

Shore, the celebrated defenseman, and now, of course, young Bobby Orr, who may yet become the greatest defensive player in the history of a very exciting contact sport. Listen to what Eddie Shore absorbed in fourteen years of National Hockey League: "The best estimates place Shore's total number of stitches in excess of 970. His nose was broken fourteen times, his jaw shattered five times, and all his teeth had been knocked out before his career had ended. He barely missed being blinded in both eyes and nearly lost an ear." Bobby Orr will probably have come close to these statistics a dozen years hence, if he survives. It's a rough, thrilling game, and this book will be a joy for any true hockey fan, particularly if he's young and lives around Boston. Good readable stuff.

Peter Manso's *Vroom!* is a series of interviews or conversations with Grand Prix champions, and I suspect you have to be a true auto racing aficionado to get much out of it. You learn from Stirling Moss how it feels to be trapped for half an hour in a drowning race car whose petrol tanks have been ruptured (unpleasant); from Dan Gurney, son of an opera singer, what it's like to kill a seventeen-year-old spectator (impersonal); from Jacky Ickx, youngest of Grand Prix drivers, what's needed to develop the reflexes that make you a champion or save your life in a crash (experience); and from John Surtees you get a great many strong opinions on racing and race, on driving as a creative thing, and on the right to demonstrate (limited). The book is printed in alternating bold-face and light-face type on two-column pages that are interlarded with fine racing shots and closeups.

WIT TWISTER #141

Edited by ARTHUR SWAN

The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each dash within a blank corresponds to a letter of the word.

The _____ River, shady
_____, and brooks
Define the _____ of her
cramped daily rounds.
She wisely _____ with
necessary bounds
By finding an unfettered world
in books.

(Answer on page 83)

Fiction

ANGELS FALLING

by Janice Elliott

Knopf, 409 pp., \$6.95

"I THINK ALL OF YOU, all the Garlands ... have made a myth out of your family. You're obsessed with each other ... It's not natural. No, that's not the word. Not *real*. You all behave like characters in a play. Whatever you do in your outside lives, there's always this inner drama going on. You're acting all the time for each other."

So Julia, who is to marry one of the Garlands, sums them up to her future brother-in-law, and her estimate is not a bad assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Miss Elliott's novel. The Garlands are not quite-real characters. They talk and talk and talk, sometimes brilliantly—but endlessly. And one reads on vainly hoping that something will happen, that a point will emerge from this flood of self-analysis.

For a story that follows an English family from 1901, when Lillian Candish is born in London on the day of Queen Victoria's funeral, to Lily's deathbed in present-day Oxford, very little does happen. We see Lily's girlhood, her marriage to Andrew Garland, who becomes a journalist, their unsatisfactory extramarital affairs, their children, and the latter's unhappy attempts to find something worthwhile in life.

Occasionally Miss Elliott's story seems on the brink of drama or perhaps even comedy—as when Lily arrives home to find Andrew, "trousers at half-mast, sweating and blushing," making love to their fat friend Maud Weatherby, "her boned pink corset unhooked but not put aside, still half-encasing her like the cast-off shell of a mollusk." It is a memorable description—but that is all. What Iris Murdoch could do with such a scene! Eventually Lily takes Andrew back, for, as he confesses, "Without you I don't know who I am." And so they go drearily on together.

The Garland children don't fare much better. Frances, a clever writer, takes lovers but can't bear the prospect of marriage. Melvyn, his mother's favorite, tries to find answers in conversion to Roman Catholicism and in psychoanalysis, and fails. Barbara strains nervously to cope with a brood of children and an ineffectual husband whom the rest of the family ignores. And Adrian, a social worker in whom Lily feels she and Andrew have truly created goodness, dies in a plane crash on his way to his mother's deathbed.

What is Miss Elliott trying to say?

