

sition. Certain defects are, however, in a sense irrelevant. Mr Fowlie has undertaken to describe the fundamental human and religious attitude of certain poets (using the word for Pascal as well as Dante, Joyce as well as Baudelaire) in the European, and particularly in the French tradition; and this may be done, as here, chiefly by stating and pronouncing, or by a more rigorous process of analysis and definition. No doubt Mr Fowlie's dogmatic method leaves many terms imprecise and even ambiguous, but, as Dante says, *al nobile ingegno . . . è bello un poco di fatica lasciare*, it is good manners to leave your reader some work to do: a courtesy not overlooked by Mr Fowlie.

He finds three 'orders of love' in civilised and articulate man: philosophic, Divine (i.e. Christian) and human: with their corresponding objects: the idea of love, Love Incarnate, a human being. These orders are personified by Plotinus, St Bernard, Heloise. It is as we draw near to the present that the outlines grow hazy. Yet the triple contrast reappears, it seems, in the 17th century: Corneille, Pascal, Racine; and here I found Mr Fowlie's thought relatively clear as well as profoundly interesting. Yet I suspect that the following sections, whose governing theme seems to be the interrelation of lover, 'clown' and *voyou*, may be more original and characteristic of their author. They resume an earlier analysis of Mallarmé's sonnet *Le Pitre Châtré* about the clown who steals furtively out of his tent and 'swims in a lake and thereby loses his greasepaint', which is also, mysteriously, his *sacre*, the 'consecration' of his life. The clown, with his self-consciousness and shame, stands for 'modern man' along with J. Alfred Prufrock and Charlie Chaplin. He is also a symbol of love. If you ask why, reflect on the folly, the clownishness of love, and that this folly obscurely hints at the condition of fallen man, born a misfit, a creature of make-believe, wounded. Reflect on Lautréamont's *j'ai reçu la vie comme une blessure*: and that Pascal spoke of *un roi dépossédé*: and that we believe that our salvation lies only in imitating somehow the *folly* of the Cross, Mr Fowlie going so far as to call the saint: 'always the clown, the counterfeit of Christ the crucified. . . . The Divine Clown eternally exhibited before mankind.'

Certain rapidly drawn contrasts between the saint (imaged by the clown and the *voyou*) and the 'creative genius' (artist or pure philosopher) suggests that Mr Fowlie has still much to say on this theme. Meanwhile we have this book—unusual, involved, suggestive and very sincere.

KENELM FOSTER. O.P.

SHAKESPEARE'S DOCTRINE OF NATURE. A Study of *King Lear*. By John F. Darby. (Faber; 16s.)

This book discusses Shakespeare's treatment of the theme of 'the Good Man in the Bad Society'. Mr Darby treats of the development, throughout the history plays, of Shakespeare's handling of the interrelated themes of political nature (man and the State),

human nature (man and his neighbour), and elemental nature (man and the Thunder). The chapters of the book vary considerably in their tone and approach. Some are surveys of the background of Elizabethan political and social thought (in which Mr Darby displays considerable knowledgeability), some are plot-synopses of the earlier plays, some are straightforward analyses of aspects of *King Lear* (the chapters on 'The Fool and Handy-dandy' and 'Cordelia as Nature' seem to me to be the most useful in the book), and some are quasi-philosophical discussions in which there is more of Mr Darby than of Shakespeare.

Mr Darby must be given credit for his informativeness on Elizabethan 'life and thought', but he seems to be unable to insert his knowledge relevantly into his discussion of Shakespeare's plays. We are told, for instance, to consider Lear's prayer on the heath as 'echoing the cry that Jack Kett had raised in 1559, and anticipating the cry to come in 1649 from Winstanley and the Diggers' (p. 223). The historical elucidation of Lear's 'Is there any cause in Nature that makes these hard hearts?' is equally unhelpful: 'We have to remember the negotiating of the Grand Lease, whereby, under pressure, the Prince Bishop of Durham gave over his palatine coal mines to the Leicester group: particularly to Thomas Sutton, Jonson's Volpone. This is a spectacular encroachment of the secular entrepreneur on to territory that had been ecclesiastical time out of mind. Behind the shift and drift of the meanings of the word "Nature" there is the shift and drift of humanity in a setting at once historical and spiritual.' (p. 49.) The summary of the rejection of Falstaff has at least the advantage of a charming simplicity: 'Hal throws off Falstaff in order to be a more effective King: Elizabeth put away the flesh to be all the more effectively the Virgin Queen' (p. 96.) What, we may reasonably ask, is an ineffective virgin?

