

IRISH POETS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. Edited by Geoffrey Taylor. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; The Muses Library; 12s. 6d.)

Mr Taylor's test of Irish poets is that they 'must have been Irish by birth and they must have written poetry with some Irish reference, either historical or topographical'. It is not a particularly good test and it is not religiously observed; George Darley, for example, is excluded on the grounds that he 'did not even pay lip-service to Ireland', whereas the truth is that Darley's attempts to brandish Irish clan names in his poetry were singularly ineffective. On the other hand, his poem beginning

It is not beauty I demand,
A crystal brow, the moon's despair,
Nor the snow's daughter, a white hand,
Nor mermaid's yellow pride of hair. .

which was mistakenly ranked by Palgrave as a seventeenth-century lyric, suggests a greater poetic power than that of either Thomas Caulfield Irwin or John Francis O'Donnell, who are given far too much space in this book.

With these reservations the anthology may be recommended to the curious reader interested in minor verse. Mangan is the one poet here whose work flames with any frequency; Allingham, a charming lyricist who influenced Yeats, is well represented and is perhaps the most interesting example of a writer caught between two literary traditions; and Mr Taylor has wisely included some excellent anonymous ballads of the period.

ROGER MCHUGH

THE STRUCTURE OF POETRY. By Elizabeth Sewell. (Kegan Paul; 25s.)

The publishers claim that from this book 'a new understanding of poetry emerges'. Perhaps it would have been truer to say that Miss Sewell has analysed very closely an old, and much neglected, understanding of poetry. As should be true of all criticism, this book becomes clearer as it goes along. Poetry may be described as an attempt to co-ordinate (integrate?) that unity and multiplicity, order and disorder, which are found in language and experience. After examining the various ways in which language attempts to order and relate experience, Miss Sewell explains how poetry does the same thing with language and takes as her examples Rimbaud and Mallarmé. These men tried to express this co-ordination—the one in a poetry of universality, the other in a poetry of nothingness. Because these are two extremes we are not quite satisfied, and suspect that Miss Sewell, too, is not satisfied with their achievements. But also because they are extremes they are good illustrations of the theory which is worked out with fine critical