

poet; for the *achievement* of his resetting of the pitch of poetic utterance, have proved an indispensable condition even of the making sense of the poetry. In this context 'the faithless fable and miss' precisely to the extent that they condescend to the object of their criticism. May critics of the psychological school please note.

The book is so thorough that the loopholes for minor dissatisfaction are very few, though it is perhaps worth mentioning that the word 'fang' in the sense of 'seize' for which literary antecedents are sought on page 131, features quite commonly in North Staffordshire dialect where '*fang howt o' this*' means 'catch hold.' In face of the constant and intensely interested notes on local words in the notebooks perhaps there is slightly too literary an emphasis in Mr. Gardner's derivation of Hopkins' diction and vocabulary.

Mr. Gardner is sailing on deeper controversial waters when he takes up T. S. Eliot's criticism to the effect that Hopkins is a 'devotional' poet rather than 'a religious poet in the more important sense in which Baudelaire and Villon were religious poets.' He rebuts the criticism with two rather obvious arguments while at the same time allowing that it is 'a paradox which Mr. Eliot could, if he chose, brilliantly expound.' But Mr. Eliot has expounded it in his essay on Baudelaire, which, together with Maritain's '*Frontieres de la Poésie*,' may be offered as a corrective to a certain academic naiveté which fails to recognise any other dimensions of poetry than those in which Hopkins showed himself so supreme a master.

It is in keeping with a Scotist reverence for particularity that Hopkins should be, as I think it true to say he is, a poet of the senses—precisely in the particularity of their direct contact with nature—rather than a poet of the imagination. Of course he goes further than the senses, for it is not the senses which tell him the beauty of Our Lord in the bluebell he has just been looking at. The question is rather of the character of his imagery. His most brilliant symbols—the Windhover—have a powerful personal relevance in a personal context in which we may come to appreciate their metaphysical import. Yet in a very true sense they cast no shadow. They are curiously devoid of connotation in the language of imagery which, no less than the language of word and syllable of sound and stress, belongs to the *inherited* material for the handling of which the poet is responsible.

However it is difficult in a short space to discuss these things without ambiguity. Mr. Gardner promises a second volume which will be awaited with keen anticipation.

BERNARD KELLY.

BLAKE AND ROSSETTI. By Kerrison Preston. (De la More Press; 18s.).

'Is it too fanciful,' asks Mr. Preston, 'to imagine that part of his [Blake's] mighty soul quitting his body so vigorously may have

found possible that very day, near at hand in London the use of a congenial speck of new human life, or at least the spiritual influencing of a new conception . . . ?' The object of this slight volume is to prove by means of rather far-fetched analogies and correspondences that in some way (though how the author is at a loss to explain) the departing soul of Blake entered into, or profoundly influenced the embryonic body of Rossetti.

Grounds for this astonishing conjecture are primarily the coincidence of the interest of Blake's last years with his illustrations to Dante, of whose theology he held a poor opinion, and the lifelong devotion to and study of the Italian poet by Rossetti père. On this slight peg is hung the further coincidence of a lapse of nine months between the death of Blake and the birth of Dante Gabriel and the fact that he purchased Blake's notebook and, on the strength of interest aroused by this, finished Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*. Much is made of the fact that both were poet-painters, yet Blake regarded himself as a painter-engraver and his poetry as secondary; while Rossetti confessed himself to be essentially a poet who turned to painting as a more sure means of livelihood. Mr. Preston finds a further link between the two in that they were both in revolt against the rising tide of materialism engendered by the Industrial Revolution.

Actually not one of the poems or paintings of Rossetti shows the smallest influence of or affinity with those of Blake, in either form or content. Blake's ethereal pictures of which every brush stroke is the outer sign of an inner, inspiring meaning, have nothing in common with the careful romanticising of mediæval allegories, the over-detailed realism with which Rossetti expressed disgust for his own times. Disapproval of the style and mannerisms of Reynolds is the only correspondence between the two painters.

In poetry, Blake's early work shows an innocence (and an experience), a fervour and passion totally lacking in Rossetti. His achievement of the ideal as seen, though 'not with the vegetative eye' is not attained by Rossetti. Blake's later and middle works were the expression of a sure faith in the values of the spirit, the reality of the transcendent and an awareness of Eternity which deepened 'as this foolish body decays.' Rossetti, on the other hand, abandoning the Catholic faith of his childhood for agnosticism, shows in his poetry a sick yearning for permanence and stability beyond the fair and delusive appearance of Nature and of a merely human love. The only immortality of which he shows awareness is the terrible reality of an Eternal Hell compounded of the ghosts of his murdered self and the agony of the contemplation of the 'might-have been.' Mr. Preston makes an apt comparison between the art of Botticelli and that of Blake. Had he looked nearer in time he might have found one with Samuel Palmer and in poetry with a backward glance at Traherne. We find no correspondance between

the carefully turned sonnets by which (*pace* the Blessed Damozel) Rossetti is chiefly remembered and the undisciplined outpourings of the Prophetic Books. The Blessed Damozel, for all its lovely imagery, is at the uttermost remove from Blake's description of even the lowest of his Heaven's, Beulah, the 'place where Contrarities are equally true.' Could any greater contrast be found between Blake's treatment of the Magdalen and Rossetti's Jenny, which the latter declared to be his favourite poem?

When writing on Blake, Mr. Preston shows great insight and sympathy. His first chapter is a really valuable summary of Blake's outlook. With regard to Rossetti he is unfortunately carried away by desire to prove his case into an unwarranted idealisation. This is a pity, for the book apart from several irritating and confusing asides is interesting and readable. Nevertheless, we must add that too much is made of the very doubtful conjecture as to Blake's disappointed hopes of fatherhood and that the naming of the great characters of the Prophetic Books is of far deeper significance than Mr. Preston imagines.

JANET CLEEVES.

WHAT IS A CLASSIC? By T. S. Eliot. (Faber; 3s. 6d.)

No one who reads this address given before the Virgil Society in October, 1944, will regret that Mr. T. S. Eliot has set himself to answer again the question which Sainte-Beuve might be thought to have closed.

The Essay of Sainte-Beuve was written in the heat of controversy, it is a work of polemic, and it is not free from the dust of strife. The approach of Mr. Eliot is more objective, and from a different angle. From the first he makes it clear that he is not concerned with controversy, that he has no verdict to deliver on the relative merits of Classical and Romantic literature. He addresses himself merely to answering the question 'What is a Classic?' objectively and absolutely.

The word 'Classic' has many meanings in as many different contexts, and all of them custom has made permissible. But in this address Mr. Eliot is occupied only with one meaning in one context. He is not concerned with defining the limits of Classical and Romantic literature, his purpose is only to define a Classic. In doing this he is careful to preserve for himself the right on other occasions to use the word 'Classic' in the less absolute sense which we use in speaking of 'Handley Cross' as a classic of the hunting field, or the authors of Greece and Rome as the classics.

In attempting to answer the question 'What is a Classic?' in the sense to which he has limited himself, Mr. Eliot has Virgil particularly in mind, for the very good reason that 'whatsoever solution we arrive at, it cannot be one which excludes Virgil--we may confidently say it must be one which will expressly reckon with him.'