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Adam Smith. Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (Delivered in the University of Glasgow by Adam Smith. Reported by a student in 1762-3). Edited with an Introduction and Notes by John M. Lothian. Edinburgh and London. Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd. 1963. Pp. xl + 205. 42 shillings.

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Review

Adam Smith. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (Delivered in the University of Glasgow by Adam Smith. Reported by a student in 1762-63). Edited with an Introduction and Notes by John M. Lothian. Edinburgh and London. Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd. 1963. Pp. xl + 205. 42 shillings.

Some five or six years ago rumors began to circulate that Adam Smith's lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres, about which the scholarly world knew no more than that they had been delivered in one form or another from 1748 to 1763, had at long last been discovered. But it was not until the appearance of two articles in *The Scotsman* (Edinburgh) of 1 and 2 November 1961 that the public was more fully informed; the articles are entitled "Long-Lost MSS. of Adam Smith" and "A New Side to Adam Smith." The author, John M. Lothian, Reader in English in the University of Aberdeen, adds further details in the introduction to the present volume. The story is a combination of serendipity and dogged research.

At an auction in Aberdeen in 1958 of the country-house library of Whitehaugh, Mr. Lothian bought two sets of lecture notes presumably made by students. The first consisted of five octavo volumes of lectures on jurisprudence. Though the lecturer is unnamed in the notes, Mr. Lothian was able to determine that they are a version of the same lectures on jurisprudence by Adam Smith which had been edited, also from student notes, by Professor Edwin Cannan in 1896. Exciting search by Mr. Lothian in the junkshops of Aberdeen was rewarded by the discovery of a missing first volume to complete the set. It is to be hoped that in due course this "differently arranged and often more fully illustrated and explained" (p. xii) version of the notes on the lectures on jurisprudence will be made available.

Our immediate concern, however, is with the second set of lecture notes in two volumes inscribed on the spine of each volume, "Notes of Dr. Smith's Rhetorick Lectures," which were given in 1762-1763 as part of a course in Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University. The "Cannan" jurisprudential lectures of 1763 consist of a fair copy dated 1766. The "Lothian" rhetorical lectures, on the contrary, bear evidence

of being, at least in part, the actual notes scribbled by a person or persons present at the time of delivery. Neither set is Smith's actual manuscripts, which presumably were destroyed in accordance with instructions issued first to David Hume, and repeated after Hume's death to Joseph Black and James Hutton, when in 1790 Smith was on his deathbed. Black and Hutton, however, were authorized to publish the posthumous *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* of 1795.

Before examining the "Lothian" lectures, it will be well to review briefly the few known facts about Adam Smith as lecturer on literature and literary criticism. During the years 1748-1751, Smith gave two such public courses of lectures before an unspecified forum in Edinburgh (not the University, but quite possibly the Philosophical Society) for which he received above £100 a year. (He also gave a course of public lectures on jurisprudence during these same years.) Virtually nothing directly is known about the content of Smith's Edinburgh literary lectures. After Smith's removal to Glasgow in 1751, Robert Watson gave a (presumably) similar (and also unknown) literature course at Edinburgh. And upon Watson's removal to St. Andrews in 1756, the public course was resumed in 1759 by the Reverend Hugh Blair. Blair's success eventually led to the creation in 1762 of the Regius Chair of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at Edinburgh University, the first such chair in Britain, North or South. And Blair was publicly to acknowledge his debt to Smith, who had lent him part of his manuscript treatise on rhetoric.

Smith went to Glasgow in 1751 as Professor of Logic, transferring the following year to the Professorship of Moral Philosophy. There is clear evidence that Smith introduced into his philosophical courses lectures on his system of rhetoric and belles lettres. In the "Method of Editing the Text," at the conclusion of the introduction, Mr. Lothian scrupulously details the editorial process: "I have endeavoured to make a more-or-less continuous text from the three sources available: (a) the great bulk of the lectures, written nearly always on the *recto* of the leaves of the manuscript, but sometimes continuing on to the *verso*; (b) very numerous additions in the same hand and ink as (a), written on the *verso* of the preceding leaf, occasionally marked for insertion at particular points in (a), but frequently not so marked; (c) occasional additions in a different hand or the same hand at a later date, made either at the end of a lecture or on the *verso* of the leaves opposite the point where (presumably) they were meant to be inserted or used as additional comment. When not otherwise indicated,

the text is from (a); all passages from (b) and (c) are so marked. The printed text is thus made to include the whole of the manuscript."

