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with his death at 52. The complexities of plot involve 47 major characters (one courtesan is named "Lady of the Evening Faces") and endless intrigue. Genji's father abdicates in chapter 9, to be succeeded by Genji's brother, who abdicates in chapter 14 in favor of a lad also believed to be Genji's brother, but who is in fact Genji's son. Seidensticker's literal rendering of this classic work offers more than good entertainment. From its puns, poems, and offhand bits ("It was the mark of her want of culture that her delight should be so unconditional, and take no account of such matters as the proper color of a fan"), discerning American readers can gain a new understanding of many values in Japanese life that survive to modern times.

**MEMOIRS**

by Pablo Neruda  
 Farrar, Straus & Giroux  
 1977, 370 pp. \$11.95  
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 ISBN 0-374-20660-0

This luminous, informative, moving, and very funny book, posthumously published in English, collects the random memories of the railwayman's child born in the primeval forests of southern Chile who, even as a diplomat and Nobel-prizewinning poet, never lost his sense of wonder. There is not an ounce of padding. Neruda (1904-73) distills his life's landscapes—Santiago, Paris, Rangoon, Colombo, Singapore, Madrid, Mexico City—into vivid sketches, well translated by Hardie St. Martin. A huge cast of characters springs to instant life: public figures, eminent and obscure artists, nitrate workers, revolutionaries, intensely private eccentrics. In 1945 Neruda was elected to the Chilean Senate; in 1948 his arrest was ordered. In 1949 he fled Chile, crossing the Andes to the South, but was welcomed back in 1952. A Communist Party member for much of his adult life, he seems able to probe everything in the tumult of his days except evidence of what he calls the Party's "weaknesses." Telling stories about his "volcanic" artist friends in Mexico during the period shortly before Stalin's exiled foe Leon Trotsky was assassinated there, he writes in passing that "someone" sent the painter David Alfaro Siqueiros "on an armed raid" on Trotsky's home. Someone?