

by those unable to appreciate the dynamic value of a dissenting minority in their midst, and who delight in budgeoning anyone who speaks or acts differently.

—T.O.G.

BODY, HEART AND MIND

AN ITALIAN VISIT, by C. Day Lewis; Jonathan Cape. English price, 7/6.

AMONG the poets of the thirties, Cecil Day Lewis was remarkable for a dry metaphysical wit and a strong sense of formal structure—this latter being in itself no guarantee of first-rate poetry, yet an indispensable aid in the writing of narrative verse. His narrative poem on an incident of the Spanish War, the fight of the Nabara, passes the test of heroic evocation for one reader, who is rarely able to read it and refrain from tears. With time his verse has become more meditative. He has learnt much from the irregular metres and stoic agnosticism of Hardy. This new poem is a hybrid—verse, journal, narrative, philosophical discourse. In it he makes use of his peculiar gifts of irony and sensuous observation; and under all the groundswell of Romantic nostalgia. His verse is intellectually too controlled to allow often an unpremeditated lyric strength; but this control gives him his staying power. What other poet would have described five Florentine works of art in five remarkable parodies of Hardy, Yeats, Robert Frost, W. H. Auden and Dylan Thomas?—or could have, satisfactorily? True, some are less parody than genuine imitation; and hence all the more remarkable.

In the first and last sections of *An Italian Visit*, the three-travellers-in-one, Tom, Dick and Harry (that is, Body, Heart and Mind) analyse in their respective terms the quality of their mutual experience. For Day Lewis, as is shown in his superb "Elegy Before Death" (the sixth section of the poem) it finds its focus in romantic sexual love; or rather, that love rectifies and replenishes the arid mind—

But "love is all,"
She says; and the mortal scene of planets
And tides.
Animals, grass and men is transformed,
proved, steadied around me . . .

until—
... upon each hill,
Vine and olive hold the archaic pose;
Below, the bubble dome looks everlasting
As heaven's womb, and threading the eyes
of bridges
Arise endlessly into the loom of oblivion
flows.

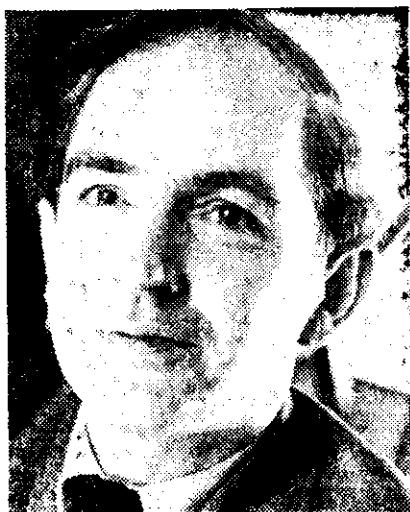
Yet he retains inevitably the Romantic paradox: "Always?—That is the song the sirens sing on bone island." One can ask no more of that particular vision. *An Italian Visit* is an uneven poem, yet through its wit and variety, successful as a whole. It contains some of the best poetry that Day Lewis has ever written.

—James K. Baxter

THE INNER CIRCLE

AN EXPERIENCE OF CRITICS, by Christopher Fry; Perpetua. English price, 7/6.

FEELING, he said, like a fourth-form boy who has been invited up to the masters' common-room to comment on the year's teaching, Mr. Fry addressed the Critics' Circle on the subject which gives this book its title. For one somewhat overwhelmed by the privilege—one who had taken the precaution of folding copies of all the newspapers into the seat of his trousers, the dramatic criticism outwards—he gives a remarkably good account of himself, whether discussing an artist's sensitiveness to criticism or defending himself against the charge of verbal intoxication. In-



CHRISTOPHER FRY
A good account of himself

toxicated with words he may not be, but how delightfully he uses them! And how one wants to quote him!

But that isn't all. When Mr. Fry has done, someone (Kaye Webb, one supposes, since she edits the book) asked eight of the best-known English critics to comment on the address and to give their approach to dramatic criticism: Alec Guinness wrote a prologue; and Ronald Searle drew some pictures. The result is not only of the inevitable kind: for here besides wit is much good sense—wisdom, even—and, surprisingly, not a little humility.

—F.A.J.

THE PEOPLED SOLITUDE

IN MY SOLITARY LIFE, by Augustus Hare; Allen and Unwin. English price, 25/-.

THE second volume of Malcolm Barnes's heroic abridgment of a vast Victorian biography sees Augustus Hare in the latter part of the century, successful, courted, lionised for his ghost stories or his knowledge of Italian antiquities, and as garrulous and self-contented as ever. Where he had formerly looked up to lords, these—especially dukes—are now the commonplace of his glittering existence, and it is to royalty that he most assiduously devotes his singular social talents. Nothing here really equals the account of his own childhood in *The Years with Mother*, but this volume, too, is richly studded

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