

The Listener

and

B.B.C. Television Review

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15c



More Autumn BOOKS

reviewed by

J. H. Plumb

William Plomer

John Fuller

Elspeth Huxley

Idris Parry

H. B. Acton

Sir Alec Randall

R. J. C. Atkinson

Simon Raven

Peter Fleming

Leonard Schapiro

Sir Herbert Read

Geoffrey Gorer

Francis Watson

Henry Reed

Mochica jar from Peru of c. A.D. 500 (from *The Dawn of Civilization*, reviewed on page 670). It represents a man being attacked by a jaguar and is in the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Cambridge

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How to Handle Mr. Khrushchev

THOMAS BARMAN, B.B.C. diplomatic correspondent, on the need for a unified approach

I HAVE not been able to squeeze much comfort out of Mr. Khrushchev's immensely long speech to the Soviet Communist Party Congress in Moscow. I confess that I have not tried very hard. I suspect that much of the time and energy spent on analysing Mr. Khrushchev's declarations are a complete waste of time. Mr. Khrushchev's foreign policy has remained very constant over the years, although there have been immense and unpredictable variations in tactics. There is not much point in looking for possible changes in his fundamental attitude.

If we accept this argument, then it follows that it is far more important to agree upon our own course of action than to interpret Mr. Khrushchev's speeches in the hope that they will yield some crumbs of comfort or reassurance. This is an idea that was put to me with great force when I was in Belgrade about a year ago. 'We feel', a senior Yugoslav official said to me, 'that you in the West spend far too much time in studying and analysing Soviet intentions. It would be far better if you didn't pay quite so much attention to Mr. Khrushchev's varying moods, and determined among yourselves what is the right policy for you to adopt'. Translated into practical political terms this means that if the Western Powers allow their foreign policy to be just a reflex action to what Mr. Khrushchev is doing or saying, then they are headed for disaster. My Yugoslav friend did not put it as plainly as that, but it was his obvious meaning.

The trouble is that there is no agreement among the Western Powers about how to handle Mr. Khrushchev. Only last week we were given a striking example of Western disunity. The British

Government explained that senior officials of the four Western Powers were to meet in the immediate future to consider the basis for a possible conference with the Russians—with the purpose, in fact, of working out an agreed negotiating position. Within an hour or two the French drily announced that there was not going to be a conference; it was all very premature, they said. It is easy to argue that this difference was unimportant, since it turned on a question of procedure. It would be nearer the truth to say that the difference is fundamental. It turns on the question whether there is any point in trying to negotiate with the Russians now, rather than to leave it to some time in the future. The British and American Governments are obviously willing to go ahead—always on the assumption, of course, that the Russians turn out to be rather more accommodating than they have shown themselves to be up to now.

But if there are to be talks with the Russians, then it is important to establish a united Western attitude on such things as how to safeguard Western rights in Berlin if the Russians and their friends sign a peace treaty with East Germany; on how to treat the East German regime; and perhaps even on a plan for reducing the dangers of a surprise attack in Europe. The fact is that these points do not appear to have been considered in any detail by the governments concerned. It had been the intention to begin a discussion upon these and other topics some five or six weeks ago, but this was put off on the ground that no German Government, on the eve of a general election, could take part in talks that would be bound to involve concessions of one kind or

Autumn Books—II.

Horace Walpole's Century

Horace Walpole. By W. S. Lewis. Hart-Davis. £3 3s.

Horace Walpole's Correspondence. Vols. 30-31. Edited by W. S. Lewis. Oxford. £6 each.

Connoisseurs and Secret Agents. By Lesley Lewis. Chatto and Windus. 30s.

Reviewed by J. H. PLUMB

HORACE WALPOLE was famous alive and he intended to be famous dead. Few men have courted posterity with such conscious skill, but the immortality that he has finally achieved must breed an acute sense of humility in Horace's ghost. More is known about the detail of his daily life than of any man's who has ever lived. After his death his correspondence, so carefully designed for future generations, was broken up and scattered over the face of the globe: his library, of which he was so proud, dispersed: his antiquities, prints, china and furniture sold. True, by 1850 Walpole had made his mark; his journals and some of his letters had been printed to be used as a leading source for eighteenth-century political and social life. Steadily interest grew, and Mrs. Paget Toynbee produced a collected edition of his letters early in this century. It seemed as if Walpole had won through, triumphed over the dispersal, the casual destructions and the corrosions of time.

