

Letter from New York

Full Circle

WHEN WE WERE kids, book publishing was a business made up of individuals, men and women of taste and literary leanings who worked with authors closely and published mostly books they loved and believed in, with a few commercial successes thrown in to pay for the beloved small printings. But there was a Santa Claus then, too.

By the time we'd grown up, *conglomerate* had entered the language as a noun, and the book publishing business had become an industry, as more and more houses were swallowed up by conglomerates. In the 1970s, the trend has been for entertainment industries to buy publishing houses. So, what happens to the literary author? More to my present point, what happens to the literary editor?

On the increase is the trend to the personal imprint, or individually run publishing unit under the corporate shelter. James Silberman set up Summit Books for Simon & Schuster; Henry Robbins has his own imprint, Henry Robbins Books, for Dutton; Richard Marek is publishing separately under Putnam; Charles Sopkin is running a new house, Seaview, for Playboy Press; David Obst turned from agenting to publishing, for Random House, David Obst Books. So back we come full circle.

And joining that circle is one of the most literate, literary bibliophiles in all of publishing, Fred Jordan. After 22 years at Grove Press, years in which Jordan brought into that house such authors as Allen Ginsberg, Claude Steiner, Rolf Hochhuth, Friedrich Duerrenmatt, Bertolt Brecht to name but a handful, Jordan is setting up his own imprint, Fred Jordan Books, for Grosset and Dunlap.

Jordan is fluent in German as well as English, and can read enough French to acquire writers in that language, and his field has always been literature rather than commerce. Not for him the big-money sub rights blockbuster, today's hit, tomorrow's remainder. Instead, Jordan has al-

LEONORE FLEISCHER covers the New York publishing scene for Book World.



Marina Oswald and Barbara Cartland

ways aimed for what Thucydides called *ktemata eis aiei*, "possessions for all time to come."

On the commercial side, however, he points out that the literary market is slow, perhaps, but certain. Grove Press's list of titles reads like a college mandatory reading list; the books are steadily in print, the market among students, constantly increasing. More than that, it is the literary quality of these books that gives Fred the most pleasure. "I never published a book I didn't like," he says, and I don't know many others in the business who can make that a truthful statement.

Fred also believes that the men and women who write books that raise one's consciousness, tell of the human condition, and reflect their times through a distillation of superior insight, are the men and women who will keep this old world moving. It is this naiveté (Jordan's word, not mine) that keeps him moving, that will inform his new list.

Intending to publish between 20 and 40 books a year, Jordan has what he thinks is the best of both worlds. He has the useful muscle of Grosset and Dunlap, its large size, financial ability, impact on the retail level, distribution system and what he calls "presence," and he will have the one-to-one, highly personal relationship between author and editor, without which he cannot function and without which he doesn't wish to remain in the business. Incidentally, Grosset and Dunlap itself is owned by Film-

ways, one of the entertainment conglomerates of which we spoke, but Jordan swears there will be no editorial interference by any part of the corporation. After all, isn't that the entire purpose of these individual imprints, to bring back the individual stamp to what used to be a quirky, idiosyncratic, literature-loving activity?

Marina Oswald Porter

SPEAKING OF PRESENCE, the Russian-born widow of Lee Harvey Oswald had no reason to apologize as she did for her "poor English" at the press conference held for her and Priscilla Johnson McMillan by Harper & Row. In the face of questions coming at her from all sides, some of them hostile, Marina Oswald Porter was articulate, sincere, thoughtful and calm, holding firmly to her belief that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone to assassinate John F. Kennedy.

Afterwards, at a small luncheon held in her honor and Mrs. McMillan's, she said, "I felt as though the ants were crawling all over me. I said to myself, 'I'm not going to faint. I'm not going to faint.'" The book that occasioned both press conference and luncheon is *Marina and Lee*, a double psychological portrait by Mrs. McMillan, who spent 13 years researching and writing it.

A number of reprint editors attended the news conference as spec-

by Leonore Fleischer

tators, since the paperback rights will not be auctioned until some time after October 26. There are already 42,500 copies in print before publication, and the book has a \$225,000 floor bid for reprint rights, which means the auction begins with that figure. In the face of the courage and dignity Marina has displayed, it would be nice to think that some measure of prosperity awaits her, to repay her in part for her years spent as another victim of the Kennedy tragedy.

What Makes the World Go Round?

MAYBE MONEY can't buy you love, but love can surely buy you money. Witness: Barbara Cartland, the undisputed champion in the saccharin sweepstakes, with worldwide sales of over 75 million copies of her more than 200 books, has just made the largest film rights deal in history. Ed Friendly Productions has acquired motion picture and television rights to the prolific (two books a month, twelve months a year) lady's outpourings, all of them—past, present and future.

In North America, Cartland's chief publisher is Bantam Books. The silver-haired author, every one of whose heroines is a virgin, is quoted thus: "I believe the world is waiting for the new standards of purity, beauty and love which are exemplified by my stories." Since she lives in a giant mansion outside London, which, in my fantasy, is roofed in gold, who can deny Miss Cartland's claims?

Meanwhile, north of the border, Harlequin Books of Canada is ready to take on the American market with a vengeance. As the largest single publisher of mush, whose Harlequin Romances sold some 80 million copies last year, they have already put a dent in the U.S. market—approximately 14 per cent of stateside women read Harlequin romances right now, and a projected \$1.8 million ad campaign has been targeted like a missile at the States and is about to be launched. So, if you are felled by a sudden attack of sweetness and light, remember: you have been warned. □