

treatment of Winstanley is too dependent on his modern Marxist interpreters; but these would be captious criticisms of a book which is, after all, aimed at the general reader, and which is informed by a generous enthusiasm for human liberty.

ROGER SHARROCK.

ON PRODUCING SHAKESPEARE. By Ronald Watkins. (Michael Joseph; 21s.)

Much of our understanding and interpretation of Shakespeare depends upon whether we accept the Protestant myth of the Renaissance. This was the belief that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there took place an unprecedented revival of scientific and literary learning which brought in its wake a great outpouring of artistic creation. To Catholics of course it comes as no new discovery to learn that the Reformation was no reformation, but perhaps it is not equally well understood that the great works of art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were in fact for the most part the fine flower of medieval culture. Dr Tillyard has shown that Shakespearian drama was in spirit medieval; Mr S. L. Bethell carried on this good work by linking up Shakespeare with popular dramatic tradition; and now Mr Watkins has brought the matter down literally to the 'footlights'. His work spans the gap that all too frequently yawns between cloistered scholarship and practical play production. He describes in accurate detail the Elizabethan theatre (the illustrations are remarkably helpful) and by using the Quarto and Folio texts, and the repertory account books shows what the plays were really about and how they were performed in the reconstructed Globe theatre. This method of research draws every ounce of meaning from the text and at the same time indirectly tells us some important things about the nature of drama. Mr Watkins briefly demolishes the view that the King's Men were a set of crude barnstormers; only the best actors would be able to give the full meaning to words, rhythm, mime and gesture and be ready to sink their own personalities in their rôles. For those who have not been dazzled by the modern Shakespearean 'star' this book will be stimulating. Play producers and students of literature will find much to instruct them, and the student of religion and drama will welcome yet another clear piece of evidence of the very real 'partnership' of actors and audience in true drama. The only flaw in the book is a slight excess of high seriousness and a tendency (though *only* a tendency) to make Shakespeare's art faultless, but this is to be expected in what is still something of pioneer work and is a small price to pay for such an outstanding piece of scholarship.