

A serious fault is the failure to point out the need of using certain translations with caution. As the bibliography has in mind many readers with no knowledge of any tongue but modern English, notes on the adequacy of versions are particularly necessary. Such notes are frequently not given, for example in the numerous references to the *English Church Historians* series, which needs to be controlled carefully.

There is a fantastic muddle in two entries, where Miss Helen Waddell's *Wandering Scholars* and *Medieval Latin Lyrics* are so confused as to make one wonder whether the compiler wrote from memory. There is no mention of translations of Plotinus and Porphyry, although translations of Iamblichus and Proclus are noted. If 'medieval' is to be stretched to include them and Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch, surely Plotinus is not to be ignored. An edition of the *Heimskringla*, the most most accessible to British readers, has been overlooked. Wentworth Huyshe's translation of Adamnan is now published by Routledge.

Cross references should be increased generally. The index would be improved by the inclusion of the usual English forms of Norse names. At present the reader has to recognize St Magnus in *Magnus saga helga eyjarls*. However, the book was issued in expectation of much criticism of detail, and no doubt a later edition will see considerable improvement.

ANTHONY ROSS, O.P.

LITERATURE

JOHNSON AGONISTES, AND OTHER ESSAYS. By Bertrand H. Bronson. (Cambridge University Press; 8s. 6d.)

This is a learned book and makes hard reading. The three essays of which it is composed first appeared under the auspices of the University of California. They are full of scholarship, research, and thoughtful appraisal. Doubtless they will find an appreciative public, but that public would be larger were the author's style simpler and more persuasive, his reasoning crystal-clear, and his touch lighter. For there is little sign of that blend of playful fancy and delicate humour, that freedom from cramping academic bonds, which ensure for the literary essay a measure of immortality. All the same, there is here a valuable contribution to Johnsonian criticism and we are grateful for it.

The first essay (which gives title to the book) is a psychological study of Johnson, viewed from a particular angle. He is seen as a dual personality, a kind of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde as it were, full of apparent contradictions, a born, deep-dyed, whole-hearted Tory, yet a man who swims instinctively against the current, and temperamentally is always in revolt. And this thesis the author ably works out in detail.

The third (and last) essay is a meticulous and careful analysis of Johnson's *Irene*. Very few people have ever had the courage to tackle in this way that ill-fated play, or even to read it through.

Yet it would repay the labour. Our author, after minutely discussing the earlier plays written round the title before *Irene* herself, and then examining Johnson's rough draft of his play, shows us how full of interest is its text, and what light it casts on Johnson's own ideas at the time he wrote it. He even discovers in one of the lesser characters an embodiment of the qualities Johnson thought he had found in his own beloved 'Tetty'.

But it is the second of the essays which is the most novel and striking one. Mr Bronson is one of the first to draw upon the recently disinterred Boswell Papers, as yet little known in this country, but existing in a limited edition de luxe of eighteen volumes in America, of which a more popular impression is said to be in preparation. In 'Boswell's Boswell', we are given copious extracts from Boswell's private journal, in which we see that strangest of men as he really lived, and are able to live each scene together with him. And in its 'appalling frankness' that day by day record is one of the most singular self-biographies given to the world. Mr Bronson's analysis of Boswell's temperament merely scratches its surface, and gives us an appetite for more.

ROBERT BRACEY, O.P.

THE STATE OF MIND OF MRS SHERWOOD. By Naomi Royde Smith. (Macmillan; 7s. 6d.)

Mrs Sherwood, author of *The Fairchild Family* and of nearly four hundred books besides, died in 1851. Hers was surely a monumental achievement, and Miss Royde Smith has had the good idea of inspecting the monument. There is nothing more revealing than the popular reading of a former generation, and here we have a brisk and professional guide who is able to disinter much that is amusing, and still more that is startling, from the millions of words in which the tireless lady expressed her moral and theological opinions.

Nothing is easier than to laugh at these hortatory novels, whose setting ranges from India to Staffordshire vicarages, whose characters include malign monks, worthy clergymen, reforming English ladies on the Continent and children—always children, to be taught, to be threatened with the certain doom that awaits disobedience and even frivolity. But there is more to Mrs Sherwood than an Aunt Sally upon whom a later age can revenge itself with laughter. She is the embodiment of Victorian morality, of that Manichean mistrust of created good which haunts the children's books of a period she did much to influence.

Miss Royde Smith has provided valuable material for the sociologist, not to say the psychologist (what might he not make of Mrs Sherwood's preoccupation with corpses, with lingering disease and parental ferocity?). And her analysis of the anti-Catholicism which became an obsession with Mrs Sherwood's advancing years is a valuable sidelight on what became a convention—taken for granted nowadays, but too rarely related to its origins. The famous conversation in *The Fairchild Family* strikes the note:

'Mamma', said Henry, 'are Roman Catholics Christian?'