

circle', *Finnegan's Wake*. Miss Rudd spends much space-time discussing what paths Yeats might have followed if he had been a mystic or a philosopher, and, although she has written some interesting chapters on the dualism of the western mind, includes too many lengthy quotations which are not germane to her subject. Significantly, she omits *Timon* and *Lear* from the above quotation; like Blake, they were twigs of the symbolism with which Yeats built his divided image of frenetic persistence forcing a reply from the oracle walled up behind normal appearances. Yeats, as Miss Rudd properly observes, was an intellectual magpie. The philosopher-critic is too often a cuckoo in his nest.

ROGER McHUGH

CHOIR OF MUSES. By Etienne Gilson. Translated by Maisie Ward. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

POETS AND MYSTICS. By E. I. Watkin. (Sheed and Ward; 21s.)

These two books attempt in their different ways to explore the relation between poetic vision and mystical experience. M. Gilson's 'muses' are a select number of the women who have inspired certain great poets in the creation of particular works. He begins with a most illuminating study of the growth of the *Canzoniere* against the background of Petrarch's love for Laura; the other figures in the book include Baudelaire's Madame Sabatier, Mathilde von Wesendonck, who inspired Wagner's *Tristan*, and Clotilde de Vaux, whose strange destiny it was to be beloved by Comte and to become the patron saint of Positivism.

English readers who have come to admire M. Gilson as an exponent of philosophical scholarship may be somewhat surprised at seeing him in his new role as critic of poetry and of human nature; one is first of all struck by the sustained polish and wittiness of the writing, which the excellence of the translation convincingly preserves; next it becomes apparent that wit and irony are mingled with charity, and that the author is seeking, through all the triviality and gossip of the *vie amoureuse*, to discern some pattern of permanent truth. Laura and her successors were muses because, and only so long as, they remained inaccessible to their lovers, and thus made possible the idealisation of romantic love. When the beloved is not content to remain a muse, disaster follows, as in the case of Baudelaire and Madame Sabatier: 'to the poet's appeal for the eternal feminine the well-meaning women replied by offering him Apollonie Sabatier'. As in the myth of Platonic love in the *Symposium*, passion is only a means of ascent towards the contemplation of beauty, which in this case is directed towards the creation of a work of art.

In the two concluding essays, 'Art and Eros' and 'The Artist and the Saint', M. Gilson develops analogies between the artist's sacrifice of himself and his passion to art, and the renunciation of the life of sanctity. Following Mauriac, he puts the disturbing question whether every great work of art

may not involve to some degree a renunciation of God. In his gravity and patience he offers no glib answer to the riddle, only holding out the hope that art is not debased if we see around its greatest works the dim halo of a possible sanctity.

In turning to Mr Watkin's first essay on 'Poetry and Mysticism', it is interesting to see the points where his route crosses that of M. Gilson. Some of his divergences are interesting, too; for him, poetic intuition is the work of the feminine and unconscious part of the mind: M. Gilson is more just to the sheer creative work of great art in his recognition of the interplay of the feminine with the male principle of energy and delight.

The most delightful portions of Mr Watkin's book are his essays on individual spiritual writers, especially the medieval studies. Though he is not writing for specialists, much erudition has gone into these essays. Moreover, the learning blends easily and unassumingly with an intimate love of the subjects. The defence of Margery Kempe, whom many must have found a difficult person to get on with, abounds in charity, and so does the charming tribute to the Puritan Thomas Goodwin's devotion to the Sacred Heart.

ROGER SHARROCK

TWO WORLDS FOR MEMORY. By Alfred Noyes. (Sheed and Ward; 21s.)

The serene and conservative mind of Mr Noyes makes of his memoirs a wholly civilised but curiously impersonal record. We come to know his two worlds—those of literature and public career, or perhaps they are England and America—so much better than himself. This is not altogether unwelcome at a time when uninhibited autobiography seems a necessary item on any writer's agenda.

Mr Noyes has much to say of poetry (with extensive quotations from his own verse and much severity in judgment of 'modern' poets), of his literary contemporaries, of American academic life, of the intellectual search that led to his own submission to the Catholic Church. Particularly interesting are his accounts of such various friends as Swinburne, Edmund Gosse, Lord Jellicoe and Dean Inge. And he gives a most informative footnote on the tragedy of Roger Casement, to which (inadvertently as it seems) Mr Noyes contributed through his reference, in a war-time article for the Admiralty, to the much-contested diaries. Here, too, are the true facts about the Roman 'condemnation' of his book on Voltaire—an incident which does no credit to the anonymous informer who complained of its 'unorthodoxy'. Cardinal Hinsley, as was to be expected, demanded justice, and Mr Noyes states that Cardinal Pacelli (now Pope Pius XII) described the charges as nonsensical. Mr Noyes has many good stories to tell, and his book reflects most engagingly worlds much calmer than those a later generation has known.