

# BLOOMSBURY'S BOOK GUIDE

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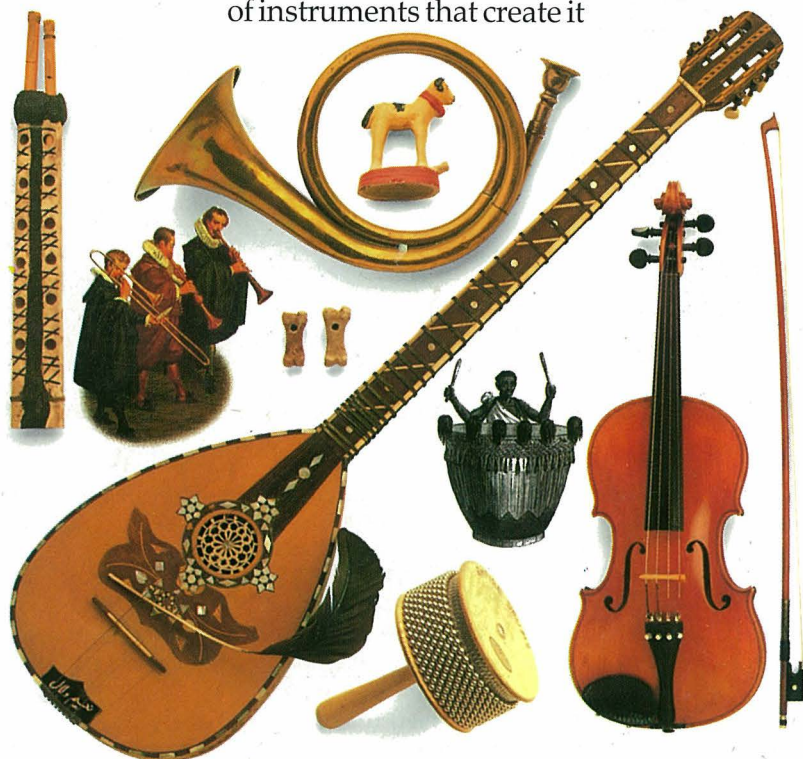


EYEWITNESS  GUIDES



# MUSIC

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an older sister, both of whom have their share of troubles. The book is true to normal family and school life as we follow Francie through the glamour and the disappointments of the rehearsals. It also traces the relationships of teenagers and the dramas that this age can bring, resulting in a witty and compelling novel.

Wendy Larkin

***Fred the Angel* by Martin Waddell. Walker Books, hc £5.95**

One may think one's problems are over once the Angel Exams have been passed and one's safely ensconced in Heaven. Not so, Fred can tell you. His singing drives the heavenly host to flight and there is a serious question as to whether he'll gain control of gravity and be awarded his own wings from the flying school. In five witty stories, Mr Waddell shows an angel in the making. Certain namesake and singing similarities made the tales especially popular with these reviewers.

Josie & Fred Armentrout

***Fun and Games Sticker Book of Animals* by Daniel Rogers, illustrated by Robert Morton. Carnival, pb £1.95**

One of a series that includes *Things That Move*, *Dinosaurs* and *Space* themes as well. Twenty reusable colour stickers are matched to illustrations in explanatory chapters and cut-out shapes for placement of stickers in appropriate environments. This book offers introductions to "Hunters and the Hunted", "Lands of Ice", "Jungles and Forests" and "In the Desert" and is recommended for ages 5 and over. All kids are stuck on stickers and this series has the virtue of giving them somewhere constructive to put them.

Fred Armentrout

***Hazel the Guinea Pig* by A.N. Wilson, illustrated by Jonathan Heale. Walker Books, hc £5.95**

Hazel is a very fat but beautiful guinea pig with eyes as black as currants, and here she narrates three of her adventures. Although sparsely illustrated the older child (of say eight and up) will enjoy the book and younger ones will enjoy having it read to them.

Each story is simple. In the first, Hazel sets off to explore and ends up stuck in a Wellington boot. Rescue comes when the boy cuts open the boot with a pair of scissors. Upon returning to her hutch Hazel is astounded to discover a male guinea pig, Tobacco, has moved in. The second story revolves around Hazel's friendship with Tobacco and introduces a third guinea pig, Fudge. Tobacco thinks Fudge is silly and nicknames him "silly hat" because of the crest of hair on his head. When left alone together

Fudge and Tobacco fight, but Mum manages to separate them before any real damage is done.

