

To return to the actual paintings. It is impossible to describe their beauty showing as they do sensitive awareness of their subjects with great technical skill in execution. DORIS LAYARD.

THE MARCH OF THE MODERNS. By William Gaunt. (Cape; 12s. 6d.)

The difficulty of preserving the arts in a mechanistic and sub-human world 'geared to war' has been met for the last hundred years or so in two ways. Either the artist cedes to the *zeitgeist* and invents—Marinetti is a case in point—a smash-and-grab art to fit a smash-and-grab age; or he withdraws, like Cézanne, from the world and does something solely to please himself which he has obvious and well-justified difficulty in marketing. Yet withdrawal from a corrupt and chaotic society might foster, even in the domain of art, eremitic vocations; and one would like, before embarking on a review of other alternatives, to point out that recluses like Eric Gill, in the tradition of the hermit bridge-builders and lighthouse-keepers of the Middle Ages, have in the long run been more socially effective than worldlings.

From this standpoint nothing could come handier than Mr William Gaunt's precise and vivid survey of what one of the most able of the English Impressionists called 'the way up the cul-de-sac' of modern art and letters. That these interpretative faculties should themselves need interpreters has seemed to many of us sufficient reason for ignoring them. With the world before us, why learn the language of a country we do not feel particularly drawn to visit? Here, however, is a born interpreter, who, starting with Cézanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin, leaves you confronting a film of 1929 by two disciples of M. de Sade. As many of the 'isms'—Synthesism, Symbolism, Pointillism, Cubism, Futurism, Vorticism, Expressionism, Surrealism, and so forth—had literary prophets and practitioners—for the 'visual chemistry' of Soviet art is obviously akin to the audible chemistry of James Joyce—the artistic movements exhibit a union with and dependence on letters which emphasise at once the force of their ideology and the weakness of their methods.

It is impossible in a short notice to suggest all that is conveyed by a study admirable in its compression and coherence. All intelligenzia—the word and the caste come from Russia—are displaced persons, but there is an affinity between them. And 'promoters of intellectual companies' like Apollinaire (Kostrowiski) can generally flogher, like other directors of international cartels, while honest fellows of more civilised persuasions are bombing each other's cities. Art is a freemasonry—an alternative religion. It will not endure what Rilke called 'the drab, desolate sham' life of the proletariat. Neither can you shut it up in the sacristy. Snubbed and rejected, a culture becomes a cult. It can give up its hieratic pretensions and help build the *civitas dei*—but only on honourable terms. (At the start the artist might possibly send his products to Moloch's nearest market, as the farmer sends his butter and eggs, from the ever-

dwindling pastures where such commodities can be produced.)

Otherwise art will turn not, alas, to the noble savage but to something less legendary—Gauguin's 'rejuvenation by barbarism'. The old order has failed. The new is not born, or much thought of. There is disorder everywhere. This invaluable book records the attitude of the twentieth-century artist towards all three possible allegiances—and the accent is on the third.

HELEN PARRY EDEN.

BRANGWYN'S PILGRIMAGE. By William de Belleruche. (Chapman and Hall; 35s.)

One of the characteristics of advancing age is that the individual is often stripped of the guile of youth and the true nature of his personality and character becomes patently obvious; also the bias of thought is towards the reminiscential. The marriage of these two elements in the person of Frank Brangwyn, the artist, provides the material for William de Belleruche's book. A series of conversations between the artist and the author, assiduously recorded by the latter, forms the basis of these 264 pages of dialogue, in which Brangwyn recalls the varied happenings of his earlier years, sometimes nostalgically; frequently with immense enthusiasm, freshness and vitality. Emphasis is given to the text in the numerous drawings by Brangwyn himself illustrating the salient points in the narrative. Apart from their literary significance, they display directness of handling, and a penetrating, if at times whimsical, vision—they are interesting besides in that an artist's sketch-book often affords an intimate glimpse into his aesthetic personality usually denied to us.

It is arguable, though, whether the presentation of the matter in this particular way is entirely satisfactory. In order to be successful it demands a diligent editor who will ruthlessly exclude anything that is relatively unimportant. In this instance there is an apparent absence of such a restraining influence, resulting in the inclusion of innumerable anecdotes and expletives, which, by reason of their continual occurrence, fail eventually to impress the reader—it follows necessarily that there is a corresponding loss in the clarity and sharpness of the delineation of the character.

Notwithstanding this, if the reader has the patience and the discrimination to reject the extraneous verbiage he will discover that what remains is a portrait depicting externally, an eccentric and idiosyncratic disposition, and yet revealing beneath this almost alarming exterior a man with a tremendous zest for life, directed by a profound but simple love of God together with a deep humanity, tolerance and generosity of nature.

M. SHIRLEY.

SENTIMENT CHRETIEN ET POESIE FRANCAISE. By Pierre Messiaen. (Daubin, Paris; n.p.)

In this book Pierre Messiaen has set out to discuss the poetry of Baudelaire, Verlaine and Rimbaud, in the light of Catholic thought.