

Up and Coming

Brigid Brophy called Elizabeth Smart's book, *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*, "one of the half-dozen masterpieces of poetic prose in the world."

Books in Canada hailed Smart's return to Canada in their June - July issue cover story.

She is currently Writer-in-residence at the University of Alberta.

Elizabeth Smart will be reading from her work at the September meeting of the Edmonton Branch of the Canadian Authors Association. The meeting will be held at 8 p.m. on September 24th in the Education Faculty Lounge on the tenth floor of the Education Building.

Visitors are very welcome, and refreshments (in some form or other) will be served.

For further information please call: Brenda Bellingham: 464-2338 or John Hayes: 468-4952.

Diner
Varscona Theatre
Directed by Barry Levinson

review by Geoffrey Jackson

Diner is a movie filled with old cars, old rock 'n' roll, old neon signs, and all the other nostalgic trappings of a fine fifties movie. What makes this film more than just another reworking of the American Graffiti gold vein is a very good screenplay by Levinson and some of the best acting to be found anywhere. Together these two elements combine to create an intelligent movie that evokes a warm and deep sense of the era.

The film is set in Baltimore in 1959 and concerns itself with a gang of young men. They're ordinary guys, the sort who like to cruise with the radio on or spend half the night shooting the bull at the all night diner. The gang varies in size but the core is pretty constant. There's Shrevie, the music expert of the gang. He's succeeded at memorizing the B-sides of every rock 'n' roll single ever released. Recently married, Shrevie is having trouble adjusting to growing up. He keeps leaving his wife, Beth at home to go out with the boys.

Another key character is Eddie, the football freak's football freak. He's a simple man with simple ideas, like doing his wedding in the colours of the Baltimore Colts (Blue and white). There's Boogie, who has to be the sleaziest lady's man ever to grace the screen. Or Fenwick, a sharp tongued kid with a foxy face who's trying hard to destroy his liver with booze.

These guys bounce off of each other throughout the film. We eavesdrop on their conversations and cruise with them down midnight highways. This film is filled with rich and subtle atmosphere that is satisfying in ways not to be found in ordinary fifties flicks.

The acting is of the highest calibre and I would hope that this film gives their careers a much deserved boost. Daniel Stern's Shrevie is a great study of nervous tension. His fight scene with Beth (Ellen Barkin) just crackles with energy. Barkin gives Beth the right sort of shopworn, gumchewing looks that make her very plausible.

Mickey Rourke could easily go on to be a great star. His depiction of Boogie is an intoxicating mixture of charm and sleaziness. He's a rat with an affectionate smile. There's one scene where a loan shark roughs Boogie up in a stairwell. Boogie curls up and feebly tries to push his attacker away. At that instant you can sense Boogie's vulnerability.

My favourite character though is Fenwick, the fox faced kid played by Kevin Bacon. He has a marvelous moment at the beginning of the film. You meet him in the basement of his old high-school, quite drunk, idly punching out some windows. When Shrevie asks him why he's doing that, he shrugs and replies, "It's a smile." He's a clever kid deliberately wasting himself and its fascinating to watch him struggle with his demons.

The look of the film is fine, being filled with tasty blue light and rundown Baltimore districts. The photography is very warm and genial and ties in well with the character of the work. In general it's a mature film, too sophisticated for the teenybopper crowd. You laugh with this film not at it, which is something I find quite endearing and special.

Quartet
Princess Theatre
September 23 & 24

by Christina Scott

The Edmonton premiere of *Quartet*, playing tonight and tomorrow at the Princess, is well worth attending, if only to watch Isabelle Adjani, winner of the Cannes Film Festival's Best Actress Award for her role as Marya Zellis, a stunningly beautiful wanderer used by those whom she fascinates the most: her husband, her lover, and his wife.

The movie is based on the 1928 novel of the same title by the late, great Jean Rhys. The original book was unique in its treatment of aimless women exploiting, and being exploited by their sexuality. Although the film renders this theme in a more pedestrian manner, the combination of innocence and sultriness is still very potent.

Marya Zellis (Adjani), a one-time, mediocre chorus girl, is set adrift, penniless and beautiful, in Paris after her charming husband, Stefan (Anthony Higgins), is sentenced to a year in prison for stealing works of art. She is adopted by a poisonous elegant English expatriate couple, played with debauched conviction by two consummate professionals, Maggie Smith and Alan Bates.

It is assumed by both Lois and H.J.

Flickers

Heidler that this apathetic, pretty girl will become Bates' mistress, and quite possibly, a suicide. H.J. Heidler is obsessed with frail, helpless women like Marya. He is aided in this obsession by his broadminded wife. To this end, they try to blot out the memory of Marya's husband.

Marya vacillates between being terrified and revolted by, and terrified and passionately attracted to Bates' seamy character, a petulant, mesmerizing man. Quivering in an endless series of cloche hats and filmy scarves, Isabelle Adjani is manipulated by this patronizing couple until her mind is almost completely numb. She is dependent upon people who will inevitably abandon her.

Unfortunately, Adjani's acting is similarly anaesthetized. Director James Ivory (*The Europeans*) is to blame for this, as he has swamped the finely-strung emotional equilibrium by emphasizing the accoutrements of 20's cafe society—the elaborate costumes, sets, even the an-drogynous make-up and hairstyles.

This objective viewpoint distances the viewer from the effect of the unappetizing ménage a trois, creating scenes of formal

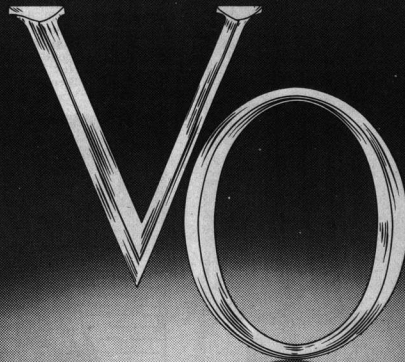
beauty only. Adjani, for example, seems drugged, rather than intoxicated, with her own sexual powers. Her studied emptiness is glamorous but not haunting enough.

The acting of Alan Bates and Maggie Smith retrieves the plot from the lush cinematography so that their sinister fascination with girls of Marya's sort escalates to become deeply disturbing.

Alan Bates plays perfectly opposite Maggie Smith, balancing his cold-eyed, nervous intimidation against her trademark fluttery, elegant wife, a parasite, an emotional vampire, who obeys her husband with complete detachment and grisly enjoyment. Together, the game they play bewilders Marya until she is completely unable to manage the situation when the last member of the quartet, her husband, is released from prison.

Although *Quartet* is flawed, it is still an evocative and unsettling film. The beautifully photographed jazz-age Paris and the wide-eyed, little-girl-lost look of Adjani are in themselves worth the price of admission. (Restricted adult, some subtitles although most of the film is in English, 7:00 Thursday, 9:30 Friday, Princess Theatre.)

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