She uses English history as background—World War I; the woman suffrage movement; the Spanish Civil War, to which Andrew runs away to fight; World War II, in which he serves as a correspondent. But this is no *For-sythe Saga* and doesn't attempt to be. Miss Elliott, who is the author of *The Godmother*, does not see the Garlands as representatives of a social class; she is solely interested in her characters as individuals. She shows them to us in illuminating phrases (as when she describes the aging Andrew as "a molting lion"). But it is not enough. We never quite understand (or, finally, care) why these people act as they do. For all its occasional brilliance, *Angels Falling* drifts, rather than crashes, to an abrupt end.

Elizabeth Easton

Elizabeth Easton is on the editorial staff of the Book-of-the-Month Club.

THE FRUITS OF WINTER

by Bernard Clavel, translated
from the French by Patsy Southgate
Coward-McCann, 382 pp., \$6.95

IN AWARDING THEIR PRIZES to this novel, the juries of the Prix Goncourt and of the Prix de la Ville de Paris crowned a fine specimen of the realistic genre, which is still going strong in spite of its age. If this seems a criticism of the juries and a backhanded compliment to the book, it is only because I believe that originality of form should attract juries as much as achievement in an old form, and that *The Fruits of Winter*, with its technique put to the service of social history and psychology, is not very different from *Eugène Grandet* or *Le Père Goriot*.

Bernard Clavel's hero is Père Dubois, a retired baker who, with his good wife, is shown coping with the trials of old age and daily living during the German Occupation of World War II and the Liberation. Their house, surrounded by a big garden which they work for their livelihood, is graphically described: a typical country dwelling with its unused front room, its freezing bedroom. There is no running water, no electricity. The house and its inhabitants could belong as well to the 1840s as to the 1940s.

Clavel's subject matter is as reminiscent of Balzac as his technique. If Père Goriot had daughters, Père Dubois had sons—and neither could die rejoiced thereby. Paul Dubois gets rich dealing with the Germans, while Julien Dubois is a deserter. After the war Julien refuses to return home and follow the family trade, while Paul just wants to hustle

his father off to the grave. Eventually he does go, preceded by Mère Dubois who had keeled over out in the frozen garden trying to cover vegetables. Their lives had been all work and privation, to what end they could really not have told. As Paul remarked, his parents might have sold a piece of their property and lived very comfortably. But work and privation were their morality, their religion, all their reason for being. Their peasant thrift can seem as wholesome as Mère Dubois's soup; yet when the old couple almost kill themselves carting firewood down from the mountain because they refuse to convert to coal, they seem sorry victims of their virtue.

Their tale is told against a background of realistic detail as fine as genre painting. Little scenes fit into big tableaux which give the setting for each of the episodes that divide the book. The journey down the mountain, Julien's return to hide out in his parents' home, the attack on the town, the arrival of the Americans are presented against great canvases. But the description, since it always involves event and episode, never slows down the action. If the old man's second trip to the forest starts with a picture of nature at dawn, it ends with a very lively account of a fight with snakes. Balzac did not blend his ingredients so skillfully.

Yet in judging what he had written, Clavel seems no cleverer than Balzac. Just as Balzac fancied for his novels a moral dimension they never had, so may Clavel delude himself. By dedicating his book "to the memory of the mothers and fathers quietly killed by work, love, or war" he indicates that it is not meant to be an objective study of rural life, old age, or anything so much as a tribute to martyred parents. One wonders if his characters deserve it. Mère Dubois is touching but a shadowy figure, whereas Père Dubois, real enough, is no martyr. If he is something like Père Goriot, he is more like old Grandet—mean, self-pitying, every bit as ungenerous as his sons find him to be. Indefatigable toil was not only his greatest joy, it was his only virtue. It should not be overrated.

Laurent LeSage

Laurent LeSage teaches French at Pennsylvania State University.

LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1 Bl, 2 Fb, 3 Gd, 4 Lc, 5 Af, 6 Ke, 7 Jh, 8 Dg, 9 Ca, 10 Ek, 11 Hj, 12 Ii.

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