

LES YEUX D'ELSA. By Aragon. (Edition Horizon—La France Libre; 6s.)

In a short notice it is of course impossible to do more than direct attention to these poems. Those who knew the old Aragon, the high-priest of surrealism (now renegade), will find the same technical adroitness allied now to a passionate devotion to France (disguised in various *double entendre*):

' Il advint qu'un beau soir l'univers se brisa
Sur des récifs que les naufrageurs enflammerent
Moi je voyais briller au-dessus de la mer
Les yeux d'Elsa les yeux d'Elsa les yeux d'Elsa.'

Technical tricks of Rimbaud's (which in Rimbaud were more than technical tricks) are imitated, e.g. 'Les soldats ont creusé des trous grandeur nature' (p. 6). The renegade surrealist speaks:

' Amour abandonnons aux ténèbres mentales
Leur carnaval imaginaire Il me suffit
Du monde tel qu'il est sur les cartes postales' (p. 11),

but the problem of poetry is a little deeper than that, Aragon has not yet assimilated the wisdom of Baudelaire: 'Le temps n'est pas loin où l'on comprendra que toute littérature qui se refuse à marcher fraternellement entre la science et la philosophie est une littérature homicide et suicide.'

J.D.

PHILOSOPHY

THE BALANCE OF TRUTH. By E. I. Watkin. (Hollis and Carter; 9s.)

Mr. E. I. Watkin paints on a vast canvas. He has attempted to sketch a Catholic world view, the outlook of the *philosophia perennis*. It is perhaps inevitable that such a presentation should at times involve a somewhat hurried dismissal of problems and that the reader should become quite breathless as Mr. Watkin's mind darts from questions of the interpretation of Baroque Art to a criticism of Judge Rutherford, only a moment later to plunge into a discussion of mystical prayer. This, however, is not to deny that the book has a fundamental and impressive unity. All the problems that Mr. Watkin's erudition has brought together are used by him to illustrate his thesis, the truth of the Catholic outlook. No problem is solved by negation, and the balanced viewpoint of the *philosophia perennis* does not permit of a divorce between matter and spirit, but sees all things within the framework of the hierarchy of being. Using, as Mr. Watkin says, 'both eyes,' it bases itself on objective reality without denying the dynamic constitution of things. On this point, however,

Personally I find the lines as quoted by Count Hans Huyn (*Tragedy of Errors*, London, 1939, p. 157) nearer to the spirit of the original: 'The mystic call of the West . . . Greeting in the wind, where the plains of the Meuse and the Marne lay sweet and fertile in the light of dawn.'