

has been that of a fair-ground's Hall of Terrors. One should perhaps have begun this review with the warning that the 'Revolution' of the titles of these two books is somewhat more fundamental and sinister than what the public associates with the area. The days when one section of the ruling class could persuade a general to lead a revolt

against another section of the same class and another general as President are almost over. Latin America is ripe for revolution against that type of revolution, and the future lies between the ideas expressed in *Pacem in Terris* and those of the 1848 manifesto.

George Hills

LINGUISTICS, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION by David Crystal, *Burns and Oates (Faith and Fact, 9s 6d)*.

This book offers a very sound exposition of linguistics, based on a less sound theory of communication. Mr Crystal tells us on his first page that 'communication . . . is the hallmark of (man's) sociability': this, in a post-Wittgensteinian era, seems rather a mechanical account of what communication is, and the book ends on the same note, warning us that language is 'at best a kind of indispensable tool' rather than 'a fundamental criterion for living'. But in fact language is not just a tool, a way of expressing concepts; language is a whole way of life, in the sense that linguistic beings think and grow in terms of their language, they are only human because of it. We aren't sociable beings who communicate as a 'hallmark' of this sociability, our sociability is only in terms of our communication: our humanity doesn't pre-date our communication any more than our concepts pre-date language.

It's because this doesn't really seem to be grasped that the book can give us a definition of communication which is in fact a description of transmission. Communication, surely, has come to mean a two-way process, transmission and response: a human movement establishing community. A diagram (as here) which shows a line from one human brain and mouth ending up in another human brain *via* the ear says nothing about communication, the engagement of two men in dialogue; it merely shows one side of the picture.

I think it is because of this inadequacy that the book, in going on to discuss language and Christianity, doesn't settle on the really vital link, the parallel between linguistic and sacramental community, language and sacraments as com-

munications establishing a community. This is surely more significant than discussion of the status of archaisms in the liturgy, and ought to be the basis for any more detailed account of this kind; it is a pity that this theoretical basis isn't touched on, since in fact the chapter called 'Language and Religionful Christianity' (is that 'religionful' a linguist's joke or just unconsciously hideous?) which talks about names, words, and language in scripture, is extremely good and imaginative.

The chapter on language and liturgy is less successful. To begin with, one can't help being suspicious of any liturgical discussion which begins by defining the liturgy as ' . . . a channel which transmits the aspirations of an individual *via* the Church's blessing to God, and, if conditions are fulfilled, allows the return of sanctifying grace.' This may be quite a good account (with a few adjustments) of the workings of slot-machines on fairgrounds, and might lead to some interesting religious exam questions ('Construct a small working-model of the liturgy, powered by one pint of grace only . . .'), but as theology it is hardly adequate. The same tendencies to outmoded thinking creep in at several points: the discussion of language in the liturgy is heavily biased towards formality and rule – we use formal language in the liturgy as we do 'when talking to superiors' (some of us, anyway) – and there's even a footnote suggestion that it might be a good idea to change to Latin as the consecration approaches to 'emphasize more satisfactorily the climax'. Maybe a couple of side-drums would help as well. There are also references to something called 'the

spiritual life' and at one point (in arguing for the consistency-criterion in judging Christian statements) a remark that an apparition of Mary which used bad language about the Pope would automatically rule itself out of court. Thinking of some of those Popes one isn't so sure.

It is a pity that the book is so unreliable on liturgy and the idea of communication, because when it sticks to linguistics and scripture it is entirely successful. The only qualification to this is that there is some tendency to move from general,

important statements to minor, concrete details without a sense of proportion, and the effect is sometimes unconsciously comic (as when a good, broad discussion of communication suddenly descends to a solemn listing of items like hare-lips, deafness and 'extreme hoarseness' as obstacles to communication). But apart from this the scholarship is sound, the exposition clear, and the general result very helpful for the layman with a linguistic bent.

Terry Eagleton

POESIE/POEMS by Eugenio Montale. Italian text with English translations by George Kay. Illustrated by George Mackie. *Edinburgh University Press, 20s.*

Montale is now nearly seventy and his earliest published poem, the famous *Meriggiare pallido e assorto*, was written as long ago as 1916 when he was nineteen. He and the slightly older Ungaretti are the two most considerable Italian poets of this century. Of the two Ungaretti (a Tuscan born in Egypt; Montale is Genoese) has been the more obviously 'original': he was the pioneer whose early lyrics, stemming from experiences on the Austrian front in World War I, mark the chief turning point in Italian poetry since the death of Leopardi in 1837. Ungaretti tried to prune language down to the roots. His effort – as effective, sometimes, as it was daring and dangerous – was to interiorize to the utmost the poetic word, withdrawing it from every conventional or literary association back to an ideal point where it would shine, so to say, with its own 'innocence', intimating in its purity mysteries that ordinary speech – and, still more, conventional literary speech – was too crude and noisy to communicate. Without this Ungarettian revolution Montale's own work would no doubt not have been possible; but it expresses a very different personality, at once more sceptical and more affirmative. Montale's search for truth (and the deep seriousness and sincerity of his work seem fully to justify the phrase) is, as every poet's must be, a search for perfect verbal expression, but he shows no confidence that words can mediate a mystical intuition. From the first the

agnostic note, the denial of any communication with a superhuman reality, has sounded strongly in his poetry – with a strength and poignancy indeed not often equalled in modern literature. True, this negative side of Montale's work – considered in terms of content – this apparently radical unbelief is offset from time to time; especially in the later poems (e.g. the superb *L'Anguilla*) by intimations or affirmations that seem profoundly religious. Montale's is in fact a divided mind. But a sense of man's being hopelessly imprisoned in space and time is what he seems likely to convey, at first, to most readers.

His work has accumulated slowly, piece by piece. In bulk it is not large; three books of verse, with some translations from French, Spanish and above all English poetry (and notably of T. S. Eliot, who on his side was one of the first non-Italians to recognize Montale's quality). The impression of mass and power that it leaves on the reader is due in part to the sensuous concreteness, the intense particularity of the poet's vision, in part to the very close-grained texture of the verse itself, in part to the general gravity of the tone and sentiment – though relieved here and there by a rather fantastic irony. The pace varies a good deal, from a slowly wandering meditative contemplation of natural objects up to sudden bursts of speed – hurrying close-packed sequences conveying a shattering external tumult, the wildness of seas and storms become suddenly the reverber-