



Derek Jarman at his cottage on the shingle in Dungeness: he tended the garden until only three weeks before his death in 1993

GERAINT LEWIS

A beachcomber in the footsteps of Blake

A new biography investigates the sources of the film-maker's vision. By James Hopkin

Derek Jarman
by Tony Peake
Little, Brown £25

As Jarman's former literary agent, Peake is well placed to tell the story, and does so with the best kind of biographical writing – simple and transparent – so you see through to the life. He is especially lucid about Jarman's influences: in film, Pasolini and Fellini; in painting, Rothko, Klein and Warhol; in literature, Genet and Cocteau. All were avant-garde and appealed to Jarman's sense of logic, in which difference and daring were readily encouraged. Indeed, spontaneity and serendipity were key aspects of Jarman's "junk yard" aesthetic. Ken Russell, for whom Jarman designed film-sets, went so far as to call him "the last true bohemian".

Peake also offers a discreet and accessible critique of Jarman's eclectic, richly inventive oeuvre. In addition to lively, anecdote-laden discussions of the major films – *Sebastiane*, *Jubilee*, *The Tempest*, *Caravaggio*, *Wittgenstein* – he looks closely at the notebooks in a well-measured reading which follows Jarman's attempts to trace a gay genealogy across history and the arts. Entranced by Elizabethan and

Jacobean poetry and drama, Jarman became interested in alchemy and began reading Jung as a way of connecting psyche, magic and self-development down the centuries. Peake is keen to investigate sources; his thoughtful approach only loses momentum when he goes into detail about the films which were never made, leaving us to labour through half-articulated ideas and synopses.

Jarman's own recollections, especially of sexual encounters, vary in intensity in his published journals, *Dancing Ledge*, *Modern Nature*, and *At Your Own Risk*, to the extent that an incident recounted in one is often retold with a different emphasis in another. Peake tries tactfully to set the record straight by invoking other reports and by resorting to phrases such as "if Jarman's own account of the incident is to be believed" and "where it differs from the truth ..."

Ultimately, though, he has to concede that Jarman's elusiveness is symptomatic of his mythopoetic imagination and of his struggle to outwit the past.

Jarman's life as a child was inescapably restless. Born in 1942, he was the son of a New Zealander, a man trying to forge an English identity through a career in the RAF. Jarman frequently had to change schools as his father moved around the country. When the family lived for a while in Italy, there was a period of happiness when the young boy marvelled at the light, colour and warmth of the Continent, and became enchanted by flowers. A subsequent spell living in Pakistan provided him with his first sexual experience, with a boy in prep school. Yet despite these glimpses of beauty, Jarman was troubled by his wordless, often violent relationship he had with his father. In his journal he confesses, "I started to paint in order to defend myself from this world".

Peake probes gently at this early sense of loneliness but we are left in no doubt that Jarman's spirit of fervour and fight emerged during these

unhappy times. All of Jarman's work speaks of exile, of being denied one's place in the world. Allied to this is a very real feeling of joy and compassion which, if denied, could turn easily to anger and a self-defensiveness bordering on the ruthless.

But the best sections of the book follow Jarman's time as an artist in London. We hear of his sexual and spiritual encounters – the two were always close – and we see the spaces where he kept his ideas, the studios and flats he decorated with a simple reverence for beauty. There is excitement, too, as his set-design, film and pop video careers take off. Then there are the parties at Ossie Clark's place, the drugs, the mischief and, in his work as in his life, an enduring mixture of the harsh and the beautiful.

Understandably, the book takes on an elegiac tone when Jarman is diagnosed HIV positive in 1986. Yet the man himself continued to protest. With commitment and courage, Jarman became a vociferous supporter of Outrage! and travelled extensively with his partner, Kevin Collins. He went back to painting, made films, produced books and tended the garden he cherished in Dungeness until only three weeks before his death in 1993. Peake's perceptive study gives another aspect of permanence to an all-too-fleeting life.

Whatever you think about Derek Jarman – and he wasn't one to discourage dissenters – there's no denying that he pursued his aesthetic with passionate conviction. The man is inextricable from his work, for in his day-to-day life, as in his art, he went looking for love and colour and exuberance and, above all, the promise of magic.

From the twilight coast of Dorset to his thrilling night-world of pubs, clubs and assignations on Hampstead Heath, Jarman played the beachcomber, the alchemist, the Blakean visionary, bringing together disparate objects, images or people in his indefatigable quest to reveal the mythic behind the mundane.

He painted, used collage, designed stage-sets, made feature films, published several fine books, and developed a beautiful garden beside his cottage in Dungeness, Kent, as he sought to repudiate what he saw as the divisive value system of middle-class "heterosoc" England. Transcending the confines of genre was one way, transcending gender and sexuality another. Biographer Tony Peake acknowledges that Jarman had a "compulsion to be promiscuous", but this sensitive study endeavours not to moralise but to comprehend.

21/11/99
2ND ON SUNDAY

No indulgences for Derek the latter day saint

DEREK JARMAN

★★★

Tony Peake
Little, Brown
£25

ARTISTS have received many honours but only one — Derek Jarman — has been canonised. The fact that the ceremony was conducted by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a self-proclaimed order of male nuns, rather than the Pope, appealed to Jarman.

In their citation, the Sisters praised his “extraordinary contribution to the lesbian and gay community”. By the time of his death, Jarman was, arguably, the most famous gay man in Britain and, undoubtedly, the most famous to have lived openly with HIV.

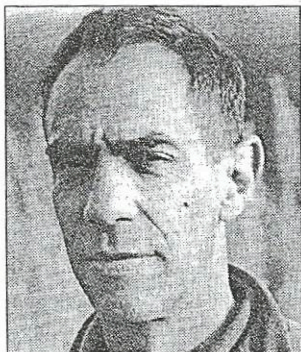
His diagnosis in 1986 brought new urgency to his work — he made five feature films, wrote several memoirs, directed pop videos and designed a unique garden at his home in Dungeness.

For Jarman, life and art were inseparable. His directing career began with Super-8 films of his friends, and his description of *The Last Of England* as “home-movie-making really gone slightly grand” holds true for much of his work.

This, coupled with his frank sexuality, ensured that long before media attention to his illness had turned him into “the object of necrophilia”, he had become public property.

This poses particular problems for a biographer but Tony Peake, who acted as Jarman’s literary agent, negotiates them admirably.

His account is warm, judicious and, unexpectedly,



CANONISED: Derek Jarman

critical. He traces Jarman’s sexuality from the tortured (at times, literally) years at boarding school through lovers who included Robert Mapplethorpe and serial-killer Michele Lupo. He pulls no punches, particularly in the portrayal of Jarman’s last lover Keith Collins, who “was, in the eyes of many, little more than a lager lout”.

Peake is equally objective about Jarman’s artistic achievement. He provides a sharp and colourful portrait not just of Jarman’s own multi-faceted life but of the various personalities who played a part in it, from John Gielgud, David Hockney and Ken Russell to street boys and the Pet Shop Boys.

He pays his subject the tribute of stressing his faults and failures as much as his virtues and successes. Attacking Britain’s literary culture, Jarman declared that “I don’t know any novelists, thank God”.

He would be glad that he knew Peake, whose first novel was published in his last year and whose biography has done him proud.

● *Express Bookshop*, £23.

MICHAEL ARDITTI

EXPRESS ON SUNDAY
14/11/99

Original of the species

Times 'Metro' w/c 13/11/99



DEREK JARMAN

By Tony Peake

Little, Brown, £25
(Non-fiction)

ISBN 0 316 64466 8

£22 (free p&p)
0870 160 8080

Iconoclastic film-maker, controversial author, tirelessly inventive painter and outrageously polemical gay activist, Derek Jarman's inimitable neo-Renaissance dynamic was both heroic and directly in proportion to his considerable creative talents. Jarman was above all things an individual, and his uncompromising maverick sensibility was as integral to his genius as it was offensive to his detractors.

