BECKETT by Richard N. Coe. *Oliver and Boyd* (*Writers and Critics Series*) 5*s.*
SAMUEL BECKETT by Nathan A. Scott. *Bowes and Bowes* (*Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought*) 12*s.* 6*d.*

We shall go on needing Beckett exegesis. Professor Scott and Mr Coe supply some of that need. Professor Scott is first concerned with Beckett's literary forebears and contemporaries, while Mr Coe is more involved in the 'philosophy' that is to be heard in Beckett. 'Art,' he writes, 'is the elucidation of the impossible'.

Mr Coe's book is the better. His chapter 'The Art of Failure' is as crisp an introduction to Beckett as anything I have seen; and he is excellent on details – the familial structure in *Molloy*, the meaning of Worm in *The Unnamable*, the relevance of Geulincx to *Murphy* and *Watt*. But it is distressing to find in a series called *Writers and Critics* that one critic has no evaluative judgments to put. None? Well, we learn of 'the depth and brilliance – and humour' of *Murphy*. And we read: 'Considered as an expression of Beckett's philosophy of the inconclusive, *Waiting for Godot* is well-nigh perfect; considered as drama, it tends to be slightly two-dimensional in conception (p. 95).' The propositions are reversible. In any case, that sentence characterizes Mr Coe's study. He is interested in ideas — and makes them interesting. But he is only distantly involved with the analysis of literary textures. And it must be a limited sense of morality in literature which allows the assertion that 'there are no moral judgments in Beckett'.

Professor Scott's book, too, gives me the feeling that I see not Beckett, but a ghost-image, like the shadow that hovers by the picture on a television screen. The work is less detached than Mr Coe's: the warm style connotes at least some kind of enthusiasm. We sense that we all ought to feel that Beckett matters, even if Professor Scott can't quite stretch his insights up to his feelings. He is strong on the religious side – it is agreeable to see a Christian emphasizing that *Waiting for Godot* is not a Christian play; and he writes very well – too briefly – on the 'metatheatre' of Beckett (that is, the self-consciousness of the personae). Indeed, he looks more often at the text than Mr Coe. But his account of Beckett does not often come to more than a *résumé* of what happens, plus a few comments.

Mr Coe's book is stronger, because, while it labours some way from the text, it declares a more systematic and purposeful design.

JOHN P. WHITE

JESUS IN QUR'AN by G. Parrinder: Pp. 187. *Faber and Faber, London, 1965* 32*s* 6*d.*

The Reader in the Comparative Study of Religions in the University of London has followed up his investigations into Indian religion, and witchcraft, with a very interesting and well documented examination of the references in the Qur'an to Jesus and the Gospels. These references, wholly respectful and indeed reverential, are surprisingly numerous. Dr Parrinder, who is familiar with all the relevant literature, is scrupulously irenic in his intention: 'It is to encourage study, self-examination, dialogue and searching the scriptures that this book has been written. Much wider acquaintance with the holy books is one of the most useful first steps to take. Let more Christians read the Qur'an and more Muslims study the Bible, so as to extend understanding and reconciliation.'

The several topics discussed are: the names by which Jesus is referred to in the Qur'an, Zachariah, John and Mary, the Annunciation, the Life and Death of Jesus, His works and words, the terms Son of Man and Son of God and the Qur'anic attitude to the doctrine of the Trinity, and to Christians generally. In his concluding chapter Dr Parringer issues a challenge to Christians. 'It is too easily assumed that all traditional doctrines are firmly based on the Bible. The

Semitic view of God may need to be cleared of some Greek theories that have overlaid it. Then if theology is to make contact with the modern world it must express itself in a meaningful way. Terms like Son of God, Trinity and Salvation need to be re-shaped and given new point. Concepts of prophecy, inspiration and revelation must be re-examined in view of the undoubted revelation of God in Muhammad and in the Qur'an. Then much more real charity and generous understanding must be shown to members of other faiths. The example of Islam towards other People of the Book often puts us to shame.'

One notices with regret some misprints or mistakes, not so numerous, however, as to be more than a mild irritant. Thus on page 98, in a discussion of the meaning of Ahmad in Sura 61 : 6, 'It has often been suggested that *parakletos*, "comforter", was confused with *perikletos*, "celebrated".' (For *perikletos* read *periklutos*.) On the same page a quotation from the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* has been mangled: 'its correct Arabic translation menahhemana'. (For Arabic read Aramaic.) And later on the same page, the mother of the Prophet Muhammad is called Amina, instead of Āmina.

The book is fully indexed, but lacks a bibliography. It deserves to be read and studied widely.

A. J. ARBERRY

MODERN IRAN by Peter Avery. *London (Ernest Benn Ltd.) 1965*, pp. xvi + 527 £3.

To be a professional Orientalist in the English-speaking world has always required exceptional fortitude and resolution (some might say, even at the present day, eccentricity and foolhardiness!); but Persian Studies in Britain are quite unique in their inspiration of the scholarly enthusiast. E. G. Browne, nominally Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, was undoubtedly the archetypal figure – a scholar and man of the world, liberal in purse and spirit, splendidly gifted and formidably erudie, he did more than any individual or institution over the last 100 years (and against constant and massive odds) to keep Britain intelligently aware of Persia while inspiring in Persians a respect and affection for things British. Even nowadays, with much of his work in ruins through the folly of others and the hazards of chance, his scholarship endures and his person remains in both lands a venerated monument.

Yet he gave many false stresses to Persian Studies: his overvaluation of Baha'ism for the regeneration of Persia is notorious; and, by his magisterial emphasis on, and isolation of, all things Persian at every turn, he robbed both Persian and Turkish of their rightful place within Islamic Studies. Above all, he made it easy for the Persians themselves to indulge in exaggerated and impotent self-pity at their own fate, whether at the hands of the Mongols or as inflicted by more modern oppressors.

Peter Avery, who teaches Persian at Cambridge, is very much in the Browne tradition. He is clearly an informed enthusiast for the land, its civilisation and its people – instinctively hostile to things Turkish and remote from Arabism. But he is, of course, a child of the twentieth century, and his writing is touched by a regret and a cynicism that Browne (who was certainly no Pollyanna) would for most of his life have found incomprehensible. Like Browne's four-volume *Literary History of Persia* (the original publisher contracted for one volume!), this work is a vast and vital store of scholarly facts, ideas, interpretations, enthusiasms and prejudices. It deals (roughly speaking) with the political, economic and social history of Persia over the last 150 years or so; and, whatever its obvious shortcomings, it does so in the main fairly and competently and, above all, interestingly. There is nothing else at the present time (certainly none of the several short sketches available on both sides of the Atlantic) that may justly be compared with it. Avery rightly includes much of his own personal experience of Persia and things Persian; he also, again rightly, sketches in a great deal of the remoter historical