
Arts & Letters
**MARCEL DUCHAMP:
Appearance Stripped Bare**

by Octavio Paz
 Viking, 1978
 218 pp. \$10.95
 L of C 78-17560
 ISBN 0-670-45502-4

Mexico's Octavio Paz—poet, philosopher, teacher, and essayist—believes that the greatest influences on 20th-century art are Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp. Picasso did it with his astonishing productivity and the metamorphoses his paintings went through; Duchamp with his “no less astonishing” and “no less fruitful” inactivity. The famous *Nude Descending a Staircase* shook the New York art world when it appeared in the Armory Show in 1913; by then, Duchamp, born in Normandy in 1887, was already beginning to substitute what he called “painting-idea” for “painting-painting.” He worked thereafter on studies of *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* (also known as *Large Glass*), which he left “finally unfinished” in 1923, did a few “Readymades” of commonplace objects, and became a self-styled “chess maniac” who spent much of his time competing in international tournaments. Manhattan became his permanent home in 1942. Not until after his death in 1968 on a trip to France was his last major work, *Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas, 1946–66*, uncovered in his secret East 11th Street studio. It is hard to believe that any critic could penetrate the vision of an artist—especially this artist—as well as Paz has done in the essays that comprise his book. But vision “is not only what we see,” the poet reminds us. “It is a stance taken, an idea, a geometry—a *point of view* in both senses of the phrase.”

**AMERICAN INDIAN
FICTION**

by Charles R. Larson
 Univ. of New Mexico, 1978
 208 pp. \$9.50
 L of C 78-55698
 ISBN 0-8263-0477-X

In 1899, Potawatomi Chief Simon Pokagon became the first American Indian to publish a novel. His *Queen of the Woods* was followed by three novels from Cherokee John M. Oskison, published in the 1920s and '30s, and Osage John J. Mathews' *Sundown* (1934). All were “conventional in form, traditional in subject, . . . indistinguishable from hundreds of other fictional works of the time.” Each of the authors was well-educated (Mathews a