That Jarman lived and died on the cutting edge of contemporary culture is central to the thesis of Tony Peake's monumentally well-researched and fittingly respectful biography of this multifaceted personality. Peake, Jarman's literary agent, is his subject's perfect biographer, for he nowhere attempts to intrude on Jarman's richly colourful life. Without sensationalising Jarman's insurrectionist activities, he offers an unflinchingly well-balanced account of the artist's action-packed 51 years.

Like all visionaries in the Blakean tradition, Jarman was largely self-created. Born in 1942, he came from a middle-class family, the son of an RAF senior air staff officer. He grew up in Northwood, Middlesex, going to Hordle House prep school and Canford public school.

A self-absorbed, imaginative child, with an eye sensitive to the minute particulars of nature, Jarman claimed to have first slept with a boy at the age of nine, and from then on to have graduated to a defiant aversion to heterosexual life.

While at public school he referred to painting as his "secret garden... an escape out of Heterosoc".

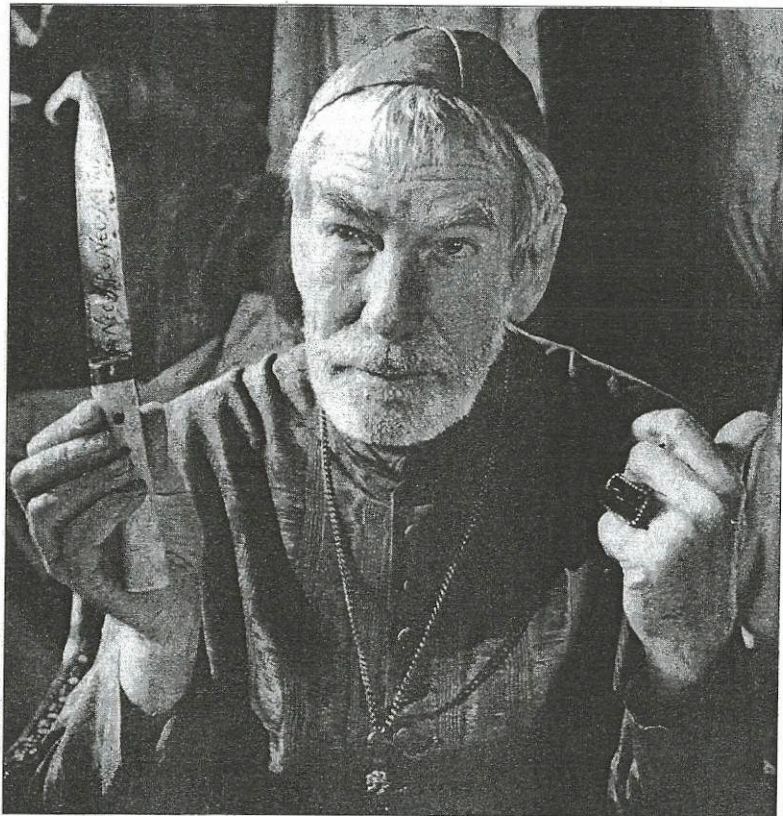
During 1964, his second year at the Slade, Jarman became enamoured of film-makers such as Fellini and Pasolini, but after leaving he spent several years as a designer for such luminaries as Frederick Ashton, John Gielgud and Ken Russell. It was only in the early Seventies that he began shooting the home-made super-8 films which were to evolve, in 1976, into the critically acclaimed *Sebastiane*.

Jarman's exuberant restlessness as a creator and his unwillingness to stick with one particular medium stayed with him for life. Highly disciplined and hard-working, he painted, shot films, wrote and designed, and, in his own words, "went in search of myself and never did a day's work that I regret".

Peake is good at pointing up the mystical aspects of Jarman the man and the film-maker. Jarman was deeply influenced by the writings of Jung, as well as those of Heraclitus, Shakespeare and the English metaphysical poets. His reading of Jung, Peake tells us, encouraged the idiosyncratic dreaminess of his film imagery in which he slows down his super-8s, while simultaneously focusing on minutiae of detail.

Always working with a budget of less than £750,000, Jarman, pursuing his concept of a historic gay lineage, shot controversially brilliant features such as *Jubilee* (1977), *Caravaggio* (1986) and *The Last of England* (1987). Of their lyricism, Jarman wrote, "in my films it's important to look into the corners".

In the Eighties Jarman moved from a Bankside warehouse to become ensconced in a tiny studio flat at Phoenix House in Charing Cross Road. Diagnosed HIV positive in 1986, the same year as he met Keith Collins, the companion who would look after him for the rest of his life, Jarman manifested a courage which was truly awesome in



CUTTING EDGE: Michael Gough as Cardinal Del Monte in Jarman's *Caravaggio*, 1986, one of his most brilliant movies

terms of creative output. A fierce opponent of the Thatcher years, and in particular of Clause 28, Jarman now found himself a public figure courted by the media on account of his HIV status. He continued to work ferociously, alternating his days spent in London with

cultivating a garden at his cottage in Dungeness. Jarman lost his fight against Aids in 1993, creating to the end, despite blindness. His voracious appetite for life and his undeviating sense of self-conviction are wonderfully celebrated by Peake.

In an address penned for his

funeral, Jarman wrote: "I was once thinking of becoming a priest but I knew the vocation would be a lie. I did the better thing and became an artist, an alternative spiritual path." For most of us he followed that path to its end.

Jeremy Reed

A hellish end for the boy who had glimpsed Eden

CRITIC'S CHOICE



DEREK JARMAN
by Tony Peake
(Little Brown, £25)

by Ned
Denny

THE CARD that announced the birth of Michael Derek Elworthy Jarman in 1943 showed a baby manning a plane, high in the clouds, assailing the blue. It could not have been more appropriate.

Derek Jarman's last film before his early death from Aids, called simply *Blue* and consisting of spoken words over a field of pure colour, was a celebration of that journey into 'infinite possibility'.

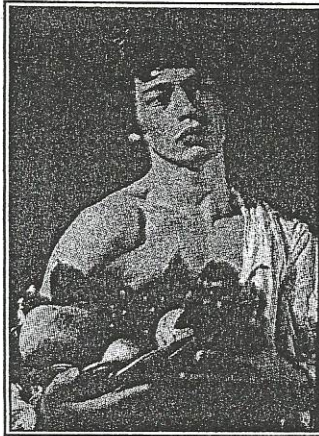
The light-hearted drawing unwittingly encapsulated both his artist's longing for the skies and the almost military fervour with which he conducted his campaign.

The son of an RAF officer, Jarman's was the typical rootless childhood of Forces children. Early in 1946 the family joined Lance Jarman at his posting in Italy.

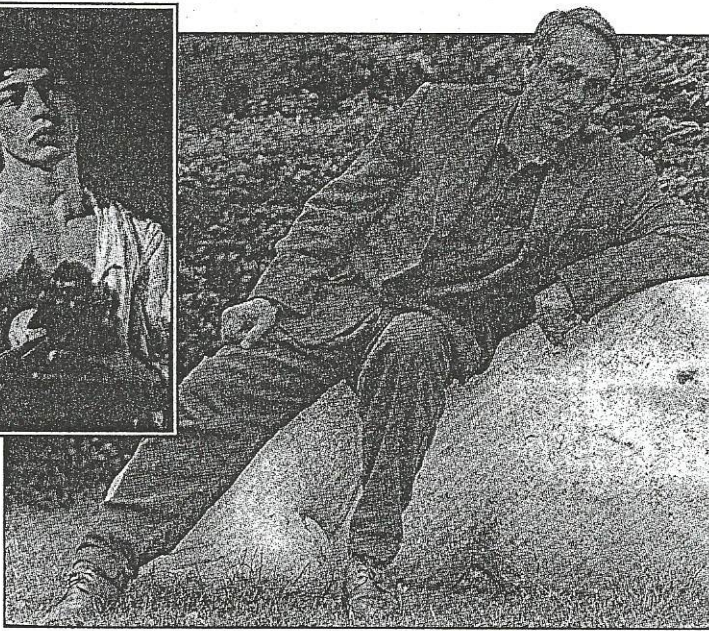
To the four-year-old Derek, the abundant life of their villa garden — especially after the gloom of wartime Britain — was overwhelming.

