

nescience, reaches the same position as the paradoxical 'Transcendental Wisdom' of Mahayana Buddhism. 'Has the power of the land', asks the author (p. 459) 'triumphed to such a degree that in the very doctrine that pretends, with the most authority, to represent "the gist of the whole meaning of the Vedas" (*vedanta*), the world-feeling, not of the Vedic singers but of the conquered folk whom they despised, and whom they sought to shut out from the society of the twice-born, is what has come into its own?'

But the last word is not with this world-negation. Side by side with it the author sees in Tantrism, as in certain types of Indian art, a dionysian affirmation of the world of name and form; indeed, he scarcely conceals his sympathy with its orgies rather than with the ascetic flights of the transcendental sages and saints.

BASIL WRIGHTON

SECULAR LYRICS OF THE XIVTH AND XVTH CENTURIES. Edited by R. H. Robbins. (Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford University Press; 18s.)

Academic orthodoxy locates the great age of the English lyric between Wiat (1503-1542) and Waller (1606-1687), and Mr Robbins's book does little to disturb one's faith in the accuracy of this assessment. Nevertheless, I personally have not seen any later production which reaches the level of achievement recorded in Chaucer's *ballade*:

So hathe my herte caught in remembraunce  
Your beauté hool, and steadfast governaunce.

Remembering this, it was not unreasonable to hope that some of Chaucer's contemporaries might have measured up to the achievements of the Master, in this *genre* at least. There was, after all, the pseudo-Chaucerian roundel *Merciles Beaute* (usually printed with Chaucer's works):

Your yēn two wol slee me sodenly  
I may the beaute of hem not sustene.

Here is that exquisite crystal beauty which is the acme of lyric perfection. Judged by these standards, Mr Robbins's book is frankly disappointing, but not without interest. Among the 'courtly love lyrics' here collected, there are a number of competent performances. The modern reader, however, should remind himself that the art of the lyric is not concerned with 'literary values'—themes and imagery are stereotyped. The art lies in the effectiveness of rhythm and cadence in supplying the emotive component to the overt (and usually trite) statement.

Mr Robbins's scholarship has germanic thoroughness, but when he openly states that he has chosen his material 'irrespective of poetic merit' and that the criterion of selection has been 'the number of texts

preserved—irrespective of their appeal as literature', one begins to feel uneasy. It is depressing to find such a large proportion of literary junk embalmed in scholarly annotations, and one feels that the reader who is prepared to spend eighteen shillings on an anthology of poetry ought to be spared the inclusion of such gems as,

Thirti dayes hath nouembir  
April, iune, and septembir . . .

Scholarship for scholarship's sake is an amusement which ought to be confined to the academic journals.

J. V. CURRAN

THE FORTUNES OF FAUST. By E. M. Butler. (Cambridge University Press; 30s.)

This is by far the most pleasing volume of Professor Butler's trilogy on the Faust legend. She traces the development of the 'Faustian organism' from the sixteenth-century Lutheran chapbook, via Marlowe, the puppet plays, on to Goethe, Lenau, and thence to Thomas Mann. Each work is analysed on its own poetic merits and set against the wider background of contemporary literature, the tracing of affinities being specially interesting. Great learning is carried lightly. The style is vivid, sometimes indeed lurid, but always entertaining. The verse translations are most readable, the pictures delightful. Typographical errors are rare, but somehow Albertus Magnus has slipped in as 'Albertus Magus'.

It is not altogether easy to discover a consistent theme behind this gallery of Faust portraits. Perhaps one might put it like this. The author finds that apart from Goethe's drama which is a special case here searchingly analysed, only the tragic 'Fausts' have survived, for Faust's ethical salvation seems to spell his poetical downfall. The theme of the doomed magician loses dramatic power in an age which believes neither in hell nor in heaven. Goethe's *Prologue in Heaven* denies the reality of the devil's power, and Faust's spectacular redemption begs the whole question. It was left to Thomas Mann in his novel, *Dr Faustus*, written during the war which unleashed the first atom bomb, to rediscover—still not without ambiguity—the grim reality of the powers of evil which also dominated the original chapbook. But the atomic age has also rediscovered the metaphysical yearning expressed in the words of a puppet-play Mephisto, words still hauntingly alive on the stage of the 'Marionettentheater' at the Salzburg Festival last summer, and with which this trilogy ends:

'Ah, Faustus, if there were a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, made of swords instead of rungs, so that I should be cut into a thousand pieces with every step I took, yet would I still strive to reach the summit, so that I might behold the face of God but once more, after which I would willingly be damned again to all eternity.'

ELIZABETH STOPP