

Study in Christian Realism', it can hardly be said to provide an objective criticism of the novels. It is really more in the nature of a biography, and it must be added that for who wish to understand Sigrid Undset's art the best account in English is to be found in W. Gore Allen's Scandinavian studies *Renaissance in the North* (1946). Mr Foote's translation reads well—though 'small-town lady' is a terrible phrase, and what does he mean by 'a few parcels of land' on page 118? Surely in the context it should be 'plots of land'?

N.B.

LE CINEMA A-T-IL UNE AME? By Henri Agel. MARCEL CARNE. By Jean Quéval. Collections 7e Art. (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars Publications; 7s. 6d. each.)

A very occasional book may be a matter of such intense personal significance for the reviewer that it becomes difficult or impossible to review quite impersonally. Henri Agel is a French film critic and professor at the *Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques*. I heard him speak in Madrid at last year's stimulating conference of the O.C.I.C. (International Catholic Cinema Office) on the general theme of 'Education for the Cinema'. I was then immediately and deeply struck by the originality of his approach to the cinema. It was not a matter either of aesthetics, technical jargon or sociology, but was an integrated grasp of the essence of the cinema; to say of its soul would be to beg the question he argues so persuasively in his little book *Le Cinéma a-t-il une Ame?*. Here then is a book illuminating with a clear, steady radiance a truth after which I have been groping for years. I have long sought the exact point at which a film ceases to be the mechanical reproduction of a book or play, a mobile picture postcard or exhibition of combined crafts, and becomes synthesised into a film in its own right. For M. Agel that would, I think, be the point at which the film may be said to be touched by grace and to attain a soul.

In my case, then, M. Agel is so happily preaching to the converted that it is difficult to assess the reaction of others to his revelation. Perhaps they may find him arbitrary, even capricious in the application of his beliefs. Certainly his chapter headings seem chosen for simple convenience: *Connaissance au Monde, L'Aventure Humaine, Connaissance du Prochain, L'Amour, Le Dépassement de Soi*—headings under which to group his stimulating, even inspiring analyses of many of the screen's masterpieces. Again, why does he find a soul in *The Louisiana Story* but not in *Farrebique*; in *The Road to Heaven*, yet hardly in *Monsieur Vincent* (except in Fresnay's performance)? Has he not disregarded political and other considerations to insist upon the soul of Dmytryk's *Give Us This Day*? Is it not a question of personal taste to allow a soul—in a passage of most remarkably sensitive film appreciation—in Garbo (the star, of

course, as distinct from the woman) but not to Edwige Feuillère? His French prose, too, may be found angular and hard to read.

How acute, though, his analysis of the limitations of William Wyler's work, of Marcel Carné's; or the arguments by which he proves that *Brief Encounters*, an admitted masterpiece, if it has a soul has one which veils for the spectator the fine shade between sympathy and complicity (in the heroine's sin). Just as the reader may have decided that really this enthusiastic M. Agel is reading too much into a film like *The Set-up*, by making the boxer's agony evoke the Passion of our Lord, the author himself answers:

*'Est-ce forcer la pensée des auteurs? Ou oserons-nous dire qu'une œuvre en vient à exister au-delà des intentions précises de ses responsables?'*

Much of the world's art criticism depends similarly on a personal interpretation. Agel's book should be, it seems to me, the starting-point of creative appreciation for all who hope to see the cinema diverted to higher ends, to see it substantiate its claim to be called the seventh art, ultimately to see it become a modern Christian art.

Those who remain unconvinced by the sympathy, zeal and sensitivity of Agel's guidance to great films should, I suggest, turn to the index which would surely inspire confidence in the cinema and faith in Agel's belief in it. Objections and disagreements there must be. Agel admits that *'Peu de films donnent comme 'Maria Candelaria' le sentiment d'être ouverts sur l'infini'*; the point is that he believes some do.

Jean Quéal's critical appreciation of Carné is more conventional. But as a very thorough study of one of France's leading directors by a leading figure in international film criticism it should be of solid value to any who hope to be instrumental as practitioner, critic or spectator, in implementing Agel's faith in the cinema's possibilities. FREDA BRUCE LOCKHART

**BERKELEY SQUARE TO BOND STREET.** By B. H. Johnson. (John Murray; 30s.)

The history of London is a fascinating record. As development, instigated by the noble and powerful families, spread westwards, fresh acres of pasture and farmland were engulfed by houses, gardens and parks. Mr Johnson's book represents an attempt to make good a noticeable gap in the recorded history of the West End. It deals with the lands which, in the second half of the seventeenth century, formed three separate holdings: one owned by the Earl of Clarendon, the Lord Chancellor, and the others by John, 1st Lord Berkeley of Stratton. The story of their ownership of two of these holdings begins in 1664 when the Earl of Clarendon obtained from the Crown a grant of land abutting on Piccadilly, part of which he immediately sold to Lord Berkeley. There they built two great houses which bore their names, with gardens and grounds