He would later remember 'a cornucopia of cascading blossom, abandoned avenues of mighty camellias, old roses trailing into the lake, huge golden pumpkins, stone gods overturned and covered with scurrying lizards'. This vision of earthly paradise would never leave him.

It was in childhood, too, that the



The man and his work: Above, his acclaimed movie *Caravaggio*, and right, Jarman in pensive mode



seeds of his love of film were sown — principally its magical, dream-like qualities.

His first visit to the cinema was to see *The Wizard Of Oz*, a film that so transported him that at one point he bolted with 'a terrified wail'.

The opposition between a monochrome normality and a transfigured land 'over the rainbow', the intervention of supernatural beings, a wizard 'who frankly admits of his own incompe-

tence', the search for home — all these are themes that can be traced throughout his entire career.

Peake is right to pay careful attention to these years. Jarman's youth and early manhood are documented in just as close and evocative detail — grim days at boarding school, early attempts at painting, the period in the Seventies when his extravagant circle earned him a reputation as the Andy Warhol of London — but

it is his childhood passions that most illuminate the glowing beauty of his films.

Equally well-covered and equally important is his homosexuality. The current of anger in films such as *Jubilee* stems largely from intense feelings of isolation and betrayal.

Jarman's mere sexuality made him a criminal for the first half of his life — the climate of guilt and subterfuge in which this forced him to live, crucial to an understanding

of his art, is made abundantly clear. Jarman's frequently difficult films — later ones such as *The Garden* sometimes consisting simply of a series of mysterious images — are further clarified by Peake's examination of his working methods.

His lifelong use of a super-8 or 'home-movie' camera is detailed. Familiar with the medium since childhood, he loved the way the flickering forms and heightened colours seemed to transform the world.

'In all home movies is a longing for paradise,' he wrote.

He filmed as a painter in love with the colours, the textures, the sheer spectacle of the world.

SOME of the most powerful shots in *The Garden* are of plants stirred by the wind — a common enough sight that seems, nevertheless, like a glimpse of Eden.

It was while filming — a feature called, appropriately, *The Last Of England* — that he stumbled on one of the great loves of the latter part of his life.

Dungeness is a vast shingle bank biting into the English Channel 'like the ivory fin of a prehistoric shark'. Under the scudding clouds, in the shadow of the vast power stations, it feels like the edge of the world.

Jarman, enamoured of the place's lonely beauty, bought one of the small wooden cottages that litter the foreshore as if they've been brought in on the last tide.

As his health failed, he would spend more and more time there, building a garden in this most inhospitable of locations. Sea kale, dog rose, mullein, sea pinks, santolinas — the few plants that would take in the stony soil, even their names are as strangely radiant as the images in his films.

To follow Jarman's slow decline from Aids-related illnesses is harrowing. He was diagnosed as HIV-positive in the mid-Eighties when an air of hysteria hung round the issue like mist.

EVEN if attitudes had improved somewhat by the decade's end, when he began to suffer the effects of the virus, means of treating it were still primitive. Drugs intended to halt its spread, many still in experimental stages, had debilitating side-effects. Lesions on his brain slowly robbed his sight and he entered a twilight zone of fevers, night-sweats, amnesia and disorientation.

His struggle with illness, ironically, gave him a media profile he would never have gained on the strength of his decidedly uncommercial films alone. By the time of his burial in Old Romney churchyard in March 1994, his extraordinary courage and resilience in the face of death had — as Peake puts it in this clear and candid biography — 'led to his achieving iconic status in the eyes not only of his most obvious constituency, gay men, but of almost anyone with a care for the human spirit'.

PAPERBACKS



The Folded Leaf
by William Maxwell
(Harvill, £6.99)

■ **THIS** newly reissued novel is an elegiac, polished account of the well-charted passage from boyhood to manhood. Set in Twenties Chicago, it centres on a friendship as intense as it is unlikely. Spud Latham is the new kid on the block — strong, athletic and volatile, he is everything that Lymie Reiers, the brainy runt of the class, is not. Lymie worships Spud from the first and the boys fall into an easy camaraderie. But as they pass from school to college, tensions surface and when eventually Lymie's friend Sally falls in love with Spud, it is clear that something must give.

The outcome is devastating. Written over half a century ago, *The Folded Leaf* belongs to a lost era of innocence and decorum, but its observations remain fresh and true.



The Pianist
by Wladyslaw Szpilman
(Phoenix, £7.99)

■ **AT THE** outbreak of World War II, Wladyslaw Szpilman, a Jewish pianist and composer, was working for Polish Radio, and this best-selling memoir tells the miraculous story of his cat-and-mouse survival in occupied Warsaw. Written in 1945 when he was still deeply in shock, it describes with startling immediacy the Nazi invasion of Warsaw, the creation of the ghetto and the deportation of his family. He prepares himself for death on numerous occasions, only to escape by sheer chance. But as the war enters its final stage, he slips up and comes face to face with a German officer. Wliln Hosenfeld. Incredibly, Hosenfeld does not shoot him on the spot but instead finds him food and a place to hide. Extracts from Hosenfeld's diary are included in this volume.



Sweet Talk: The Secret History Of Confectionery
by Nicholas Whittaker
(Phoenix, £7.99)

■ **THIS** is a witty and deliciously nostalgic look back on a century of ice cream, chocolate and sweet eating, in which we've been indulging as a nation since the 1300s. After 65 years, the Mars Bar is one of the longest surviving chocolate bars, but Whittaker lists an exotic array of much-missed old favourites such as Cadbury's Aztec, Dobson's Moon Pebbles and penny Arrow bars, as well as considering newcomers such as Fuse and Magnum and pondering the impact of giants Cadbury, Nestle and Mars. He also takes a comical look at marketing from Bertie Bassel to the Milk Tray man, and reveals some rather murky trade secrets. There is even a recipe for genuine acid drops.



The Knife Thrower
by Steven Millhauser
(Phoenix, £6.99)

■ **THESE** short stories lead the reader into an eerie, twilight zone where the boundaries between reality and fantasy blur. In the title story, an audience watches a knife-thrower and waits, half in dread, half in excited expectation, for him to prove the disturbing rumours everyone has heard about his routine. In another, the monotony of a never-ending summer holiday is relieved by a new craze — magic carpets — but the temptation is always to fly higher and further, while the narrator of *A Visit Is* strangely shocked when he meets his best friend's wife. In this glittering, fairy-tale landscape, the familiar is used unsettlingly with the fantastic, and the things which we fear and dread become irresistible.

by Hephzibah Anderson

A man of his time

TWO DAYS AFTER DEREK JARMAN

succumbed to the virus which he had spent eight years publicly and privately fighting, MPs rejected a move to equalise the age of consent. Angry crowds of gay men and women, for whom the militant gay film director had become an inspiration, rampaged outside Parliament. While the riot which marked the birth of gay liberation had been fuelled by grief over the death of Judy Garland, the rioters' anger in February 1994 was reinforced by the death of their own hero. Jarman, "canonised" as a gay saint by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, had become the Judy Garland of British gay history.

The greater coincidence was that Garland's first starring vehicle, *The Wizard of Oz*, was Jarman's earliest film influence. Taken to see it as a child, he was so terrified that he fled his seat and had to be hauled back by an usherette. "I took part in [the film], rather than merely watched it," he later wrote. But Tony Peake's vast biography emphasises that, otherwise, film rarely featured in the young Jarman's life. His passion was painting.

