

Flirs of the heir apparent

By Jeffrey Gillenkirk

We no longer can say we know nothing about Jerry Brown. These books present a picture of the man who many believe will be America's next

President. Brown emerges as a confused, charismatic conservative who sometimes has the interests of the people in mind and always their votes. He will inevitably try for the presidency. Yet he's succeeded in appearing indifferent to the task: the press in the 1976 Maryland primary dubbed him the Uncandidate.

After years of over-ambitious Humphreys and Nixons, Jerry Brown's coyness with power has made him enormously popular on the national scene. He is Prince Hal to the people, an innocent and flippant heir to our problems, although in J.D. Lorenz's *The Man on the White Horse* Brown is more Machiavelli's prince than Shakespeare's.

Much of Lorenz's cynicism about Brown resulted from his dismissal as director of California's Employment Development Department seven months into Brown's administration. He pictures himself as an activist in a passive administration.

More damaging is his personal assessment of Brown as a cold opportunist obsessed with manipulating the media on his own behalf. Lorenz claims that Jerry Brown pushed the 1975 Agricultural Labor Relations Act for California farmworkers because he needed the farmworkers as a symbol of his compassion. Blacks are too hot in California, but browns are cool symbols.

"Jerry was like the tin woodsman in *The Wizard of Oz*, who had no heart," Lorenz writes. "Cesar [Chavez] would give him a heart. Cesar's alliance with Jerry would supply the warmth."

About interviews, Lorenz quotes Brown as saying: "They're only words." About demonstrators for jobs and environmental safeguards, Brown told the author, "It's all symbols. All they're arguing about is symbols." And about Lorenz's controversial public employment plan that eventually led to his ouster, Brown said: "Listen, I'll believe I have to do something for the unemployed only when I see them rioting in the streets."

An idealist who is now a real estate agent, Lorenz is discouraged that Jerry Brown reads the public mood rather than leads it. The most resourceful tactic of the governor is to delay decisions while he looks to the public for the answer. He is liberal when pushed, and conservative when pulled, a traditional democratic politician with both ears to the ground.

Lorenz's last several chapters on the pushers and pullers in Sacramento are brilliant. We may be in the TV age, but a politician still reacts to pressure. The pressure on Brown thus far has been from business and property owners. Liberals have left him alone, Lorenz says, expecting him to come their way naturally, which he has not done.

Another view or two.

To veteran Sacramento reporter Ed Salzman, Jerry Brown is just another politician. As editor of the *California Journal*, he has watched Jerry since his term as Secretary of State in 1970, and his father, Pat, before that. His judgments are unclouded by partisanship or personal resentment:

"Brown is clearly not a liberal," Salzman wrote during the first year of Brown's gubernatorial term. "The Governor may well be called a conservative. He is tight with the buck, against big government and takes some hard-line stands on crime."

"But Brown may be closest to being a



Is Jerry Brown Shakespeare's flippant Hal, or Machiavelli's Prince of Craft?

JERRY BROWN: IN A PLAIN BROWN WRAPPER

By John Bollens and Robert Williams
Palisades Publishers, Pacific Palisades, Calif., 1978

JERRY BROWN: HIGH PRIEST AND LOW POLITICIAN

By Ed Salzman
California Journal Press, Sacramento, 1976, \$2.95 (paperback)

BROWN

By Orville Schell
Random House, 1978, \$10

JERRY BROWN: THE MAN ON THE WHITE HORSE

By J.D. Lorenz
Houghton-Mifflin, 1978, \$8.95

JERRY BROWN: THE PHILOSOPHER-PRINCE, by Robert Pack

Stein & Day, 1978, \$10

Libertarian—one who believes that the economic system ought to be left alone, that government should stay out of the lives of people as much as possible and that victimless crimes should be wiped off the statute books."

If Salzman is noted for his solid reporting of legislative and executive actions, the other end of the spectrum is covered by journalist Orville Schell, whose day-by-day 'this is what Jerry wears and eats for

breakfast' coverage is groupie journalism, high on detail and low on information.

Brown campaigns for the White House in Ely, Nevada; meets a Hare Krishna at the Denver airport; speaks at a "Save the Whales" rally in Japan after an interview with the President of Nissan motors; breakfasts at Linda Rondstadt's in Malibu; wears a pair of galoshes and a silly wool cap; rides shotgun in a squad car; snubs Jimmy Carter.

It is offbeat and Jerry Brown meant it to be. Unacknowledged throughout the entire book is the fact that at each of these "spontaneous manifestations of Brown's puckish character, journalist Schell was present and taking notes. His most ringing observation is that for all the different worlds Jerry Brown inhabits, he seems comfortable in none.

Just the facts.

The most useful book for clear insight into Brown's political behavior and personality are Robert Pack's *The Philosopher-Prince* and Bollens' and Williams' *In a Plain Brown Wrapper*. Pack is especially strong on Brown's seminary years, when he assumed a militant Jesuit's stance. He wanted to save a doomed mankind, but believed, with arrogant skepticism, that it could not be done. The strength of Bollens' and Williams' book lies in the 50-page chapter, "Brown's Activities as Governor"—just facts.

Some facts: As of January 1978, Jerry Brown had made 2,111 appointments: 658 were women, 198 Chicanos, 167 black, 64 Asians, 30 American Indians, and ten Filipinos. He has opened up some of the government to groups previously denied entrance.

It is clear from these books and the public record that so far Jerry Brown has been more of a performer than a reformer. He has given liberals appointments, a farmworkers bill, coastal conservation and a thrilling, unorthodox public image. He has pleased conservatives with fiscal tightness, although his failure to push moderate property tax reform led to the unexpected success of Proposition 13. Since then Brown has opposed local and statewide measures that would distribute tax-cut savings from the Proposition to renters, but is hedging on rent control.

The fearless forecast.

1978 is an election year. Brown is after the voters who passed Proposition 13, but California's ten million renters may stay away from the polls in November and give the philosopher-prince something to think about. His aloofness, portrayed as a tragic flaw in his character in at least three of these books, has kept him from attracting any true grass-roots support, except from farmworkers. His stance as a populist looks as misleading as was Jimmy Carter's in his quest for the presidency.

Brown has a taste for the political jocular, the advantage of incumbency and an understanding of media. He will win reelection if a renters' revolt does not derail him, then decide whether to go for President in 1980 or '84.

What kind of President would Brown be?

For one thing he would open the Cabinet to women and minorities as he has done in California. Whether he would deny them the funding and autonomy that means real power—as he has done in California—is another question. His concept of "planetary realism" means, domestically, low government spending and a decrease in individual consumption. Internationally, it is easy to see Brown pursuing a JFK-type pattern, with a resolute defense of free enterprise values vis-à-vis the socialist world as first-term politics, and the intention of liberalizing relations with them if he makes it to a second term.

Perhaps these five books and a few more years will slow Brown's seemingly inevitable succession to the presidency and force him to earn his stripes, as Carter did not.

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