The third episode brings a happy ending. Hazel gets fatter and fatter for no apparent reason. She is put on a diet to slim her down, but to no avail. Needless to say, Hazel soon produces four babies courtesy of Tobacco. The little piglets are taken to a pet shop for sale but one, Beryl the runt, returns home to rejoin her family.

A. Maywood

***Henry Pond the Poet* by Dick King-Smith. Hodder & Stoughton Roosters, hc £3.95**

Dick King-Smith is well known as a writer of comic stories for children. These mostly concern the strange tales of weird and wonderful farmyard animals. This one is written for a younger audience, perhaps for those who are just beginning to read. The print is large and there are plenty of illustrations to keep the reader interested.

The tale concerns a frog, Henry, who is the poet on the pond. While reciting his verses one day he falls in love with Victoria Garden-Pool (one of those frogs whose family has affected a double-barrelled name). Victoria's beau, Larry Lake, is not impressed with Henry's infatuation and challenges him to a wrestling match to decide whom Victoria will choose.

This is a hugely enjoyable story and one which, with its allusions and comic asides and puns, is equally likely to entertain adults as it is the younger readers. I am sure it will win a prize at Eistoadfod ...

Monique Pirie

***Japanese Tales & Legends retold* by Helen & William McAlpine. Oxford University Press, pb £3.95**

Though this is the first time this book has been printed in paperback, this edition has been in circulation since 1958. The tone is a little self-consciously heroic, but once one has accepted that, the stories become fascinating, particularly for the reader new to Japanese mythology. One can see many Japanese attitudes and traditions reflected in the tales, and two of the strongest underlying themes seem to be an awareness of opposites in constant need of balance, and a powerfully sexist dominance of the female by the male. That may seem contradictory, but I suppose there is a kind of balance in dominance and submission.

Like all mythologies, the Japanese is a description and an explanation of society and morality, but its startling reflection of current Japanese values has a greater impact in the context of a society so conscious of tradition. The stories are charming and contain the range of incident, conflict, sorrow, joy, misfortune and magic that has made myths and

legends so popular in all cultures. One can recognize Orpheus and Androcles among many, and there is the familiar theme of advice spurned and wisdom learned too late. My first introduction to Japanese tales and legends, I enjoyed the book and shall read it to my children.

Martin Alexander

**Let's Draw Series** by Leon Baxter. Collins, pb £1.50 each

Six of twelve in the series reviewed: *Action!, Design, Landscape, People, Plants & Animals, Paper Art*. Delightful series of simple lessons on how to see, with playful practice drills on how to draw what you've learned to see — such as pictures of flags, trees and a boy walking his dog in the wind, with the challenge of making the wind blow them in opposite directions. Exercises are scaled for different conceptual and skill levels so that my eight year old, for instance, could pick and choose between creating something from a model to completing outlines of an elephant or a rhinoceros; or, after learning that zebra stripes are a disguise, accepting an invitation to "draw a zebra hiding". Mr Baxter clearly has read his Cicero, who advised the purpose of art is to "teach and delight". Highly recommended for ages 5-10.

Fred Armentrout

**Lexie** by Mary Hooper. Methuen Teens, pb £1.99

Lexie's Mum has just re-married and gone to live abroad, but she and her kid sister Sammy move in with their father. Dad has no clue on how to look after himself or the two girls, so they have numerous take-away meals and a learning process begins. Lexie falls for the irresistible Laurie Clark, and life becomes rather complicated what with love, domesticity, schoolwork and a giggly little sister. A sensitive yet humorous account of teenage vulnerability.

Wendy Larkin

**Match and Sort** by Michael Holt, illustrated by Michael Evans. Carnival, pb £1.50 each

A series of six early learning books for toddlers aged three to five. Each book is illustrated in bright colours with fun concepts. The level of difficulty increases as each book progresses. *How Many?* introduces numbers and counting. Initially the child will require assistance to understand the concepts of ringing or making a set. However once these ideas are understood the child will enjoy working alone. *Colours* is an easier book, as matching the same colours and linking colours to words is good fun. The concepts of big and small, long and short are introduced in *Sizes*, together with the words, with

some amusing illustrations. *Who Goes Where?* shows a variety of ideas — matching colours, where certain items go and fitting words to pictures — while *Numbers 1, 2, 3* are introduced in figure and picture with illustrations that capture the attention and prevent the book from becoming tedious. Finally *Shapes* are portrayed through animals, people and geometric forms. One or two difficult problems for the young child here so a parent will need to explain.