Conceding defeat in the fiercely competitive world of fine art, he won early praise as a ballet designer for Sir Frederick Ashton. He then drifted into the film world as a designer for the avant-garde director Ken Russell. Peake, Jarman's former literary agent, is no uncritical admirer of the super-8 films and pop video montages which became his trademark. He notes Jarman's incomprehension when it was politely suggested that films worked better with some kind of narrative, and he describes pot-hazed film shows at the director's Bankside home in the 70s, when the guests would surreptitiously nod off.

Instead, he recognises Jarman for what he was: an upper-middle-class Englishman doomed to be an outsider, excluded by sexuality and anger from the world he was born to, and comfortable only when surrounded by fellow outsiders and trouble-makers. At first uneasy with his gayness - he had a sexless school life, and early partners com-

plained that he was appalling in bed - he blossomed as the gay movement itself blossomed, learning how to be passionate politically as well as physically. From *Sebastiane*, his all-Latin homoerotic first feature, to *Blue*, his final film-poem about the unsentimental reality of Aids, Jarman's work for the cinema was about correcting the omissions of "heterosoc".

As a compulsive diarist and scribbler, the film-maker is in some ways an easy subject for a biography. The material is all there, even if, as Peake tactfully observes, Jarman's various accounts of the same events do not always tally. But he was always a man of his time. He learned to be a bohemian in the 60s, was inspired by the earliest howls of punk in the 70s, stood in the anti-

Thatcher vanguard in the 80s, and exuberantly embraced the politics of queer in the 90s. Peake's extraordinary achievement is to have captured the spirit of each age, tracking the growth of Jarman the artist and man in the context of the changing world around him.

It is Jarman's tragedy, and ours, that his body was unable to fight the virus for just two or three years longer, until the protease revolution. But he remains one of the defining figures of gay militancy, as well as an artist capable of producing celluloid images of rare poetry and beauty. Every great life is made greater by a great life, and Peake has given Derek Jarman the biography he deserves.

Simon Edge

● Simon Edge writes for *The Express*

Portrait of the artist Jarman

WN

◆ Derek Jarman

By Tony Peake

Little Brown, \$425.00

Ian Graham

It was an unhappy period in the 1950s at Cranford Hall, a traditional, if not very illustrious, English public school, though some solace was to be found in drawing class and tending to the garden. As Derek Jarman poignantly recalled, "The school is bleak and soulless, dominated by bells, prayers, bullying and everything that brings a chill."

He studied at the Slade School of Art and after college, concentrated on painting, with some success. He also worked in theatre design, collaborating with John Gielgud on a production of *Don Giovanni*, before Ken Russell offered him work as production designer on his controversial film, *The Devils*. It seemed a fortuitous association, one established iconoclast collaborating with a newer, no less compromising one.

After the Russell experience, while continuing to paint, Jarman began experimenting making Super 8 films, mostly recording his friends and his London home. After financing his first films, including *Sebastiane*, with the help of friends, he finally began to get some recognition when the British Film Institute invested in a number of projects.

A controversial figure, Jarman was frequently embroiled in fierce clashes with British 'pillars of society', including Mary Whitehouse, who slammed his films for their blatant homo-erotic overtones, as well as Channel Four, whose controllers had the audacity to screen them!

Even as his film ambitions expanded, Jarman's vision, remained focused on a very personal cinema. The paradox, was that Jarman was not committed to commercial feature film production, and was, too 'arty' for the main alternative, the British social realist tradition. He did not regard film as 'narrative', except in a very oblique way. The result, often confused, impressionistic jumbles of visuals, with very little coherence or technical skill on display. Only *Caravaggio* really works and even then, not all of the time.

(1/28) IRISH INDEPENDENT
12/2/00

This is a superbly written biography, both evocative and gritty, as much a social history of post-war Britain, than a life of an artist. Peake has an excellent prose style, but the issue of whether his subject is of the stature, warranting a five hundred page tome, is still open to debate.



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Derek Jarman

Tony Peake



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Reviews

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Biographies undertaken by acquaintances of the subject can so assault the senses with over-preened apologia that one would be forgiven for chomping on lemons to counter the gooiness. Tony Peake, former literary agent of Derek Jarman, proves an honourable exception, for in this oddly conventional yet superb account of an anything but conventional life, he remembers with discerning clarity the maverick talent and the talented maverick. As Betts, Jarman's mother, confided to her husband, "I'm so glad our children haven't grown up normal. They're so much more interesting than their friends." Jarman came to be known as much for going public on being HIV-positive and for the subsequent campaigning work he did for AIDS awareness and the militant gay group "Outrage". His homosexuality certainly informed his art, though for many it may also have obstructed it—but that would be a criticism of the artist, not the man. He came to film relatively late; painting was perhaps his first love (he was short listed for the 1986 Turner Prize), certainly staying with him as a constant form of expression until his final days, and he was also a prolific writer, with several volumes of autobiography and journals published, and a final one due to appear in early 2000. If mythology informed his art, it also shaped his life and Peake shows redoubtable resolution in trying to pin down the facts in the face of constant re-invention and artistic licence. Jarman was an original film-maker, perhaps not great, but always searchingly imaginative, and if his films show flaws, the charge can never be laid that they lack ambition and vision, something conspicuously absent from the work of so many of his British contemporaries. His later works, made in the shadow of his personal sword of Damocles, are steeped in unavoidable poignancy, stripped of the eager rawness of the youthful *Jubilee* and *The Tempest*. And always behind the artifice and polemic lay a gentle, warm man, devoted to his gardening, a constant that spanned his life. Where others may plunder, Tony Peake has crafted an intimate, sensitive account, unafraid of home truths, yet commendably slow to judge; he shows the seams, but wisely doesn't remark on the stitch work. --David Vincent

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lifestories

Roz Kaveney

It is generally the fate of musicians, actors and painters to have their lives written about rather than sung, performed or painted; if all art aspires to the condition of music, all lives aspire to the condition of story, particularly after a writer has been at them. There is the romantic story of victory through struggle, say, or the moralistic story of bad leading to worse, or the sad story of promise largely unfulfilled; lives that cannot be fitted comfortably into those stories are almost inevitably harder to write, less interesting to read.

Cole Porter is not necessarily a lesser musician than Hector Berlioz or John Lee Hooker, but he was a rich boy who much of the time regarded his talent as a social accomplishment or hobby; his serious pursuit of formal musical training had to be fitted around seducing Diaghilev's choreographer boyfriend or thinking up parties to entertain his even richer wife. William McBrien's *Cole Porter* (Harper Collins, £9.99) makes clear how much pain he endured during the latter part of his life—a horse had rolled on his legs—and how much he loved the wife to whom he was true, darling, in his fashion, but the book never quite catches fire; we care about the songs, but we can just go and listen to them.

Charles Shaar Murray's *Boogie Man* (Penguin, £17.99) makes us care about Hooker as well as his music, partly because a black life lived during the slow debridement of American racism was always going to be interesting, partly because Murray turns the book away from some of the conventional pieties of the biography into a meditation on the blues. Some readers will find it an intrusive breach of decorum that he acknowledges his personal griefs as a guarantee of the power of blues music to heal; others will find these passages deeply moving, an expression of the blues in prose.

On a far larger scale, David Cairns's two-volume *Hector Berlioz* (Penguin Press, £25 each) is a discussion of the whole Romantic movement in the arts. Think of any aspect of Romanticism—continuity with the classical, flirtation with madness and crime, obsession with Shakespeare, stretching of genre forms—and Berlioz will always offer fascinating examples. And he really did persuade his muse to marry him by the eloquence of work dedicated to her, really was the Titan destroyed by jealous inferiors. And, being an accomplished journalist as well as a great composer, he knew how

to arrange his life into compelling patterns. Cairns's thorough documentation and critical acuteness make this one of the most important books of the year, a scholarly work that keeps

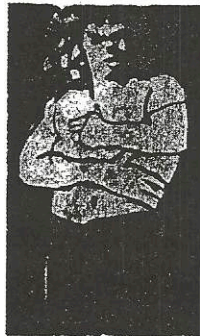
you awake into the night, wondering whether Hector wins the prize, finishes the opera, gets the heroine...

