

DE QUINCEY, *Confessions d'un mangeur d'opium anglais*, Introduction, Traduction, Notes par F. Moreux, Collection Bilingue des Classiques Etrangers, Paris, Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1964, 363 pp.

The well-known Aubier series is a very helpful instrument for the study of the authors whose works they present, and the critical edition and translation of *Edward II* and of De Quincey's *Confessions* are valuable contributions to it. Mr. Pons has written an exhaustive introduction to Marlowe's play, in which he discusses the sources of this drama, its historical and literary context and the criticism relating to it. His comments on Marlowean criticism widen its bearing, for he takes it as a starting point for his own discussion of the play in order to show how the contemporary reader can best appreciate Marlowe's drama. His analysis of the play is penetrating and humane; the characters, in particular, are not viewed as strongly contrasted figures but as complex individuals, who yet enact the dramatic fight between the Renaissance spirit and the feudal system. Indeed, whether he discusses Marlowe's dramatic technique, the duality of his inspiration, or the themes he deals with, Mr. Pons insists that Marlowe was above all a man of the Renaissance opposed to the medieval conception of the world, to the moralizing spirit of the Reformation, and to the virtues of the Church, for which he substituted aestheticism and a cynical realism. His presentation of Edward II as an aesthete may be questioned, though, according to him, it explains the king's love for Gaveston. Mr. Pons believes that in his conception of love in particular Marlowe expressed better than his contemporaries the true spirit of the period and of its passions, its extremes of simplicity and refinement, of violence and delicacy. Marlowe was a precursor and Edward II the predecessor of the great tragic heroes, Richard II and Hamlet.

Mr. Moreux is no less successful in bringing out the originality of De Quincey's *Confessions* and in presenting him as a forerunner of the systematic exploration of the strange and the unknown. It was De Quincey who, in the nineteenth century, first introduced in literature such themes as the prostitute, the City, or dreams. Mr. Moreux presents him not only as a precursor of Baudelaire and Nerval but also of the Decadents. He has edited and translated the first version of the *Confessions*, written in 1821, but he gives in appendix some extracts from the later version, and he draws attention to the important alterations the author made in 1856. He explains the origin of the book and stresses the close relation between the man and his work, which throws light on the mixture of orthodoxy and unconventionality of his writings. He makes clear the notion of 'power', so important in De Quincey's work, and gives a detailed analysis of his style in the *Confessions*, showing what an adequate instrument his 'passionate prose' was to the description of his inner life and of the superior reality he was trying to attain. — H. Maes-Jelinek.