But, in fact, his resurrection had only just begun. In the nineteen-twenties W. S. Lewis and his late wife became attracted to Walpole, first as collectors, but, as their collection grew, it transformed them into scholars. They dedicated their time and fortune to the pursuit of Walpole. His correspondence was bought or photographed but always remorselessly hunted: his books, too, were run to earth and his library largely re-assembled: even some of his furnishings and pictures were tracked down. And Strawberry Hill was, in a sense, reborn in Farmington, Connecticut. Yet the Lewises were no ordinary collectors. They printed what they found. The great Yale edition of Walpole's correspondence, of which volumes 30 and 31 have just been published, is a triumph not only of scholarship but also of speed. The volumes rattle from the press. To collect the material, to engage in and supervise one of the largest scholarly enterprises in America, might be regarded as sufficient for one man, but not for Mr. Lewis. As well as being a collector and a scholar, Mr. Lewis now demonstrates that he is a creative writer of distinction.

This study of Horace Walpole is based on a knowledge that no one else possesses. It is written with warmth, one might say, with affection, and naturally enough Horace is usually given the benefit of any doubts. On the nature and purpose of his letters, on his buildings, his collections, his friendships and his family Mr. Lewis carries emphatic conviction in prose which is so delightful, so at ease with itself, that Horace himself might envy it. On Walpole's politics, however, Mr. Lewis is somewhat evasive, for here Walpole was at his most serpentine, malicious, sly, and even, at times, dishonest. Also the truth itself is still in question. Until

Walpole's *Journals* have received the same careful editing as the correspondence there can be no final judgment. Nevertheless the portrait of Walpole that Mr. Lewis gives us is elegant and sympathetic, and it is greatly helped by the beautiful illustrations which provide a brilliant setting for the book itself. For once one can say that at three guineas the book is dirt cheap.

Walpole is less of a hero for most of us than for Mr. Lewis, naturally enough. And for me, at least, Mr. Lewis brushes aside both in his preface to the new volumes of the correspondence (which contain the highly amorous letters to Lord Lincoln) and in his book, the question that must be faced of the intensity of Walpole's homosexuality. That his affections for other men—Gray, Lincoln, Conway—were warmer than was usual even in the more freely expressive society of eighteenth-century England seems to me impossible to deny. And the question is not an idle one, for it would help not only to explain many of Walpole's quarrels but also some of his hatreds, jealousies, and failures in the tough masculine world of politics. Whatever were the secret springs of Walpole's nature they certainly kept him working from youth to old age. And whatever else he may have been, he was a writer born. No matter how trivial the letter, Walpole is always compulsively readable. He enhanced all that he touched and by his creative



Horace Walpole, by Allan Ramsay, 1758

From 'Horace Walpole'

genius he gave significance to his life and made it a part of his age. So, however dark and difficult his inner nature may have been, we should be grateful for it, and grateful, too, that, through Mr. Lewis, he has found the posterity that he sought.

Indeed the value of Mr. Lewis's work for eighteenth-century scholars can be seen in Mrs. Lesley Lewis's book on Cardinal Albani who worked as the Hanoverian secret agent in Rome and whose chief channel was Horace Mann, the British representative in Florence, with whom Horace Walpole had one of his longest correspondences. Without the Yale edition of this correspondence, Mrs. Lewis's task would have been far more arduous. Albani, urbane, sophisticated, highly cultured (he befriended Winckelmann amongst others) is another complex, fascinating character. Although his influence on politics was insignificant, on taste it was profound, and to this aspect of his life Mrs. Lewis might have given greater space. And there are other sources which Mrs. Lewis might have tapped with advantage, particularly the large collection of papers of the third Earl Cowper, who lived at Florence throughout the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Even so, hers is a stimulating and lively book and may provoke others to explore the rich field of eighteenth-century Anglo-Italian relations. It is ripe for a masterpiece.

impression. 'The labyrinth of Indian politics' was not for her, though she 'photographed the leaders of the destinies of India', rickshaw-borne to the abortive Simla conference. Their pictures, alas, are wrongly identified in an otherwise well-produced book.

FRANCIS WATSON

Veteris Vestigia Flammae

Some Recollections. By Emma Hardy. Edited by Evelyn Hardy and Robert Gittings. Oxford. 16s.

OUR IDEAS, NECESSARILY INCOMPLETE, of the darker side of Thomas Hardy's first marriage have to be pieced together from a variety of sources: a few statements in his own and other people's letters; the formidable evidence of the poems; the less certain evidence of a number of passages in the novels. There is also the gossip of casual observers and self-styled close friends. Gossip is not to be despised as evidence, but a good deal of that which surrounds Hardy can be discarded out of hand. The mysterious blurb to the present volume seems to have drawn rather heavily on one of these questionable sources.

