

tant seminarists. The footnotes and bibliographies are on the whole well calculated to lead the reader along sure paths to such goals as he himself may propose.

G. M. WICKENS

COLERIDGE. By Humphry House. (Rupert Hart-Davis; 8s. 6d.)

WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE, 1795-1834. By H. M. Margoliouth. (Home University Library; Geoffrey Cumberlege; 6s.)

Mr House's *Coleridge*, the Clark Lectures for 1951-2, is a distinguished book. He has had the wit, his scope being necessarily limited, to make his point clearly and at once. The traditional accounts of the poet distracted by German metaphysics, or of the philosopher spoilt by poetry, or of the split personality, are in their different ways inadequate. And there has been too much pitying of Coleridge. Certainly, says Mr House, pity is needed, but it must be 'a developed, comprehending pity, so far as we are capable of it, a pity like tragic pity. . . . The area in which we should pity him, the things for which we should pity him, are beyond our normal emotional scope.' This fairly indicates the book's concern with the things that matter, and the quiet authority with which it is addressed to them.

Mr House has little time, and perhaps he has not much inclination, to discuss Coleridge's philosophy or his criticism: he concentrates on the aura of the man and then on his poetry, or rather, on his five or six great poems. Here he has some good points to make, in one case—*Frost at Midnight*—attempting a serious revaluation, in support of his belief that this poem belongs with Coleridge's best. About *Kubla Khan* he argues very convincingly that nobody would have thought it less than perfect had not Coleridge first described it as 'a fragment' and 'a psychological curiosity'. Good too is his study of the potentialities of *The Ancient Mariner*, of the allegorical interpretations, sensible and silly, that have been given to it.

Like *The Road to Xanadu*, Mr House's book is preoccupied with the joining together in poetic conspiracy of close observation of nature and a rare appetite for abstract studies. This rewarding critical approach gains in value from Mr House's review of the unpublished notebooks, in which both sides of Coleridge appear to fine effect.

Wordsworth and Coleridge, a recent addition to the Home University Library, is also a good book, an introduction to the two poets which is in the best sense elementary, since it makes an excellent basis for further reading. Here and there it is marred by slack writing—'Bursting out like that is unusual for the charitable and affectionate Dorothy, but to have one's serious letter thus ignored!'—and by absurdity of phrase—'little brown Dorothy'; but Mr Margoliouth orders his material so well that he is able to say a great deal in a small book, without dullness or vicious distortion. Also,

he clearly loves the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and he will bring others to love it with him.

JOHN JONES

EVOLUTION IN ACTION. By Julian Huxley. (Chatto and Windus; 9s. 6d.)

This small book of 153 pages is based on the Patten Foundation Lectures given at Indiana University in 1951 and on a series of special talks given a little later for the B.B.C.

We can always trust Dr Huxley to provide us with interesting reading for he has that somewhat rare gift of making whatever he writes about seem of supreme importance. We can also expect him to be stimulating and provocative, even exasperatingly so, for his faith in his own ideas is impregnable and knows no boundaries. His latest book is well up to standard and it takes us a little further along the road of Huxleyism, but dressed up in the garb of a crusader concerned now with the destiny of Man.

Dr Huxley, of course, takes evolution for granted, and there seems little reason why he shouldn't, and he gives us many fascinating examples of his evolutionary assertions. He does not bring forward any of the now old-fashioned proofs. Instead, he attempts to give an overall impression of evolution and to discern the principles behind the process. He considers that modern work on evolution, in conjunction with a general consideration of the subject, has shown that evolution is a unitary process displaying several special features and common trends, such as the efficacy of natural selection, adaptation, speciation, and deployment of groups leading to a general spread of organisms into new environments. This process leads to advances in general efficiency, but in the case of man only has this general efficiency developed so well that he may affect the course of future events, and so progress enters into the process. Biological progress (as distinct from mere biological advance) has now ceased, but human progress leading to higher planes of activity has only just begun (shades of Olaf Stapledon!). Dr Huxley considers that man became human only when he learnt to use verbal concepts, to benefit from his experiences and to pool them. In other words, he considers that the essential uniqueness of man lies in his powers of abstraction and his building up of tradition. If these age-old attributes of man have now a biological foundation, biologically they would seem to imply that only man can make real progress in an evolutionary sense because man knows he has a destiny and, as Dr Huxley says, 'He could come to the realisation that his destiny is to participate and lead in the creative process of evolution, whereby new possibilities can be realised for life'.

What the ordinary man, or even the advanced thinker, is to get out of this realisation, Dr Huxley does not attempt to say. But, no doubt, even to think along this line is to think against the evolutionary process. It is difficult to see, however, how such an idea of the transcendental importance of the evolutionary process is more uplifting, or more satisfying in any