

The Guildford
Institute

A UNIQUE PLACE IN THE HEART OF GUILDFORD

New Books May 2010

Non-Fiction

Maharanis : The Extraordinary Tale of Four Indian Queens and Their Journey from Purdah to Parliament by Lucy Moore

A rare, exotic portrait of the matriarchs of a brilliant Indian family ranging from the final days of the Raj and the British Empire to the present, this book re-creates a splendid lost world and describes India's national growing pains through the sumptuous, audacious lives of four ravishing, influential women of the same family. Sunity Devi, friend to Queen Victoria; Chimnabai, fierce nationalist; Indira, her flamboyant daughter; and Ayesha, her equally fashionable daughter who fought tirelessly and with incomparable grace to turn an ancient tradition of noblesse oblige into a progressive democracy.

Piano Notes by Charles Rosen

Written by a renowned concert pianist and National Book Award-winning author of *The Classical Style*, a probing, uniquely written exploration of the piano reveals how the musical instrument transformed western music and forces pianists to stretch themselves in order to master it.

Kisses on a Postcard – A Tale of Wartime Childhood by Terence Frisby

It is June 13th, 1940. Terry, aged seven, and his elder brother Jack, eleven, stand in a crowd of children on the narrow platform at Welling station. Wearing labels, carrying gas masks and small suitcases, they are evacuees, or 'vackies', awaiting the steam engine which will pull them across the country towards their unknown destination – and new lives. When they reach the tiny Cornish hamlet of Doublebois, Terry and Jack find they have swapped the newly built streets of suburban London for the adventure of the countryside. The woods and river become their playground, rabbit-catching and night-fishing their new pastimes. But it is the railway, above all, which delights them. Picked at random from the group of evacuees by a middle-aged couple, the brothers discover that the main London to Penzance line runs through a cutting right below the tiny terraced cottage where they are to live, the goods yard and sidings lie a couple of hundred yards down the line: to Jack and Terry, sons of a railwayman, No. 7 the Railway Cottages seems the perfect new home. It is the richest of childhoods, full of colour, humour and the unselfish love that Uncle Jack, an irreverent Welsh ex-miner, and his generous wife Auntie Rose, offer without reserve to the two young strangers. And despite fierce rivalry between local kids and the 'vackies', village life seems wonderful to the boys. That is, until the bombing of nearby Plymouth and dreadful news from the battlefield shatter the peace of Doublebois, reminders of the brutal reality of a war which at times had seemed so far away. A compelling and uplifting memoir of growing up in an extraordinary time.

Burying the Bones: Pearl Buck in China by Hilary Spurling

Pearl Buck was raised in China by her American parents, Presbyterian missionaries from Virginia. Blonde and blue-eyed she looked startlingly foreign, but felt as at home as her Chinese companions. She ran free on the grave-littered grasslands behind her house, often stumbling across the tiny bones of baby girls who had been suffocated at birth. Buck's father was a terrifying figure, with a maniacal zeal for religious conversion – a passion rarely shared by the local communities he targeted. He drained the family's budget for his Chinese translation of the New Testament, while his aggrieved, long-suffering wife did her utmost to create a homely environment for her children, several of whom died tragically young. Pearl Buck would eventually rise to eminence in America as a bestselling author. This book recounts her unspeakable upbringing in a China that was virtually unknown to the West.

The Lion and the Eagle by Iain Manson

At Farnborough in Hampshire on 17th April 1860, Tom Sayers of England and John Heenan of the United States met in boxing's first world championship bout it truly was the Lion and the Eagle. All England held its breath, and when news of the outcome of the fight reached New York, the city came to a standstill. This book tells the now-forgotten story of one of the greatest events in England's sporting history. The bare-knuckle prize ring, technically illegal and in decline for more than a generation, for one brief moment blazed brighter than ever. Newspapers which had ignored pugilism for decades, sent their best reporters. Charles Dickens was riveted, William Makepeace Thackeray wrote an epic poem, Prime Minister Palmerston ensured that police turned a blind eye. The book tells how the fight was arranged, recounts the bloody and desperate battle itself, and details the extraordinary aftermath. But that is not all. It tells the story of England and America in an age of turmoil and transformation. The miseries of the industrial revolution, the wonders of the Crystal Palace and the transatlantic telegraph cable, the chaos of New York City, the glamour of the Pony Express, all are here. Victoria sat on the throne of England, the Light Brigade charged, Lucknow stood firm. In America, as the iron horse sealed the doom of the Indians, millions of slaves groaned under the lash and Abraham Lincoln set out on the journey which would take him to the White House. Through it all, Tom Sayers and Jack Heenan fought for their lives. This book is a must for those who are fascinated by the most visceral sport of all. But it is also a book for anyone who has ever wondered how our ancestors lived when America was young and England ruled the world.

