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**Sinopsis**

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Smart was a globe-trotting journalist until she picked up a collection of George Barker's poetry in a London bookshop and decided to fall in love with him. *Grand Central*, first published in England in 1945, is a poetic prose recreation of her side of the affair, during which she bore him four children and he remained with his wife. Many will be put off by the self-pitying solipsism of this brief work and by its occasional slips into cliché ("Everything flows like the Mississippi"). At best Smart achieves a sort of neurotic, erotic hysteria, and in part 4 she pulls off an astonishing technical feat, counterpointing the *Song of Songs* with the hideous minutiae that accompany her arrest with Barker in Arizona for an undisclosed crime. However, this cult book will best suit those whose taste runs to the more maundering Romantic poets. Accompanying the novella is its putative sequel, *The Assumption of the Rogues & Rascals*, which wasn't published until 1978. This brief work shifts the emphasis toward the concrete and quotidian. As a result, Smart's more poetical conceits seem forced. Robbed of the central focus that her affair with Barker gives the first novel, *Assumption* meanders dully.

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