There seems to be a great deal of discussion by Mr Darby of what he calls 'machiavels', though it is hard to follow him when he speaks of 'a machiavel of goodness'. To be sure, there are in Shakespeare's plays a number of villains who explain their villainy to the audience (by the convention of what Schücking calls 'dramatic self-representation') in terms of machiavellian policy, and who, besides being villains for the purpose of the plot, act as ironic choric commentators on the rest of the play. But to consider them solely as self-existent characters, as Mr Darby does, is pure Bradlevism. When we are told, for example, of Richard III that it is 'the very superiority of consciousness which makes him more sincerely wicked than the averagely anti-social groups around him' (p. 63) are we to presume that Richard's self-consciousness is to be inferred from the fact that he talks more to himself than the others do?

The arrangement of the book tends to disorder and repetitiveness, and the level of the criticism is not very deep. But above all it is the whole critical approach that seems to be at fault. 'The main meanings,' says Mr Darby, 'all the time are where they should be in

successful art, on the surface'. (p. 224.) But the only meanings we can extract from the surface are through character — and plot-analysis, and by such standards *Henry VI* is as interesting as *King Lear*. 'Meaning', on such terms, can only be a kind of prose argument, as if Shakespeare consciously set out to solve problems of ideas. This is to forget that Shakespeare was a poetic dramatist, to forget the poetic imagery and the handling of the dramatic conventions. By neglecting the poetic and dramatic significance of Shakespeare's presentation of the theme of redemptive Nature, Mr Darby passes over entirely the connection between *King Lear* and the plays of the final period, in particular *Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*. By treating Shakespeare's doctrine of nature as if it existed in the realm of abstract ideas, Mr Darby resorts to the kind of approach which may pass in the lecture-room but which is rather embarrassing to see in cold print: '. . . *King Lear* reflects the alternative readings of man's position in regard to God and his neighbour which were current at the turn of the century. The main choice lay between the dead mechanical Nature of the infidel politician and the normative moral Nature of the worthy King; between the Lion-headed Goddess and the Goddess, God's handmaid, whose face was that of a beautiful woman; between the Nature of Edmund and the Nature of Cordelia; that of Hobbes and that of Hooker. Shakespeare was born at a time when the afterglow of the Middle Ages was still casting strong lights and vivid shadows. But Galileo, too, was born in 1564. The ferment of a new world was at work.' (p. 198.)

After digesting that, the reader should have a good idea of what he is going to get for his sixteen shillings. T. A. BIRRELL.

CESAR FRANCK. By Norman Demuth. (Dobson; 12s.6d.)

The judgment which contemporaries pass over composers often differs greatly from that which is ultimately given in the history of music. While it would be absurd to maintain that there can ever be an exact assessment of any artist, it is nevertheless true that, after a time, a certain mean is to be found amongst the opinions of critics. It is now nearly sixty years since Franck's death, and, living in an age no longer concerned with the politics of factions and of art which precluded an unbiased examination of his position as a composer, we may now begin to look for a more complete and a more reliable account of his life, music, and influence.

Unlike many other composers Franck has not been overwritten. As Mr Demuth claims, this is the first book on the subject to be written by an English author, although M. Vincent d'Indy's study has been translated. In some ways Mr Demuth's book will supersede that of d'Indy. M. d'Indy was the greatest of Franck's pupils, and, writing always with romantic veneration and love of the 'Pater Seraphicus', has done much to create the legend of Franck as a saint and mystic. His distortions are usually obvious, and he has an enthusiasm and charm which his successor lacks.