

of her conversion is the Highlands of Scotland and the Isles of the Hebrides: her geological surveys there, involving much adventurous climbing and strenuous self-discipline, are both the setting and the symbol of her quarrying of 'the Rock of Truth'. Her story is a forceful and illuminating one because her discovery was made almost reluctantly by reasoned argument, uncompromising overcoming of her former beliefs, and prayers said against every emotional conviction. One is ready to forgive certain faults in style—a choice of images which often jars, and at times sentences and phrases awkwardly turned—for the liveliness of her book, both in description and argument. None of her deliberations are made in an armchair, but in the course of strenuous activity: the reality of the wild beauty of the mountains is known through the dangers and hardships of mountaineering, the reality of the distant lives of the Celtic saints is learnt by retracing their arduous journeys. To everything she brings a desire for reality and facts. Her conversion itself is a discovery of reality—the Church. Like the True Cross, its appeal is that 'it states a fact', which makes its claim 'still as insistent as Christ calling Peter from his fishing'.

FAITH TOLKIEN

DIVIDED IMAGE: A Study of William Blake and W. B. Yeats. By Margaret Rudd. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 18s.)

The declared aim of this book is to examine the influence of William Blake upon the philosophy of W. B. Yeats, who edited his works while in his twenties and who wrote as an old man:

Grant me an old man's frenzy
Myself must I remake
Till I am Timon and Lear
And that William Blake
Who beat upon the wall
Till Truth obeyed his call.

Miss Rudd is largely concerned with showing that Yeats, who identified poetry with magic, misunderstood Blake, who was a mystic and who identified poetry with prophecy. The best part of her book is that which shows clearly that Yeats's 'system', as formulated in *A Vision*, owed a good deal to that early editing of Blake. Yeats appears to have substituted for Blake's twenty-seven heavens on the sun's path, for example, his own twenty-eight phases of the moon and, perhaps unconsciously, to have linked Blake's idea of the recurrent circle of religious development with the much more deterministic view of the cyclic process of history which he encountered later in Vico.

Yet Yeats was not a philosopher. He often used the ideas which he found in philosophical writings as the catalysts of emotions and of other associated ideas. His attempted organisation of these in *A Vision* is about as successful a guide to philosophy as that other baffling book, that 'vicious

circle', *Finnegan's Wake*. Miss Rudd spends much space-time discussing what paths Yeats might have followed if he had been a mystic or a philosopher, and, although she has written some interesting chapters on the dualism of the western mind, includes too many lengthy quotations which are not germane to her subject. Significantly, she omits *Timon* and *Lear* from the above quotation; like Blake, they were twigs of the symbolism with which Yeats built his divided image of frenetic persistence forcing a reply from the oracle walled up behind normal appearances. Yeats, as Miss Rudd properly observes, was an intellectual magpie. The philosopher-critic is too often a cuckoo in his nest.

ROGER McHUGH

CHOIR OF MUSES. By Etienne Gilson. Translated by Maisie Ward. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

POETS AND MYSTICS. By E. I. Watkin. (Sheed and Ward; 21s.)

These two books attempt in their different ways to explore the relation between poetic vision and mystical experience. M. Gilson's 'muses' are a select number of the women who have inspired certain great poets in the creation of particular works. He begins with a most illuminating study of the growth of the *Canzoniere* against the background of Petrarch's love for Laura; the other figures in the book include Baudelaire's Madame Sabatier, Mathilde von Wesendonck, who inspired Wagner's *Tristan*, and Clotilde de Vaux, whose strange destiny it was to be beloved by Comte and to become the patron saint of Positivism.

English readers who have come to admire M. Gilson as an exponent of philosophical scholarship may be somewhat surprised at seeing him in his new role as critic of poetry and of human nature; one is first of all struck by the sustained polish and wittiness of the writing, which the excellence of the translation convincingly preserves; next it becomes apparent that wit and irony are mingled with charity, and that the author is seeking, through all the triviality and gossip of the *vie amoureuse*, to discern some pattern of permanent truth. Laura and her successors were muses because, and only so long as, they remained inaccessible to their lovers, and thus made possible the idealisation of romantic love. When the beloved is not content to remain a muse, disaster follows, as in the case of Baudelaire and Madame Sabatier: 'to the poet's appeal for the eternal feminine the well-meaning women replied by offering him Apollonie Sabatier'. As in the myth of Platonic love in the *Symposium*, passion is only a means of ascent towards the contemplation of beauty, which in this case is directed towards the creation of a work of art.

In the two concluding essays, 'Art and Eros' and 'The Artist and the Saint', M. Gilson develops analogies between the artist's sacrifice of himself and his passion to art, and the renunciation of the life of sanctity. Following Mauriac, he puts the disturbing question whether every great work of art