



Books of 1980

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Books of 1980

Contribution to 'Books of the Year', *Sunday Times Weekly Review*, 7 December 1980, 33



Barbara Strachey as a child, with Alys Russell née Pearsall Smith

Remarkable Relations: The Story of the Pearsall Smith Family by Barbara Strachey. This account of the Pearsall Smith family is beautifully written in a vigorous, direct style, with a candour and detachment which does honour to the author's Quaker ancestors, but with an irony and freedom from piety which owe something to her Bloomsbury upbringing. A masterpiece of intensely readable descriptive writing.

BOOKS OF 1980



The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi, ed. Denis Stevens. This excellently edited and annotated book illustrates vividly the status of composers in Counter-Reformation Italy. Monteverdi was a very famous composer in his lifetime, yet even allowing for the genuflections from clients to patrons obligatory in his day, his constant and pathetic pleas to the Dukes of Mantua and Venetian officials for money and position still read painfully. It took the French Revolution and the Romantic movement to create a climate in which Verdi could be a Senator of the Kingdom of Italy.

BOOKS OF 1980



Leave the Letters Till We're Dead: The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume VI: 1936–1941, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. These wonderful letters need no praise from me.

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