In thus setting out to provide a diplomatic edition of the notes, Mr. Lothian seems to be committed to two assumptions: (1) That the Glasgow lectures of 1751-1763 were substantially, if not entirely, identical with or elaborations of the Edinburgh lectures of 1748-1751 (e.g., pp. xii, xvi, xvii); and (2) That, with some misgivings and reservations, the lecture notes were made by a student "scribbler" or "scribe" on the occasion of the actual delivery of the lectures (e.g., pp. xix, xxii, xl, and footnotes throughout). Dr. T. I. Rae, who has contributed an appendix, "Description of the Manuscript of Adam Smith's Lectures on Rhetoric," is perhaps even more strongly committed (p. 195): "The writing, the gaps in the text, and the existence of certain comments, seem to suggest that these are the original notes written at speed in the lecture room, not a fair copy." The lectures numbering thirty, the first of which is missing, were given on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and are dated from 19 November 1762 to 18 February 1763.

Unexceptionable, and even mandatory, as these two editorial assumptions appear to be at first sight, upon study they actually raise at least as many scepticisms and problems as they settle. It will be well to examine some of these doubts and contradictions, not in the spirit of carping criticism, but rather to illustrate the complexity of the situation.

To begin with, there is the problem of the manuscript itself. In the printed version the lectures vary in length all the way from two and a half pages (No. 10) to fourteen and a half pages (No. 30). If the former could have been delivered in ten minutes, the latter would have required a full hour, presumably the actual time of a classroom lecture. What, then, becomes of the assumption of a stenographic auditor copying down the lectures at top speed? No. 18, after six and a quarter pages, breaks off abruptly with the exasperated comment of the auditor: "Not a word more can I *remember*" (my italics). Again, No. 21 opens: "N.B. This lecture was delivered entirely without book," which, as Mr. Lothian candidly acknowledges, "would seem to suggest that this lecture, at least, had been copied from another MS." And No. 24 opens: "Sine libro, *except what he read from Livy,*" which would seem to require a similar comment. Yet, as a matter of fact, the lecture does not quote from Livy; the last sentence reads: "The first is seen exemplified in the oration of Titus Quinctius Capitolinus, and

the latter in that of Appius Claudius Crassus, in Livy." We are, it is apparent, dealing not only with an almost incredibly fast copyist (e.g., No. 30) but also with remembrance of things past (e.g., Nos. 18 and 21).

How did Smith lecture? We are informed that early in his career at Glasgow he graciously granted permission to students to take notes. But, unlike some eighteenth-century professors, it would appear that he did not dictate his lectures slowly, sentence by sentence, and, indeed, on occasion spoke extemporaneously and emotionally. We are further informed that somewhat later in his academic career he grew jealous of the property of his lectures and that when he saw anyone taking notes, he would interrupt his discourse to say that he "hated scribblers" (p. xxii). When this change took place remains unknown, but he left Glasgow toward the close of 1763 and resigned his chair early the following year.

Smith's absent-mindedness was notorious. In No. 15 where he is speaking of La Bruyère's character of Menalcas, the absent-minded man, the scribbler or copyist commented on the *verso* (p. 77), "mutato nomine de te fabula narratur, said Mr Herbert of Mr Smith." Now this Mr. Herbert later became Lord Porchester and still later Earl of Caernarvon and as a student at Glasgow was one of several gentleman-boarders in Adam Smith's house—which introduces a further complexity. It is well known that Smith conversed informally with such students and it is not unlikely that he allowed them to read some of his notes or manuscripts or even possibly lectured to them privately. Mr. Lothian considered this possibility (p. xl) but concluded that "since there were occasional failures to recognise names of persons or titles of books in these comments [Source (c)], this hypothesis had to be abandoned." Nevertheless, need it be *entirely* abandoned?