A. Maywood

**Myrtle, Tertle and Gertle** by Emma Chichester Clark. Bodley Head, hc £6.95

Myrtle, Tertle and Gertle are three donkeys who go on a Greek island cruise on what looks suspiciously like an antiquated Cunard liner, accompanied by a motley crew of equally antiquated fellow travellers, including Mrs Brackenbury and her poodle, Pom-pom, of whom more anon. Gertle, not being very keen on classical remains, slips away from the rest of the party and falls asleep under a tree. Alas, when she awakes, she finds she has missed the boat. Undaunted, she sets off in pursuit in a small dinghy, picking up on the way the aforesaid Pom-pom, who had fallen overboard. Together they battle the elements and are finally rescued by their erstwhile shipmates. A rather unlikely tale, but pleasantly illustrated and produced.

Frances Mackinnon

**Odette: A Springtime in Paris** by Kay Fender & Phillippe Dumas. Gollancz, pb £2.99

Odette is a baby bird who falls from her nest and lands on the hat of a lonely old street musician. He looks after her and they become firm friends. After a happy summer together in the streets, cafes and Metro stations of Paris, Odette must fly to warmer climes as winter approaches. Will they meet again next year?

Children aged four and over will enjoy this story; the large, detailed, softly coloured pictures are a major attraction on every page and besides illustrating the activities of Odette and her protector provide a subtle geography lesson.

Delia Hole

**Oh, That Sinking Feeling** by Michael Pearson. Methuen Teens, pb £1.99

Ducker is a kid with a lot of ideas for raising money to build a swimming pool for his school. He launches the Great Swanswell Swimming Pool Appeal but the various factions in school are either crooked, apathetic or competitive. He enlists the aid of Chico, a juvenile delinquent, and issues a challenge to the girls in the race to raise the first \$1,000. Every teenager should read this amusing story for its fun,

its fundraising ideas and their pitfalls. The author has two other titles in the same series, *Winners and Losers* and *The Bubble Gum Champion*.

Wendy Larkin

***Private Nose* by John Robert Taylor, illustrated by Emanuel Schongut. Walker Books, hc £5.95**

Three exciting stories renew an old partnership: Jack Watson's new neighbour is Saturday Holmes, who claims her grandfather's grandfather's brother was the great detective, Sherlock. Saturday uses her brother's magnifying glass and her rather Holmesian nose to seek clues to find Jack's bear and to banish Amanda Littlejohn's child-eating ghost. A smashing success with my eight-year-old informant who says, "I wish I was Saturday because she's a great detective and great at smelling things. That's why she's called Private Nose!" Case closed.

Josie & Fred Armentrout

***Promise Solves the Problem* by Babette Cole. Heinemann, hc £6.95**

From the bestselling authoress of hilarious *Prince Cinders* last year comes another wacky winner. When Farmer Jollybones is persuaded to take all his bored animals to the beach, events do not turn out quite as expected and the animals decide country life ain't 'alf bad after all.

Lindi Pratt

***Special Days, Grandmother's House, Favourite Animals and Good Friends* by Ernest Nister. Collins, hc £2.95 each**

Ernest Nister was one of England's most popular children's storytellers at the turn of the century. Each of these four "antique picture books" contains an interesting insight into the uncomplicated world inhabited by genteel children of the Victorian era. Through poetry and pictures one learns of their responsibilities in the home, their friends, animals and games. Each poem is lovingly illustrated with a pop-up or pull-the-tab picture — definitely not for sticky little fingers! Any of these charming stories would make an ideal present for a child aged 8-10 who enjoys looking at beautiful books and is interested in a bygone era.

