

internal combustion machines in order to appreciate his meaning, or to discover the influences behind his work.

At the same time, if it is true that people have no idea that the Bible and its interpretations did colour Langland's thought as that of all his contemporaries, this book will be of immense value. It contains a great deal of interesting material on Scriptural tradition in the fourteenth century—greatly derived from Père Spicq and Dr Beryl Smalley (whose book is erroneously ascribed to Cambridge). And it does in fact succeed in giving us an interpretation of *Piers Plowman* which brings a unity to the poem even if it is not always accurate in detail or profound in insight.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

RETURN TO CHESTERTON. By Maisie Ward. (Sheed and Ward; 21s.)

A gigantic and beaming G.K.C. is framed in an open doorway in Mr Thomas Derrick's dust jacket for this book; he is holding the door open with one hand and welcoming the reader with the other. It is a friendly greeting, appropriate to this friendly book, which is filled with happy reminiscences of the great man collected assiduously by Miss Maisie Ward. These are not simply strung together, for Miss Ward weaves her narrative with a craftsmanship which compels admiration.

Clearly, a man of Chesterton's stature could not be always faultless and infallible; his idiosyncrasies, his whims, his enthusiasms which were engaging to many, could cause irritation and annoyance to others. A very real and also very lovable person emerges from these pages, for the defects enhance the high qualities. The reader returning to Chesterton has his earlier impressions refreshed and confirmed. The reader less familiar with G.K.C. will discover a man of fantastic inventiveness and wit. Both could envy those who knew this man of noble rotundity and immense intellectual power with his zest for life and his capacity for friendship.

There is much that is serious in this book: a careful history of *G.K.'s Weekly* and the origins of his Distributism; the place of religion in his life and his reticence about it. There is much more that is gay and amusing, and rightly so, for this was a giant who strode gaily through life. This book would be justified if only for the superb *jeu d'esprit* on 'The Tomato in Prose and Prosody' with its alleged quotations from illustrious poets on the subject of the tomato. But there are many other delicious things, witty poems dashed off for his young admirers, the clever drawings and burlesques. How lucky indeed were those who knew this friendly giant well!

KIERAN MULVEY, O.P.

EZRA POUND AND THE CANTOS. By Harold H. Watts. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 12s. 6d.)

Pound once remarked that a paragraph by Yeats had 'done more to prevent people reading the Cantos for what is *on the page* than any

other one smokescreen'. For Pound, genuine literary criticism consists in 'the examination and juxtaposition of particular specimens'—a strict attention to the *facts*, the words on the page '... to get at them despite the smokescreens erected by ... critics, ... despite the mass of dead matter that these people have heaped up and conserved round about them in the proportion: one barrel of sawdust to each half-bunch of grapes'. The reader seeking a genuine critique of the Cantos ought to be warned that Mr Watt's book contains eight brief quotations; eight grapes to a barrel of sawdust. Mr Watts has chosen to examine Pound's thought rather than his poetry, though Pound himself has warned that it is 'premature to mention my "philosophy", call it a disposition'. (*Letters*, p. 430.) Pound's 'disposition', then, is Mr Watts's subject, but I cannot see that he has anything new or illuminating to say. Those who have already read Hugh Kenner's *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* or the collection of essays commemorating Pound's sixty-fifth birthday will find the present work superfluous.

Mr Watts's final judgment is that Pound has grotesquely exaggerated the importance of economics: 'No one can doubt that usury has contributed greatly to the inhumanity of the era in which we live; there are strong reasons for doubting that it is the only begetter of the evil which we know'. (p. 124.) This is well said, but it is implied that Pound's values are not sufficiently central, sufficiently human, to give his poetry universal appeal. This is not the case. Pound is following his poetic masters, Dante ('*Usura offende la divina bontade*') and Chaucer ('the cursedness of covetyse, that first our sorwe brought') in protesting against the rape of nature and degradation of humanity:

'Usura slayeth the child in the womb,
It stayeth the young man's courting,
It has brought palsy to the bed, lyeth
between the young bride and her bridegroom.

Contra Naturam.

Every word here is *true*. The issues are not academic, they are poignantly human. It is a question whether Pound's poetry is not more fundamentally human, more religious even, than Eliot's. 'I am writing', he proclaims, 'for *humanity* in a world eaten by usury. I write for a cultural heritage that includes centuries of anti-usurious doctrine and results thereof in cathedral building. *Usura* was a moral issue, it was a religious issue. It is still an ethical issue, and religious wherever religion merits a name.' (*Polite Essays*, p. 55.)

J. V. CURRAN

THE MILLENNIUM OF HIERONYMUS BOSCH. Outlines of a new interpretation by Wilhelm Fränger, translated by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser. (Faber and Faber; 42s.)

Illustrations apart (four in colour superb, twenty-three in mono-

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