

and I should like to draw attention to an alleged saying of our Lord reported in the Apocryphal New Testament in the Acts of John: 'thine is the passion of this manhood, which I am about to suffer'. The archetypal drama of the Passion of our Lord was the means whereby the instinctive life of man was made conscious and that is the source of its compelling power.

Fordham then discusses Transference which he considers in the analytic interview and shows the importance of the counter-transference which is inevitably present, and which has been neglected, but which is as vital a factor if healing is to occur.

The rest of the book is concerned with the origins of the *ego* in childhood and he presents a mass of his own experiences gained in his work in child guidance, from which he draws his conclusions, showing in the process the part played by the transference, counter-transference and the use of archetypal imagery. This section is a mine of important observations and deductions. In the briefest possible summary of this well-documented material what emerges is that the child, born into and contained by an undifferentiated wholeness associated with mother-instinctive experiences, gradually abstracts from it and brings into consciousness an *ego* personality. Failure or partial failure to do this results in neurosis.

It is not till the second half of life, the problems of which have occupied so much of Jung's attention, that the need to regain a wholeness on a conscious level is imperative.

The book contains an appreciative foreword by Jung, and as a reader of *BLACKFRIARS* I confidently recommend it to other readers.

DORIS LAYARD

MEDIEVAL ENGLISH POETRY. By John Speirs. (Faber; 42s.)

Perhaps the chief of the demerits of *Medieval English Poetry* is that their sum is so great and they are so glaring that the book's many compensatory virtues may be ignored. Its author, John Speirs, is one of that group of young Cambridge writers who recently produced *The Age of Chaucer*: and those who found that symposium for the most part confused and confusing are not likely to be better pleased by this solo flight into the criticism of medieval poetry. The very title is misleading: the author is chiefly interested in only such poems as will lend themselves to use as illustrative material for his highly specialized thesis, the survival in the late Middle Ages of pre-Christian rite and myth. He attempts to disarm in advance readers' objections to this wilful and arbitrary choice by calling it 'an act of criticism': but criticism of the body of Middle English poetry, which is what this expensive work claims to be, which relegates such a work as *The*

*Owl and the Nightingale* to a single, trivial footnote, and makes no mention whatever of such poets as Layamon, Robert Manning, Richard Rolle, Richard Caistor, William of Nassington or William Herebert, can only be treated as partial and capricious. But because Speirs is obsessively concerned with dubious anthropology and therefore neglects the chronicles, the comic tales, the homilies and most of the devotional poetry, one must not jump to the conclusion that he is incapable of dealing with such categories, unwilling to deal with them or insensitive to them. In fact, his analysis and appreciation of *I sing of a maiden that is makeles* shows him to have deep feeling for and understanding of the religious lyrics, and one can only regret that he has not turned his acts of criticism upon himself, and employed his considerable talents more usefully. He announces with great flourish a new critical method which he will employ, and in evolving this method he has worked from some valid assumptions, such as that those who treat medieval literature merely as the raw material out of which to make learned works on sound-laws or on theology or on history or on *Realien* are themselves losing the true worth of that literature, and are withholding it from others. But though few would dissent from the statement in Speirs's 'Conclusion', that medieval poetry 'means nothing less than *all* that it does or is in every detail' (we might, however, think that for most of us this has been premise rather than conclusion), we are bound to find the author's practice strangely different from his precept. He has many hard things to say of the philologists, living and dead, who have edited medieval English texts, and he throws out several hints as to how their work should have been done: but he makes no attempt to do it himself, instead relying blindly upon the work, good, bad and indifferent, of the men whom he dispraises. Nor is it cricket, or any other game played to rules, for him in one place to attack a scholar by name for a piece of crass stupidity, but elsewhere to make use, without acknowledgment, of the same scholar's critical observations. He is an enemy of source-hunting, as we all should be when we find ourselves engrossed by lost sources to the exclusion of living texts; but he himself vividly exemplifies how source-hunting could be used to distinguish between lies and truth, when he seeks to support his contention, itself arresting and stimulating, that the scene of Mak and the stolen sheep in the Towneley Cycle is not merely, as most of us have thought, a light-hearted persiflage of the Adoration of the Shepherds, but an allusion to devil-worship and the black art, by citing one of the most outrageous pieces of unreason from Dr Margaret Murray's *The God of the Witches*. There is no space here to dispose of it except by assuring him that if he will consult her cited sources (and he is supposed, *ex officio*, to be a serious and responsible

scholar, obliged to do this) he will find that Walter Langton, after searching investigations conducted both at the Curia and in England by commissioners not at all favourably disposed to him, during which he was suspended from all priestly and episcopal functions, was found entirely guiltless of the many charges brought against him by an enemy who seems to have been mentally deranged. One must end as one began: readers who allow themselves to be put off by nonsense of this sort will miss much of great value in this book: the present writer can only say that Speirs's articles in *Scrutiny*, reproduced here, on *Sir Gawain*, convinced him that he had never before really understood the significance of this mysterious and fascinating poem. *Medieval English Poetry* has already been greeted with delight by those who believe along with Professor Trevor-Roper that professional scholars may kill the subjects which they profess: but amateurism can be no less deadly, when it leads to neglect or misinterpretation of relevant evidence. If Mr Speirs would master the techniques which now he merely despises, he might well end by putting them to better use than most of us who employ them, he might display that 'totality' to which we may think that we still can bring each his own humble mite of comprehension.

ERIC COLLEDGE

ON POETRY AND POETS. By T. S. Eliot. (Faber; 21s.)

Any new essay from Mr Eliot is to be received with interest and gratitude. The sixteen essays in this latest volume, though not all brand new, are, with one exception, subsequent to *Selected Essays*. In two other respects this volume differs from *Selected Essays*: while the earlier volume touched many other subjects besides poetry, this one, as the title indicates, is exclusively concerned with poetry (seven essays) and poets (nine essays); where the earlier essays were mostly written for publication, most of the present set were originally conceived for delivery to an audience, though all except three, that on Johnson, on Goethe and the second essay on Milton, also subsequently appeared in print. So we can observe how well Mr Eliot's prose speaks or reads; there is little or no difference between the two. While we shall welcome the reappearance here in permanent form of some fairly old friends, such as *What is a Classic?* (1944) and *Rudyard Kipling* (1941), we naturally also look to see if Mr Eliot has changed his mind or offered any further observations on old themes. It is particularly valuable to have the two essays on Milton (1936 and 1947) side by side, and some, no doubt, will be gratified with what they might call a mellowing of view. One of the most interesting and helpful essays is