

years. The slow germination of Swift's genius is of absorbing interest. Mr Murry carefully assesses his hero-worship of his patron, Temple, and the rebuff which brought it to an end, and the abortive courtship of 'Varina'. Both episodes served to strengthen that urge to self-sufficiency which was the main motive force of Swift's career. The estimate of the early Pindarics is too favourable: here after all Dryden has the last word; but it does serve to illuminate the transition in the young Swift from intellectual idealism to a stern contempt for its absence or degradation in the real world.

One of the most moving stories in literary history is of Swift in old age, when a copy of *A Tale of a Tub* was put into his hand, saying, 'What a genius I had when I wrote that book'. The long discussion of the *Tale* is remarkable for viewing the work as an exercise of the pure comic spirit—a total derision without any particular critical purpose. The treatment of *Gulliver's Travels* is less original, and its justifiable concentration on the disturbing power of the fourth book perhaps results in some neglect of Swift's studied approach to his climax in Books I and II: the gradual ironic reduction of human pretensions is at work all along.

Mr Middleton Murry's account of the complicated political relations of the Oxford-Bolingbroke ministry has at least the merit of being clearer than most attempts to unravel the tangled skein of those years. Swift is plausibly shown as standing on the periphery of events, in spite of the friendship with Harley so flattering to his esteem: his political standpoint was controlled by his involvement in Irish affairs, and he did not really understand the great issues.

The pen which described the love of Keats for Fanny Brawne was not unfitted to probe the very different relations of Swift with Stella and Vanessa. A coherent account emerges and there is no unnecessary psychologizing. The story of a purely formal marriage with Stella given by the earlier biographers is accepted: it makes sense of many things, but it is by no means proved.

The terrible scatological poetry of the later years, so different from the robust Rabelaisianism of *A Tale of a Tub*, is discussed in a sane and compassionate manner. When the life-story is finished, the reader feels he has lived more closely with Swift and his writings; to have brought this unapproachable man so much nearer to us is a measure of Mr Middleton Murry's scholarship and imagination.

ROGER SHARROCK

THE DEATH OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC. By Ronald Matthews. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 18s.)

The worst enemies of France have too often been her own leaders, the politicians for whom the party's traditions—however obsolete they

may have become—can never be sacrificed. Mr Matthews has a sad record to unfold, in which the jealousies and schisms of the Third Republic have been resurrected to make the Fourth Republic almost unworkable. He wrote before the lamentable presidential election of a few months ago, and the scheming and sectarian bitterness of the proceedings at Versailles provide a sufficient postscript to his thesis.

The common purpose of the Resistance, like the common calamity of defeat, gave hope of a new unity, but all too soon the old suspicions and vested interests asserted themselves, and the succession of ineffectual governments became once more a matter for cynical laughter. In particular, the resurrection of the issue of *laïcité* made genuine progressive co-operation impossible, and Mr Matthews' exact and impartial analysis of the sorry story of anti-clericalism and its futile revival shows how deep and how incurable this wound in French political life has become. With the running out of the tide of generosity and tolerance engendered by the war, there were revealed 'the reefs of old prejudices, as jagged as ever, of old habits, just as compelling in their restraint'. Mr Matthews, appreciating, as few English observers do, the real importance of the religious issue in French politics, sees in the failure to reach a sane compromise here a symbol of the fatal fissure in French life.

Mr Matthews writes with a hard precision which makes the complicated story of French politics from Leon Blum's Popular Front to the present uneasy compromise both intelligible and absorbing. No details are ignored, and a gift for summary makes even the financial complications of the various post-war economic plans seem coherent. Mr Matthews has lived through these years as a newspaper correspondent in Paris, and his judgment deserves respect. For him, the hope lay in 'an equivocation to be ended, a wound to be healed and a truth to be told; none of the three had been done, and the bill had to be paid'. He sees, therefore, opening for France 'a peaceful exit from the perilous ways of history, the road that leads to the comfortable status of a cosy Portugal, rich in memories, golden in her tourist trade, unworried by the responsibilities that her betters will shoulder for her'.

And yet there is something to be said on the credit side. The very years that have seen this sad return to irresponsibility and hatred have seen the emergence of statesmen such as Robert Schuman and Georges Bidault, whose integrity cannot be doubted and whose greatest achievements may be yet to come. But so cautionary a tale as that Mr Matthews has to tell is not to be ignored, and its moral may extend beyond French frontiers, for there are other countries in which government can be sacrificed to partisan advantage and in which the sometimes excessive price for democratic freedom must be paid.

I.E.