on p. 187 makes Oscar Wilde the author of 'half-a-dozen poems contributed to a *Paradyze of Dorian Grey*.'

I.E.

POEMS 1937-42. By David Gascoyne. With drawings by Graham Sutherland. (PL Editions—Nicholson and Watson; 8s. 6d.)

Readers of contemporary poetry owe a debt of gratitude to Messrs. Nicholson and Watson for the publication within six months of volumes by the two best under-forty poets in England: Kathleen Raine and David Gascoyne. What is more, this book is embellished with lithographs by Graham Sutherland, which gives it still further cause to be one of the books of modern verse that should find a permanent place in every library.

Tracing a line of development through this book, we find continual progress, the progress of someone trying to find his way about, and not always succeeding, though never losing a sense of direction. The earliest and latest poems are the most successful.

The book begins with a group called *Miserere*. An inclination to liturgical phraseology and even phrases, and indeed the very fact

The second section of the volume, *Metaphysical*, is pervaded with an imagination intense more than vivid expressed in sensuous and eloquent language. The subjects vary from sexual sin in *Amor Fati* to an interpretation of the inner life of the Blessed Trinity in *The Three Stars*, and include a number of romantic landscapes and a poem about Mozart in which Gascoyne's organ-tones give place to a texture light yet not flimsy, like that of Mozart's six quartets dedicated to Haydn.

The third sequence, *Strophes Elégiaques à la Mémoire d'Alban Berg*, is influenced by Baudelaire and Pierre Jean Jouve. But note also this, which in imagery and syntax and irony is Webster:

ce sont des rats
 Qui font la musique de chambre dans vos chambres;
 Et dans vos jardins ombrageux se cachent les loups.

The poems in the next section lack integration because of their struggle towards a new style. Blake has his influence, and Shakespeare very much so:

Words are marks
 That flicker through men's minds like quick black dust.

Many of these poems relate to moral criticism of persons and people, which in *Noctambules* is turned not only against drunkards and prostitutes, but against himself:

And climbing the last stair
 How timeless seems this time
 Of vigil in despair;
 Of night by night the same
 Weary anabasis
 Between two wars, towards
 The future's huge abyss.

The poems announcing the final group are not good; they partake of the immaturity of rebirth. Then follow *A Wartime Dawn*, *Walking at Whitsun*, and *The Gravel-pit Field*, which show that a brave working-out of one's own unique salvation, provided heresies and blasphemies against tradition are avoided, is ultimately the best course, though the hardest.

The beauty of Gascoyne's poetry lies less in the imagery than in the choice and ordering of the words, though that is not to call it verbal. These last poems, dignified and translucent, which succeed logically the quite different beauty of *Miserere*, have in their diction the synthesis I have awaited all through the vagaries of reportage and neo-apocalypticism: they are glowing without opulence, passionate yet disciplined, and the syntax and rhythm are those of a mature poet:

As with untold intensity
 On the far edge of Being, where
 Life's last faint forms begin to lose
 Name and identity and fade

Away into the Void, endures
 The final thin triumphant flame
 Of all that's most despoiled and bare:
 So these least stones, in the extreme
 Of their abasement might appear
 Like rare stones such as could have formed
 A necklet worn by the dead queen
 Of a great Pharaoh, in her tomb . . .

ANTHONY SYLVESTRE.

STEFAN GEORGE: POEMS. Rendered into English by Carol North Valhope and Ernst Morwitz. (Kegan Paul; 10s. 6d.)

A poet who deliberately separates himself from the people and chooses a manner of writing which can only be understood by those to whom its secrets have been revealed, who uses the tone, the appearance and the situation of words, as well as their literal sense, to convey his meaning and is consciously influenced by the 'sounding obscurities' in the works of the masters, presents extraordinary difficulties to the foreign reader. Hence, whatever criticism there may be of the details of this edition of Stefan George's poems, our general attitude can only be one of unrestrained gratitude. It is an ambitious effort, an attempt to translate sound as well as sense, which could not be wholly successful; and the selection excludes poems which seem to have more than the personal preference of the reviewer to justify publication. Nevertheless, a sufficiently wide range is provided to guide the uninitiated and even to create enthusiasm for this unusual and remote poet.

The difficulty is that even the simplest poems, which appear to be perfectly intelligible, are simultaneously the expression of a thought or experience known only to the poet and his intimate circle of friends. But there is ample evidence in George's poetry and in this selection that he possesses a permanent place in the world's literature as a genuinely lyrical poet, a sensitive exponent of the nobler aspects of the German spirit, and a true European.

There is a direct and irresistible appeal in the joyous lyric beginning:

Es lacht in dem steigenden jahr dir
 Der duft aus dem garten noch leis.
 Flicht in dem flatternden haar dir
 Eppich und ehrenpreis.

The brave English rendering indicates by its very inadequacy the power of the original:

The tides of the year for you breathe still
 From gardens a smiling perfume,
 Fluttering locks for you wreath still
 Ivy and speedwell bloom.

It is unfortunate, too, that this selection omits a poem which, by its simple description of the cutting of a flower, brings out all the depths