

original text shows fifty-seven lines including a stanza of poetry. The reference page is given as p. 155, where my copy gives pp. 125-126. Besides this piecemeal condensation of Noyes' writings, in the quotation as given by Fr Murray there are at least thirty-nine mistakes. All this indicates some confusion which is reflected in the actual text of the book. Hence, but reluctantly, we cannot recommend this book in any respect. It would seem that the publisher's reader was not critical enough because the book obviously requires drastic editing and checking *in extenso*.

PHILIP G. FOTHERGILL

ENGLISH RELIGIOUS DRAMA OF THE MIDDLE AGES. By Hardin Craig. (Oxford University Press, Geoffrey Cumberlege; 42s.)

This repetitive and largely unoriginal book might have met the needs of serious students if it had been reduced to a third of the present length and price. Its author should have assumed, to begin with, that we know the work of Sir Edmund Chambers and those which have largely superseded it, notably the late Karl Young's austere and highly technical studies of drama in the Western liturgy. Had he acted on this assumption, and had he pointed out, once only, that we can fill the many gaps in the English evidence by consulting the histories and texts of medieval Continental drama, he could have started at what is now his page 150, where he first comes to grips with his subject as his title announces it. If he had spared us his elaborate examinations of matters which are neither controversial nor obscure, such as the dependence of the Chester Cycle upon French originals, and if he had left his *coda*, his story of the decline of the English miracles and mysteries, where he found it in H. C. Gardiner's *Mysteries' End*, his real matter, notably his discussion of the archetypal cycles, and his interesting if uneven account of the 'Coventry' or 'Hegge' plays, would have gained in significance. He might then also have found space and time to fulfil some of the promises of his portentously-announced 'Critical Approach to the Subject', to tell us, for example, what the guilds and their cities did in fact contribute to the plays which they performed. A worthwhile study of this field might take as its basis the development in the late Middle Ages of the Church's policy of giving the laity regular and organized religious instruction, and might compare such a preaching syllabus as Pecham's *Ignorantia Sacerdotum* with the mystery cycles. Or again, it might seek to solve the question of why the Latin plays were replaced by vernacular versions through studying recent investigations of the comparable problem presented by Latin texts of sermons manifestly addressed to the laity: and one would welcome some discussion of the economics of medieval dramatic production, using such material as the strange anecdote of how Chester petitioned Rome for an indulgence for those who visited its plays. But the present

author seems to be unaware that problems and criteria of this nature exist; and, after reading his Introduction, in which he describes, with relative brevity, what he believes the Middle Ages to have been like, one is hardly sorry that his often-declared intention of exposing the texts of his plays as illustrative of medieval religious and social life is never carried out. Narrow specialists, if they are wise, will not attempt wide surveys; and if their studies compensate for narrowness with depth, they do not result in such very shallow works as this.

ERIC COLLEDGE

THE SLAVE OF LIFE. By M. D. H. Parker. (Chatto and Windus; 18s.)

Did Shakespeare have a philosophy of life? How many times has that question been asked and with what sketchy results very often! Miss Parker, however, gives us a very substantial answer. In this book she considers Shakespeare's views on justice but that takes us very far afield to think about nature and grace, corruption and salvation. Perhaps the most important thing she says is that theology was significant to Shakespeare: this is something we are not always allowed to appreciate. We are encouraged to think of Shakespeare as first and last a craftsman who was so busy churning out his plays for the theatre that he couldn't be bothered with the things which we should nowadays call 'abstract matters'—faith and morals. That of course ignores the intellectual and spiritual tempo of his age and in any case will not stand in the face of the very texts of the plays. *Hamlet* bristles with moral problems; *Antony and Cleopatra* is very largely written in Catholic theological language; even such 'trivialities' as *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It* depend for their growth on moral and theological roots. It would have been quite impossible for Shakespeare to write 'belles lettres'. Moreover, he takes his stand firmly on the traditional Catholic platform. He could never, for instance, have created a figure like Milton's Satan: pride for him was always a sin, and he was so aware of this and of the ultimate dreariness of sin that this pride never became a magnificent sin. There is no figure anywhere in Shakespeare even like the Duchess of Malfi. This awareness of sin is a thing that sometimes even surprises us, as in *Antony and Cleopatra* when it is contrasted with the transmuting power of sincere love. Together with a sense of sin there goes pity for suffering and even for the sinner, and the even more typically Christian attitude of charity for the failure and the blackguard. Falstaff will always be something of an enigma; true enough, Shakespeare found him good box-office and therefore developed the character, but the original attitude to him remained, and we cannot imagine the Puritans, if they had dared to set foot in a theatre, taking a kindly view of the audience cheering the lovely bully; nor can we imagine business-like politicians approving