

LES YEUX D'ELSA. By Aragon. (Edition Horizon—La France Libre; 6s.)

In a short notice it is of course impossible to do more than direct attention to these poems. Those who knew the old Aragon, the high-priest of surrealism (now renegade), will find the same technical adroitness allied now to a passionate devotion to France (disguised in various *double entendre*):

' Il advint qu'un beau soir l'univers se brisa  
Sur des récifs que les naufrageurs enflammerent  
Moi je voyais briller au-dessus de la mer  
Les yeux d'Elsa les yeux d'Elsa les yeux d'Elsa.'

Technical tricks of Rimbaud's (which in Rimbaud were more than technical tricks) are imitated, e.g. 'Les soldats ont creusé des trous grandeur nature' (p. 6). The renegade surrealist speaks:

'Amour abandonnons aux ténèbres mentales  
Leur carnaval imaginaire Il me suffit  
Du monde tel qu'il est sur les cartes postales' (p. 11),

but the problem of poetry is a little deeper than that, Aragon has not yet assimilated the wisdom of Baudelaire: 'Le temps n'est pas loin où l'on comprendra que toute littérature qui se refuse à marcher fraternellement entre la science et la philosophie est une littérature homicide et suicide.'

J.D.

#### PHILOSOPHY

THE BALANCE OF TRUTH. By E. I. Watkin. (Hollis and Carter; 9s.)

Mr. E. I. Watkin paints on a vast canvas. He has attempted to sketch a Catholic world view, the outlook of the *philosophia perennis*. It is perhaps inevitable that such a presentation should at times involve a somewhat hurried dismissal of problems and that the reader should become quite breathless as Mr. Watkin's mind darts from questions of the interpretation of Baroque Art to a criticism of Judge Rutherford, only a moment later to plunge into a discussion of mystical prayer. This, however, is not to deny that the book has a fundamental and impressive unity. All the problems that Mr. Watkin's erudition has brought together are used by him to illustrate his thesis, the truth of the Catholic outlook. No problem is solved by negation, and the balanced viewpoint of the *philosophia perennis* does not permit of a divorce between matter and spirit, but sees all things within the framework of the hierarchy of being. Using, as Mr. Watkin says, 'both eyes,' it bases itself on objective reality without denying the dynamic constitution of things. On this point, however,

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Personally I find the lines as quoted by Count Hans Huyn (*Tragedy of Errors*, London, 1939, p. 157) nearer to the spirit of the original: 'The mystic call of the West . . . Greeting in the wind, where the plains of the Meuse and the Marne lay sweet and fertile in the light of dawn.'

we think that Mr. Watkin underestimates the dynamic character of 'act' in the philosophy of St. Thomas.

One of the most valuable sections of the book deals with that dialectic by which one truth both implies another and tends to evoke its complement and contrast — a truth which can only be met by the synthesis involved in the Catholic outlook of the *philosophia perennis* — the whole truth.

The whole work is infused with a sense of the mystery of things, and the last chapter on the Blessed Trinity illustrates well how the supernatural pervades and crowns the world known by man's natural reason. There are, however, certain obscurities; for instance, the use of the word 'intuition' as a species of *deus ex machina*, though this may be due to the fact that Mr. Watkin is not here writing a treatise on knowledge. Further, in justice to St. Augustine it should be pointed out that for him at least *memoria* had the same entitative footing as understanding and will, and that the point of his analysis of the '*Imago Trinitatis*' is that these three are necessary elements involved in each and every act of the *mens*. St. Augustine is not as Mr. Watkin appears to be, talking about the 'economic' Trinity, but is conducting an analysis of the Trinity starting from a consideration of the divine essence.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

THE MOVEMENT FOR A NEO-SCHOLASTIC PHILOSOPHY OF LAW IN AMERICA, 1932-1942. By Miriam Theresa Rooney.

We are presented here with a report of a movement which has just completed the first decade of its existence. As suggested by the Chairman of the Committee in her report, it may well be, that this movement 'may some day be recognized as one of the most important of this twentieth century, an innovation not only for Catholic philosophers in America, but also for jurists in the English-speaking or Common Law, world.' There is an obvious demand for a better philosophical knowledge on the part of the jurists, and of a less superficial understanding by the Scholastic philosophers of the Common Law system. Not unnaturally, despite efforts which have been made, the Common Law lawyer inevitably finds in the Scholastic system a technique and tradition which remains foreign to him. 'When philosophers who are familiar with fundamental Scholastic principles as well as with the principles and genius of the Common Law, can demonstrate intelligibly to modern legal thinkers, the validity, the presence and derivation of those principles in the Common Law as expressed in the original and creative thinking of jurists who were both Common Law lawyers and products of the Scholastic philosophical system from the time of King Alfred down to the time of Saint Thomas More, at least, a great gap in the foundations of the constructive readjustment of our law necessary to cope with contemporary legal problems will be supplied. What was the influence not of the Canon Law historically, but of the Scholastic