

IRISH POETS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. Edited by Geoffrey Taylor. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; The Muses Library; 12s. 6d.)

Mr Taylor's test of Irish poets is that they 'must have been Irish by birth and they must have written poetry with some Irish reference, either historical or topographical'. It is not a particularly good test and it is not religiously observed; George Darley, for example, is excluded on the grounds that he 'did not even pay lip-service to Ireland', whereas the truth is that Darley's attempts to brandish Irish clan names in his poetry were singularly ineffective. On the other hand, his poem beginning

It is not beauty I demand,
A crystal brow, the moon's despair,
Nor the snow's daughter, a white hand,
Nor mermaid's yellow pride of hair. .

which was mistakenly ranked by Palgrave as a seventeenth-century lyric, suggests a greater poetic power than that of either Thomas Caulfield Irwin or John Francis O'Donnell, who are given far too much space in this book.

With these reservations the anthology may be recommended to the curious reader interested in minor verse. Mangan is the one poet here whose work flames with any frequency; Allingham, a charming lyricist who influenced Yeats, is well represented and is perhaps the most interesting example of a writer caught between two literary traditions; and Mr Taylor has wisely included some excellent anonymous ballads of the period.

ROGER MCHUGH

THE STRUCTURE OF POETRY. By Elizabeth Sewell. (Kegan Paul; 25s.)

The publishers claim that from this book 'a new understanding of poetry emerges'. Perhaps it would have been truer to say that Miss Sewell has analysed very closely an old, and much neglected, understanding of poetry. As should be true of all criticism, this book becomes clearer as it goes along. Poetry may be described as an attempt to co-ordinate (integrate?) that unity and multiplicity, order and disorder, which are found in language and experience. After examining the various ways in which language attempts to order and relate experience, Miss Sewell explains how poetry does the same thing with language and takes as her examples Rimbaud and Mallarmé. These men tried to express this co-ordination—the one in a poetry of universality, the other in a poetry of nothingness. Because these are two extremes we are not quite satisfied, and suspect that Miss Sewell, too, is not satisfied with their achievements. But also because they are extremes they are good illustrations of the theory which is worked out with fine critical

accuracy. Miss Sewell concentrates on the poems themselves and will not be distracted by extrinsic considerations. But simply because Rimbaud and Mallarmé are extremes we look forward the more eagerly to the work which Miss Sewell promises us on Lewis Carroll and Coleridge; there we can hope to see poetry, religion and laughter all holding the balance in the mind between order and disorder. In an excellent and closely worked out study one small fault is noticeable: Miss Sewell is anxious to 'sign-post' her thought and explain where she is going to lead us. But she writes clearly enough for us to follow her with ease, and, when we are eager to get on, these apologies sometimes constrain us. As it is, there is here much excellent new material with which once again to compare poetry, contemplative prayer and theological science.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE CARDINAL. By Henry Morton Robinson. (Macdonald; 12s. 6d.)
A CHANGE OF HEART. By Emyt Humphreys. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 10s. 6d.)

A HERO OF TODAY. By Vasco Pratolini. (Hamish Hamilton; 9s. 6d.)

THE LOST CHILDHOOD and Other Essays. By Graham Greene. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 12s. 6d.)

The human situation itself provides a sufficient common denominator for three novels very different in their presuppositions and for the critical essays of a distinguished writer of fiction. Mr Robinson's compendious study of American ecclesiastical life—a *From Log Cabin to White House* of hierarchical career—is not encumbered by any great anguish of motive, and Stephen Fermoy's progress from curacy to consistency is an informed and always interesting account of the impact of the Church on American life in all its bustling diversity. Mr Humphreys is concerned with religion, too, but the vestigial sanctions of Nonconformity as they affect the affairs of a Welsh university town, and in particular the relationship of a student and his professor brother-in-law, have never the incarnational consequence which, even in its bitter rejection, makes a novel such as *A Hero of Today* of more than technical interest. Mr Humphreys is a skilled observer, but Signor Pratolini is more: his post-Fascist people are terrifyingly real, and the crude violence of his novel, its moral vacuum, suggests a tragedy much deeper than that of agnostic intellectuals, who never believed enough to make the rejection of belief more than a passing option. Mr Graham Greene's collected critical notices, slight enough in their origins, are yet a valuable postscript to his own preoccupation as a novelist. Speaking of Henry James, he remarks that 'the novelist depends preponderantly on his personal experience, the philosopher on correlating the experi-