

Study of Responsive Law, the remarkable young people of Nader's Raiders, the burgeoning Public Interest Research Groups, and such byproducts as the Project for Corporate Responsibility, nicknamed "Campaign GM" which had the crusader's blessing but was never a Nader operation.

McCarry depicts Nader as loyal to friends, sensitive to human suffering, yet so dedicated to principles and causes that at times he appears to scorn mere flesh and blood. Willing to give everything of himself, he is insensitive, even callous or reckless when it comes to making demands on others. We are given a dramatic picture of Nader's role in "Jock" Yablonski's ill-fated fight to replace W. A. (Tony) Boyle as the leader of the United Mine Workers; Nader encouraged Yablonski to go ahead against frightful odds in a struggle that cost him his life, yet he could not, or would not, offer the aid that Yablonski needed.

Zealous missionaries can cause grief. Is there in Nader, as McCarry makes us feel, a zeal that, for all the good it may accomplish, could also hurt? "*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*", McCarry quotes from Juvenal. Who will watch the watchman? Nader, it is charged by certain of his adversaries, has no electoral constituency and has not been voted into office, yet he wields great power by his ability to use the media and inform or arouse public opinion. If the idea "that government and industry are handmaidens in conspiracy and corruption illuminates almost every sentence he utters," Nader would appear something of an extremist; and, even when radical prescriptions are in order, one well may be worried by extremists. Or is Nader really doing no more than attempting to balance the huge power of business enterprise, private wealth, and individual avarice that have used the media to tell us what to buy, how to live, and indeed how we should be governed?

The news has been full of a story about a giant corporation charged with pledging \$400,000 for the 1972 convention of the party in power because the man nominated to be our highest law enforcement officer allegedly settled an antitrust case very much in favor of that corporation. And there was food for thought, too, in a *New York Times* editorial (March 20) that commented: "Other businessmen doing business with the federal government and fearful of Nixon administration retaliation . . . stressed to the Muskie fund-raisers that they would give little or nothing if their names were published." Perhaps, after all, ". . . if technology is a church . . . Ralph Nader is its . . . saint."

Robert Eisner is a professor of economics at Northwestern University.

## THE OTHER WOMAN

by Colette  
translated from the French  
by Margaret Crosland

Bobbs-Merrill, 140 pp., \$6.95

Reviewed by Nancy Ryan

■ There is a famous photograph of Colette taken during her sixties and reproduced in *Paris Match* and *Life* after her death in 1954. It has been cut out and framed by women's liberationists of various persuasions in America. For, while in France Colette is a legend because of her famous style (the sensuousness and perfect pitch of which are untranslatable into English), in the United States it is her spirit of irreverence and her perceptive analysis of love and marriage, youth and old age that make her as cogent today as she was fifty years ago when she wrote the nineteen short stories and one brief novella that comprise *The Other Woman*. Perhaps the soft edge of narcissism adds to Colette's appeal in

a country where there is a particularly heightened sense of "self." One sees it in her face in the photograph, still that of a young girl: vulnerable, sensuous, amused, and tolerant. The soft hair is a nimbus around her finely shaped head, her cheeks are gently rounded, lightly brushed with color as in a blush, and, like the forehead, unlined. Her perfect, bow-shaped lips are closed and painted a carmine that seems natural to them. The total effect is natural. But the eyes! The eyes are those of an aging Medusa, with their short lashes and crescent brows, low, as if to protect the eyes from themselves. The irises are points of light. It is the light they cast that matters.

Colette measures light out in proportion to what is needed for a proper exposure. In *The Judge*, a servant looks with open disapproval at the new hairdo of his aging mistress. Colette comments: "She felt the cold in two recently exposed places—her forehead and her ears. . . ." Most of her characters are in similar danger in the stories included from *La Femme Cachée* (published in book form in 1924, they originally appeared in magazines and

Colette—"solitude, intoxicating freedom, and the absence of any corset."



newspapers). The women she describes in them are, in short, imprisoned by the same world that nurtured Colette who, after marrying into it, finally fought her way free through divorce, a term as an actress (which could explain the slightly melodramatic, scenic quality of *The Landscape and The Murderer*), and a career as a writer. It is a world of arranged marriages and country houses, of salons, balls, casinos, illicit drives in that new invention the automobile, and conversation revolving around a new hat, the cut of a gown, the latest makeup, lover, or diet. It is a world of surfaces: the face, the object, a texture, a gesture—details and nuances that concerned Colette.

