

BECKETT by Richard N. Coe. *Oliver and Boyd (Writers and Critics Series)* 5s.

SAMUEL BECKETT by Nathan A. Scott. *Bowes and Bowes (Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought)* 12s. 6d.

We shall go on needing Beckett exegesis. Professor Scott and Mr Coe supply some of that need. Professor Scott is first concerned with Beckett's literary forebears and contemporaries, while Mr Coe is more involved in the 'philosophy' that is to be heard in Beckett. 'Art,' he writes, 'is the elucidation of the impossible'.

Mr Coe's book is the better. His chapter 'The Art of Failure' is as crisp an introduction to Beckett as anything I have seen; and he is excellent on details – the familial structure in *Molloy*, the meaning of Worm in *The Unnamable*, the relevance of Geulincx to *Murphy* and *Watt*. But it is distressing to find in a series called *Writers and Critics* that one critic has no evaluative judgments to put. None? Well, we learn of 'the depth and brilliance – and humour' of *Murphy*. And we read: 'Considered as an expression of Beckett's philosophy of the inconclusive, *Waiting for Godot* is well-nigh perfect; considered as drama, it tends to be slightly two-dimensional in conception (p. 95).' The propositions are reversible. In any case, that sentence characterizes Mr Coe's study. He is interested in ideas – and makes them interesting. But he is only distantly involved with the analysis of literary textures. And it must be a limited sense of morality in literature which allows the assertion that 'there are no moral judgments in Beckett'.

Professor Scott's book, too, gives me the feeling that I see not Beckett, but a ghost-image, like the shadow that hovers by the picture on a television screen. The work is less detached than Mr Coe's: the warm style connotes at least some kind of enthusiasm. We sense that we all ought to feel that Beckett matters, even if Professor Scott can't quite stretch his insights up to his feelings. He is strong on the religious side – it is agreeable to see a Christian emphasizing that *Waiting for Godot* is not a Christian play; and he writes very well – too briefly – on the 'metatheatrical' of Beckett (that is, the self-consciousness of the personae). Indeed, he looks more often at the text than Mr Coe. But his account of Beckett does not often come to more than a *résumé* of what happens, plus a few comments.

Mr Coe's book is stronger, because, while it labours some way from the text, it declares a more systematic and purposeful design.

JOHN P. WHITE

JESUS IN QUR'AN by G. Parrinder: Pp. 187. *Faber and Faber, London, 1965* 32s 6d.

The Reader in the Comparative Study of Religions in the University of London has followed up his investigations into Indian religion, and witchcraft, with a very interesting and well documented examination of the references in the Qur'an to Jesus and the Gospels. These references, wholly respectful and indeed reverential, are surprisingly numerous. Dr Parrinder, who is familiar with all the relevant literature, is scrupulously irenic in his intention: 'It is to encourage study, self-examination, dialogue and searching the scriptures that this book has been written. Much wider acquaintance with the holy books is one of the most useful first steps to take. Let more Christians read the Qur'an and more Muslims study the Bible, so as to extend understanding and reconciliation.'

The several topics discussed are: the names by which Jesus is referred to in the Qur'an, Zachariah, John and Mary, the Annunciation, the Life and Death of Jesus, His works and words, the terms Son of Man and Son of God and the Qur'anic attitude to the doctrine of the Trinity, and to Christians generally. In his concluding chapter Dr Parringer issues a challenge to Christians. 'It is too easily assumed that all traditional doctrines are firmly based on the Bible. The