

Now translated into English

## Roy writes of her own Enchantment and Sorrow

Enchantment and Sorrow  
Gabrielle Roy  
Lester and Orpen Dennys

review by Elaine Ostry

"One knows less about one's own destiny than about anything else on earth," states Gabrielle Roy in her autobiography entitled *Enchantment and Sorrow*.

The novel is Roy's exploration of the first thirty years of her life, during which she struggled to discover her destiny. The reader follows Roy's life from her early childhood in Manitoba, to her teaching positions in the small towns of that province, to her stays in Paris, London and Provence, and her return to Canada. By this time, Roy started her career as a writer, using the experiences of her past.

"I always knew  
you'd go far  
because you  
never knew where  
you were going."

Gabrielle Roy is one of the most celebrated Canadian writers, renowned for works such as *The Tin Flute*, *Where Nests the Water Hen*, and *The Road Past Allamont*. She won several awards for her novels, including three Governor General awards, and France's Prix Femina.

But this autobiography shows Roy's life before the glory, in her years of poverty and indecision. She grew up in a large, poor French Canadian family in St. Boniface, Manitoba. The first part of the novel, "The Governor's Ball," describes her years in Manitoba. Roy was very close to her mother and comments on their relationship, as she wanted to be a success to please "Maman".

The first part of the autobiography, because it describes her family members, their sufferings and deaths, is sombre and a little sentimental. The sentimentality does not irritate the reader, however, because Roy is so sincere and obviously feels emotions deeply. Her loyalty to her family is real, and the reader sympathizes with her difficulty in breaking away from these bonds to develop

her own talents. "The Governor's Ball" is particularly interesting if you have read Roy's collection of short stories *Street of Riches*, because it supplies important background to the stories.

"The Governor's Ball" also illustrates the trials of a French Canadian in Manitoba. In fact, the first chapter begins with the line: "When did it first dawn on me that I was one of those people destined to be treated as inferiors in their own country?" and goes on to describe the young Gabrielle and Maman shopping in the big — and English-speaking — city of Winnipeg.

Roy developed a strong sense of her identity as a French Canadian during her youth. She makes observations about the treatment of French Canadians outside of Quebec. To her disappointment, she discovers that "we French Canadians don't really have a sense of common blood." Roy also comments on the "easily wounded sensitivity" of the French Canadians, and complains about the lack of French education.

The second part of the autobiography, "A Bird Knows Its Song," describes her experiences in London and Paris. She spends a great deal of time alone in these cities, and observes that "solitude has so often brought me to a better understanding of people and things."

During this time, Roy is ostensibly studying drama but really occupying her mind, with what she sees around her. She spends most of her days wandering about the streets wondering what she is going to do with her life. However, she had no reason to despair because at the same time she was unconsciously collecting impressions that would serve her well when, years later, she started to write books.

As Roy observes: "At times I used to feel I was becoming a huge reservoir of almost inexhaustible impressions, emotions, and observations, if only I could have access to them. But though you'd expect having access to what's inside you to be the most natural thing in the world, it's often the most difficult."

Roy shares her observations of life with the reader, and her descriptions of people and places are fascinating. Roy's loves for people and nature are evident in these vignettes. She compares watching people on the city streets to watching "some unbelievable carousel of improbable humanity." Roy comments that it is "strange how often in my life I've had crowds of strangers as substitutes for friends and family." She brings both passersby

and new friends to life with her skilled descriptions.

Roy also makes the scenes of London, Paris, the British countryside and Provence come alive. The most touching example of this talent is the description of her journey from London to the nearby countryside, to which she is drawn by her longing to see nature unblemished.

Roy's writing reveals her great wisdom. She obviously learned from her experiences, and shares her discoveries with the reader. For instance, she comments how "curious" it is "that we place love, which is so fickle, on a higher plane than friendship, which is almost always so faithful."

Roy's greatest lesson that she shares with the reader is the importance of allowing oneself time to discover one's potential, without forcing oneself to follow a fixed series of goals. "I journeyed for a long time without a compass," she says, "but when life itself is a journey, what use is a compass?" This apparent aimlessness obviously had its rewards later in life. As her old landlady Madame Jouve comments on Roy's return as a famous writer: "I always knew you'd go far because you never knew where you were going."



Gabrielle Roy, author of *The Tin Flute*

and new friends to life with her skilled descriptions.

Roy also makes the scenes of London, Paris, the British countryside and Provence come alive. The most touching example of this talent is the description of her journey from London to the nearby countryside, to which she is drawn by her longing to see nature unblemished.

Roy's writing reveals her great wisdom. She obviously learned from her experiences, and shares her discoveries with the reader. For instance, she comments how "curious" it is "that we place love, which is so fickle, on a higher plane than friendship, which is almost always so faithful."

Roy's greatest lesson that she shares with the reader is the importance of allowing oneself time to discover one's potential, without forcing oneself to follow a fixed series of goals. "I journeyed for a long time without a compass," she says, "but when life itself is a journey, what use is a compass?" This apparent aimlessness obviously had its rewards later in life. As her old landlady Madame Jouve comments on Roy's return as a famous writer: "I always knew you'd go far because you never knew where you were going."