A few examples may serve to illustrate the problems involved. The notion of the "scribbler" copying down at breakneck speed the oral lectures and in so doing making occasional slips in the names of persons or the titles of books is based, of course, upon possible errors of hearing. In No. 18, for example, "Dionysius of Halicarnassus" appears uncorrected (except by the editor) as "Diodorus of Halicarnassus" but "Tacitus" is corrected to "Thucydides." In No. 3 "rythme" is uncorrected (except by the editor) to "rhyme." In No. 7 Dr. Mandeville" is mistakenly corrected to "Machiavel." In all of these instances —to mention no more—the aural explanation is not fully acceptable. "Dionysius" does not *sound* like "Diodorus," "Thucydides" like

"Tacitus," "rhyme" like "rythme," "Dr. Mandeville" like "Machiavel." The "Thucydides"—"Tacitus" switch, indeed, as well as the "Dr. Mandeville"—"Machiavel," seem well nigh impossible. A non-aural explanation may perhaps be more acceptable, namely, that the writer was copying from another set, or sets, of notes or manuscripts and that he was incorrectly expanding some one else's abbreviations, such as *Dio, T,* and *V.* As a matter of fact *Dio* actually does appear in No. 19 where it is followed by a blank of half a page, the only such hiatus in the text. The "other" set of notes or manuscripts might be those of another student or, better yet, of the professor himself to whom the expansion of the abbreviations would have been perfectly obvious.

The two editorial assumptions noted above are not, to be sure, mutually exclusive; but so far I have been dealing mainly with the second, that of the scribbling student at the lectures themselves. In turning now to the first assumption, that the Glasgow lectures of 1751-1763 (most importantly those of 1762-1763) are virtually identical with the Edinburgh lectures of 1748-1751, we encounter difficulties both in acceptance and in refutation. In any event, we must constantly bear in mind that we have no precise information whatsoever about the Edinburgh lectures.

That many professors of whatever century repeat the same lectures year in and year out cannot, unhappily, be denied. And that Smith, because of his sudden move from Edinburgh to Glasgow with the consequent necessity of lecturing on logic and moral philosophy, relied heavily on his original lectures on rhetoric is probable enough. But there are other factors concerning the 1762-1763 series that seem most improbable. At the close of No. 20, dated 12 January 1763, for instance, Smith deals with British History. "Clarendon and Burnet are the two English authors who signalized themselves chiefly in writing history," he remarks, and shortly thereafter adds, "Rapin seems to be the most candid of all those who have wrote on the affairs of England." A marginal note, presumably in the same hand, comments, "10 years ago. A better now," and Mr. Lothian's footnote comments without discussion: "The first volume of Hume's *History* appeared in 1754; the last in 1761." Yet discussion is vital. As pure hypothesis, Smith may have added the comment as an aside during the lecture itself, or as a reminder to himself to bring the lecture up-to-date, or as an observation to one or more of the students living in his house. Surely the comment could hardly be that of a student scribbler referring to ten years ago when presumably he was still a child. Indeed, in this particular instance, it boggles the imagination that Smith was still using

the very words of the 1748-1751 Edinburgh lectures or possibly that delivered in one of the first rounds at Glasgow. Since about 1750 Hume and Smith had become friends and, indeed, Hume's first known letter to Smith (24 September 1752) is in answer to a missing one from Smith discussing "the best Period to begin an English History," and the tone is already intimate. That Smith did not know and, in general, approve of Hume's *History* is unthinkable.

Along with the failure to mention Hume is the extreme paucity of references to any literature between 1751 and 1763. Gray's *Elegy* (1751) is mentioned and there is also a possible allusion to Shenstone's *Pastoral Ballad* (1755). Yet William Robertson's two-volume *History of Scotland during the Reigns of Queen Mary and King James VI. till his Accession to the Crown of England* (1759) goes unmentioned. In 1758, as Dean of Faculty, Smith had recommended Robertson for the Degree of D.D. Macpherson's three translations from the Erse, 1760, 1762, and 1763 are alluded to (p. 131) but unspecified. Neither Dr. Johnson nor his *Dictionary* (1755) is mentioned, and certainly it would have been appropriate to refer to the *Dictionary* in No. 2 where Smith is dealing with the meanings and the changes in the meanings of words. Rousseau is named (p. 8) but the work alluded to, *Origine de l'Inégalité,* Partie première, also of 1755, is not. The cases of Johnson and Rousseau are the more curious because Smith had reviewed the *Dictionary* at great length and had considerable to say about the *Origine de l'Inégalité* in the only two issues of the ill-fated *Edinburgh Review* of 1755-1756.

