

Book Club alternates. Foreign rights: Bernie Kurman, Putnam. [May 4]

CHANDLERTOWN: The Los Angeles of Philip Marlowe

Edward Thorpe, with his photos. St. Martin's, \$12.95 ISBN 0-312-12851-7
Thorpe's book is a dual biography, in effect, a photo-essay on the late Raymond Chandler and on Los Angeles, the setting of his classic crime novels, from 1939 through 1958. The biographer searched out neighborhoods where Chandler's hardboiled but sensitive private eye Philip Marlowe operated. Thorpe found certain areas little changed, although most have been shouldered aside or razed for high-risers. The surviving sites appear in the text, which is graced by liberal quotations from *The Big Sleep* and other tales of Marlowe's exploits. These extracts display Chandler's literary gifts and his perceptions of human frailty. He reminds one that avarice has corrupted the City of the Angels as much as the notorious smog. For ardent Chandler fans, the book is a plus. [May 1]

CONFESSIONS OF A DANGEROUS MIND: An Unauthorized Autobiography
Chuck Barris. St. Martin's, \$12.95 ISBN 0-312-16216-6

If it strikes you as credulous that the eminently successful producer of popular television game shows—*Dating Game*, *Newlywed Game*, etc.—doubled as a hit man for the CIA, personally killing so-called enemies of the U.S. in Latin America and Europe, then you can credit this book. If you cannot believe that, then the book seems like the fantasizing of someone who has read too much spy fiction, tacked onto an account of one of the most dazzling careers in televisionland. Barris, who discovered new nadirs of vulgarity with his *Gong Show*, keeps his reputation alive on the printed page. There is a predisposition to shock here, but, remembering Mencken's crack about the taste of the American people and considering how widely Barris's

shows were watched, the public may well go for it. 75,000 fr. printing; \$100,000 ad/promo; author tour. Foreign rights: St. Martin's. [May 2]

SALESMAN IN BEIJING

Arthur Miller. Viking, \$16.95 ISBN 0-670-61601-X

In the spring of 1983, Arthur Miller arrived in China at the invitation of the Beijing People's Art Theatre to stage the first production there of *Death of a Salesman*. He had to contend not only with directing through an interpreter—the actor who starred as Willy Loman and who had translated Miller's play into Chinese—but with bringing to life characters and situations utterly removed from the Chinese experience and a theatrical style far more understated and naturalistic than the actors were used to. Creating characters who were sympathetic while not simultaneously "good" was an ambiguity new to them. Miller's engrossing journal records his worries that such unknown commodities as traveling salesmen and life insurance would render the plot incomprehensible; his conflict with the theater's wiggers, who planned to drape the actors in hairpieces that would turn them into Western caricatures; and the triumph of the opening. Interspersed are recollections of the original production of *Salesman* with Lee J. Cobb, and Miller's impressions of a China engaged in strenuous modernization and tentatively opening itself to outside influences, following the depredations of the Cultural Revolution. Chinese friends warned him that the audience wouldn't understand the play; almost until opening night, he was unsure that the public would be allowed to buy tickets. Photos. [May 7]

PETER HALL'S DIARIES: The Story of a Dramatic Battle

Edited by John Goodwin. Harper & Row, \$25 ISBN 0-06-015296-6
Hall, British stage and opera director, replaced Laurence Olivier as head of the National Theatre in 1972; these diaries chronicle his first eight years there. It was a stormy tenure, during which the National's new South Bank building opened late and considerably over budget, there were bitter, lengthy disputes with the theatrical unions, and both the National as an institution and Hall personally received a great deal of bad press. The publication of these diaries in Britain last year stirred renewed controversy due to Hall's caustic comments on such distinguished colleagues as director Jonathan Miller, playwright John Osborne, and Olivier himself. Though the picture of Hall that emerges—quarrelsome, work-obsessed, manipulative, self-righteous—is not attractive, the book is nonetheless a compelling account of the cre-

ation of a theatrical institution—and, incidentally, a disturbing portrait of Britain in the 1970s. Those unfamiliar with the English theater will find the diaries' abundance of names and casual theater gossip a trifle confusing, but editor Goodwin has annotated them thoroughly and well. Photos. [May 9]

THE MOON SEEN AS A SLICE OF PINEAPPLE

Conrad Hilberry. University of Georgia Press, \$10.95; paper, \$6.95

Hilberry demonstrates clarity, precision and occasional wit in this volume of poems, his fifth. The first section, titled "Housemarks," contains short poems accompanied by a figure, such as a double flail, chevron, key or house, which acts as the central image of the poem. For example, the double flail represents two people, "a pair of sevens . . . crossed/ by a single purpose. . . ." Hilberry addresses a variety of themes in Section II, "Man in the Attic": the passage of time, the relation between body and mind, the hunger for wisdom. There is a prose poem based on Renoir's *Seated Nude* and various anecdotal poems depicting a character through an everyday scene. The final section is "Mexican Poems," lovely, haunting lyrics evoking landscapes and people of that country. Here are included handsome illustrations from Jorge Enciso's *Design Motifs of Ancient Mexico*. Hilberry's work is nicely detailed and accessible, using tangible images in the physical world to embody or suggest an emotion or idea. [May]

AGAINST THE APOCALYPSE: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture

David G. Roskies. Harvard University Press, \$20 ISBN 0-674-00915-0

When Solomon's temple was destroyed, the prophet known as Second Isaiah fueled the Jewish people with hope by proclaiming that God would return them to their land and even irrigate the desert. Prophets, turning history into myth, have helped the Jews survive. Over the centuries Jews have suffered persecution, pogroms and anti-Semitism culminating in the Holocaust. How Jewish writers, poets, thinkers and artists have responded to repression is the subject of Roskies's scholarly essay. Medieval rabbis led the faithful in weeks of mourning that reenacted the Jews' mass exile. In the Eastern European ghettos, writing became an act of faith. Sholom Aleichem attempted to laugh away the traumas of history: "I talk, therefore I am." But Nazi atrocity made satire irrelevant. Hence Chagall's crucifixion paintings are a stark symbol of mass murder of the Jews. Roskies teaches at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Illustrations. [May]

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