

of importance in his own right. Ronald Knox has come to grips with his task with characteristic boldness. But his most ardent admirers who have always been somewhat puzzled by the ambiguous reception of his major work of translation may be largely reassured. After all, as Mgr Knox was so ruefully aware, the Bible is a special case, and to set about translating it is the easiest way of asking for trouble. On the other hand, one might also have wondered whether the years of intense labour devoted to the Bible might not have made the change of key required for St Thérèse too exacting a task. And indeed in the third paragraph of this book one hears a familiar echo in one of those inversions so characteristic of the Knox 'O.T.' style. But this proves to be, practically speaking, but a final flourish, a last farewell to an ancient theme. And throughout, her English translator accommodates himself admirably and triumphantly to the familiarity, the intimacy, and at times the chattiness of Thérèse. Perhaps the wartime Aldenham conferences to that unexpected congregation of school-girls, which punctuated the translation of the Old Testament and in which Ronald Knox so loyally entered into the world of his listeners, played their part in keeping his hand in for this his last work.

The division into chapters in this English edition is the translator's. Making such divisions is always a tricky business; but it would, I think, be a fair criticism to say that in the first and major section of the book Thérèse's own division of her life into four parts to which Père François de Sainte-Marie, O.C.D., the editor of *Manuscrits autobiographiques*, drew attention, has here been slightly obscured. An error on the first page of Père François's Introduction to this English edition should also be noted. As is made clear from what follows, the notebook to Mother Marie de Gonzagues was begun on June 3, 1897 (not 1896), and completed not in September but in the early days of July of the same year.

RONALD TORBET, O.P.

ART IN CRISIS. By Hans Sedlmayr. (Hollis and Carter; 35s.)

The writer of this book, who is Professor of Art at the University of Munich, takes his cue from the idea (first put forward by René Huyghé) that 'Art is for the story of human societies what the dreams of an individual are to a psychologist'. Taking 1700 (that is, the end of the Baroque) as his starting point, he sketches subsequent Art History, picking out certain recurring motifs and enthusiasms which seem to him to be signs of advancing madness, if not of diabolic possession. It is a tempting thesis. 1700 marks the end of the Baroque; it marks also (or is reputed to mark) the loss of belief and the rise of secular thinking. It was to be expected, surely, that this would lead to a psychological

upheaval in our society which in turn would be reflected in our art; and indeed it is not difficult to find signs of perverseness and irrationality in the course which our art has in fact taken. One disadvantage of Professor Sedlmayr's treatment of this momentous thesis arises from the fact that he formally excuses himself from discussing the positive achievements of the age in question or even the human and technical problems the age had to face. This gives his book the air of an intolerable polemic, but it also tempts the author to seek obscure and sinister interpretations where simple and natural ones will do. His treatment of Architecture is very typical. Throughout the book he worries about what he calls 'the denial of the earth base' (i.e. making buildings look as though they were suspended in the air) and the reduction of Architecture to Geometry and Engineering. These to him are clear signs of madness and dehumanization. What he does not regard is, first, the much greater complexity of the problems architecture must solve, and second, the necessity of calling in techniques which have never been used in building before. What appears to deceive Professor Sedlmayr is the fact that since Architecture is an Art, it advances by means of intuition, not reason, and reaches its formal conclusions before the reason for them is clear. The classic example of this is afforded by the architects of the modern movement of the nineteen-twenties who produced a formal language which they called 'functionalism', but which was not functional at all because the techniques required to make it so had not yet been invented. It is only now that we are beginning to 'realize' what they prefigured and to appreciate how accurate had been their prophecy. This is in itself confusing to art critics and is a stumbling block to all who, like Professor Sedlmayr, feel unable to have confidence in the future or belief in the artists' integrity. This book is scholarly and nonsensical.

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