

DREAMER BY DAY, by Michael S. Parer. *Angus and Robertson*, 1972. xii + 144 pp. £2.

One reason why this book has been written 'is to speed the inevitable change of the compulsory law of celibacy'. I can think of nothing more likely to slow it down.

The author is possessed of a maddening sense of his own importance. He is determined to correct the ways of bishops and theologians who don't pipe to his ill-prepared tune. His long explanations of his struggle with his sexual impulses, his verbatim accounts of his talks with the Almighty, and his odd behaviour when he really comes close to a girl, all betray an immaturity which at times is almost incredible. He was born in 1933, studied for the priesthood in Werribee, Australia, was ordained in 1959 and laicized in 1969. Although he was already eighteen when he entered the seminary, he doesn't seem to have known as much about girls as the average teenager knew even then; and, by his account, the seminary training from 1952 must have been much worse than my own at Ushaw nearly thirty years earlier. They let him through and he even obtained a few special jobs in the diocese and the Church at large. Photographs show him beaming on one bishop and two archbishops, looking solemn as he awaits ordination in 1959, beaming again after his wedding ten years and fifteen pages later, blissfully unaware of the fact that any wedding photographs are at best a bore, often merely silly, to all except the parties and their close friends.

His self-importance comes out when he calls at Westminster Cathedral one afternoon. Perhaps justifiably annoyed at not being able to see a priest, he becomes really 'peeved' when he learns that not even Cardinal Heenan would see him without appointment. He had button-holed the Cardinal in Rome during the Council sessions, to tell him that a lecture by Francis Clarke, S.J., on the Eucharist, was out of date and indeed 'almost dishonest'. The Cardinal expressed surprise: evidence obviously

of his extreme patience and tolerance and not, as Mr Parer thinks, of a determination to uphold a lost cause. In fact the author's memory of eucharistic theology in the seminary seems rather dim: he thinks he was taught that Christ was 'circumscriptively multi-located' in the eucharist.

He has indeed quite a lot to say about abuses in the Church, untruthfulness in high places, barriers between clergy and laity, and these things need saying. But they have been said before, by more competent and less excited critics. Much of what he says is robbed of its force by the way it is linked with his account of his sexual progress.

At one stage he is self-confident enough to wonder 'whether only a priest or a nun could fully appreciate the deepest mysteries of marriage'. Always willing to learn, he asks about a girl at the bar in a restaurant in Istanbul and is told that the price of champagne for her at 10 dollars also included taking her to bed. He resisted this unusual bargain and spent a restless night.

The setting for his first real breakaway bears a close resemblance to that of an Aldwych farce. In a hotel in Florence, Marie, an ex-nun, had to pass through his bedroom on her way to their shared bathroom: returning in her nightie, she flicked the dripping water from her hand as she waved him good-night. Tension mounted when they were allotted a twin-bedded room in Venice. On page 91 she sits in her nightie at his bedside while he tells her of his 'personal battle for sexual integrity'; on page 92 'she lay beside me with only our pyjamas separating us'; eight lines later she has apparently effected another quick change, since he lifts up her nightie and proceeds to settle his immediate problem. They rise at 5.30 and go to confession, but on reflection he decides: 'In this total act of love, God had answered a prayer of my long years of struggle.' EDWARD QUINN

MOTHER IS GOLD: A STUDY IN WEST AFRICAN LITERATURE, by Adrian Roscoe. *Cambridge University Press*, London, 1971. 273 pp. £3.40.

The title translates a Yoruba proverb, and states a principal theme of the author's: the importance for the artist of indigenous sources. In this critical account of West African writing in English, Mr Roscoe makes a personal, often provocative response to modern African writers from Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone. He insists on the need to submit their

verse, prose and drama to as exacting canons of judgment as are used for British and American authors; and thus dismisses as worthless many of the bandwagon autobiographical novels produced since 1960.

This book is to be welcomed because it contributes vigorously, contentiously, to a literary debate often marred by hypocrisy and