A. Maywood

***Staying At Sam's* by Jenny Hessel, illustrated by Jenny Williams. Collins, hc £5.95**

Becoming aware that your family's way of doing things is not necessarily the way all families behave is an important and integral part of every child's learning experience, as a sheltered little boy discovers when he visits his pal Sam's place. A simple lesson is taught here and charming illustrations depict the cosy chaos of Sam's house. Recommended for ages 4-7.

Lindi Pratt

***Stray* by A.N. Wilson. Walker Books, pb £3.95**

Cat lovers young and old will enjoy this autobiography of — sorry! real cats don't have names — this autobiography written by a cat of long and varied experience and prodigious literary talent. This is a cat's-eye view of the world and a mordant commentary on the less attractive attributes of the human race, especially in their dealings with the animal world. It is a story spiced with adventure and tragedy, murder and mayhem and a bittersweet tale of true love cut short. If the author settles for a halfway house between the roving life and a total dependence on humans, who's to blame him? There's nobody like a cat for having its cake and eating it.

Frances Mackinnon

***Tales From the Mabinogion* by Kevin Crossley-Holland & Gwyn Thomas. Gollancz, pb £5.95**

Here are four stories based on an ancient Welsh mythology, the original comprising 11 in all. They were oral tales told in mediaeval England about the often magical adventures of the rulers of various parts of Great Britain. This book attempts to re-tell the stories in simplified form so that children of about 11 years old and up can understand them and enjoy the same sense of mystery that Merlin holds for them in the King Arthur stories.

The authors have some success, I feel, in presenting the stories of Rhiannon, the strange beauty on horseback who seems unattainable, and of Lleu and his wife Blodeuwedd who is created entirely from flowers. However, as with Greek legends many of these tales are very adult, dealing with infidelity and bloody acts of vengeance. I must admit I wonder how appropriate the book is as children's fare.

Jane Foxcroft

**French Home Cooking** by Paul Bocuse. Grafton, pb £10.95

What a pleasure to read a cookbook devoid of all the nouvelle hype — no raspberry coulis, no warm quail salads, no four different sorbets in tuile baskets. This book is filled with real food that is fun to cook (because it allows for personal interpretation) and hugely fun to eat. It is cuisine grandmère — pot au feu, boeuf bourguignon, rillettes, clafoutis and tarte aux pommes. You will probably have seen these recipes over and over again but it's nice to have them all under one volume written by the authoritative Bocuse. A book to have and to use.  
Annabel Zimmern

**National Trust Little Library Series: Salad Herbs: How to Grow Them in Your Kitchen; Spices Roots and Fruits: How to Add an Exotic Touch in Your Cooking; Teas and Tisanes: Everyday and Unusual Teas and Tisanes and Dishes Flavoured With Them; Sweet Flavours: Their Use in Sweet and Savoury Dishes** by Jill Norman. Dorling Kindersley, hc £3.95 each

Ms Norman's library of cookbooks offers carefully measured and prepared introductions to the wonders hidden in the jars and cans of seeds and nuts and dried leaves and other delights to be found on the shelves of the average kitchen. Each book is precisely 41 pages of text long; each is superbly illustrated in colour by Jane Thomson and Sheilagh Noble; each has magnificently marbled covers, dust jackets and end papers; each covers 12 to 15 specific herbs, spices and roots, dried sweets, nuts or aspects of tea; each is a delight to behold.

Forthcoming titles include: *Aromatic Herbs, Spices: Seeds & Barks, Jams and Preserves* and *Chocolate*. Single copies or selected sets will make superb gifts for food lovers and chefs.

Fred Armentrout

**Pacific Flavours: Oriental Recipes for a Contemporary Kitchen** by Hugh Carpenter, photography by Teri Sandison. Columbus Books, hc £19.95

This sumptuous collaboration by a Californian "free-style cuisine" chef, a studio photographer, two "food stylists" and a graphic designer suggests that beautiful cookbooks are rapidly becoming as revered for their production values as they are for their recipes and preparation instructions. There are over 70 stunning studio portraits illustrating part of the more than 150 recipes in the book. Witty graphic elements and smaller photographs also abound.

