

the reader's shelf

Edited by Neal Wyatt

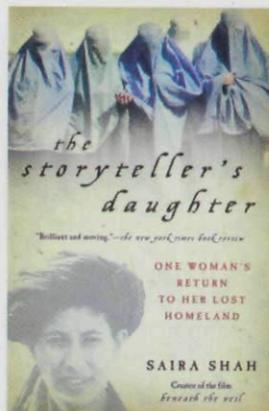
Mad Dogs and Englishmen: Intrepid Brits Abroad

They might come across as refined, calm, and a bit dull in their staid biographies, but let the British out on their own, and an amazing set of journeys unfold. Whether documenting travels long past or the newest quest of an undaunted adventurer, these stalwart authors are not your ordinary tourists writing about their summer vacations and bad food but Brits on a mission.

During the early 1930s, the very witty Agatha Christie, the Queen of Crime, wrote a delightful book about traveling and doing a little archaeology in the Middle East with archaeologist husband Maxwell Mallowan. Originally published in 1946, **COME, TELL ME HOW YOU LIVE** (Akadine Pr., dist. by Trafalgar Square, 2002. ISBN 978-1-58579-010-4. o.p.) is a charming glimpse of a time between two world wars.

Fanny Parkes was the quintessential 19th-century English traveler: brave, curious, and independent. First published in 1850, **BEGUMS, THUGS AND WHITE MUGHALS: THE JOURNALS OF FANNY PARKES** (Sickle Moon Bks., dist by Dufour, 2003. ISBN 978-0-907871-88-0. pap. \$34.95) describes Parke's adventures in Raj India from 1822 to 1846. Readers track her evolution from a prim and proper Victorian Brit into quite the eccentric lady, whom Fanny Eden (sister of the Governor General of India) described in 1838 as "(having) a husband who always goes mad in the cold season, so she says it is her duty to herself to leave him and travel about."

FROM THE HOLY MOUNTAIN: A JOURNEY AMONG THE CHRISTIANS OF THE MIDDLE EAST (Owl: Holt, 1999. ISBN 978-0-8050-6177-2. pap. \$18) tells of author William Dalrymple's trek in the footsteps of two sixth-century Byzantine monks: John Moschos and his pupil Sophronius the Sophist. In recounting his travels through Greece, Egypt, Turkey, and other former territories of the Byzantine empire, Dalrymple mixes history and adventure writing. His exotic adventures continue in **IN XANADU: A QUEST** (Lonely



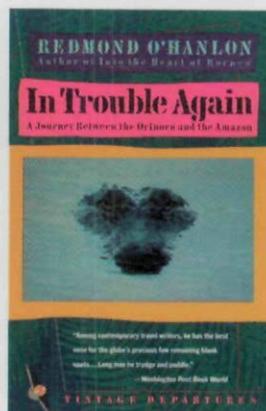
An Afghan woman goes home, a limey gets unlucky in the Amazon

Planet, 2000. ISBN 978-1-86450-173-5. pap. \$14.95), as Dalrymple retraces Marco Polo's journey from Jerusalem to China's ancient city of Xanadu.

Travel into the heart of the Amazon rainforest with Redmond O'Hanlon in **IN TROUBLE AGAIN: A JOURNEY BETWEEN THE ORINOCO AND THE AMAZON** (Vintage, 1990. ISBN 978-0-679-72714-9. pap. \$13.95), where we discover a host of diseases awaiting the unlucky adventurer. In addition, O'Hanlon finds and loses a traveling companion (apparently his friends know him too well to travel with him) and meets the mysterious Yanomami Indians.

What does one do when one sees a treasure map in a tourist shop in Jerusalem's Old City? In Tahir Shah's case, he buys the map and heads to Ethiopia. As Shah relates in **IN SEARCH OF KING SOLOMON'S MINES** (Arcade, dist. by Little, Brown, 2004. ISBN 978-1-55970-724-4. pap. \$13.99), he meets gold miners, visits a salt caravan, and hunts down snippets of information on King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

The travel bug also bit Shah's sister, freelance journalist Saira Shah, who made many trips back to her father's ancestral homeland of Afghanistan. Her wonderful **THE STORYTELLER'S DAUGHTER: ONE WOMAN'S RETURN TO HER LOST HOME-**



LAND (Anchor, 2004. ISBN 978-1-4000-3147-4. pap. \$13.95) is a magical mix of travel story and memoir as she struggles to find out where she comes from, learns to adapt and triumph over her odd mix of relatives from different lands, evades the Taliban, and searches for the mythical Afghanistan of her father's tales.

Diamonds may have no memory, as a diamond smuggler tells Kevin Rushby in **CHASING THE MOUNTAIN OF LIGHT: ACROSS INDIA ON**

THE TRAIL OF THE KOH-I-NOOR DIAMOND (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. ISBN 978-0-312-23933-6. pap. \$14.95), but they do have a fascinating history. Rushby's mesmerizing exploration traces the epic saga of the fabulous Koh-i-Noor diamond (currently residing in the Tower of London) and draws memorable portraits of the strange characters he met in India.

MIRRORS OF THE UNSEEN: JOURNEYS IN IRAN (Picador: St. Martin's, 2007. ISBN 978-0-312-42733-7. pap. \$16) by Jason Elliot is a compelling mix of travel and adventure. Through his conversations with a wide variety of Iranians and his observations of the wonders of Iran's architecture and art, Elliot gives readers a penetrating glimpse of a hidden world that few outsiders ever see.

This column was contributed by Melissa Aho, MLIS, MS, Evening & Circulation Supervisor, Bio-Medical Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

Neal Wyatt compiles LJ's online feature *Wyatt's World* and is the author of the forthcoming *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Nonfiction* (ALA Editions). She is a collection development manager for Chesterfield County Public Library, VA. Those interested in contributing to *The Reader's Shelf* should contact her directly at Readers_Shelf@comcast.net

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