'essential significance' and is not content with platitudes about character drawing and fullness of life. GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE AGE OF ANXIETY. By W. H. Auden. (Faber; 8s. 6d.)

Auden's reputation as a poet was established in this country, with those of Spender, Day Lewis and MacNeice, in the early 'thirties, in those difficult years when Europe was troubled continually by war and the rumours of war. The 'twenties were over, and they had left a feeling of general disillusionment behind them: to believe seemed impossible, unless it was in some negative creed like Communism; the future was dark; doubt was the only thing about which anyone could be certain. It is to this time that many people look for the best of Auden's verse; they complain that since his departure to America and his 'conversion' a moral earnestness has pervaded his poetry which has deprived it of its early lyrical impulse. This is something that any poet who advances spiritually must expect to hear said: the deeper his contact with things greater than and outside himself, the more difficult will be their expression. And although he may have written better poems, he is here consistently at his most interesting.

The Age of Anxiety, which he describes as 'a Baroque Eclogue', is divided into six unequal parts and takes the form of a dialogue on All Souls' Night during the war in a bar-parlour in New York, between four people, a woman and three men, who, for one reason or another, have cause to feel acutely the anxiety of the age.

The form of the poem illustrates well Auden's versatility as a poet—the jazz-songs have all the bitter brilliance of his early ballads and the news-bulletins are clever in their brittle sharpness —but it is perhaps questionable whether the alliterative form which he uses—the form of *The Wanderer*—is justified in an age whose ears are not attuned to it. Perhaps he has used it for this very reason, to jar just sufficiently to shake the mind into an acuter awareness. At any rate, it certainly succeeds in doing this, even if at times it seems definitely out of place and imposes only a sense of strain.

Despite this, however, there can be no doubt about the extent of Auden's achievement. Nor indeed should there be about the extent of his potentiality; in *The Age of Anxiety* he gives a clear indication that it is within his capability to write something of outstanding worth in the future. ELIZABETH KING

THE HAPPY PROFESSION. By Ellery Sedgwick. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 15s.)

For thirty years Ellery Sedgwick was the Editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, that most urbane and influential of American reviews. His reminiscences reflect the qualities that made him so unequalled a journalist. Born into the closed world of New England privilege, educated at Harvard, thrown into the company of the famous, his story might have been intolerably smug. Instead it is gracious and

tolerant; full of fascinating stories of meetings with such people as Woodrow Wilson and Mary Webb, Queen Mary and Rupert Brooke. But he is at home with criminals and large-scale eccentrics as well, and perhaps the most delightful incident in the book is his visit to the 'factory' where the 254 plays of Bacon were being industriously reconstructed by cryptograms and crazy erudition. It is a happy profession indeed that can produce so wise and humane a practitioner. I.E.

THE DILEMMA OF THE ARTS. By Wladimir Weidlé. (S.C.M. Press; 10s.)

In reading Professor Weidlé's first book to be published in English one is reminded of Mr Eliot's essay on 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. 'No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone'. Professor Weidlé traces the decay of modern art to the triumph of titanism at the Renascence when man ousted God from the centre of the artist's vision. So art and the artist have grown introverted and 'self-expression' is the rule. But titanism had always been a hidden grumbling monster before the Renascence; the flesh and the devil, original sin and the unredeemed world have always been just beneath the surface. It is the one defect of Professor Weidlé's work that he is so concerned by their triumph in the last fifty years that he forgets this and almost sets up an ideal where they would not be allowed even a subterranean rumble. Yet clearly he does not believe this for he quite definitely pronounces his belief in the sacramentalism of art. Professor Weidlé is concerned with the conflict between science and art. Perhaps the terms read a little archaic now but they are none the less applicable if for science and art we read plan and spontaneity and see excess planning as the destruction of life and thus of religion, for 'artistic experience is, deep down, a religious experience'. So art will only live again when religion lives again and that must be through prayer. One of the great merits of this book is that while it includes in its scope the whole of European poetry (and painting and music too) it is rarely guilty of unwarranted generalisations. The translator has done his work well and left only a few angularities. GERARD MEATH, O.P.

'I WANT TO BE LIKE STALIN'. From the Russian textbook officially approved for the training of school teachers. Drawn up by B. P. Yesipoz and N. K. Goncharov. Translated by George S. Counts and Nucia P. Lodge. (Gollancz; 7s. 6d.)

On the dust cover this book is described as 'rather terrifying'. Yet if we open it at random the chances are that we shall light upon a passage that is remarkable for its insight into the juvenile mind or else one that is highly reminiscent of the rules of a dames' school.

For example: 'Children imitate before they understand. They imitate even in the absence of any deliberate stimulation or direc-