If one can overcome the fear of grease spatters and oily fingerprints desecrating this graphic temple of food, it offers inventive combinations of classic Oriental recipes from China, Thailand, Vietnam and elsewhere with Western ingredients. Behind all the graphic beauty is a good, solid cookery book that offers clear instructions and thoughtful touches — like the fact that each of the nine major chapters opens with a guide to the "easy-to-prepare" recipes and each recipe closes with notes on how many people it serves, good substitutes for basic ingredients and "menu ideas" for preparation in advance.

Rodelia Delizo & Fred Armentrout

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## HARDCOVER FICTION

**I Served the King of England** by Bohumil Hrabal. Chatto & Windus, £12.95

Wonderful literature is coming out of Czechoslovakia. Hrabal, acclaimed by Milan Kundera as the country's finest writer, gives us a novel with gusto and heart and great lashings of sardonic humour. It is the tale of a clever waiter who irrepressibly sails through disaster and not unlike China's legendary Monkey King, turns woe to his advantage even when, and maybe especially when, he loses everything. Lyrical yet earthy, full-bodied yet bubbling, novels from the Czechs and Hrabal in particular are intoxicating.

Nancy Langston

**My Chocolate Redeemer** by Christopher Hope. Heinemann £10.95

Bella is the teenage fashion- and chocolate-addicted daughter of an itinerant photographer mother and lost, feared dead, anthropologist father. She lives in La Frisette with an ageing grandmother and cynical astronomer uncle.

On the arrival of the deposed emperor of Zanj, the polygamous black "Redeemer", who takes a whole floor of the local hotel, the residents of La Frisette and particularly those who are members of the local Popular Nationalist Party are up in arms. Their leader, advocating the return of all immigrants to their country of origin, is utterly dismayed that a suspected cannibal with four wives could be staying in their midst.

Christopher Hope builds an intriguing and moving relationship between Bella and the "Redeemer", whom Bella is convinced can throw light on the mysterious disappearance of her father in Zanj. The author's depiction of the teenage psyche is close to the bone, funny yet shatteringly

It was with some surprise then that, in spite of much to criticize, the story turned out to be compelling. This is still extended journalism. Williams' ability to get closely involved with the event as it was actually happening gives her an unusual, if indiscriminating, view of an unusual bit of history. This book will no doubt command a certain readership while it is still topical and then it will be forgotten. But it will remain a unique record in the archives of architecture.

The Hongkong Bank is a truly original building: in Hong Kong indeed the only one in the whole of its colonial history. It is not, as this book implies, a revolutionary building, and thank goodness for that — those are invariably works of a lesser order. Foster's conception of the role of structure in architecture (so strong a feature of his style) is expressed with unsparing clarity but it is a conception in the Gothic tradition, as old as Chartres or Salisbury. His exploitation of the resources of technology may be carried further and more logically than that of most architects, but they are all working in a well-established genre, and that is a measure of his genius; and the depth of the Hongkong Bank pocket.

This book is worst when Stephanie Williams explores the background scene where there is either too much or too little. Or where she writes of the Hongkong Bank as a patron, or a potted history of 20th century urbanism in Hong Kong (but with some very good old photographs). Some of this is necessary for the general reader's understanding and occasionally she excels, as in the explanation of the inherent conflicts between Chinese and Western architectural thought, derived from fundamentally different conceptions of art.

How Foster came to be chosen is of great interest, commenting implicitly on the character and values of the commissioning patron. The courage of people in the Bank at that time is in contrast to the Bank's near success in stopping the whole enterprise later, once the "system" took over.

The account of Foster himself is shallow. Yet the story of how the design emerged misses excellence only because Williams clearly got so close to her subjects that she starts to talk the jargon of architects — unwittingly, one guesses. The description of the construction is overwhelmed by detail though the moments of high drama (there were several) and the tensions and conflicts (they were endemic) come across well. Even the characters of some key figures emerge, though Foster himself remains an enigma.

*Hongkong Bank* suffers from not being certain who it is written for. Stephanie Williams is best when least self-conscious and dealing with the swift passage of events. She is worst when journalism takes over. She has a disconcerting liking for the historic present and a magazine writer's taste for hyperbole. Dialogue, much of which is incredible,

is conducted in that kind of tough and bullying talk reminiscent of transcripts from Nixon's White House. This is the world where confrontations are always eye-to-eye, where "operatives" fail to "perform" and deadlines are always critical. Offices are slick and groups are tight-knit. Ideas are always radical and draughtsmen inspired. As for Norman Foster himself, he is always obsessed with something, his wife Wendy is his toughest critic and he believes that buildings should be constructed with the materials of our time. So did Corbusier 70 years ago. The reader is told that this book appeared at Foster's own request, and Sir Michael Sandberg's, "warts and all" (*sic*), and one hopes they like it.

