

Through The Looking Glass

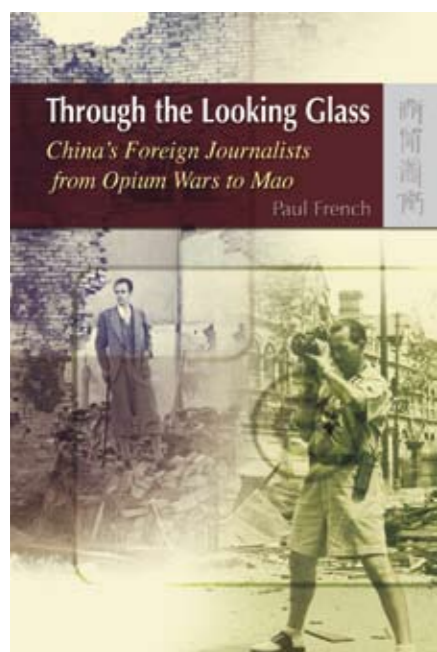
China's Foreign Journalists From Opium Wars To Mao

Author Paul French

Hong Kong University Press Non-Fiction

Review by Gary Jones

Through The Looking Glass lays bare what many China-based journalists suspect, but never shout about: the glory days of China reporting are long gone. The accepted wisdom that the West is obsessed with the middle kingdom as never before, French argues, and that 'the China story' in the first decade of the 21st century is sexier than at any time through history, is utter tosh.



The boom time for foreign journalists in China was the late 19th century and first half of the 20th, French claims, citing among much other evidence an article published in a Shanghai-based newspaper in 1928. The New York Times back then, the China Weekly Review informed its readers, was 'running seven or sometimes eight columns of material on China' and sending urgent telegrams to its man on the ground to ramp up his output and meet American demand for middle-kingdom news.

China during the decades in question, after all, was witness to the opium trade,

anti-foreign political movements, the Boxer Rebellion, the collapse of dynastic rule, the birth of the republic, the rise of warlords, Japanese warships prowling the Huangpu River, a communist party for which revolution would not be a dinner party. So how can today's relative stability compete?

Through The Looking Glass, then, looks back on an era when the country lured an army of talented journalists aiming to cement reputations in an exotic crucible of political intrigue and personal risk. China also attracted more than its share of chancers and adventurers, crooks and dreamers, spies and oddballs, and with new newspapers and magazines in English, French, German and other languages popping up almost weekly in cities like Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin, many grabbed the chance to make a buck with the China hack pack.

French intends his chronologically arranged book to be the definitive account of foreign reporting in China; a source of reference for academics as well as the simply curious. That approach means Through The Looking Glass is not always easy going for the casual reader, who must wade through reams of dry facts, figures and dates liberally spiced, it should be said, with quirky trivia (the foreigner-friendly Peking Post's front page exclaiming on one occasion, 'Just Arrived Cheese'; Hong Kong's South China Morning Post becoming, in 1916, the only newspaper in the world to be owned by a dentist) to get to the juicy bits.

But there is still much juice within, primarily squeezed from the many personalities, typewriters under their arms, that China attracted; characters such as Emily 'Mickey' Hahn, who arrived in Shanghai in 1935 and immediately embraced the social whirl. 'Half tomboy and half femme fatale', Hahn would attend parties with her pet gibbon Mr. Mills on her shoulder. She also became concubine to a Chinese poet and addicted to opium, writing about her experiences for the New Yorker.



Adam and Michael



Harlan Coben Group Photo

Then there was Shanghai radio announcer Carroll Alcott (he angered the Japanese so much following their 1937 attack on the city that he was forced to wear body armor, carry a pistol and always be shadowed by two bodyguards to avoid assassination), London Times travel correspondent Peter Fleming, brother of James Bond author Ian (Peter likened Chengde, with its grand Tibetan and Mongolian-style temples, to looking something like Windsor), and British poets WH Auden and Christopher Isherwood.

Self-proclaimed 'amateur war correspondents', the pair arrived in 1938, adored Shanghai's decadence, partook of its male brothels and bathhouses, and traveled inland briefly with their compatriot. 'Well, we've been on a journey with Fleming in China, and now we're real travelers for ever and ever,' Auden then commented flippantly. 'We need never go farther than Brighton again.'

Through The Looking Glass's pages are packed with tales of such offbeat non-conformists. It is their eccentricities and occasional lunacies, their personal misadventures and derring-do, that provide this meticulously researched book with its most enjoyable moments.

Hold Tight

By Harlan Coben



Tia and Mike never thought they would spy on their kids. But their 16 year old son Adam has been unusually distant lately, after the suicide of his classmate. So they install a sophisticated spy program on Adam's computer. Within days they are jolted by a cryptic message: 'Just stay quiet and all is safe.'

Meanwhile, on an online memorial for the dead boy, there is a photo which appears to have been taken on the night of his death. It looks like Adam, but when Adam goes missing, it becomes clear that something deeper, and more sinister, is going on – something that could tear the family apart.