Equally fine as scholarship, but less compelling as a story, Ian McIntyre's *Garrick* (Penguin, £25) evokes decades of forgotten theatrical feuding and performs the near-impossible task of inventing for us the Method-ish performances of an actor two centuries dead. Because his Huguenot family disapproved of him, Garrick was determined to be a respectable gentleman as well as an actor; his creation of Bardolaty was in part a claiming of British identity against hacks who played the patriotic card against him. There is no suspense here, but there is a certain shock of recognition as Garrick imposes his iron will on British social history.

And in case we were wondering whether it was possible to lead a modern life so consciously engaged with the exemplary and the iconic, Tony Peake's *Derek Jarman* (Little, Brown, £25) eventually demonstrates very clearly and precisely that it is. Jarman took some years to find his voice and his method, and Peake's life inevitably shares this element of dithering for part of its length. Peake's Jarman is a film-maker of real talent and a polemicist of genius. This is a book about a man and artist who elevated bad attitude to a point of principle and convinced many of us that he was right to do so. Peake successfully avoids a kitsch reading of Jarman's

long, slow death; his best work was motivated far less by the urgency his fatal illness imposed than by bitterness over the potential for youthful happiness that had been wasted by the punitive anti-gay laws and culture under which he grew up.

There are other ways than political engagement for an artist to be at war with society. Edward Bunker's volume of memoirs, *Mr Blue* (No Exit, £16.99), is a powerful story of a criminal rebel with no cause, and plenty of reasons. Best known for his performance in *Reservoir Dogs*, Bunker lived the life of a robber and scammer and long-term prisoner for most of his teens and much of his adult life; he is, in passing, acute both on the cut-price antinomianism of the criminal culture and the decline of American prisons from mere hell-holes into nightmares of racial warfare.



Masked ball

DEREK JARMAN. By Tony Peake. Little, Brown; 624 pages; £25

HE WAS many things: "A crucial figure in British cinema"; "the gay guru"; "a jewelled magpie"; "a decaying necromancer" were some of the labels attached to Derek Jarman by critics, enemies, and by himself. From his schooldays onwards he was a painter, and he painted all his life. In his 20s, he was also a set designer. In his 30s, he became a maverick film maker. In his 40s, he was diagnosed as being HIV positive. And in 1994, aged 51, he died of AIDS.

Jarman's films, all made with tiny budgets, seem likely to survive him longest. His 1986 "Caravaggio" is a dazzling recreation of the painter's world, emphasising the sexual eclecticism of the stonemason's son and his group, all done in a style reminiscent of the painter's own work. "Edward II" (1991) is a modern-dress, rough-trade abridgement of Marlowe's play, and "Wittgenstein" (1993) is a stark study of the philosopher crammed into just 75 minutes.

All three protagonists had obvious appeal to Jarman the "gay guru". But his more urgent, angry movies—"Jubilee" (1978) and "The Last of England" (1987)—reveal a man at odds with Jarman the conscious rebel: their fury with modern "decadence" disguises a romantic nostalgia that is not unlike that to be found in the early satires of Evelyn Waugh.

This is less surprising than it appears. In "Who's Who", Jarman's father de-

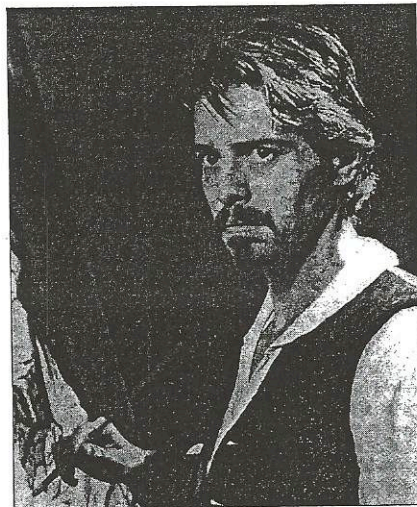
scribed himself as "Air Commodore Lance Michael Elworthy-Jarman, son of Hedley Elworthy and Mary Elizabeth Jarman (née Chatterway-Clarke); married 1940 Elizabeth Evelyn Litton-Puttock". Tony Peake's otherwise exhaustive biography quotes neither "Who's Who" nor its array of hyphenated double barrels. But it shows how assiduously Jarman's father, born in New Zealand, built a career as a British officer—and how sternly he treated his arty son.

Close to his mother, alienated from his father, Jarman was sent away to boarding school where he was once, traumatically, caught in bed with another boy. Jarman's account of the incident varied, "never allowing", as Mr Peake admits, "too much attention to truth to undermine a good narrative." At all events, his personal pattern was set early. But it included much of his father's character and courage. By 1986, Jarman knew that he had AIDS. Yet he wrote in his diary, almost in his father's voice: "Pull yourself together and put on the best of your masks to face the new day."

They were an odd family. One day Jarman's father presented him with "my school report and bills, the cost of an education to make me 'an Englishman'." Later, when his wife, Jarman's mother, was dying of cancer, the air commodore succumbed to kleptomania. And the family took home movies when to do so was highly unusual.

Mrs Jarman herself once remarked to her husband: "I'm so glad our children haven't grown up normal. They're so much more interesting than their friends."

Jarman himself treasured home movies. He constantly used a hand-held Super-8. Of the miles of film he shot, his last pictures were his most personal: "War Requiem" (with Benjamin Britten's music and Wilfred Owen's words); "The Garden" (about the pebbly garden he grew at his cottage on shingly, windswept Dungeness); and "Blue" (just a blue screen with a soundtrack). Telling this teeming story, Tony Peake sometimes gushes and occasionally errs. But his labour of love brings back to life a fascinating man.



Jarman's Caravaggio

TMAS

views 1999, and his biographical choice

Heaven and hell in a maverick life

DEREK JARMAN

by Tony Peake

Little, Brown £25, 595 pages

"In all home movies is a longing for paradise," wrote Derek Jarman. It is a wonderful perception. And if the ill-finished nature of amateur image-making really is "about" a lost or yearned-for perfection, it may explain the appeal of Jarman's own bric-a-brac experimentalism.

As a painter, writer, designer and filmmaker he spent 30 years - from the outlandish sets for Ken Russell's *The Devils* (public loos gone giantist) to the otherworldliness of *Blue*, the single-colour film about his Aids illness - moving between semi-private heavens and hells.

He found extra fame in the 1990s as a gay campaigner, vilifying not just homophobes but unfaithful believers. He never forgave Ian McKellen for accepting a knighthood from the Thatcher government after its infamous "Clause 28", which told local councils in essence to discriminate against homosexuality.

Jarman could be a grandstander, a Savonarola, a pest with a pulpit. But it was impossible not to like him: his personal energy, vividly evoked in this biography, gave him so much charm. Impossible too to dismiss his work, even though the bad (films such as *Jubilee* and *The Last of England*; much of the painting and poetry) could be very bad indeed.

For author Tony Peake, this messianic amateur was a kind of paragon. Jarman never yielded to cultural or political fashion and never "sold out". And his homes remained virtual garrets even when they commanded studio-sized space in Charing Cross Road or the windswept, picturesque cottages in Dungeness.