A final skepticism about the "scribbler" theory is to be noted, namely, that the "scribbler," while often erring badly and even grotesquely on proper names, is remarkable for the sustained flow and finish of the text with exceedingly little of the stumbling and garbling so natural to an auditor taking notes in the classroom. No. 3, "Of the origin and progress of language," offers an excellent example because in 1767 it was published in an expanded form as an appendix, "Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages, and the Different Genius of Original and Compounded Languages," to the third edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments.* The text of the lecture itself is such that it could have been handed to the printer almost without correction. Nos. 3, 21, and 30 (the last and longest) seem, at least to this reviewer, much more likely to be fair copies than notes, even expanded and corrected notes, taken down on the occasion of the lectures.

The above strictures have been presented in considerable detail

because they illustrate the complex problems of editing the notes of the lectures diplomatically. No easy solutions will be offered here because this reviewer knows of no easy solutions—only of the existence of problems. It may be asserted with some confidence, however, that the notes are not all of a piece. Some are evidently the work of the "scribbler." Others are evidently the work of the copyist, piecing together several sets of notes including, likely enough, those of the lecturer himself. And, perhaps most perplexing of all, is the indication that, by and large, exceedingly few changes were made in the lectures over the course of some sixteen years. This hardly fits in with the abundant evidence of Adam Smith as a good scholar and a popular lecturer. The "Cannan" lecture notes, interestingly enough, were updated. Why not, then, the "Lothian"? Perhaps all that can be done is to repeat the words of Smith's skeptical friend: "The whole is a riddle, an aenigma, an inexplicable mystery."

Mr. Lothian has provided in his introduction a learned account of the development of the rhetorical tradition in Scotland and of the beginnings of the reaction against the old tradition of mere categorizing. His account of the Scotland of the Enlightenment provides interesting reading and is invaluable for background. As titles are provided by the student (or students) to only three of the lectures, it would have been a kindness, however, on the part of Mr. Lothian to provide titles for the other twenty-six. It is also regrettable that Mr. Lothian did not deem it fit to provide sample photographic reproductions of the handwritings of the three sources of the lectures as well as of Smith's own. The footnotes throughout are almost always concise, erudite, and reliable. For all of this, due praise.

No praise, however, to the compiler of the index. This book will be read in its entirety by all students of Adam Smith and of the history of literary criticism in the eighteenth century and will be constantly used as a reference work. It will also be referred to by many others who wish to know what Smith had to say about a given author or topic. A full and accurate index, therefore, is not only useful but indispensible. A few random checks led to a growing skepticism on the part of this reviewer and to a careful check (restricted to the texts themselves) of a select group of British authors beginning with the period of the Renaissance. Here are some of the results. Of four references to Spenser, only one in indexed; of fourteen to Milton, only nine; of ten to Bolingbroke, only five; of eleven to Shaftesbury, only five; of eleven to Pope, only four. Shakespeare fares better with ten

of twelve; Addison with eight of ten; Swift with fourteen of seventeen; Thomson, with six of eight; Gray, with two of three. Sir Philip Sidney, Samuel Clarke, and Colley Cibber never make the index at all. An index so patently capricious is no index, and the user of it gains little idea of the vastness of Smith's literary knowledge.

"Dr. Smith's Rhetorick Lectures," as they were called by the copyist, might with some justice be called Lectures *against* Rhetoric, taking rhetoric as the ancient logic of multiplicity of divisions and subdivisions. On two occasions, in particular, Smith goes out of his way to gibe at this concept of rhetoric; "It is rather reverence for antiquity than any great regard for the beauty or usefulness of the thing itself which makes me mention the ancient divisions of rhetoric" (p. 59), and again, "The rhetoricians divide all these topics into many orders and classes. (These will be found in Quintilian by those who incline to read them. For my part I'll be at no further trouble about them at present)" (p. 167). The two passages reveal at once his Classicism, in the sense of "reverence for antiquity," and his Neo-classicism, in the sense of a drive for "beauty or usefulness" to be found through simplicity of style. This drive was much more characteristic of the Scottish universities of the eighteenth century than of the English. The doctrine of simplicity supplies the essential unity to Smith's lectures. The lectures, themselves, may be divided into five general topics. A brief recapitulation follows.