This writer offers interesting observations on writing itself, which "never ends and has no real goal, an ocean without shores." She defines a writer as "an interpreter of human dreams," and comments on her need for emotional security in order to write.

The style of Gabrielle Roy is very strong, supple and descriptive. She is fond of similes and metaphors, and the result is a colourful turn of phrase. She describes twilight as "a time for silence and thinking thoughts that spread out in circles till they disappeared in perfect stillness, as a pond at night."

*Enchantment and Sorrow* was written shortly before Roy's death, and therefore is written with a certain urgency that gives it much energy. As Roy comments: "I think that every day I become more like the dervish in the desert who had more and more stories to tell the older he got, and less time left to tell them."

Roy's autobiography is particularly likeable because although she talks a great deal about herself, she never stoops to self-pity or pride. Instead, the novel reveals her interest in and love for the world around her. These rich experiences, written in such a lively, lyrical style, make the reader wish Roy had had the time to write about the rest of her life.

## INXS fail in their latest Kick

INXS  
Kick  
Atlantic Records

review by Christopher J. Cook

Too bad, mates, you've failed in your bid to become the next "biggest band in the world." Up until this album, the formula for number one (recently established by one of the most jocular bands of the decade) had been followed perfectly — start out small, gradually build up to respectable size, then explode onto the music scene in a ball of flame. INXS was doing great — progression from "obscure" to "good but unknown" to "really good and reasonably successful" to.....Kick.

After wallowing in opacity for a few albums, INXS produced *The Swing*, a good album which netted the band its first big hit, "Original Sin." Then came *Listen Like Thieves*, a great album that yielded several hits and sold lots of copies. Kick should have been

the album constituted of mega-platinum A.M. vomit that would have been swallowed up by the millions of idiotic dolts who buy anything they hear on the radio. With it, they could have even got to play to thousands of hysterical clods from the roof of an old building. Ninety percent of the world's population would have loved them. Sorry, it's not going to happen.

There's not much to say about *Kick*, it's a rotten album full of monotonous nonsense that's not as good as anything from the previous disc. The lyrics are bordering on the ridiculous (I can't understand the reasoning behind repetition of a verse that was of questionable profundity the first time around). The band's songwriters are evidently so burnt out that they're unable to pen more than eight lines per song. This makes it really easy to learn the words but negates any potential to be meaningful (that the song may have had. Accordingly, *Kick* turns out to be a meaningless album.

Actually, I'm disappointed with this album for more reason than that of its musical merit. I wanted to see how INXS could climb their way to the top without appearing to be — you guessed it — the U2 clones that they are (or hoped to be). I'll never get to see it, because to call *Kick* good would be nearly as slanderous as saying that *The Joshua Tree* is deservedly multi-platinum. The only positive thing I can come up with is that its music listeners still have only one band of egotistical dorks to contend with because, with *Kick*, INXS has most assuredly not entered The Bono Zone.

## Siesta a real snore

Siesta  
Lorimar Motion Pictures  
Westmount 3

review by Darren O'Donnell

*Siesta*, starring Ellen Barkin, contains the seed to what might have been an interesting and exciting film but, unfortunately, it tries so hard to be art it becomes laughable instead. Directed by Mary Lambert, who is responsible for a couple of Madonna's videos, the film looks like a video with subtle-as-a-brick-in-the-teeth shots which drag on to amazingly tedious lengths.

The dialogue, too, is full of clichés which must have been difficult for Barkin since her performance is embarrassing. The rest of the previously talented cast don't come off much better with Jodie Foster struggling wearily to master an upper crust British accent.

The story is fairly straight forward. Barkin as Clair, a daredevil, returns to visit her mentor and former lover Augustine (played horribly by Gabriel Byrne) who has recently married Marie (Isabella Rossellini) — much to Clair's chagrin.

The film, however, starts later in the chronology as Clair awakes in a field near an airport to discover herself covered in blood and with no memory of the last four days. She spends the rest of the film trying to figure out what has happened which is slowly revealed through flashbacks. And to add to

this she has amazing healing powers which make bruises, scars and serious wounds disappear in only a matter of hours.

The steamy sensuality that is so desperately sought after in *Siesta* is so self-conscious that shots of Barkin lying in the nude become uncomfortable because they are so obviously and ridiculously gratuitous. It appears that every trick in the "Art Film Handbook" was used in desperation. Shots of back-lit actors and long dark hallways stretching off to eternity certainly become monotonous.

The mournfully mysterious music by Miles Davis sounds good here and there, but employed to the extreme it too becomes a hammer over the audience's head.

Performances are uniformly weak with the one exception being Julian Sands (*Room With a View*) playing a near psychotic artist who wanders angrily and aimlessly but eventually finds himself in the role of guardian angel to the confused Clair. He combines violence, bravado and genuine concern to create an unpredictable character who seems to have almost magical qualities.

(Unfortunately there's too many shots of Barkin running dazed down the Spanish streets or stupidly asking herself "Oh my God, what has happened to me!?" to salvage a tolerable minute from this mess.

Even the sex scenes try so hard to be sexy that, amazingly, they're not. And when the sex isn't even fun to watch, what's the point?