'Coben is still one of America's masters of the hook, the twist and the surprise ending.' Literary Review

Killing Rommel

By Steven Pressfield



Steven Pressfield's classic novel of ancient warfare, Gates of Fire, established him as a master of historical fiction. Now, he charges forward two millennia to tell an explosive story of men at war in the modern world.

It is 1942. Hitler's legions have swept across Europe. France has fallen and Russia reels under the German onslaught. In North Africa, Field Marshal Rommel and his seemingly unstoppable Panzer divisions have routed the Eighth Army and threaten the vital oil fields of the Middle East.

With the outcome of the war hanging in the balance, the British hatch a desperate plan: to send a small, heavily armed yet highly mobile force behind enemy lines to strike a blow that will stop the Afrika Corps in its tracks. It is called the Long Range Desert Group and its exploits are to become the stuff of legend.

Based on actual events, Killing Rommel brings to life the heroism, ingenuity and daring of this maverick commando unit – a dedicated 'band of brothers' who sacrificed so much for the sake of freedom.

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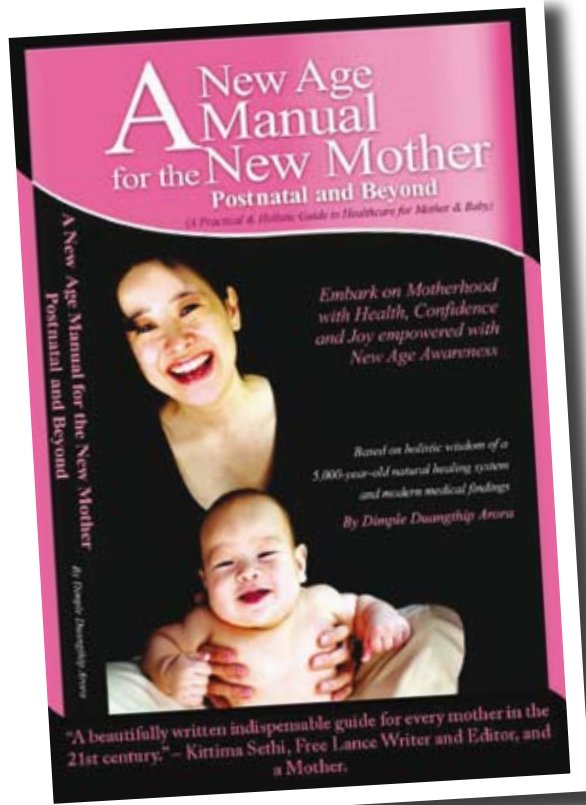
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Raising Children Naturally

Making waves with her compendium of knowledge, Dimple Duangthip Arora reminds every mother the core truth - ultimately, her child's health and wellbeing are sustained by Mother Nature. Liz Smiles meets the author.

Bubbling with energy, Duangthip certainly doesn't give the impression of an exhausted mother of two young children. "I have never felt so content in my life and so complete as a person or a woman as at this moment. Being able to share my knowledge with women from all kinds of cultures is just another dimension that gives me so much joy."

With the plethora of motherhood, pregnancy and parenting books already on the market, you would think there couldn't be anything left to say or any stone left unturned, but when Duangthip became pregnant six years ago, a comprehensive manual of ayurvedic and holistic advice for mothers simply wasn't on the shelves.

"I couldn't find a resource that I needed in Bangkok, or on Amazon and Barnes & Nobles! Most of the parenting and healthcare books were fragmented - some offered advice for the first three years of childhood, others are first aid, then you go to another for recipes, while books on postnatal mother care are virtually non-existent."

Thai-Indian by birth, Duangthip's personal journey to publishing her book began with workshops, sharing her ayurvedic and nutritional knowledge with women. In doing so, she realized just how many mothers were lacking confidence in this digital age, running to the doctor with every sniff, cut and bruise.

"From my workshop sheets I have developed this one-stop guidebook that mothers can refer to from day one out of the hospital, complete with recipes and remedies for both Mom and Baby. It is so essential to employ natural



holistic wisdom in the current times when people are going further and further away from nature, with debilitating effects on health, especially of children. This book offers an understanding of the holistic science as well - it offers awareness and wisdom, not merely information."

Readers' have commented it's like taking advice from a grandmother with a scientific mind. Full of herb news flashes and "Golden Guidelines" for every ailment, the 300 pages are packed with insights to prepare a mother in terms of attitude (see chapter Spirituality of Motherhood), and health (see chapters on diet and bodyworks) to assume this new and fantastic role in life.

"Positive parenting begins with a happy and healthy mother after all" says Duangthip, "and Mother Nature has equipped us with all the necessary tools to achieve a healthy life. Just somewhere

along the way it seems we forgot how to use them or they became overshadowed by modern technology."

Endorsed by pediatricians around the work, Duangthip's book is proving to be a welcome guide on the parenting shelves, and she is thrilled to be sharing her qualified knowledge with mothers to give children a healthy head start in life.

Further information is available on her website
www.goldenawareness.com

The book can be purchased in all Asia Books stores
 and online for the overseas market at www.asiabooks.com.