

Her early work of writing for daily papers in several large cities; her membership at different times of the Socialist Party, the International Workers of the World, and a number of Communist inspired organizations were, in themselves, preparation of a very special kind. She has known the inside of a prison.

When Dorothy Day was at the University of Illinois she shared rooms with Rayna Simons, a young Jewess, who was afterwards to become a prominent member of the Communist Party, and who worked with Madame Sun Yat Sen and Borodin in China, and whose ashes repose in an urn in Moscow. In one of the finest chapters in the book Dorothy Day shows her love and understanding of this misguided but truth-seeking soul, so joyous, pure and generous. It provides a commentary on that doctrine of the harmony between the visible and invisible Church, and, like the author, our hearts too are 'comforted about Rayna, for most assuredly she loved truth and justice.'

There is a reticence about the last chapters that causes us to read much between the lines. What was written must have cost the author much to write, what remains unsaid we can only reverence. The gift of faith generally asks for sacrifice, but when the issue involves, so acutely, a husband and child, we must tread softly if we would dare to approach.

Those who know Dorothy Day as the heart of the House of Hospitality movement in America, and an inspirer of it elsewhere, may have hoped to find some first-hand account of the work in Mott Street; something about the bread line, the soup ladling, the laughter and tears, the giving of clothes and, above all, love to thousands of Christ's poor in New York. They will look in vain. Yet it is well that this most Christian book stops short at Rome; the works inspired by the living faith she received are best left to speak for themselves. One day we shall hear more of this pilgrimage, probably from another pen, and it will not stop short, but be continued through Rome to New York, Canada, even to Wigan and London, and—who knows?—throughout the wide world.

PETER WHITSTONE, O.P.

MISCELLANEOUS

APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE. By D. R. Traversi. (Sands, The Paladin Press; 6s.)

This is an excellent introduction to a study of Shakespeare from a modern angle. Mr. Traversi's approach does not exclude the well-worn avenues of Coleridge and Bradley, but it sees the plays, not as the great Victorian critics tended to see

them as purely studies of character and personality, nor as Mr. Granville Barker sees them as illustrating and demanding the conventions of the Elizabethan stage, but as organic creations, in which the play of metaphor and the stress of metre are aids to dramatic and psychological development. He sees them as artistic wholes.

It was for many years almost a commonplace to acclaim *Hamlet* as Shakespeare's greatest achievement, an assumption which Mr. Eliot was the first to disturb. And it is symptomatic of that new trend of criticism, of which Mr. Traversi is so penetrating an exponent, that *Hamlet* is becoming displaced by *Antony and Cleopatra*. Mr. Traversi is the first to admit the futility of comparisons, but he does point out that Shakespeare's problem, which was unresolved in *Hamlet*, is solved in *Antony*, and that the balance of the later play is in consequence more satisfactory. He might also have disposed of the myth that it is less stageworthy. Anyone who has seen *Hamlet* performed in full must have felt the slackening of tension after Hamlet's departure for England; they must have felt, too, that this was no deliberate easing of the play's momentum, but rather that the high-lights of the later Acts—'How all occasions' (greatest of the soliloquies), Ophelia's mad scene, the Gravediggers, and Osric—are all so many rivets on the attention rather than necessary developments of the play.

Mr. Traversi has set down more clearly than anyone I know Shakespeare's obsession with the antinomies of flesh and spirit, of nature and grace, of eternity and time. Shakespeare's search was for a spontaneity of the spirit to redeem the spontaneity of the flesh. He demanded—unconsciously I think—the man of God as distinct from the man of character. Angelo and Isabella, the later Prince Hal and the early Prospero, were people of character, and none the more likeable for that. Lucio and Claudio, Falstaff and Leontes, illustrate a fecundity of the flesh which buds into an ultimate sterility. Time is the enemy of their desires. The sonnets are full of the same tension—that moment which is likest heaven on earth is the earliest victim of mortality. Shakespeare's escape from this dilemma was personal, as every poet's must be. It is no denial of objective truth to say that no man dare take his deliverance second-hand. The quest for a harmonious experience, which is the quest of all mankind, was resolved for Shakespeare out of those very elements which had seemed to obstruct it. *Antony and Cleopatra*, who had committed all the betrayals and the degradations of physical love, were purified by disaster, and the accident of

their deaths is seen by Shakespeare as the opening of a door to the exaltation of what they had brought low.