In *The Hand* a young woman, newly wed, lies across the arm of her sleeping husband. He is wealthy and beautiful. He can fly an airplane. The wife is scrupulous in describing his physical appeal, but such fairness cannot scant the sense of heaviness she feels, the burden of possession. She would like to reach up and put the light out but she is afraid to wake him. She tries to make herself lighter, but he moves under her, reminding her of an animal. Light from a blue crystal globe falls on his hand. She finds it too manish! There are ridges on his nails. His thumb stiffens. In horror, she wonders how she could ever have kissed that hand. It appears to respond to her disgust. It stretches, opens, then closes on the bedsheet. Rigor mortis has set in! (It usually does in Colette's vision of marriage.) The hand disappears, the arm frees itself and encircles her. As expected, he protects her. Her sense of unease is put off. In one sentence Colette then takes us to the next morning: to hot chocolate (the details she gives of life in upper-class France during this period constitute a social document) and the husband asking, "Do you want this piece of toast, darling? I'm doing it for you." Here is the ultimate appropriation, the flesh of daily life impounding itself shamelessly. She recoils, then conceals her fear, for concealment is self-preservation. "Beginning her life of duplicity, resignation, base and subtle diplomacy, she leaned over and humbly kissed the monstrous hand."

Colette's anatomy of marriage as an institution is exhaustive. In *Secrets* the mother of a just engaged girl thinks: "But I could never talk to her about the fringe of the towels, nor about the thumbnail running over the lip a hundred times, nor . . . oh, that'll do! She'll hide things from me . . . little, terrible things, the mold that grows on married life . . . the rubbish that a man's character throws away at the boundary of childishness and madness." She deplores the roles both men and women are obliged to play in

order to organize that "prison called life together."

Colette divorced her first husband, Willy, in 1906, returned to the theater for a time, married again in 1910 and divorced again in 1924, then, in 1935, married Maurice Goudekot, whom she described as "my best friend." She loved both men and women. It was the institution of marriage she went after, with its inevitable partition of feminine and masculine, its collusions and concealments, the wounds it inflicts, its "small deaths." In a letter to her fictionalized friend, Valentine ("My friend Valentine," this collection's concluding novella, was published posthumously in France), Colette states her feelings openly: "Admit it, my dear Valentine, it's not possible that your state of marriage hasn't revealed itself to you—for an hour, for a moment—in all its preposterous vulgarity! And who can say that your husband too hasn't suffered from it in his own modest way."

When Colette wrote these stories she was living alone: "Solitude, intoxicating freedom, and absence of any corset have made me, as you see, a preacher of the worst type." But the beauty of Colette's work is that she never preaches. She shows. There are no existential crises, no rifled consciousnesses, and if she was familiar with the works of Freud she would appear to have found his discoveries inappropriate to her methods. The world she both caressed and devastated depended on conceiving the heart as a muscle resolutely responding to the senses. That these stories still make one wince suggests she found at least a portion of the truth.

Nancy Ryan is an American poet who lived in Paris for several years and now resides in Tangier.

## THE ASSASSINS

by Elia Kazan

Stein & Day, 311 pp., \$7.95

Reviewed by William Kennedy

■ Those who have long admired Elia Kazan as a film and theater director, and who recall that at one time he was an actor, may be tempted to regard Elia Kazan the novelist as a dilettante seeking recognition in all art forms and media, and to wonder whether he will turn up next as a New Journalist.

His first two novels, *America*, *America* and *The Arrangement*, had about them the quality of a man recording deeply personal experiences. His third novel, *The Assassins* ("A" is his talismanic title letter), is something else:

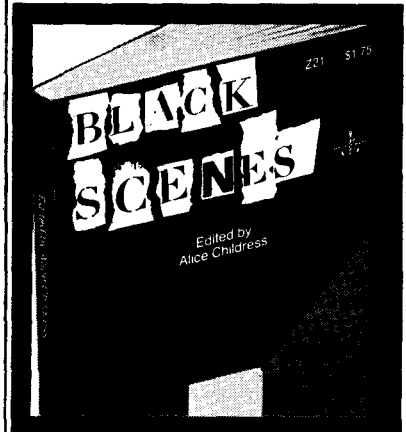
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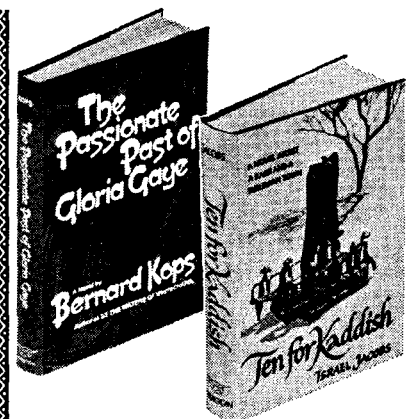
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