Was Jarman born a maverick and misfit? His mother and father were classic gay parents, Peake suggests: she all-loving, he a remote disciplinarian later revealed - to the astonishment of a son who must have thought he had cornered the market in acts of antisocial rebellion - as a kleptomaniac. The most touching passage comes when Derek and his sister search dad's house after his death to discover "the maddest inheritance. 90 bottles of whisky (he never drank), enough baked beans

to fill a kitchen cupboard, 100 stolen cartons of lavatory paper... and on and on."

Like father like son? A bricoleur like Jarman may well be culture's answer to a compulsive thief, the difference being that this artist-filmmaker confessed and revelled in his plunderings. Medieval art and drama, Caravaggio, the English countryside, Oscar Wilde, underground cinema, gay physique mags...

Borrowed treasures galore, although as with dad's loot there were periods when Derek's cultural swag merely stacked up in the attic of his mind. Rather than being incorporated into a personal vision, it just spilled over when it had to.

He dreamed of a collective artmaking like that of the old cathedral-builders, but that method triumphed only occasionally. *The Garden* was his most beautiful and cohesive collaborative feature, with postproduction nearly all done by others during a Jarman hospitalisation. The film works its Biblical motifs

At best, Jarman

was a poet of word

and image who saw

the richness in

simple things

into a mocking but serious epic of gay martyrdom set on a terminal beach (Dungeness with stunning, darkly lyrical trick projections).

Blue, his last film, was a collaboration between Jarman and Jarman. It remains astonishing: 80 minutes of blue screen (partly meant to represent the Aids-afflicted director's own engulfing blindness) with words and music welling up and falling away like incantatory, grief-defying thoughts. It is impossible not to admire the dogged bravery with which he continued working; less easy to admire his no-less dogged sexual promiscuity.

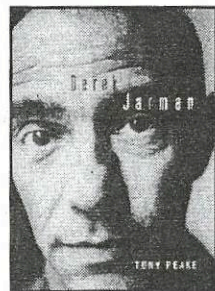
At best Jarman was a poet of word and image who saw the richness in simple things: in being alive, in movement as miracle, in the hide-and-seek revelations of nature. Offscreen, as a crusader for an honourable cause, he taught us a no less valuable lesson by setting his own maverick's example. He made friends by being unafraid to make enemies.

F5
27/11/99

The heroic, scatter-shot life of a queer icon

BETWEEN HIS diagnosis as HIV-positive in 1986 and his death in 1994, Derek Jarman produced five feature films, five books and several series of paintings. He created a remarkable garden and designed and directed stage shows and pop videos. The public Jarman set about infuriating the establishment and found himself the first distinctly queer icon. The private Jarman was conducting a largely platonic, often turbulent, relationship with Keith Collins.

Tony Peake's substantial, sympathetic life shows how acutely Jarman was "attuned to his times like a litmus paper". The stifling conventions of postwar England weigh heavily on the young Jarman's various homes, dictated by his father's RAF career. His sexual coming of age coincided with the Sixties (though, ever the prodigy, he claimed to have been initiated at nine). The casual hippy aesthetic, however, proved largely anathema, and Jarman's career took off during the Seventies punk "rebellion", which was more conducive to his talents for mythologisation and publicity. In the



Eighties, his status as Britain's prime exponent of the cinematic avant-garde was consolidated by the contrast with his twin demons: Thatcherism and an obese arts world.

HIV compelled Jarman to bring order to an unfocused career. If the shadow of Aids fell across the pre-diagnosis films *Caravaggio* and *The Last of England*, it informed the post-diagnosis quintet: *War Requiem*, *The Garden*, *Edward II*, *Wittgenstein* and *Blue*. Jarman always worked best under time pressure, though his falter mid-career (when funding of *Caravaggio* stalled) suggests that time for reflection finessed his gifts.

FRIDAY BOOK

Derek Jarman
by Tony Peake
(Little, Brown, £25)

Jarman's life challenges the biographer, not least because of the diffuse body of his own commentary. Tony Peake, who was his literary agent, intelligently picks out contradictions in Jarman's diaries. He is less successful in bringing order to the chaotic volume of material. The life seems too much as the younger Jarman lived it – convoluted and scatter-shot. The prose isn't especially polished; chapters run between four and 50 pages; and there's one wrong photo attribution (Isaac Julien).

Peake poses important questions but is reluctant to hazard answers. Of Jarman's embrace of sex but rejection

of intimacy, Peake merely asks why "he could, on the one hand, be so open, and on the other, so closed". Jarman's quasi-medieval relations with women are unexplained. Contemporary evaluations feature prominently, but the opportunity to evaluate the whole career is missed. Peake's only strong judgment – on *Caravaggio*'s "staleness" – is unpersuasive. Within Jarman's variable literary output, Peake doesn't discriminate.

There are compensations. The scenes documenting Jarman's hostilities with his father, forever forcing him out hunting, are vivid. A celebration by schoolmates of the size of Jarman's penis ("Snakeman" and "Hose" being preferred nicknames) is dramatically reimagined in the treatment of Sebastiane by Roman soldiers in Jarman's film. Later anecdotes compel for their eccentricity – even when mixed with horror, as when Jarman wakes to find his sheets soaked in either blood or yesterday's beetroot-stained dinner. Much unfamiliar material appears: unproduced projects such as *Pansy*, a film musical on post-

war gay life, and *The Bees of Infinity*, about Antony and "Kleopatra". David Bowie visited Jarman to discuss playing the lead in the unrealised *Ake-naten*. The project fell apart after Jarman embarrassed Bowie by proudly placing a cigarette packet he had discarded on his mantelpiece.

At times, Jarman couldn't transcend his relative indifference to art as product rather than learning experience. Some films verge on tedium or pretension. But the genius of others stems, this biography reveals, from two qualities: a naivety that legitimated creativity, and the heroism that characterised not just the last, harrowing days but the dominant struggle of Jarman's life: to secure the funds necessary to create.

RICHARD CANNING

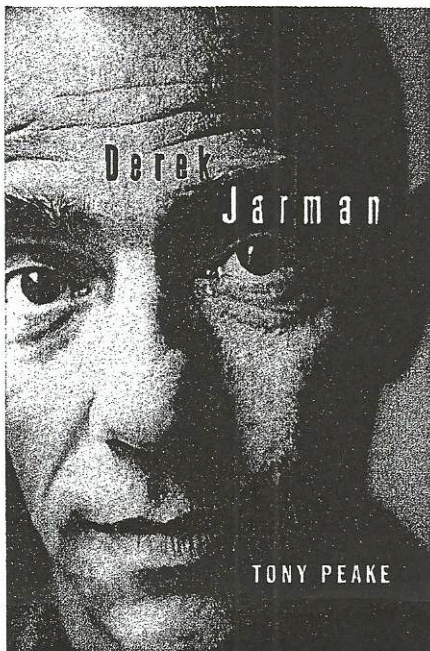
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Do You Know What I Mean? The Authorised Biography Of Derek Jarman by Tony Peake (Little, Brown) Derek Jarman was a visionary artist, film-maker, scene-setter (and shaper) whose most famous work addressed his grapplings with sexuality and, later, AIDS. Those who

cherished Jarman's magpie-like memoirs over and above landmark films like *Sebastiane*, *Jubilee* or *Blue* won't be disappointed by this non-genuflecting doorstep of a biography: Peake's access to friends, family and every last scrap of Jarman's writing gives familiar anecdotes fascinating perspective. However, this isn't just a tale for the art-school crowd aspiring to be like those who fill its pages; rather, it's a riveting history perfect for turning on the uninitiated to the work of a true iconoclast. The son of an RAF Wing Commander whose humble origins in New Zealand fuelled his desire for establishment acceptance in Britain, Michael Derek Jarman was the repository for his dad's middle-class aspirations; this cold, distant, post-Colonial pressure sent the future film-maker scurrying for the safety of his boarding-school art-room, where he began his lifelong work shaping myths plucked from the most arcane corners of his classical education. The affection unavailable from his father could always be found in the arms of boys and, later, men. A familiar story, spanning five decades of cultural and sexual upheaval, but all the more resonant because of the queer connections it makes between every significant British 'scene' of the 20th Century - a milieu encompassing everyone