'Where souls do couch on flowers we'll hand in hand,
'No more the juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip,
'I am all fire and air.'

Those who follow Mr. Traversi's persuasive reasoning will see no difficulty in this mingling of spiritual and sensuous anticipations. Romeo's resolve to 'shake the yoke of inauspicious stars from this world-wearied flesh,' and Hamlet's half-hearted will 'to shuffle off this mortal coil,' sound almost liverish beside Cleopatra's jealousy when Iras dies before her.

'If she first meet the curléd Antony
He'll make demand of her and spend that kiss
Which is my heaven to have.'

These lovers saw death not as a cancellation of bodily desires, nor quite as its redemption, but rather as the doorway to that immortality in which alone the value of human love could be realised. We must beware of attributing a Christian sense where none is intended; for I do not think that Christian dogma played any conspicuous part in Shakespeare's poetic development. But it is arguable, I think, that a sensibility inherited from the Christian centuries and alive to a great deal of their spirit is at work in the later plays. For Antony and Cleopatra death is not a purgation from sin, but a release from limitation. Shakespeare had been haunted through the Sonnets with the agony of his great passion, and he could only assuage his thirst for a timeless love by prophesying the immortality of his verse. It was a long stride from this to the last Act of *Antony*. If in *The Tempest* and *A Winter's Tale* Shakespeare touches on the forgiveness of sins, in *Antony and Cleopatra* he suggests the resurrection of the body. We are used to regarding the romantic plays of the last period as studies in reconciliation, and we are in debt to Mr. Traversi for pointing out that *Antony and Cleopatra* is, for Shakespeare at least, a solution equally harmonious. It remains unique in being a tragedy whose arc is completed. Completion is the key-note of comedies like *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but the essence of tragedy is interruption. In *Antony and Cleopatra* we are shown the consequence of sin and treachery, and its annihilation not by repentance, but by time. There is an interruption of unity, but the unity is finally restored, as it is not restored in *Macbeth*, *Othello* or *Troilus and Cressida*; as it is partially restored in *Lear*. There, too, death is the solvent,

and one might say of *Antony and Cleopatra* as of Lear and Cordelia that 'ripeness is all.'

There are many points in Mr. Traversi's essay that I have not touched upon here, but it is throughout persuasive, original and gracefully written. I commend it to anyone who wishes to penetrate further into the greatest mystery of literature.

ROBERT SPEAIGHT.

RECUSANT POETS, 1535-1633. Vol. I. From St. Thomas More to Ben Johnson. Edited by Louise Imogen. (Sheed and Ward; 18s.)

The present volume has an almost unique value for the study of the formative period in the old Catholic tradition. It is a collection of Catholic verse between the middle years of Henry the Eighth and the middle years of the reign of James the First. For a great part they were previously inaccessible and they illustrate the changing Catholic reaction to contemporary fashion as well as to contemporary event. Technically the title is inaccurate. Neither the second Lord Vaux nor the eighth Lord Morley were ever recusant, the Catholic sympathies of Surrey were probably tenuous and certainly restrained, and Nicholas Grimauld prudently conformed to the old religion at the height of the Marian reaction; yet all are represented. Still it is at least tenable that there was a continuity between much of the poetry of Elizabethan recusants, the officially pamphleteered verse of Mary's reign and the rhymed moral aphorism which had been in fashion with a 'Catholic' section of the Henrican ruling class.

For one grouping, at least, the links were reinforced by a strain of blood; the literary inheritance of the More circle were transmitted through all three phases by John and Jasper Heywood and by the Clements, Prideaux and Copleys. The tradition of devotional verse, maintained among the exiles and growing increasingly sophisticated was to reflect minutely a changing culture. It was to find expression not only in Verstegan, but in Robert Southwell and in Henry Constable.

It is in many ways a contrast to the anonymous Catholic verse of the time; popular in origin, controversial in its implication sometimes rudely, always buoyantly spontaneous. As a background to this popular tradition lie the marching songs of the pilgrimage of grace, the monks of St. Mary's, York, and the Dominican John Pickering. It is allied with the writings of such country squires as Tregian of Golden and Blundell of