

by the canons of true literary criticism, even if they would be distinctive when judged by sixth-form criteria. The lack of real analysis leaves an impression, after reading several such pieces, of having waded through interminable bibliographies. There is, however, one more exception to this stricture—D. S. Savage—who provides two expositions: one of the work of Margiad Evans, the other of that of E. M. Forster. It is the latter essay which deserves separate comment.

His thesis is that certain writers—the majority usually—allow their themes to take shape from the exteriorization of an inner conflict rather than to proceed from an achieved centre of being. The difference is well exemplified in a contrast between the novels of François Mauriac and those of Forster. Whilst the former's plots are increasing in scope—compare his *Le Baiser au Lépreux* (1923) with *La Pharisienne* (1943)—the latter reached a height of excellence early in his career from which he has not been able to develop. His creative efforts stopped in 1924 with *A Passage to India*, because he had, in fact, written himself out. The actions of his characters were conceived in a state antecedent to full integration, so that as soon as the different subject matters which had accrued through his personal logic were exhausted, silence set in. His friend, G. Lowes Dickinson, once declared that his object as a novelist was 'to bring realistic life into contact with the background of value (or whatever it is)'. Unfortunately after a time value without faith becomes meaningless. It cannot be solved by subtraction, but only as an equation.

Here is the gist of Savage's thought. Its execution, if carried through successfully, may be a major step in English criticism.

NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

THE CONSECRATION OF GENIUS. By Robert Sencourt. (Hollis & Carter; 21s.)

It is often a disappointment when picking up a book on Christian art, to discover that the making of the book itself, its binding and its printing, have not been informed by that concern for right making which is so rigorously recommended in the text of the work. No such sense of discord awaits the reader of this book, for the dust-cover is striking, the print is pleasant to the eye, and the superb illustrations are testimony to the skill of the publishers, and to the fine discrimination of the author's taste. The delight awakened in the reader by the appearance of the volume increases in following Mr Sencourt's demonstration of how the sense of the divine has ennobled works of art from the time of the Song of Songs until the time of Bossuet. Each of the chapters—and they are catholic in their wide range—is devoted to some particular genius, Plotinus, Bunyan and Palestrina being only three of the names which will attract experts on each individual subject, and will enable them to find fresh riches in these old quarries. Specially valuable is the insistence in the chapter on the Gothic Cathedral that much paganism still lurked in gargoyles of

medieval buildings, a fact which many who write about the Age of Faith are unwise to ignore. The same chapter illustrates the difficulty of the author's task when he seeks for his examples in such widely divergent structures as the entrance to Christ Church Hall, the cloisters at Gloucester, and the churches of Catalonia, for not every student would acknowledge finding the same spirit in the cloisters at Gloucester as in the Catalonian churches.

There are, of course, many brilliant paragraphs in the book, typical of them being the one which begins: 'Strive hard, live whole, keep the heart hot in its full beat of blood, work together in your guilds and hierarchies, let your keenest scientific work rise with the incense of prayer . . . '—but these everyone can find for himself! Here it is more profitable to indicate why almost all readers will come away from the study with a feeling of uneasiness.

In a book addressed to an audience mainly composed of unbelievers, might not the burden of illustration have been somewhat relieved by a more detailed and strictly philosophical account of Catholic principles of art? When Mr Sencourt says of St Augustine, for instance, that 'the pulses of his blood, so often heightened by the magnetism of his emotions, reached to the finest windings of his brain, and passed like an exhalation into the ardours of his soul', one could pardon the unbeliever for saying that such a passage did not mean anything or that the language was unsuited for the exact analysis demanded by the *Confessions*. This strained and nebulous language is reminiscent of the style of Father D'Arcy's recent book on *Love*, and suggests a lack of confidence in Catholic rationalism which is disturbing; in both books there is lacking a note of conviction which can only be secured, perhaps, by the 'hard and dry' method of St Thomas. If, to take a random example, we say with St Thomas that to love a person is to desire that person's good, we do, at least, avoid the ambiguities inherent in 'windings' and 'exhalations'; the meaning is not in doubt.

This uneasiness remains to the end of the work, for in his 'final note of explanation', where clarity is supremely necessary, Mr Sencourt suggests that we may well have another Christian Renaissance 'when the genius and the discoveries and the techniques of the work which has succeeded Bossuet are mastered by the combined enterprise of skill and soul to generate new masterpieces'. Here, surely, we have not the answer. Is it not true that there will be no more Giottos until there is another St Francis? and that no Dante will arise until there has been another St Thomas? And can we really hope for a Christian Renaissance until our men of art have forgotten all about technique and remembered the one thing necessary besides which their works are 'mere straws', and without which their art dies? In the realm of art, as in economic life or the life of thought, the need is one and the same—the need for Saints. Would that Mr Sencourt had used his artistry to say so.

DONALD NICHOLL