

*Poetry and Drama* (1951). Here much of what was left half-enunciated in *Rhetoric and Poetic Drama* (1919) and *A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry* (1928) is stated clearly, or at least as clearly as one can expect with such a delicate matter. The examples illuminate brilliantly, and I know of no other work, short or long, which so clearly explains how dramatic poetry does not 'interrupt but intensifies the dramatic situation'. For this and much like it we fall still deeper into Mr Eliot's debt.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

AN APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE. By D. A. Traversi. (Sands; 8s. 6d.)

Mr Traversi's study of Shakespeare, which has already appeared in the United States in a slightly shorter version, is very welcome in England. Mr Traversi adheres to that school of Shakespearean interpreters which has been called 'Poetic'. They are represented in their most extreme form by George Wilson Knight, and in a more moderate and methodical manner by Monsignor Kolbe. They have been sometimes criticized for over-emphasizing the poetic character of the plays and have been accused of ignoring the fact that they were written to be performed before a nutcracking, orange-sucking audience. In no instance could Mr Traversi be accused of such one-sidedness. On the contrary it is his sensitiveness to the poetic values of the plays that carries him into the heart of them as they are acted on the stage; we do not have to withdraw quietly to study the text in order to appreciate his point. I know of no one, except S. L. Bethell who only approaches the question, who has so satisfactorily answered the ultimate questions which the works of Shakespeare raise. If the answers are not exhaustive, that is because it is beyond their nature to be so. It is never agreeable, nor is it possible, to sum up briefly Shakespeare's mind. If it must be done one would say that his mind was a limbec in which were poised a number of cardinal thoughts: he was equally conscious of man as a sinner and as redeemed; he was aware of the battle between spirit and flesh, the struggle between nature and grace, the contrast between time and eternity. Yet, without ever awkwardly invoking religious criteria, he saw these things in resolution and not for ever in conflict. His view was synthetic, not, that is to say, *ersatz* as we were taught to think of the word synthetic during the war, but a view founded on hope. If Shakespeare is an optimist his hope is founded on the nature of things and not on any spurious millennial belief. It is in this sense that he does not drag in religious criteria, though of course they were there in the formation of his mind. But once we grant the religious beliefs, and, Catholic or not, Shakespeare would certainly have been brought

up to accept the beliefs of the Church, it is not difficult to see how his poetic sensibility distilled from them this world-view which is at once profoundly disturbing and utterly convincing and satisfying.

All this Mr Traversi lays before us in some detail. We see the view of life growing as play after play reaches the prompter's corner, and it is perhaps only towards the end when we discern the 'incarnational' significance of the last plays, particularly *The Tempest* and *A Winter's Tale*, that we may perhaps think we have seen the whole truth about this man's world. Perhaps too that was how it happened with Shakespeare himself; he had, of course, always believed in the Incarnation, presumably it had always, with one part of himself, made sense of life for him. But was it perhaps only when it came to life under his pen in these last plays that he was able to go beyond belief and see with the whole of his being how the world should be transformed? Certainly that is the legacy he has left to us, and we must be grateful to Mr Traversi for so unfolding it before us.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

PRACTICAL PLAINSONG. By Dom Aldhelm Dean. (Burns and Oates; 8s. 6d.)

Inevitably one compares this publication with the *Grammar of Plainsong*, that little classic which has served as the basis for the teaching of plainchant in this country for over fifty years. Less concise than the *Grammar*, Dom Aldhelm's book follows a similar pattern although the introductory first section gives a much fuller historical account of the chant and an attempt to place it in some kind of theological setting. The section on rhythm is also much fuller and gives a clear exposition of the familiar thesis of the independence of ictus and word accent; for Dom Aldhelm, like the Abbess of Stanbrook, adopts the orthodox Solesmes interpretation of the chant which, despite a few recent sporadic attacks, has proved itself to be, both musically and historically, the most authentic and satisfactory interpretation of the manuscript evidence. A few more hints on how to set about the very difficult business of teaching the chant to schools and congregations might have been expected from a manual of 'practical' plainsong, although there is a short, valuable section on chironomy which should prove a great help in this direction. For this is a book which will be widely used by choirmasters and teachers.

MALCOLM MAGEE, O.P.