Mao – The Unknown Story by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday

Ever since the spectacular success of Chang's *Wild Swans* we have waited impatiently for her to complete with her husband this monumental study of China's most notorious modern leader. The expectation has been that she would rewrite modern Chinese history. The wait has been worthwhile and the expectation justified. Based on a decade of research and on interviews with many of Mao's close circle in China who have never talked before—and with virtually everyone outside China who had significant dealings with him—this is the most authoritative life of Mao ever written. It is full of startling revelations, exploding the myth of the Long March, and showing a completely unknown Mao: he was not driven by idealism or ideology; his intimate and intricate relationship with Stalin went back to the 1920s, ultimately bringing him to power; he welcomed Japanese occupation of much of China; and he schemed, poisoned and blackmailed to get his way. After Mao conquered China in 1949, his secret goal was to dominate the world. In chasing this dream he caused the deaths of 38 million people in the greatest famine in history. In all, well over 70 million Chinese perished under Mao's rule—in peacetime. Combining meticulous research with the story-telling style of *Wild Swans*, this biography offers a harrowing portrait of Mao's ruthless accumulation of power through the exercise of terror: his first victims were the peasants, then the intellectuals and, finally, the inner circle of his own advisers. The reader enters the shadowy chambers of Mao's court and eavesdrops on the drama in its hidden recesses. Mao's character and the enormity of his behaviour toward his wives, mistresses and children are unveiled for the first time. This is an entirely fresh look at Mao in both content and approach. It will astonish historians and the general reader alike.

Fiction

The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet by David Mitchell

Imagine a nation banishing the outside world for two centuries, crushing all vestiges of Christianity, forbidding its subjects to leave its shores on pain of death, and harbouring a deep mistrust of European ideas. The narrow window onto this nation-fortress is a walled, artificial island attached to the mainland port and manned by a handful of traders. Locked as the land-gate may be, however, it cannot prevent the meeting of minds – or hearts. The nation was Japan, the port was Nagasaki and the island was Dejima, to where this novel transports us in the year 1799. For one young Dutch clerk, Jacob de Zoet, a strange adventure of duplicity, love, guilt, faith and murder is about to begin – and all the while, unbeknownst to the men confined on Dejima, the axis of global power is turning...

Executive Actions by Gary Grossman

An assassin takes aim at a Presidential candidate during a primary stump speech. The instant he pulls the trigger, the outcome of the election is irrevocably changed. But Democrat Teddy Lodge, an upcoming media sweetheart, isn't killed. His wife is. As a result, Lodge emerges as the man to beat and the greatest threat to the incumbent President, Morgan Taylor. Under a specific directive from the President, Special Service Agent Scott Roarke deviles into the case and begins to unravel a deadly plot that incubated for more than 30 years; designed to alter America's allegiances in the Middle East. From the very first page, *Executive Actions* culls events from today's headlines intersecting with a scenario that's shockingly real.

The Devil's Queen by Jeanne Kalogridis

Catherine de Medici is one of the most maligned monarchs in history: blamed for the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in which hundreds of innocents died. What motivated this Renaissance woman who was born of Florence's most powerful family, and one day came to rule France? This book tells the story of Caterina, a tender young girl, destined to be a pawn in Machiavellian games. Left a fabulously rich heiress, imprisoned and threatened by her family's enemies, she was finally married off to a handsome prince of France.

Overshadowed by her husband's mistress, the conniving Diane de Poitiers, and now consort to a King, Catherine resorted to sorcery to win his love, enhance her fertility and foil her enemies. Against the lavish and decadent backdrop of the French court, and Catherine's visions induced by the black arts, this book reveals the great love and desire Catherine bore for her husband Henry, and her stark determination to keep her sons on the throne.

So Much for That by Lionel Shriver

All his life Shep Knacker has dreamed of leaving New York and living in simplicity in the Third World. Yet he comes to realise that his wife Glynis has never been serious about making the change. On the very day that he announces that he is leaving for the island of Pemba with or without her she informs him that she has cancer. So he can't leave. If nothing else, Glynis needs his health insurance. But despite having insurance coverage, the co-payments required for her astronomically expensive treatments systematically deplete Shep's nest egg, and this once well-off small businessman hurtles towards bankruptcy. This novel takes a hard look at America's health care system and tasks the uncomfortable question: how much money is one human life worth?

Mapp and Lucia by E F Benson

This is the centerpiece of E.F. Benson's now-cult series of Lucia novels, marking the debut of the eponymous middle-aged doyennes of polite, 1930s British society.