

reject what they do not and cannot understand.

There is a very fine motto: a verse of a hymn from the very remarkable eighteenth century Welsh hymn writer, Ann Griffiths, who died so young at twenty-nine giving birth to her first child. It begins: 'Gwela' i'n sefyll rhwng y myrtwydd'. (See Zechariah 1: 8-11) A translation into English can hardly bring out the qualities of the original.

There I see among the myrtles
Someone worthy of my love,
Tho' in part I seem to know him
Far by far the world above.
Hail the morning!
When I see him as he is.

Rose of Sharon is his namesake,
Pure and blushing, fair to sing,
By ten thousand times excelling
Even the world's most precious thing.
Friend of sinners,
He the Master on the sea.

What more is there here for me that
Earth's base images afford?
I bear witness there's no company
To compare with Christ my Lord.
O! How I long
For his love throughout my days.

HUGH PRICE

GRAMSCI AND MARXIST THEORY edited by Chantal Mouffe. *RKP*. pp 288
£9.50 and £5.95 p/b.

Antonio Gramsci can seem, in retrospect, the model figure for today's generation of aspiring young marxists: the three major moments of his life combine to suggest an enviably comprehensive portrait of the militant intellectual – his direct contribution as agitator, educator and newspaper editor to the maelstrom of factory occupations in 1920 Turin, his combative role in founding and briefly leading the Communist Party in Italy, his protracted physical martyrdom and probing theoretical inquiries in a Fascist prison ending only with his death at the still-young age of forty-six in 1937. In the last few years three solid volumes of selections from the Prison Notebooks and the political writings of 1910-26 have appeared in English, together with many of the prison letters and a minor spate of biographies, studies and articles. Now Chantal Mouffe has usefully culled seven of the more important contributions from the longer-standing Gramsci debate in Italian and French periodicals and symposia and has intelligently grouped and ordered them (with an introduction and an essay of her own) to give the conscientious reader both a feel for the development of the debate over the last decade and a strong sense of the intertwining preoccupations of Gramsci's

thinking – though it is, with slightly disabling effect, on the thinking of the prison years that the emphasis predominantly falls.

The opening piece by Norberto Bobbio, from 1968, very nearly reduces Gramsci to a social philosopher in the classic Enlightenment tradition; Bobbio's over- neat patterning of the threads of Gramsci's thoughts on 'civil society' and the State leads to an almost purely formal foregrounding of the political role of intellectuals and to a voluntaristic conception of the function of the Party. This elegantly empty exegesis was influential in the late 1960s, despite the immediate and severe corrective administered by Jacques Texier whose article justly but rather inconclusively reinstates economic determination as central to Gramsci's assumptions. Some tersely elliptical but compactly assured comments by Nicola Badaloni contribute obliquely to this exchange by both locating Gramsci's considerations on the respective political strengths of civil society and state power (consensus and coercion) more exactly within the trajectory of Gramsci's own political activities and also situating the theoretical problem within a global conjuncture in which, after 1917, the Russian proletariat's revolution-

ary prestige opened the way for possible assumption of a 'hegemonic' role on a world-historical scale while almost simultaneously the installation of Fascism in Italy signalled a retreat by the bourgeoisie towards reliance on pure coercion.

Some themes from Badaloni's over-compressed piece are explored at greater length though with a lesser sense of urgency in Leonardo Paggi's article on 'Gramsci's general theory of marxism'; no general theory in fact emerges (nor should it) but Gramsci's reworking of the very notion of 'philosophy' is carefully if rather pedestrianly pursued. Chantal Mouffe's own essay has an invigorating firmness and definiteness by comparison: she swiftly orchestrates the leading theoretical and strategic options of the Second International period in order to pinpoint the significance of Gramsci's central notions of 'hegemony' and 'war of position'. Her essay thereby goes to the heart of the Gramsci problem: his attempt to explore the possibilities for appropriate revolutionary strategy in a 'Western' situation where the political weight of the bourgeoisie was apparently concentrated more in mechanisms of ideological grip than in the directly coercive powers of a central State apparatus and where, correspondingly, the 'Eastern' Russian option for a 'war of manoeuvre', of direct assault upon State power, was less credible. However, Mouffe's analysis of this central problem is curiously muffled by a double displacement: the essay seeks both to establish a consonance between Gramsci's view of ideology and that of Louis Althusser and to use declared Althusserian premisses for a symptomatic reading of Gramsci's texts; the result is not merely somewhat circular (though persuasive enough) but also tends to block what seems an embedded potential of the essay itself. For, having established a theoretical compatibility of Althusser and Gramsci on the materially inscribed, institutional character of ideological practices, Mouffe then tends to revert to a view of ideology as primarily a matter of 'consciousness' when she goes on to consider the strategy of 'war of position'; she thus bends her essay back towards correct textual exegesis at the expense of actually pushing further into the pressing

political problem of the appropriate objectives of a war of position when one primary line of 'trenches' in such a war is precisely the ideological apparatuses as material institutions, as sites of definite practices rather than the arena for combat between opposing hegemonic 'principles'. What lurks behind this deflection back into mere exegesis is perhaps what Gramsci himself would call a double deformation: of 'marxism' into 'research' (Mouffe's introduction smacks of this) and of 'research' into appropriation of 'authorities'.

