

admired in his own life-time both by Charles Lamb and William Wordsworth and that the accounts of his meeting with Coleridge are ecstatic. Granted Blake's work appealed only to 'fit minds, though few'. But it *did* appeal.

Dr Bronowski is quite right to point out that 'Blake's form of Christianity was heretical'. But again one must be accurate. His heresy consisted in an impatience with the natural world, so eager was he for the spirit. When Dr Bronowski states that Blake 'identified Christ the Son with all spiritual goodness and made God the Father a symbol of terror and tyranny' he is forgetting the magnificent close to the epic *Jerusalem* where the soul is re-united with the Father in joy; still more the pencil sketch of the Trinity in his notebook which shows the Son clasped in the Father's arms overshadowed by a great soaring bird. As a follower of Jacob Boehme, William Blake knew that wrath was necessary and in some ways he was the supreme interpreter of terror. Blake's extremes usually balance one another off. And if Blake rebelled, his rebellion was, like Christ's, against the Pharisee. But even here he has the sanity to see the other side.

'Anytus, Melitus and Lycon thought Socrates a Very Pernicious Man.
So Caiphas thought Jesus.' DÉSIRÉE HIRST

THE PELICAN GUIDE TO ENGLISH LITERATURE, 6: FROM DICKENS TO HARDY. Edited by Boris Ford. (Penguin Books; 5s.)

It is difficult to write literary history which is at once factually informative and profitably critical, especially when space and cost are strictly limited. In this volume, as in its predecessors, the informative matter of names, dates and titles is relegated to its true place in the bibliography, and the body of the book devoted to critical assessments of nineteenth-century literary achievement.

Mr Klingopulos has contributed with admirable economy a chapter on the Victorian Scene and an excellent survey of the Literary Scene. Among other things, he discusses the debt of Victorian poetry to the Romantics; the fact that 'the age produced no unquestionably major poet, but only a number of technically accomplished poets who look major but remain essentially minor'; the discovery of inspiration by such untypical poets as Hopkins and Emily Brontë not in 'the spirit of the age' but in the stress of personal experience; and the development of the novel, which 'presented, with wonderful inwardness, different kinds of moral possibility and the actuality of choice; it formed an extension of consciousness and gave life to life'. His frequent references to Lawrence, however, as an oracle for quotation or as part of a creative trinity (with Yeats and Eliot) are not likely to go unchallenged.

It is unfortunate that Mr R. C. Churchill should have attempted so much in a single chapter on Dickens. In adopting, as he says, 'a

purely personal approach' he has allowed standards of criticism to diminish, and, though his views are interesting, one feels the need for some more strenuous critical comment rather than the restrained praise of a Dickensian. Mr Churchill also repeats the well-established myth of the 'false ending' of *Great Expectations*, which is unacceptable to anyone who studies the novel carefully.

Professor Betsky studies Thackeray ('powerful bourgeois sentiments') and Trollope ('resolute lack of any psychological penetration as searching as we find in Henry James or George Eliot'), while Dr Kettle surveys the social-problem novels of Disraeli, Mrs Gaskell and Kingsley in the light of Carlyle's remarks in his *Chartism*: 'A feeling very generally exists that the condition and disposition of the Working Classes is a rather ominous matter at present. . . .'

There are detailed critiques of *Middlemarch* and *Wuthering Heights* (one wishes that space had allowed fuller comment on Emily Brontë's verse) Mr Churchill provides an illuminating chapter on Mark Rutherford, Gissing and Butler, and there are two sad chapters on Meredith and Hardy.

It is clear, as Mr Robson says in a chapter on Pre-Raphaelite poetry, that the greatest imaginative writers of the period are novelists, not poets. Nevertheless, the commentaries on Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, clear, sane and intelligent evaluations, do justice to the considerable achievements of these men without ignoring their effects on later writers. Tennyson, for example, 'far from opening up new possibilities, helped to narrow and restrict, to establish a conventionally held notion of the "poetic".'

Some comments and conclusions there are which are disappointing and even trivial. Mr Rodway, after castigating the dead Kipling horse for imperialistic sadism, and despising the aesthetes for being 'too little concerned to put life on the page', concludes tamely that the quality common to all writers of the 1890s is 'the tendency to strike a pose and adopt a manner', One is irritated occasionally by the price-tags of criticism: *Hard Times* is a 'masterpiece of a minor order'; two or three of Hardy's novels should remain 'minor classics'; we are assured of Hopkins's 'sureness of touch' and 'peculiar grasp of language'; and we are informed either naively or with pretentious subtlety that 'Hardy is among those writers who have increased the amount of reality in the world'.

On the whole, however, this volume is critical without pedantry, perceptive without affectation and, above all, relevant. It should prove a popular and useful handbook.

JAMES REED