

would like to know about the other side; about his Christian and transcendental revolt against Schelling's theory of imagination, which, Coleridge says, confuses 'the creaturely spirit in the great moments of its renaissance with the deific energies in deity itself'. The book is still to be written that will show how Coleridge's thought was at once so energetic, so resourceful, and so broken-winded.

Nevertheless this is a good book because the hand of theory rests in fact very lightly on it: the essays on individual poets—for this is what the chapters really are—reveal Sir Herbert a better empiric than he knows, and it is scarcely relevant that he has little new to say on the question of 'Classic and Romantic', of 'Shape Superimposed' and 'Form Indwelling'. These essays show variety and vitality of interest. He writes most educatedly, almost learnedly, about Byron, about Hopkins with sensitive understanding, with justice and even temper about Pound and Eliot, yet without that smugness common in the up-to-date. The author of many books, he can still think freshly, and with a rare, questioning humility. Only his long defence of Shelley fails to hold the attention. Eliot and others have called Shelley immature, neurotic, self-centred, intellectually incoherent. Sir Herbert Read attempts to turn this argument on its head, maintaining that these very qualities—his choice of words is not quite theirs—make Shelley's lyrical talent what it is. Of course this may be so; but the point cannot be argued at large: we could have done with some practical criticism.

There is nothing unreal about the general problem which this book poses; nor, since it is real, can it be wholly new: but there has taken place, in the last two or three decades, a decisive shift of emphasis that makes it dangerous to look back in philosophical history. The working of non-discursive symbolisms is being much discussed, both in the theory of art and of sacramental religion: 'there is indeed the inexpressible; this shows itself'. The way ahead is hard to see.

JOHN JONES

THE WEeping AND THE LAUGHTER. By J. Maclaren-Ross. (Rupert Hart-Davis; 12s. 6d.)

It might be suspected by the cynical that when an established writer turns to his memories of childhood he is either cashing-in on fame or running short of original material. In neither respect does the first volume of Mr Maclaren-Ross's autobiography deserve criticism. He has learned to write the hard way, and his curiously abrupt and 'documentary' work hitherto had scarcely prepared one for the distinguished and contemplative style he has now achieved.

The world of the first war and after, seen through the extraordinarily watchful eyes of a small boy in Bournemouth and in France, is brilliantly recovered. His parents are perhaps a little blurred, but his brother (who

was once in a seminary, but who was removed because of an unsuitable skill as a mimic, it seems) and his sister have just that larger-than-life dimension which childhood's imagination gives. There are 'characters', whether nursemaids and aunts, or M. Félix, the puppet-man, who reflect the skilled observation of the novelist. But there is nothing exaggerated or forced: the grave evocation of earliest years is always true to its purpose. One thing that seems strange in this story of a Catholic family is the total absence of the impact of religion on a boy so perceptive. His obsessional love for the early silent films and for puppets suggests that he would scarcely be neutral where his imagination was stirred. But of the effect—if only by reaction—of religion, there is scarcely a word.

I.E.

**BYZANTINE MOSAICS**, with an introduction by Peter Meyer. (Batsford; 30s.)

*Byzantine Mosaics* maintains in every detail the tradition of Batsford publications. There is a very high standard of reproduction. The plates have been most carefully selected; the letterpress is quite inadequate. In the introduction, which is four pages long, Dr Peter Meyer deals with Byzantine mosaics as a whole. His style is epigrammatic, and it seems clear that he is familiar with recent research on mosaic decoration, notably with that of Dr Otto Demus. His essential standpoint seems best expressed in the sentence: 'Byzantine painting, illuminations and mosaics are neither representations nor idealisations—they are allusions, sacred emblems, almost hieroglyphs, therefore akin to script'. Such a view is hardly tenable after the discoveries of the Whittemore-Underwood expedition at Hagia Sophia, and the new knowledge of imperial Byzantine portraiture which has developed from it. It is hardly compatible with the classical reminiscences which were always known to have survived in Byzantine art and whose significance is becoming more and more apparent through the work of Dr Weizmann and the discoveries at Castel Seprio. Yet as a generalisation it would be far more tenable if it was only the art of Norman Sicily and the early Venetian Republic which was under consideration. It is this in fact that should have formed the title of the book, for it is its true subject. One of the illustrations is from Torcello, five are from San Marco, four from Monreale, three from Palermo, the last from Cefalú.

G.M.

**SIGRID UNDSET.** By A. H. Winsnes. (Sheed and Ward; 15s.)

This book provides quite an adequate introduction to the work of Sigrid Undset. Without either reserves or qualifications, the author accepts Sigrid Undset's attitude to life so that, though this book is called 'a