Massimo Salvadori's essay on 'Gramsci and the PCI: two conceptions of hegemony' is an interesting inquiry into the PCI's own appropriation of Gramsci as 'authority' for its present policies of mass pluralism, historic compromise and Eurocommunism; Salvadori's successful unhitching of the PCI bandwagon from Gramsci's own thought gives *his* textual exegesis a certain immediate political point, but English readers (lacking a local Gramsci round whom textual debate can similarly be waged with political impact) can probably profit more from thinking through the problems half-broached by Mouffe and partly picked up in Christine Buci-Glucksmann's essay on 'State, transition and passive revolution'. Buci-Glucksmann analyses the asymmetry between *two* wars of position, that waged by the bourgeoisie which tends towards an economic-corporatist-statist form (evident in both Fascism and 'Fordism') and that of the proletariat, in which the forging of new political practices is crucial including most particularly the emergence of mass political democracy within the sphere of production relations themselves; at this point the argument could link up not only with the theoretical insights hovering in Mouffe's essay but also with a deeper reconsideration (tentatively indicated in Badaloni's piece) of the possible strategic significance, within a war of *position*, of the Factory Councils of 1920.

These latent strands which link the contributions by Badaloni, Mouffe and Buci-Glucksmann might perhaps have been drawn together in a concluding selection from the current debate in Italy around

the work of Toni Negri and Mario Tronti on the 'social worker' and the 'social factory' (*Red Notes* have published some of this work in England). As it is, the final essay in the volume, by Biagio de Giovanni on 'Lenin and Gramsci', has been translated into such awkward English that I refused to persevere with it. Since the editor's own contributions are acknowledged as having themselves been translated into English, the blame for approving this piece

of garble may lie with the publishers rather than with the editor herself. But since the debate about Gramsci and, much more importantly, the attempt to clarify those problems of 'Western' strategy that pre-occupied Gramsci is far from concluded it's appropriate that one should close this commendable collection without quite finishing it.

BERNARD SHARRATT

THE IDEA OF THE SYMBOL: SOME NINETEENTH CENTURY COMPARISONS WITH COLERIDGE by M. Jadwiga Swiatecka O. P. *C.U.P.* pp viii + 213. £11.50.

This is an essay in philosophical definition, an attempt to disengage with rigour the concept of the symbol, and the role of this concept, in the thought of Coleridge, followed by comparisons with the concept of the symbol *chez* Carlyle, Newman and others. To a student of English literature such as the present reviewer the mode and even the point of such an exercise seems at first not at all obvious, for the Introduction confesses both that the word 'symbol' is not used consistently by modern writers and that it does not in fact play the sovereign part in nineteenth century philosophies of religion which modern commentators would have us suppose. So negative an introduction suggests a Ph.D. thesis failed for its candour. Indeed it turns out that while, for example, M. Arnold and F D Maurice hardly use the word 'symbol', even Coleridge, Carlyle and Newman do not use it very often. The book is punctuated by complaints that no later writers fully understood Coleridge's use of the concept, that they used it differently and (each of them) inconsistently. The common practice of academic philosophers in critically examining the role of a single word or concept without full regard to the context and assumptions of the literary genre in which the quarry lurks can seem arbitrary, dry and, where the authors studied are themselves not philosophers, of questionable value. Is the idea of the symbol, then, a quarry worth chasing?

The chapter on Coleridge sufficiently provides a reassuring answer. It also makes

clear to the non-specialist that Coleridge's understanding of this term, applied to natural objects, works of art, the Bible and even to Christ, has a real potential usefulness for the epistemology and language of modern theology. The book is not merely an act of mental hygiene and a distinguished contribution to the history of ideas, it rediscovers something of real value. Coleridge wrote in *The Statesman's Manual* that the narratives of Scripture are 'living educts of the imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the reason in images of the sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-encircling energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of which they are the conductors.' From these last words it appears that the puzzling wide introductory survey of the very various senses in which authors now use 'symbol' had a purpose eventually, not unconnected with our understanding of such dogmas as the Real Presence.

Students of literature are accustomed to having their thinking done for them by philosophers. The discomfort aroused by the Socratic naivete of the opening pages and their horror at the Babylonian confusion of uses of 'symbol' gave way, in this reviewer, to gratitude for the economical sketch of the essentials of Coleridge's philosophy of mind. For the daunting scope and refrigerated style of the book, its clarity and penetration are ample reward. Economy is won by the determined application of the single criterion of the