What is certain is that Hardy and Emma were not well suited; and Hardy has received more sympathy than Emma in a situation where they both suffered as much as they could. There is no reason to question the idyllic nature of their early relationship in North Cornwall, and of the first years of their marriage; but after a time cancerous quantities of hate largely overspread this: a hate fortified on Emma's side by envy, social disappointment and a vain, offensive snobbishness, on Hardy's by a temperamental inconstancy. The two of them lived together for almost forty years, and increasing age does not seem to have mellowed a probably ill-judged match. Yet the more one studies them the more there seems to emerge a kind of inevitability about their conjunction; and there was a quality of loyalty in both of them that is often overlooked, and in his memories Hardy cherished this fact.

Emma's unexpected death, when they were both seventy-two (he had expected her to live to 'quite old age') was the major disaster of his later life. The pair were not, as has sometimes been asserted, literally 'estranged' at the time of her death; nor were they reconciled. But his unforeseen loss of her overwhelmed him; and there is already more than funeral-piety in the inscription on Hardy's funeral-wreath: 'From her lonely husband—with the old affection'. For the old affection had begun to make a clamorous return. The great outpouring of poetry after Emma's death is well known: the poems, in so far as an order of composition can be established, show first a desolation, a growing remorse, and then a gradual re-living of the early emotions seen through the melancholy haze of the present. A few months after her death Hardy revisited, for the first time since their marriage, the places of their early love. In every detail, his life and art at this time offer a classical illustration of the later psycho-analytical conception of the nature of mourning, and its relation to creative activity.

At some point soon after Emma's death, Hardy discovered a manuscript she had written nearly two years before, called *Some Recollections*. The later pages, dealing with their romance at St. Juliot, have already appeared, in a reasonably emended form, edited by Hardy himself. They are here given in full, together with the earlier sections dealing with Emma's life before they met. These are of immense value in their information about Emma's curious shabby-genteel background: lucid details shine through the helpless, illiterate, incoherent, deranged ramblings of this sad, pathetic old woman. In these pages, Emma, in her loneliness, is desperately attempting to say something to someone: their importance lies, I believe, in the fact that she had—as Hardy must have felt, with some sense of humiliation—in an odd way, under God knows what inspiration, contrived to recapture their earlier days together; it was to take her death to provoke this activity in himself. When gossip and maliciousness

have done their worst with Emma, this still remains something worth remembering.

It is a little surprising to see the name of Miss Evelyn Hardy associated with the presentation of these difficult pages; her past achievements in the way of transcription have not been of a kind to beget confidence. It is to be hoped that the presence of Mr. Robert Gittings has guaranteed the general accuracy of the text; he has not, of course, been able to hold completely in check Miss Hardy's passion for irrelevant annotation: perhaps he feels that this has sometimes a wild charm of its own. Mr. Gittings has himself edited a small anthology of poems, appended to the main text, which may be considered to have a definite or possible derivation from the *Recollections* themselves. There is naturally room for minor disagreement about some of his choices, but most of what he has to say is very illuminating; and all of it is worth the closest attention.

HENRY REED

Two Poems

The Suicide

And this, ladies and gentlemen, whom I am not in fact
Conducting, was his office all those minutes ago,
This man you never heard of. There are the bills
In the in-tray, the ash in the ash-tray, the grey memoranda stacked
Against him, the serried ranks of the box-files, the packed
Jury of his unanswered correspondence
Nodding under the paperweight in the breeze
From the window by which he left; and here is the cracked
Receiver that never got mended and here is the jotter
With his last doodle which might be his own digestive tract
Ulcer and all or might be the flowery maze
Through which he had wandered deliciously till he stumbled
Suddenly finally conscious of all he lacked
On a manhole under the hollyhocks. The pencil
Point had obviously broken yet, when he left this room
By catdrop sleight-of-foot or simple vanishing act,
To those who knew him for all that mess in the street
This man with the shy smile has left behind
Something that was intact.

Soap Suds

This brand of soap has the same smell as once in the big
House he visited when he was eight: the walls of the bathroom
open
To reveal a lawn where a great yellow ball rolls back through a
hoop
To rest at the head of a mallet held in the hands of a child.

And these were the joys of that house: a tower with a telescope;
Two great faded globes, one of the earth, one of the stars;
A stuffed black dog in the hall; a walled garden with bees;
A rabbit warren; a rockery; a vine under glass; the sea.

To which he has now returned. The day of course is fine
And a grown-up voice cries Play! The mallet slowly swings,
Then crack, a great gong booms from the dog-dark hall and the
ball
Skims forward through the hoop and then through the next and
then

Through hoops where no hoops were and each dissolves in turn
And the grass has grown head-high and an angry voice cries
Play!
But the ball is lost and the mallet slipped long since from the hands
Under the running tap that are not the hands of a child.

LOUIS MACNEICE
—Third Programme