

Greek Commonwealth); they worked in factories and on the land, and through the fifth century a large number of Thetes, and very few slaves at all, were oarsmen in the Fleet.

Mr Letters judges Sophocles to have been a perverted hedonist, but he fails, except verbally (p. 67 fin), to reconcile this moral depravity with the spirituality and nobility of his works. The Catholic distinction between formal and material sin, and the concept of invincible ignorance do not occur to him. But need we really, with him, accept the theory of Sophocles' moral obliquity? The anecdote he makes so much of (pp. 41-2) need not be so ill interpreted (cf. Sir C. Mackenzie's *Pericles*). Mr Letters' comment on Plato's Rep. I, 29, that the Poet's joy to be free of the tyranny of Eros is undoubtedly 'an allusion to the homosexual friendships of the palaestra' is only an undoubted proof that he has not studied the text.

The only damning witness against Sophocles is Hieronymus Rhodius (300 B.C.), whom page 51 professes to quote *ipsisimis verbis* from Athenaeus. Actually page 51 gives only a brief epitome, more damaging than the extensive original since it multiplies the occasion ('at times he committed greater excesses') and omits its suspicious vulgarity. Studying that original, what are we to say? It is a quotation in c. 200 A.D. of an alleged story of 300 B.C., about a man who died a hundred years earlier. It is the only suggestion of moral turpitude against him; there is no hint even in Aristophanes. Let Sophocles on the other hand speak in his own defence. Read the plays, consider the wonderful women he created, savour his extraordinary spiritual and ethical purity. Remember that he died the father of a large family and reputedly still fond of the company of women. Surely we may recognise the libel for the scurrility that it is, and prefer the verdict of his fellow-citizens, who soon after his death were venerating him with an altar as a sort of demigod or saint.

K. C. THOMPSON

RIMBAUD'S ILLUMINATIONS. By Wallace Fowlie. (The Harvill Press; 18s.)

For Mr Fowlie, 'Poetry is one of the principal methods of preparation by which man tries to change his being into an angelic being' (p. 134), and it is from this point of view that he studies Rimbaud, regarding him more as a kind of Prometheus than as the adolescent of genius in revolt against the *condition humaine*, of more pedestrian but more convincing literary criticism. The theory of angelism does not really seem to bring us any nearer to understanding the poet who said bitterly, 'Moi! moi que me suis dit mage ou ange . . .' (*Une Saison en Enfer*), when at last he came to some sort of terms with reality.

The value of this book lies in the closely-knit and highly sensitive analyses of the prose-poems of the *Illuminations*, grouped according to

their theme under the following headings: *Childhood; Life of the Poet; Nature; City; Mystic Vision*. Mr Fowlie sheds considerable light on the interconnection of the successive images of which each *Illumination* is composed and makes interesting suggestions about their possible source.

It is very useful to have the complete text in French and English, as well as the commentary, although Mr Fowlie, by giving an absolutely literal translation, has sacrificed the literary quality of the original so that it is scarcely possible, in the English version, to appreciate the poet who regulated the form and movement of each consonant and tried to invent 'un verbe poétique accessible, un jour ou l'autre, à tous les sens' (*Alchimie du Verbe*). Indeed, this version often shows that literal translation is not even necessarily accurate. It is a little surprising to find Beaumarchais' cheeky page Chérubin transformed into Faunteroy (pp. 176, 177); in *Mouvement* (pp. 214, 215) surely 's'isole sur l'arche' should have been rendered 'withdraws into the ark', especially in view of the 'lumière diluvienne' earlier in the poem.

L. A. ZAINA

NOTICES

SELECTION 1 (Sheed and Ward, 15s.) is the first issue of 'a yearbook of contemporary thought'. It includes material from periodicals not always easily available to the general reader, and such contributions as Professor Evans-Pritchard's (on Nuer religion), Fr Victor White's (on 'The Scandal of the Assumption') and Josef Pieper's (on 'The Reign of Antichrist') are examples of the catholicity of the editors' selection and of the permanent value of this new enterprise.

ST ATHANASIUS ON THE INCARNATION (Mowbray, 7s. 6d.), translated by an Anglican Sister, first appeared during the war, and a new and revised edition of this basic Christian text, with an introduction by C. S. Lewis, is very welcome.

THE CONQUEST OF DEVIL'S ISLAND (Max Parrish, 10s. 6d.) is an account by Charles Péan of the work of the Salvation Army among convicts in French Guiana. It is a remarkable record of Christian charity and of the unrelenting efforts of a great organisation in bringing to an end the inhuman conditions in the notorious penal settlements which for so long dishonoured the name of France.

THE STORY OF THE TRAPP FAMILY SINGERS (Bles, 16s.) describes the story of an impoverished Austrian family which found a new life in America as a band of singers. *Cor unum et anima una* is the motto of this happy family, united in faith and music, and the author, Maria