

spiritual life' and at one point (in arguing for the consistency-criterion in judging Christian statements) a remark that an apparition of Mary which used bad language about the Pope would automatically rule itself out of court. Thinking of some of those Popes one isn't so sure.

It is a pity that the book is so unreliable on liturgy and the idea of communication, because when it sticks to linguistics and scripture it is entirely successful. The only qualification to this is that there is some tendency to move from general,

important statements to minor, concrete details without a sense of proportion, and the effect is sometimes unconsciously comic (as when a good, broad discussion of communication suddenly descends to a solemn listing of items like hare-lips, deafness and 'extreme hoarseness' as obstacles to communication). But apart from this the scholarship is sound, the exposition clear, and the general result very helpful for the layman with a linguistic bent.

Terry Eagleton

POESIE/POEMS by Eugenio Montale. Italian text with English translations by George Kay. Illustrated by George Mackie. *Edinburgh University Press, 20s.*

Montale is now nearly seventy and his earliest published poem, the famous *Meriggiare pallido e assorto*, was written as long ago as 1916 when he was nineteen. He and the slightly older Ungaretti are the two most considerable Italian poets of this century. Of the two Ungaretti (a Tuscan born in Egypt; Montale is Genoese) has been the more obviously 'original': he was the pioneer whose early lyrics, stemming from experiences on the Austrian front in World War I, mark the chief turning point in Italian poetry since the death of Leopardi in 1837. Ungaretti tried to prune language down to the roots. His effort – as effective, sometimes, as it was daring and dangerous – was to interiorize to the utmost the poetic word, withdrawing it from every conventional or literary association back to an ideal point where it would shine, so to say, with its own 'innocence', intimating in its purity mysteries that ordinary speech – and, still more, conventional literary speech – was too crude and noisy to communicate. Without this Ungarettian revolution Montale's own work would no doubt not have been possible; but it expresses a very different personality, at once more sceptical and more affirmative. Montale's search for truth (and the deep seriousness and sincerity of his work seem fully to justify the phrase) is, as every poet's must be, a search for perfect verbal expression, but he shows no confidence that words can mediate a mystical intuition. From the first the

agnostic note, the denial of any communication with a superhuman reality, has sounded strongly in his poetry – with a strength and poignancy indeed not often equalled in modern literature. True, this negative side of Montale's work – considered in terms of content – this apparently radical unbelief is offset from time to time; especially in the later poems (e.g. the superb *L'Anguilla*) by intimations or affirmations that seem profoundly religious. Montale's is in fact a divided mind. But a sense of man's being hopelessly imprisoned in space and time is what he seems likely to convey, at first, to most readers.

His work has accumulated slowly, piece by piece. In bulk it is not large; three books of verse, with some translations from French, Spanish and above all English poetry (and notably of T. S. Eliot, who on his side was one of the first non-Italians to recognize Montale's quality). The impression of mass and power that it leaves on the reader is due in part to the sensuous concreteness, the intense particularity of the poet's vision, in part to the very close-grained texture of the verse itself, in part to the general gravity of the tone and sentiment – though relieved here and there by a rather fantastic irony. The pace varies a good deal, from a slowly wandering meditative contemplation of natural objects up to sudden bursts of speed – hurrying close-packed sequences conveying a shattering external tumult, the wildness of seas and storms become suddenly the reverber-

ation of a mind in anguish. The weather and the sea are everywhere in this poetry, the sea especially – it is one of the two predominant images of this son of Liguria, the other, in perpetual contrast with it, being a wall or a prison.

Montale's habitual concision, combined with his extensive and sometimes strange vocabulary, make him exceptionally difficult to translate, but Mr Kay's renderings must on the whole be judged a success. Here and there he fails badly, it seems to me; the sense, for example, of 'E la nube che vede?' in *L'estate* can only be, not 'And the cloud that sees?', but 'And the cloud, what does it see?', in view not only of Italian idiom but also of the

typically Montalian context (an implicit denial of the 'pathetic fallacy'). But such blemishes hardly matter. Mr Kay has put us all in his debt with a generally accurate and sometimes really felicitous line-by-line rendering of so much sombrely splendid and deeply moving poetry. No one has taken the full measure of modern poetry who does not know *L'Anguilla* or *La casa dei doganieri* or *Incontro*. And here we have them, beautifully bound and printed, with decent versions *en face*, and interspersed with Mr Mackie's aptly evocative drawings.

Kenelm Foster, O.P.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SARTRE by Mary Warnock. *Hutchinson, 15s.*
HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY by Magda King. *Basil Blackwell, 30s.*

Sartre's main philosophical writings are difficult. Mrs Warnock's book is intended as a guide for those who none the less wish to read them. It claims to be mainly expository and only incidentally critical. It is clear, brief, but at times misleading.

The book falls into three parts. An account of the background to Sartre's main philosophical work *Being and Nothingness*; a discussion of this work; and a chapter on the half-completed *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*. Sartre distinguishes being-in-itself and being-for-itself or consciousness; various instances of being-for-itself, these giving rise to being-for-others; and pre-reflective and reflective consciousness. The latter makes possible the distinction between self-consciousness and consciousness of self. Mrs Warnock notes this distinction (p. 17) but fails to stress its radical importance. Sometimes she appears to miss what is at issue. Thus she writes of 'reflexive awareness, in which the self can be thought of as an object to itself in introspection' (p. 22) and of unreflective self-consciousness that it 'entails . . . an awareness of myself being aware of an object' (p. 37). But the point of the distinction is to render consciousness non-ego-logical. Which is the opposite of what the quotations suggest. This is unfortunate since the

autonomy of consciousness, important both for Sartre's account of freedom and the central concept of 'nothingness', is thought by Sartre to gain plausibility from this distinction. Sometimes, as on page 43, Mrs Warnock notices this. But the ambiguity is unhelpful to her avowed purpose.

Similar ambiguity occurs elsewhere. Opening her account of *Being and Nothingness* (p. 42), Mrs Warnock rightly stresses the 'highly integrated system of concepts' Sartre presents. Later (p. 89) she denies that Sartre has a system. Prior to this she discusses selected aspects of it. These include 'Nothingness', 'Bad Faith', and 'Being-for-others', where Sartre's contribution to the problem of other minds and his view of human relations is presented. Mrs Warnock over-dramatizes what Sartre actually means. Given his examples it is easy to see Sartre as pessimistic and his account of human relations as 'characterized by an extreme hostility' (p. 81). But this is, I think, a mistake. Unfortunately Mrs Warnock makes it.

This mistake accounts, perhaps, for the change of tone in Chapter 4. Here the charge that Sartre has no system but instead generalizes illegitimately from particular instances is resurrected. A lengthy extract from *La Nausée* is produced in evidence. But this really won't do. *La Nausée* was published in 1938. At that date Sartre had worked