

cultural paternalism. The work lacks the comprehensive vision and steady penetration of great criticism; but it is well informed, rich in insights and puts its views boldly. Poetry, the author holds, promises well in West Africa, and drama is strong, but prose is flat and often bad. Amongst the poets, Okara is sensitively studied, but John Pepper Clark is condescendingly patted on the shoulder. Abioseh Nicol is ranked higher as a master of prose than Achebe, whose pre-eminence as a novelist is, however, conceded. The greatest accolade of all is reserved for the dramatist Soyinka.

These sharply personal assessments are supported amply by quotations (which could have been better marked out for the reader by deeper indentation and some spacing above and below, instead of appearing to be merely part of a badly laid-out paragraph). Sometimes the extract makes the author's point and is not helped by his sudden descents into banality and cliché such as (p. 86):

'There are qualities here which place Nicol in the very forefront of African short story writers. It all looks so simple, so utterly natural; as though Nicol is casually taking a slice of real life and offering it to us in all

its workaday detail, all its blending of the tragic and the absurd. Yet the style that allows this effect must possess the translucence of crystal; and the sensibility behind the style must be one of marvellous richness and iron control.'

There are other passages, which read like transcripts from a taped lecture. Did the author have African university students in mind as his readers? The argument at times becomes wordy, yet we are carried along by the author's excitement and enthusiasm, to be rewarded by flashes of perception, especially in his handling of authors he likes.

The immediacy of this response to literature seems to preclude the development of any treatment of theme, other than tangentially. There is an interesting critical work yet to be written on the 'quest' theme in African writing. But Mr Roscoe's aim was to set out in some detail a personal assessment of modern West African writing in English, and to show that in drama and verse, at any rate, it has largely succeeded in becoming independent of western models, and is drawing increasingly on its own heritage of thought and experience. In this he has succeeded.

ROLAND HINDMARSH

**THE LIFE OF ST PHILIP HOWARD**, edited by Francis Steer. *Phillimore*, London and Chichester, 1971. 83 pp. £2.50.

St Philip Howard is the only one of the recently canonized martyrs who was not executed. He was condemned to death in 1589 and left to languish in the Tower till his death in 1595. For this reason alone he has a special importance in establishing that condemnation rather than actual execution is the essence of martyrdom. There are several others who died in prison under sentence of death and have never been declared even 'venerable'.

On his reconciliation to the Church in 1585 St Philip tried to flee the country but was betrayed and captured at sea. He was convicted in the Star Chamber and sentenced to a huge fine and imprisonment at the Queen's pleasure. At the approach of the Armada in 1588 he organized a 24-hour prayer. This was very easily interpreted as a prayer for the success of the Spaniards and he was condemned for treason.

This account was written by a Jesuit who

knew him. The MS. is at Arundel and was privately printed in 1857. It is now lavishly reproduced, with portraits from the Arundel collection of the saint and his parents. Most contemporary accounts of martyrs are little more than panegyrics but this one is an exception. It really gives all the important facts and does not whitewash a very human person. Not only the indiscretions of his youth are recorded but his correspondence with Dr Allen at Douai, intimating that it would be a good thing for the Catholics if the Earl of Leicester could be 'taken away by some lawful means'. Also no attempt is made to minimize the want of prudence in organizing special prayers at the time of the Armada. But it is easy to be wise after the event and these are small points in a drama that contains all the ingredients of Tudor intrigue, including an apostate priest and a terrorized Marian priest who provide the 'evidence'.

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