

seems an inadequate response, not fully under Miss Stafford's control and, ultimately, not very interesting.

Mrs Oswald has fed and prospered on the proceeds of the world's fascination with the details surrounding Kennedy's death, as Miss Stafford (gainfully employed?) suggests. No doubt it is difficult to feel much compassion in the circumstances, and the novelist is honest enough about her reactions – on one occasion only can she confess to 'a fleeting pity'. And when towards the end of one of her self-absorbed tirades Mrs Oswald says 'I have suffered very much,' it makes Miss Stafford's blood 'run cold with embarrassment'. But embarrassment

doesn't seem enough in front of a woman, however humanly 'impossible', who has seen her son die as Oswald did.

The noisy, mercenary creature offered for our inspection is clearly not as abject and defenceless as the two men on Death Row whom Truman Capote worked over so persistently and skilfully, but surely she is pitiable as well as horrible. Some people have apparently found Miss Stafford's reportage amusing. It's hard to understand. Mrs Oswald at one point speaks of herself like this: 'They say "This woman is out of her mind. Let's put her in a mental institution." Isn't it funny?' It's like laughing in Bedlam.

BERNARD MCCABE

LE MEME PIEGE, by Charlotte Crozet. *Gallimard*, 1965.

This novel has a certain piquancy for English readers, since it is set in London, where Mlle Crozet has lived for the past eleven years, married to an official of the B.B.C. She has an accurate feel for the mental landscape of the English, though not everyone will be at home in her hyper-articulate, sophisticated and neurotic world of quivering sensibilities, the fringe of sub-Bohemia. Dominique, her heroine, is called by her father 'my little Cartesian' and there can be no apter description for this girl who endlessly ratiocinates about her desires and relationships and has the ill-luck to fall in with Christopher, whom J. G. Weightman, reviewing the book in *The Observer*, characterised as a 'particularly revolting type of Englishman'. Christopher is a tease, certainly, but it is possible to understand that although he feels the upsurge of desire for Dominique, he cannot share her rather *simpliste*, if over-psychologized, view of what the completion of love is. Love and England both somehow escape her, not because she is too intelligent, but because she is intelligent in a particular analytical way.

Her outward surface of independence and aggressive energy has already, as the novel begins, been broken by submission to an appalling and ambitious young Swede, and in the next liaison Dominique seeks to be the one who makes the rules; but she cannot free herself of her intolerable desire to be loved. This is 'the same trap' of the title, but it has another

meaning, too. Christopher is not simply unwilling to be subjugated by Dominique, to leave the control of their relationship in her hands; he has odd, vague homosexual velleities, and her crude Yes or No attitude to physical love makes him feel that he is in a trap – the classical bachelor-at-bay situation rendered slightly more sophisticated by the complexities of Christopher's character.

This is where Mlle Crozet definitely scores. Her semi-intellectual, vaguely arty London milieu is intensely real, as also is the reaction of the hesitant and romantic Christopher, needing Dominique and yet defending himself against her. So also is the mutual opacity of the two of them, involved in a curious situation in which the attraction between them is physical, but the psychology of one of them prevents its consummation and makes them mutual enemies who – until the rather unconvincing final break – perpetually require the other's presence.

The confrontation in this book is a complex and interesting one of two types of sentimental life, each reachable by conversation, and yet in the last analysis separated by a wall of understanding. In spite of the complexity of Christopher's character, the chasm between him and Dominique is not one of mystery but of clarity, a case where *tout comprendre* is definitely not *tout pardonner*.

LOUIS ALLEN

EMILE ZOLA, by F. W. J. Hemmings. *Oxford University Press*, 55s.

Professor Hemmings' book is, after revision, essentially what it was, a standard critical-biographical study of the French novelist, Emile Zola. It has a first-rate bibliography, some interesting biographical discussion, but is

still very unsatisfactory as an attempt to assess Zola's achievement. For Zola's life and work raises certain crucial questions about the relationship between art and politics with which Professor Hemmings' critical perspective is not