

THE PENGUIN BOOK OF GERMAN VERSE. Introduced and edited by Leonard Forster. (Penguin Books; 6s.)

The chief themes of German lyric poetry, as Mr Forster observes, are dusk, night, peace of mind, death and God, and he has compiled his anthology to evoke the setting through which the German genius moves in its favourite archetype, the 'Wanderer'. Not even Russian poetry is able to produce quite so constant a reflection of the national ethos in its search for God, truth, and the resolution of the human enigma. This selection includes many of the greater exponents of the Wanderer's journey, both the familiar and the generally unknown, beginning with the ninth-century author of the *Hildebrandslied*, selecting with excellent taste from among the romantics and expressionists, and including finally Carossa, Elisabeth Langgässer and Bertolt Brecht. Here are contemporary figures who overcame the shock of concentration camps and 'asphalt cities' with the same realization that ruin and degradation are no justification for despair. Ten centuries of Wanderers would seem to share the conviction that only the end of the journey can provide an answer to all the problems.

The chronological scope of the book is ambitious but completely successful. Quite a third of the material selected is pre-Klopstock, and since there is an accompanying translation, one is able to appreciate even the medieval pieces and folk-songs in dialect. To criticize a book outside the limits which the author sets himself, is to invite Goethe's rebuke to Tischbein 'not to blame Angelica for the qualities her painting does not possess'. Mr Forster offers us what he calls a plain prose translation, but in fact it is sometimes more and at other times less (and occasionally all too reminiscent of the sort of programme notes we associate with Lieder concerts). The translation could have been done with a little more feeling for the English language.

GEOFFREY WEBB

THE PENGUIN BOOK OF FRENCH VERSE, 3: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Introduced and Edited by Anthony Hartley. (Penguin Books; 5s.)

This new Penguin anthology has an introduction of some twenty-five pages before presenting a comprehensive selection of poems. There is a plain prose translation of each poem. Between the dates 1780-1900, Mr Hartley gives us what any anthologist of this century must—*noblesse oblige*. The reader, therefore, who is approaching French poetry for the first time, and it is for him that the anthology is presented, will become familiar with the inseparable trio: Lamartine, de Vigny, Hugo. They are well represented, and if Mr Hartley's excellent advice is taken of reading the poems aloud, then the delightful cadences of 'Le Lac', and the more solemn and sonorous ones of 'Booz Endormi',