

moment become the victims of this strange disease: extremism. Nor is the problem viewed historically, and therein perhaps lies the weakness of the essay.

For instance, he compares the multiplicity of styles current since the Impressionists with the homogeneity of other periods. But often that homogeneity seems relative when viewed closely. A Sienese quattrocentist would probably have found Masaccio's Carmine frescoes a little disquieting; Michelangelo and Titian provide two very different records of the High Renaissance; Caravaggio and Annibale Carracci were both practising in Rome at the same time. Similarly, although extremism may bring modern art to a ludicrous pass, nonetheless it has appeared in many guises before, from the flaccid perfection of late Greek art to the more unpalatable confections of the Italian Mannerists. It would seem to be a sign that the artist has nothing more to say, but it has never prevented subsequent artists from saying a great deal.

But these are minor blemishes in a stimulating and very good book. The debunking of the myth of the artist's freedom is long overdue and expressed with great lucidity. Every art student striving to be *avant-garde* and painting 1915 'Braques' should read and ponder his argument carefully. The discriminating layman will enjoy it, too; but fundamentally Mr Wyndham Lewis is a painter, and it is his fellow artists who will most fully appreciate the subtleties and be most provoked and enlivened.

MARIA SHIRLEY

STUDIES IN LITERATURE AND BELIEF. By Martin Jarrett-Kerr, C.R. (Rockliff; 15s.)

Most criticism deviates in some degree from the work of art. The more valuable sort, through its function of elucidation, directs us back to the work with an increased capacity for appreciation; the rest concerns itself with problems connected with the work, but not immediately related to our appreciation of it. In these studies, which treat in their various aspects of the effect and importance of a writer's beliefs in relation to his work, and through the work in relation to the reader, Father Jarrett-Kerr is engaged in criticism of the second sort. There are two general essays, and others on the influence of popular beliefs on the development of the ballad, on the 'theological drama' of Calderon, on the unself-conscious faith of *I Promessi Sposi*, on Dostoevsky's agonized debate between belief and unbelief, and on the novels of C. F. Ramuz.

Father Jarrett-Kerr wisely recognizes that 'it is impossible to discuss univocally the relationship between belief and literature'. But such complex relationships can be discussed satisfactorily only when the various levels of interaction are clearly distinguished. The effect of the

introductory discussion unfortunately is rather to blur distinctions, and in consequence the book suffers from a degree of obscurity and from a lack of direction. However there are a great many interesting and wise insights by the way, and the extracts which illustrate them are always relevant and significant.

And at the end of the last essay it becomes apparent that the author's deepest concern is to insist that a writer should not allow his beliefs to interfere with the free creativity of the imagination. The essay 'Calderon and the Imperialism of Belief' is a typical expression of this concern. His conclusion is that although a 'theological' play such as *El Magico Prodigioso* is 'drama of major stature', its end is bathetic because faith predetermines the climax and so eliminates sympathy: 'the final weakness even of his greatest work is that he has not understood the genuine independence and validity of creaturehood' (p. 63). The understanding of life and of art implicit in this thesis is admirable. But the argument fails to convince me because it seems to assess Calderon by standards alien to those of his own endeavour. As Mr Pring-Mill commented (cf. note 29, p. 192), Calderon was not attempting to produce tragedies, as the argument assumes, but 'dramatic illustrations of certainty'.

The source of this misunderstanding in an otherwise penetrating study is to be found, remotely, in the failure to define clearly the terms of the discussion, and, immediately, in the fact that Father Jarrett-Kerr has been concerned consciously with the theological implications rather than with the effect of the drama upon the imagination. Perhaps a necessary corollary to his praiseworthy insistence that the ability to create a good work of art does not come through philosophy or religion in any direct manner, is that a preoccupation with the beliefs of a writer can interfere with the direct imaginative response which is the proper basis of criticism.

DAVID MOODY

THE WORKS OF SIR THOMAS MALORY. Edited by Eugène Vinaver.
(Oxford Standard Authors; 21s.)

When Professor Vinaver's edition of Malory's romances of chivalry first appeared it was justly acclaimed a great work of scholarship. This presentation of the text in the Standard Authors series, while retaining the authority of that edition, makes it available in an attractive form to the common reader. Its scope is well described by Professor Vinaver in his brief introduction:

'In the following pages I have reproduced the text of my edition of *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* published by the Clarendon Press in 1947, but without the Introduction, the critical apparatus (the "few essential notes" referred to on the dust-cover seem to be miss-