Michael Kirkbride

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## ART

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*Bad Art* by Quentin Bell. Chatto & Windus, hc £19.95

Quentin Bell was born in 1910 (the year of the first Post-Impressionist exhibition) to one of the two great English formalist critics of art in this century, Clive Bell (who gave us his idea of "significant form" as the aesthetic wellspring of Beauty). Quentin's mother was a painter, his aunt Virginia Woolf the novelist (of whom he wrote a biography). He grew up in the world of the Bloomsbury Group, about which he also has written. The second great critic of the modern art movement, Roger Fry (who saw Beauty as born of "plastic harmonies") took him on field trips to art museums as a teenager.

Predictably, Quentin Bell grew up to be a potter, painter, sculptor and professor of art at some of England's premier teaching institutions (e.g. Slade Professor at Oxford). Surprisingly, his first serious investigation into art theory came in the form of a study of clothes, fashion and art, *On Human Finery*, published in 1947. All save two of the twelve essays in *Bad Art* have that common ancestor, which ended with an appendix on the dress of ghosts.

He is after other spectres here: our reluctance to look at the larger world of "bad art" from which "good art" of any period has emerged; why art critics have become afraid to make critical pronouncements (or if they do, why they obscure them in pompous verbosity or hide them behind the "authority" of art history); how non-conformity has become conformist in the Fine Arts; what is our reluctance to readmit the life room nude and principle of the academy into our thinking of art; how art appreciators often find contents unrelated to a work's form or original intention; what is meant by "elitist" art, and popular or demotic art; can there be a canon of quality in art; what are the fallacies of Marxist thinking about art.

Whatever one thinks of the views he espouses, Mr Bell has four sterling qualities — an unmatched personal knowledge of that about which he speaks, great wit, a gift for both apt and funny analogies, and an absolute intellectual veracity. Because he is not afraid to make a mistake and be so discovered, he restores to the study of art the true value of the “essay” form. May we all be so youthfully courageous at age eighty.

Fred Armentrout

*History of Art for Young People*, 3rd edition by H.W. Janson & Anthony Janson. Thames & Hudson, hc £16.95

This is an extremely praiseworthy enterprise, mapping out the territory over which many young people will start a lifetime’s voyage of exploration and discovery in the visual arts. Its strength lies in the amount of material it presents within a very manageable compass.

Its weakness is one of style: it all comes out rather flat. While Janson does not talk down to his chosen audience, it is hard to imagine many children picking up the book and being unable to put it down. If you want to know what was special about Ottoman art, who was Bronzino and why Jasper Johns painted American flags on top of each other you will find the answers here. If you want to ignite an unquenchable interest in the subject, buy Gombrich’s irresistible *Story of Art*.

David Roseveare

*Pre-Raphaelites in Love* by Gay Daly. Collins, hc £15

The picture which emerges from reading this fat, well-researched volume is of youthful idealism ending up in humdrum life or in recantation for commercial reasons. Far from the arch sublimities of much of their paintings, the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had, like most of us, feet of something approaching clay. We are only surprised because their paintings deal in nectar and ambrosia.

Mrs Daly writes pedestrian, adequate prose which seldom moves up or down in response to the drama or tragedy of what she is describing, lapsing now and then into anachronistic colloquialism — “broke” meaning penniless is scarcely the word of choice to describe the Victorian artist’s plight. The reality of the lives she deals with (like the reality of life as portrayed by the artists in their paintings) is obscured by a resolute romanticism.

The photographs of the female models for the pre-Raphaelites’ ample, swan-necked, faintly goiterous ladies with their hints of exophthalmia, show beings rather far from the coyly lascivious feminine hulks so indulgently painted by those bewhiskered artists of a century ago. Perhaps the utility of this book lies in its corrective to the current vogue of adulation of an episode in sexual sublimation affecting a group of talented artists — the end product of Victorian morality.

Nigel Cameron

