

POUR TOUTE ÂME VIVANT EN CE MONDE. By Gaston Bardet. (Librairie d'Art, Paris.)

It is an encouraging sign that in our over-activist age more and more people, especially also among the laity, are drawn to the contemplative life. Yet there are unfortunately also dangers in this trend. M. Bardet is an architect and father of a family who discovered mysticism comparatively late in life and fell for it headlong. In the years that followed this discovery he seems to have read almost the whole mystical literature of Christendom from the Fathers of the Desert to Teresa of Lisieux, and perhaps it is not surprising that this one-sided diet should have produced something like spiritual indigestion, in the quite literal sense of remaining undigested. In his enthusiasm for his discovery he urges on all and sundry the mystic life, and this means for him ecstasies and the highest phenomena of the unitive way, for he considers that 'the ecstatic union is the normal way of perfection'. (p. 32.) Indeed, he wants to form an élite of Christian families into a 'Chevalerie mystique'—a somewhat self-conscious undertaking, to say the least. He thinks that married couples, whose homes form 'a veritable little hermitage, a shelter where the noises and agitations of the world die down' (p. 19), are the natural apostles of the contemplative life, for 'experience has shown that nothing prevents married laymen from practising all day long perpetual prayer by loving ejaculations' (p. 16). The world in which M. Bardet lives seems to differ somewhat from that in which most people in Western Europe have to work out their salvation. Hence this book, mostly a tissue of citations, has little value for just the people for whom it is intended. Indeed, we read in it such comments as this: 'Happy epoch (of St Thomas, who prevented himself from feeling pain by an effort of concentration) when ecstasy was wisely considered a normal faculty, a refuge almost always offered to souls desirous of the divine union' (p. 125). Surely this kind of *exalté* devotion to ecstasy as an anaesthetic can only lead to grave spiritual disorders. The need for balance and commonsense is nowhere more urgent than in the mystical life, and these are sadly absent from the book under review.

HILDA C. GRAEF

MACHINE TRANSLATION OF LANGUAGES. Edited by W. N. Locke and A. D. Booth. (Chapman and Hall; 48s.)

Linguists do not as a rule take kindly to science, and so competent translations of scientific articles are expensive and hard to come by. With the recent influx of Russian technical work the problem has become acute, and one of the solutions being considered consists of replacing the human translator by an electronic machine. No one sup-

poses that a machine which slavishly obeys instructions will produce an artistic translation, but even a translation which showed whether the article were worth further study would be useful.

A surprisingly varied collection of problems connected with mechanical translation are discussed in the book under review. There is a natural emphasis on translation from Russian into English, just as in more recent Russian work the opposite emphasis occurs. Two or three of the essays are severely technical, and some others are marred by the tendency of scientists not to use a short word if a long one will do: 'As a consequence of the foregoing' is written for 'Because of this'. On the other hand several of the articles are models of their kind, and as there is a good deal of overlap these are sufficient to give the general reader a survey of the many and varied problems and of the ingenious solutions being tried. One such article describes an attempt at a modified form of English ('Model English') in which each word has essentially only one meaning, inflexions (which are hard to deal with mechanically) are eliminated, and so on. Such a form of English would be the answer to a translating machine's prayer, and the author suggests that a typist preparing an ordinary English text for input into a machine would have no difficulty in rewriting the text in Model English. To convince us that Model English need not appear unduly unfamiliar, the chapter heading has the footnote: 'This chapter be entirely written in Model English'.

The first two chapters are reprints of 'pioneer' papers by Weaver in America and Richens and Booth in England. As the historical introduction recalls, it was by these essays that many of the present workers in the field were first convinced of the possibility of machine translation. As far as scientific writings are concerned, this pleasantly printed and well-bound book will perform the same service for a wider public.

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STUDIES IN COMMUNICATION CONTRIBUTED TO THE COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH CENTRE, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON. (Secker and Warburg; 25s.)

Professor Ifor Evans explains in his illuminating foreword that the Communications Research Centre, set up in 1953, has not only produced this stimulating, irritating and fascinating collection of essays, but plans to publish further studies from time to time. It has inspired a more specialized volume on Communications in Industry; and it would be interesting to know whether it may later undertake the investigation of that vast everchanging complex of 'in-group' and 'out-group' dialects of class, place and occupation in England which Nancy Mitford and Alan Ross have attempted to immobilize in rather *simpliste*