

Next, it is admirably documented. Each phase and turn of it draws upon poetry actually written. This may seem too elementary a virtue to call for special praise; perhaps it is so noticeable in Mr Day Lewis because he so clearly enjoys what he quotes. One is kept continually wondering what he will cite next and still more what he will say about it; and time and again his generalisations bring a greater understanding of, and consequently a greater delight in, particular texts. As a critic he has the poet's talent rather than the logician's; 'the capacity' (it is for him imagination itself) 'to put oneself in the place of another'. Therefore too he has sympathy and finesse; and that already is much. Poet, he can place himself in the heart of another; critic, he can place himself in the heart of another's poem. And this he does not seldom, for our instruction.

Yes, instruction; for this poet-critic is also fertile in ideas, though these are not altogether unconfused. He cannot help trying to get to the bottom of his subject. He hardly succeeds, perhaps, but it was a brave thing to attempt. His mind dogs his feelings. Speaking of the 'dangers which threaten all pure poetry, all poetry whose meaning is . . . concentrated within its images' he finds the notion of poetry expressed in this formula inadequate; and his whole effort is to explain why this is so and to define what further aim poetry does, in fact, constantly envisage. The question is, what is poetic thought ('discovered or rediscovered' by the Romantics); and for Mr Day Lewis the question cannot be answered simply by referring to what we commonly call imagination. 'The poetic image', he says, 'is the human mind claiming kinship with everything that lives or has lived, and making good its claim.'

How is the claim made good? In a sense, simply by metaphor—the linking of different objects within the one image-field. And why is the claim made at all? The last lecture tries to sketch out an answer. It comes to this, that poetry involves images drawn out of the field of sensation and held together by a 'general truth' (itself hardly ever detached from the image that suggests it). Thereupon Mr Day Lewis relates these truths to memory and primordial archetypes, and, coasting by a dubious materialised platonism, drops anchor in a spirit-haunted mist. But not without his catch of pearls. For he has shown us the poet (who is himself also) as one who divines 'general truths' without forgetting the vivid, particular things and images that embody them; and that the poet's delight (communicated just a little) springs from his power to give to universal notions, embodied, hidden even from himself perhaps, a new being in the poem, in that strange thing at the tip of his pen, that image at once of the mind and the mind-mirrored world.

KENELM FOSTER. O.P.

BOOKS RECEIVED

- Allen & Unwin.* M. Blanco Formona: *The Lost Ant*, 7s. 6d.
Blackwell. F. Wright Beare: *The 1st Epistle of Peter*, 15s. 0d.
Blackfriars. ed. E. P. Armitage: *A Torchbearer*, 2s. 0d.; S.M.C.: Henry Suso, 6s. 6d.