from Hockney and Ken Russell to Adam Ant and burgeoning YBAs. Against this backdrop, Derek Jarman's sexuality and art dance with controversy and flirt with martyrdom: most of Britain knew nothing of Jarman until he declared his HIV status and let the virus inform his film-making. Already beautifully rendered with an artist's eye, even on a Super-8 budget, the films acquired a time's-up resonance as the years passed and Jarman's condition became more central to the ideas he put onscreen, courting outrage describing fallout from the desire no disease could ever take away. By the time he'd retreated to his Dungeness cottage and garden, awaiting the inevitable end, Gay Villages were a British reality and AIDS debates focused on cure rather than blame. Jarman's final feature, *Blue*, dispensed with trippy, sexualised visuals in favour of an azure screen; ironic that this cinematic alchemist made the most impact when he forced his viewers to create their own mental pictures. Here's a book which mirrors and explains the ethos that inspired it. Nearly six years after his death, Derek Jarman's standing continues to evolve and blossom: this unblinking record complements the arresting images and conscientious objector's spirit left by its incandescent subject.

1-D OCT 99

A life of 'significant mischief'

Derek Jarman

By Tony Peake

Little Brown £25

Reviewed by Maretta Dillon

'S' till waiting and f*****g furious': at a demonstration to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act in July 1992, Derek Jarman's placard made no secret of his anger. (The act legalised sex in private between consenting males over the age of twenty-one.)

Two years later, when Jarman died of AIDS, in February 1994, the headline in the London Independent ran: "Gay champion dies on eve of new age." The new age, prematurely announced, referred to a proposal to give homosexuals parity with heterosexuals by lowering the age of consent to sixteen. In the end, the legislation settled for eighteen.

Tony Peake's meticulously researched biography of Jarman details the life of this most unlikely of gay – Jarman himself would have preferred the term queer – activists while asserting his artistic legacy as a painter, designer, filmmaker, writer and gardener.

Born in 1942 into a quintessentially English family, Jarman had a difficult relationship with his father, Lance, characterised by long term battles of will, beginning with the young Dekky refusing to eat certain foods. Throughout his life he was much closer to his mother, Betts, who acted as the peace maker, and his younger sister, Gaye.

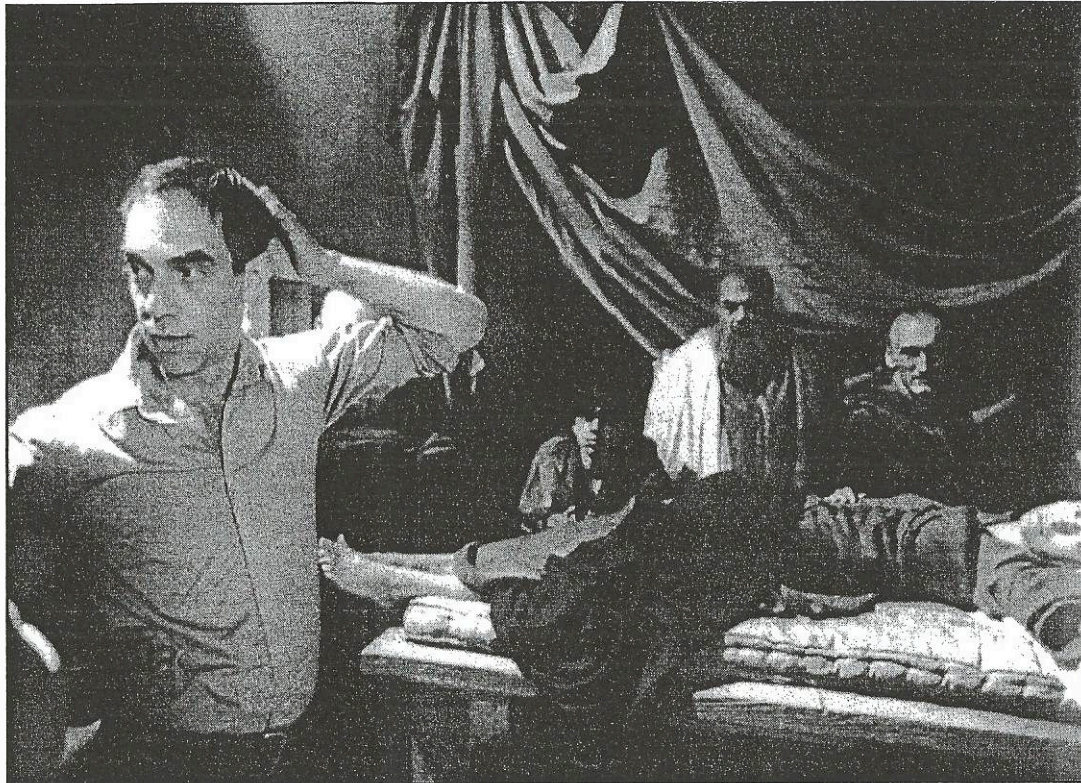
The Wizard of Oz, Peake records, was the first film Jarman saw. It made a lasting impression: "I took part in [it], rather than merely watched it, and am grateful



to this day that it had a happy ending." The imagery that made such an impression was to recur in much of his later work.

It was this ability to retrieve and reuse ideas and images – essentially to reform them for his own use – which was so original and inventive in all of Jarman's work. The biography makes compelling reading as it explores how the developing artist cherished single items of great beauty or personal significance and placed them with ritualised care in all the spaces he ever inhabited, as well as in his paintings and films. This provides a key to Jarman's entire aesthetic. He never forgot a formative image. His parent's present on his fourth birthday, Beautiful Flowers and How to Grow Them, was a substantial work for a young child. But almost thirty years later he based a design for a ballet on one of its watercolours.

At Canford public school, which Jarman describes as "bleak and soulless", Peake tells us how "he immersed himself in the art but which tellingly was located on the furthest edge of the overgrown park". Later we are told: "The adult Jarman would almost always operate on the fringe. As a painter he hardly ever exhibited in a West End gallery. As a film-maker he es-



Derek Jarman: angry at society for its marginalisation of homosexuals and their experiences, he countered his own marginalisation by creating a rich alternative world

chewed mainstream cinema. As a sexual being he embraced his position on the margins of conventional society. When, towards the end of his life, he came to buy his first house, he chose a cottage on an isolated shingle spit at the far end of Romney Marsh."

Jarman's rejection of the mainstream began to be reflected in his personal life at the Slade school of art in the 1960s. As he became increasingly comfortable with his

sexuality, his social life became more crowded and more colourful. His journals, which his biographer cites, bear witness to his more adventurous forays to Hampstead Heath.

Despite the active socialising, it's made clear that, throughout his life, Jarman was always hard-working and focused. Success came early when he was asked by Frederick Ashton to design the set for a ballet he was working on. Jazz was

well received and John Gielgud asked him to design the set for a production of Don Giovanni at the London Coliseum. A much less happy experience – both direction and design were roundly criticised – this set the tone for Jarman's ongoing relationship with the establishment. His journal records his decision to "slip quietly from the scene and establish my own idiosyncratic mode of living."

More work followed and Peake

is extremely good at depicting just how busy Jarman always was. At first painting dominated, with both group and solo exhibitions coinciding with designing for more ballet and theatre. Although he enjoyed working with Ken Russell as designer on the Devils, we learn how Jarman increasingly felt that other people's projects demanded too much of his time. Exploring film's possibilities for himself now seemed a natural progression.

His first camera was a Super-8 designed for use at home by amateurs. Jarman was never much interested in the technology – it was what the technology would serve that mattered to him. Fittingly his first film was a "home movie" recording objects in his studio. Super-8 suggested how he might fully expand his life into art by giving him a visual voice.

