



Stilted eroticism and melodrama not enough.

Adele tries to please all and ends up pleasing none

Adele: At the End of the Day
by Tom Marshall
Macmillan Books

review by Karen Heaton

The book jacket of Tom Marshall's *Adele at the End of the Day* promises an ironic, yet touching, story of a mother and her estranged son. Unfortunately, the novel is about far more than this. Tom Marshall has tried to write about too many subjects and has not done justice to any of them. *Adele at the End of the Day* is about parent/child relationships, growing up, old age, death, love, marriage, sexuality (hetero-, homo-, and bi-), fanaticism, antisemitism, and fate. Tom Marshall's inability to create a coherent novel out of this mixture is disappointing because *Adele at the End of the Day* contains some fascinating characters.

The novel is divided into "takes" which, except for the final two sections, alternate between Adele in Toronto and her son Kevin in New York. The plot of the novel involves Adele's desire to see Kevin again and her apparently paranoid fear of being coerced into giving all her money to a religious cult. This plot reaches its melodramatic conclusion in the final two chapters. The plot, however, is less interesting than the gradual revelation of Adele's and Kevin's pasts through flashbacks.

Adele at the End of the Day begins by showing the reader a wealthy, eccentric, old woman who lives in a hotel with her companion, her gin, and her memories. Adele's past is far from the expected background of a Rosedale matron and is the most interesting part of the novel. Adele's lonely childhood, her unsettled life in Paris, her tragic love affair, and her marriage and return to Toronto are revealed in fragments with the essential pieces missing until the end of the novel. Questions of "Who was Daniel?" and "What happened to shatter Adele so completely?" bother the reader who is kept in

suspense by the gradual unravelling of Adele's tragedy.

Kevin's confusion is revealed in the same way. His search for his own identity is traced through his childhood at the French orphanage, his unhappiness in Toronto with Adele, his sexual ambivalence, and his unsuccessful marriage. Kevin's restlessness and pain are very similar to those of his mother. The revelations of Adele's secret and Kevin's identity occur in the last chapters.

These last sections are, however, the most flawed in the novel. The conclusion is melodramatic, unrealistic, and sentimental. After creating two interesting characters, Marshall denies their complexity by presenting an unbelievable reconciliation of mother and son. The unresolved problems in their relationship, their pasts, and their surroundings are ignored.

The incongruous ending of *Adele at the End of the Day* is not entirely unexpected when one considers the contradictions in the novel's style. On one hand, Marshall tried to write an intellectual novel which experiments with point of view and contains "deep" symbolism about a tree. At the same time, he tried to spice up *Adele at the End of the Day* by including every sexual combination possible. The stilted eroticism is far from image generating and is often hilarious if anatomically confusing. If Marshall was trying to sell books by exploiting sex, he should be aware that Harlequin does it much better than he does.

Adele at the End of the Day fails because Tom Marshall could not decide what type of novel he wanted to write. He tried to deal with too many subjects, to write in too many styles, and to please too many people. The use of flashbacks to develop the main characters and create suspense is the only successful part of this novel. *Adele at the End of the Day* could have been a very good book, but, unfortunately, it is not.

No headroom for Max

by David Smith

Peter Finch knew what he was talking about in the movie *Network* when he said he was as mad as hell, and he wasn't going to take it anymore. He knew what he wanted, or rather, what he didn't want: the continuous maelstrom of cathode ray garbage that seeps into livingrooms across the country day and night. Bob Barker gives away millions of dollars every year, but can he really do anything for the viewer? Pee Wee Herman makes more in one year from his syndicated Saturday morning show than you or I will probably see in the next thirty years, but is any of it worth watching? (Ask any six year old for the correct answer.) When will the paying public ever receive a choice between good, better, and best instead of not good, worse, and *Moonlighting*?

Well, it appears that it won't be in the near future; the cancellation of *Max Headroom* is a case in point. After less than one season, ABC has decided that the cerebral and acerbic computer generation is to be flat-lined. And accompanying Max down the drain will be several millions of dollars in set design, soundtrack, merchandising rights, relevant story lines, and good scripting. If *Headroom* is to survive one of two things must happen: either the viewer will convince the network that the show is well worth keeping (which is unlikely), or the network will reverse its decision all on its own (even less likely).

Headroom's popularity rested on a number of different factors, but the show mainly owed its success to its leading men, both played by Matt Frewer. This was probably the only show in recent television history that had an actor playing both the lead role and his foil at the same time; it worked well without being contrived. The supporting characters were solid and credible. And the world in which the stories were set had the same post-apocalyptic flavour and moody atmosphere that made films like *Blade*

Runner and *Alien* so popular.

Max *Headroom's* self-centeredness and glib one-liners directed at the world of network programming gave the show a clean humour and crisp edge. It was even surprising to see the censors leave in some of the saltier dialogue ("As they say when you're buying suppositories, with friends like these, who needs enemies?"); by all accounts, the show was not tampered with. So why was it cancelled?

Max *Headroom's* over-exposure in the commercial media could have been partly responsible, but it's unlikely. There have been plenty of actors who have sold themselves to advertisers in order to make a living between series, and they can still find work; why should Max be any different? And then there is the argument over production costs; rumour has it that each episode ran in the neighborhood of \$1.5 million. But then consider the cost of an episode of "Miami Vice" or "Star Trek: the Next Generation."

The key reason for the show's cancellation probably lies in Max *Headroom's* complexity. Complexity? Could anyone really say that about a television show? Yes, in this case, one could. *Headroom* was not the type of show that you could start watching in the middle, and hope to completely understand or appreciate. Each episode had something to say about some public issue, and even though the writers did ask the viewers to accept some radical concepts, there was compensation in the moral. *Headroom*, like the original *Star Trek* series, was able to say something about present-day society and still be good entertainment. In the world of programming, that is the exception rather than the rule.

In that respect, the cancellation of "Max *Headroom*" is ironic. Eventually, a show like "Star Trek: the Next Generation" will be cancelled because it's so bad. Max *Headroom* was cancelled by the network because it was too good.

WRITING COMPETENCE PETITIONS: NOTICE TO STUDENTS

This notice is intended for students who have not met the University's writing competence requirement and whose deadline for meeting that requirement occurs January 1, 1988. Students who do not pass the writing competence test by their deadline will have their registrations cancelled prior to the start of classes unless granted an extension by the GFC Writing Competence Petitions Committee (WCPC).

If your deadline is January 1, 1988 and you plan to register in the Winter term or in a subsequent session, you may petition the WCPC in November provided that you are currently registered and have written the writing competence test at least once.

Students are urged to seek advice on preparing their writing competence petitions. Such advice can be sought from the Student Ombudsmen, Room 278, Students' Union Building (432-4688). The Student Adviser's Office (300 Athabasca Hall) is offering information seminars on preparing petitions; call 432-4145 for dates and times or for an information pamphlet.

The regulations and procedures used by the GFC Writing Competence Petitions Committee are available in either of the above-noted offices.

Petitions must be received in the University Secretariat, 2-5 University Hall, by Thursday, November 5, 1987, 4:30 p.m.

PAID VOLUNTEERS

The English Language Program,
Faculty of Extension requires:

100 Volunteers
(75 English second/other language and
25 English first language)

to complete an hour-long questionnaire on
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Volunteers will receive \$5.00.
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to set up a convenient time from
November 2 - 5. (Foreign students are eligible.)