I. The meanings of words in sentences to achieve the plain style (Nos. 2-5). Thus Swift is praised for his perspicuity and his abhorrence of neologisms, indeed, "his language is more English than any other writer we have" (p. 2). On the contrary, Shaftesbury is condemned for deliberately going out of the common and simple road and ending in "a dungeon of metaphorical obscurity" (p. 5).

II. The attack on rhetoricians and on the ornate style (Nos. 6-15). Tropes and figures of speech are generally, but mistakenly, conceived as giving the chief beauty and elegance to language. "Figures of speech give no beauty to style: it is when the expression is agreeable to the sense of the speaker and his affection that we admire it" (p. 30). Scotland is found to be in the paradoxical position of speaking a corrupt dialect while attempting to form the idea of a good, simple prose style.

III. The principles of historical writing (Nos. 16-18). A general rule is "That when we mean to affect the reader deeply we must have recourse to the indirect method of description, relating the effects the

transactions produced both on the actors and spectators" (p. 82). Such a method arouses sympathy in the reader. Chronology is to be followed with no gaps permitted even when there are no remarkable events during that period. Dissertations and digressions within the text obscure the chronological development.

IV. History of historians (Nos. 19-20). The earliest historians were poets. They were followed by poets writing in prose but still employing subjects altogether poetical, such as elves, fairies, dragons, griffins, and other monsters. Herodotus extended the plan of history but was more interested in amusing than instructing. Thucydides, in his history of the Peloponnesian War adopted a proper design of historical writing by providing facts, the causes of the facts, and by supplementing military history with civil. Of all the Latin historians, Livy is rated as without doubt the best. Tacitus is notably successful in dealing with the knowledge of the motives by which men act. Of all the modern historians, Machiavelli is the most impartial. Among the English, both Clarendon and Burnet are too close to the events to be other than party men. Rapin is candid but is concerned more with "the lives of the princes than of the affairs of the body of the people" (p. 112).

V. Expository writing in poetry and drama; the oratorical style (Nos. 21-30). Neo-classicist that he was, Smith insists on the dramatic unities, finding Shakespeare deficient on all three counts of action, time, and place. He is also guilty of offending the propriety of character. As for the oratorical style, Smith, despite his ridicule of rhetoricians, follows Quintilian in dividing it into three varieties: the Demonstrative (or panegyrical), the Deliberative (or didactic, subdivided into the Socratic and the Aristotelian), and the Judicial (or argumentative). After long discussions of the eloquence of the Ancients, Smith rises to the defence of the English. Foreigners find the English deficient in gesticulation and in musical tone. As opposed to the French and Spanish idea of politeness, the English requires "composure, calm and unruffled behaviour" (p. 192). Violent gesticulation and display of passion are avoided and "if there is any art thoroughly understood in England, it is music. The lower sort often evidence a great accuracy of judgement in it, and the better sort often display a thorough and most masterly knowledge of it" (p. 192).

To judge Adam Smith as literary critic solely on the basis of these fragmentary lectures would be injudicious. To condemn him for being a Classicist and a Neo-classicist in an age of Neo-classicism would be unhistorical. Somewhat disappointing it is, however, at least to this

reviewer, to find no sign of the aesthetic sensibility of Hume displayed in such essays as "Of Tragedy" and "Of the Standard of Taste," both of 1757, essays which Smith had read in manuscript. The philosopher of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is present throughout, as well as hints of the economist of the *Wealth of Nations*: "Prose is naturally the language of business, as poetry is of pleasure and amusement" (p. 132). Whatever ultimate judgment is made of Smith as literary critic, the verdict of Wordsworth will surely be disclaimed: "Adam Smith, the worst critic, David Hume not excepted, that Scotland, a soil to which this sort of weed seems natural, has produced." Hume and Smith were men of letters of a breadth incomprehensible to Wordsworth, and only blind anti-Scottish prejudice could have produced such absurdity.

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