

suavity. Alan and Pamela Standish, elegantly successful as "America's first theatre couple," prepare for their Shakespearean season with a production of "King Lear," conveniently featuring their three daughters. When the youngest, and markedly different, daughter, aptly named Cordelia, demonstrates little affinity for stagecraft, she arouses not only Alan's dormant suspicions about her parentage, but also his repressed sexual feelings. Circumstantial evidence mounts and long-armed coincidence propels the twisty plot, as a daughter, who is not Cordy, is discovered. Alan resolves his dilemma in a sophisticated frolic that amuses. [June 21]

#### PANDA BEAR IS CRITICAL

*Fern Michaels.* Macmillan, \$12.95 ISBN 0-02-584550-0

This first hardcover novel by two writers whose romantic paperbacks have sold more than nine million copies, Roberta Anderson and Mary Kuczir, is eminently satisfying escape reading, smooth, entertaining and full of suspense. "Panda Bear" is the CB code name of a bright and plucky five-year-old who suffers from hemophilia. Kidnapped and threatened with death when he sees a psychopathic killer and his battered teenage girl friend burying the body of a victim, Davey's plight is rendered all the more agonizing because of the terrible risk he runs in being deprived of the medication that keeps him alive. While the authorities and the loving aunt and her husband with whom he was on a camping trip agonize over reaching Davey in time, his cold self-righteous mother and mollycoddled father are under a pressure of their own, caught up in a court case that involves heavy drug dealing mobsters. All of the characters are sketched in quickly and colorfully and as their destinies converge the pace quickens excitingly. It is Davey who will call the final shot and you root for him and his pet dog all the way. "Leaping Lizards," as Little Orphan Annie might say. [June 24]

#### THE QUESTIONNAIRE: Or Prayer for a Town & a Friend

*Jiri Grusa;* translated by Peter Kussi. Farrar Straus & Giroux, \$15.95 ISBN 0-374-24010-8

Applying for a job, Jan Chrysoptom is routinely asked to fill out a questionnaire—and gets carried away, the bland questions becoming the jumping-off point for a delightfully whimsical exploration of his origins, fantasies, surroundings, as well as a sort of history of his Czech town from medieval times to the modern era. Impossible to summarize adequately, Jan's comments are made *in utero*, or to a dead horse, or in the context of dreams and their interpretations, or in the form of complaints

about his relationship with a woman he hates far more than he loves. There's a devilishly funny description of a dance performed by his uncle while being cremated, and a consideration of whether a hangman who hangs himself is a murderer. The author includes several helpful diagrams—Jan's horoscope, for instance, and an illustration showing how to distinguish between a male and a female cat. A brave and jolly celebration of life. [June 28]

#### THE COLOR PURPLE

*Alice Walker.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$11.95 ISBN 0-15-119153-0  
Alice Walker's first novel since "Meridian" is a stunning, brilliantly conceived book about two black Southern women, sisters who are separated at adolescence and for the next 30 years never forsake their devotion to each other. Their stories are principally told in the letters of the elder sister, Celie. Written in a rich dialogue, though barely literate, they are addressed to God because Celie doesn't know where her sister Nettie is. In these letters, Celie recounts her pained life as part of the lowest caste in society—a poor, unattractive, uneducated, Southern black woman. Raped by a man she thinks is her father, then robbed of her two children, Celie is later given to a man as a wife. The love in Celie's life is Nettie who has gone to Africa with the black missionary couple who have unknowingly adopted Celie's children. Nettie's letters to Celie are kept by Celie's husband. But Celie finds another love in an extraordinary woman, Shug Avery, a singer who comes to live with Celie's husband. Through Shug, Celie begins to feel loved and valued for the first time in her life. Spanning some 30 years, this is a saga filled with joy and pain, humor and bitterness, and an array of characters who live, breath and illuminate the world of these black women. [June 28]

#### THE GOLDEN LION AND THE SUN

*Yoram Hamizrachi;* translated by Philip Simpson. Dutton, \$11.95 ISBN 0-525-24114-0

A top-notch adventure import from Israel. The CIA wants the two Iranian scientists they have sponsored rescued as the Shah's government falls. If rescue is impossible, they want them dead. Gen. Said Khorasad head of SAVAK, the Shah's intelligence network, undertakes to get himself and the scientists to a mountain rendezvous. Arik Hod, formerly with Israeli intelligence, is persuaded to lead them out of the country to safety. He knows the Kurds and the mountainous terrain; and he owes Gen. Khorasad a debt for once saving his life. There is a real heart-thumping race to safety with a chilling technological lift-off from a mountain top. [June 28]

#### THE CLEARING

*Mary Elsie Robertson.* Atheneum, \$12.95 ISBN 0-689-11275-0

Annie, battered and afraid, takes her four-year-old son, Arie, and flees to a wilderness cabin. She leaves her husband and a violent marriage behind her, relies on distance, heavy snows, and survival skills her father taught her to get through a harsh winter. It is not weather that comes close to defeating her, but an injury and a stranger who peremptorily forces his way into the cabin and into the lives of Annie and Arie. What happens and how makes a suspenseful and dramatic tale. The taut, austere prose is perfectly matched to this tale of isolation, brutality and terror. Mary Elsie Robertson, who has published short fiction in *Ms.*, *Redbook*, the *Virginia Quarterly* and other magazines, is the author of "Jordon's Stormy Banks and Other Stories" and a novel, "After Freud." [June 28]

#### NO MORE DREAMS

*William J. Coughlin.* A&W, \$13.95 ISBN 0-89479-105-2

When "swing" Justice Howell succumbs to a stroke, the Supreme Court, not to mention the White House, begins to stew. The concern is an upcoming decision on the electoral college, a decision that could threaten a sitting President. Thus Jerry Green is dispatched from Washington to probe the mind/psyche of Dean Pentecost. A single-minded shaper of the East Michigan State University Law School, he is known for his acute constitutional expertise. As Green begins his inquiries, a subplot injects a bit of romance. (An old flame of Jerry's will agree to marry if they move to Michigan.) And such a possibility proves important because the dean offers a tempting proposal (a faculty appointment for Green)—something that sounds a bit too calculated for Washington insiders. An odd mixture of love story and politics in which Pentecost's undefined "dreams" imply a dangerous unpredictability. [June 28]

#### DAN THE WHITE MANDARIN

*Dan Sherman.* Arbor House, \$15.25 ISBN 0-87795-325-2

A masterful suspense novel by the author of "Dynasty of Spies," this is also an illuminating picture of the history of modern China, of the intricate maneuvering behind U.S.-Sino relations, of daily life on the razor's edge as experienced by career intelligence agents, and of a poignant love story. As the setting moves between Peking, Hong Kong and the CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., Sherman makes a complex situation vivid by representing it in terms of fully realized characters against a wealth of background detail. John Polly, aka the White Mandarin, is a mole, a double agent within the Chinese Communist bureaucracy. He has