After making numerous Super-8 films and pop videos, he embarked on his first major film project, *Sebastiane*: a retelling in Latin (subtitled into English) of St Sebastian's treatment at the hands of a garrison of Roman soldiers in a far-flung outpost of the empire. In Jarman's words, it was "perhaps the first film that depicts homosexuality in a completely matter of fact way, such as another film might depict heterosexuality." Not surprisingly, it caused something of a storm on its release. Later films, including *Jubilee*, *The Tempest*, *The Last of England*, *Caravaggio*, *Edward II* and *Wittgenstein* would prove equally controversial.

The picture of Jarman that emerges from Tony Peake's biography is of an artist who, certainly by the end of his life, was at one with himself having resolutely followed his own star. Angry at society for its marginalisation of homosexuals and their experiences, he countered his own marginalisation by creating a rich alternative world. His bravery and courage in living with AIDS for so long and his decision to openly acknowledge his HIV status stand as a testament to him. At his memorial service, the journalist and critic, Nicholas de Jongh, memorably referred to the "significant mischief" inherent in Jarman's attitude to life. Would that we could all say as much of ourselves.

Maretta Dillon is co-director of the Lighthouse Cinema and was programme director of the 1999 Dublin Film Festival.

Confined to camp

As a filmmaker, Derek Jarman was an excellent gardener

PHILIP HENSHER

Derek Jarman
by Tony Peake

Little, Brown £25, pp613

DO YOU KNOW what I mean?' was Derek Jarman's incessant refrain in conversation, but after any exposure to his work, the answer tends to be: 'No, not always.' Nor, I suppose did he always know what he meant. But that hardly diminishes the slight but genuine pleasure to be had from one of his stage designs, his films, paintings, books or, in later years, political actions; the pleasure which comes from imagining some respectable Guildford Marjorie who can't believe her own ears and eyes. He loved to shock, and often found himself seeking out audiences, or even inventing them, when it started to look as if everyone who paid attention to him was really quite appreciative, and not shocked at all.

Jarman, in a way, strikes you as a latter-day Anthony Blanche. Swarthy, cosmopolitan, aesthetic and, as he was the first to tell you, a big man in his underpants (his nickname was Hose), he was highly popular at school. 'At nine, I discovered that sleeping with someone was more fun than sleeping alone.' Highly available in one sense, in his aesthetic judgment he was only attracted, like a magpie, by high glitter. An early fascination was *The Wizard of Oz* with its wizard who, tellingly, 'frankly admits his incompetence'. Out of school, there were such influences as his Auntie Doris, who once had the bright idea of writing to the Kremlin to offer herself as a cosmonaut on Sputnik. Her finest hour, though, was the invention of artificially perfumed rubber roses, a bouquet of which was presented to a mildly startled Queen Mary.

Meanwhile the young Michael Jarman (he dyed his name into Derek much later) was going along a familiar sort of path. When his next-door neighbour, Dorothy, took him into Watford to go shopping, he 'would make a bee-line for the make-up'. The next bit you can write yourself - the heavy father, the tears before bedtime, and finally he was allowed to go to art school in London. Here, things all got a bit overheated: 'I took Brenda's dress-making scissors and threatened suicide.' But at least there were men - lots of them - a gay pub, the Willy in Hampstead, with its clientele of 'elderly models and artistic antique dealers'.

By now Jarman was Derek and hatching manifestos, as art students will. 'Turn Piccadilly into one vast shimmering glass funnel. Music, all types, from loud speakers, sometimes Bach sometimes Beatles.' All the manifestos boil down to: 'Everything, at all times, must be completely fabulous.'

Whether or not Jarman was any good in his subsequent career is open to question. Personally, I feel that he lacked that component of genius, the

infinite capacity for taking pains, and that his films, paintings and books fall apart at the seams because he couldn't quite be bothered, or because he couldn't quite work out what he ought to be saying. At art school, he said, you had to be noisy to be noticed. The trouble was he never quite lost that idea - a characteristic Jarman film such as *The Tempest* exists in a mood of raucous, cheerful camp.

All his life, Jarman had to work on a shoestring. Sometimes this reaped unexpected dividends. His startling low-budget designs for Ken Russell's *The Devils*, for instance, are some of the best things he ever did; *Sebastiane*, his hilariously smutty film in Latin about St Sebastian, was cheap to make mainly because there were no costumes. By the Eighties, though, the corner-cutting began to show, and one of his later films - *War Requiem*, *Caravaggio*, *Wittgenstein*, *Edward II* - comes near the standards of his earlier work. It all looks as if the filmmaker and crew were having far too much of a good time to worry about the final result.

But there's a good reason for the

skipped, casual feel of the last movies: this was Jarman in a hurry, possibly driven by the fear that his current project could be his last. And by then, his diminishing energies were channelled elsewhere; by his political activism on behalf of Peter Tatchell's excellent Out-Rage! pressure group; by taking the heroic step of publicly declaring his antibody status as soon as he was diagnosed with HIV. The best, most characteristic part of his work, apart from the much-admired and lovely garden at Dungeness, are his late paintings. They mount an unlikely but enchanting alliance between macabre high camp wit and violently un-English abstract expressionism and have titles like *Arse-Injected Death Syndrome*.

This is quite a good biography, very solidly researched and sensibly thor-

ough - more than once I reflected that Jarman himself would never have been capable of such a sustained piece of applied concentration. It's true that it follows the European Union directive which dictates that all biographies must now begin with an account of its subject's funeral. And Tony Peake writes terribly badly as soon as he starts thinking about it: 'The sky was clear, the viridescent fields dotted with tentative lambs and occasionally splashed with the red of budding willows.' But he has done his homework, and I wouldn't have thought anyone will think it worth doing again. When there is no one left to be shocked by what, in Julian Clary's words, is really 'a series of jokes about buggery', then Jarman will be forgotten; because, after all, there is not much more there than a gleeful urge to *épater les bourgeois*. For the moment, though, that is enough to be going on with, and there is always something nice about him; he defined the phrase 'the gaiety of nations'. All his friends, clearly, miss him like mad.

To order Derek Jarman for £21 plus 99p p&p, call Observer CultureShop on 0800 3168 171

Observer 128/11/99

Reckless Derek

Derek Jarman

By Tony Peake

Little Brown £25

As a designer, film-maker, gardener, artist and gay activist, Derek Jarman was effortlessly talented. But as this exhaustive biography makes plain, despite all his prodigious creativity and his many friends, he remained an angry enigma right to the end

DEREK JARMAN
TONY PEAKE



Review by Angus Wolfe Murray

Scotsman 27/11/99

MOST people would find it difficult to name a Derek Jarman film. He is remembered as much for his dying as his work. Almost single-handed, he gave the AIDS virus a face. His dislike of David Puttnam for championing middlebrow conformity was matched only by his disappointment at Ian McKellen for accepting a knighthood from a Government responsible for Clause 28. The shy, unco-ordinated schoolboy with a low IQ became the flamboyant, promiscuous youth who designed the sets for Ken Russell's *The Devils* and later an artist, film director, gardener, writer, gay activist, lover, friend and maker of marmalade. There wasn't much he couldn't do, certainly very little he wouldn't try. His appetite for sex contrasted with his appreciation of food. He couldn't get enough of the first, couldn't care less about the second. He told Tilda Swinton: "Love is folly. I'd go for friendship any day. As for sex, it's best anonymous."

His many contradictions can be attributed to an unhappy childhood. His father was a New Zealander who joined the Royal Air Force and ended up an air commodore. They were always moving, sometimes to hot countries where they had servants. He was sent to boarding school, which he hated. He learned how to "play the game", although not play games. His passions were painting and plants. He wanted his father's approval but never achieved it. His mother suffered also. "When, one afternoon, she inadvertently burned a saucepan full of milk, she buried

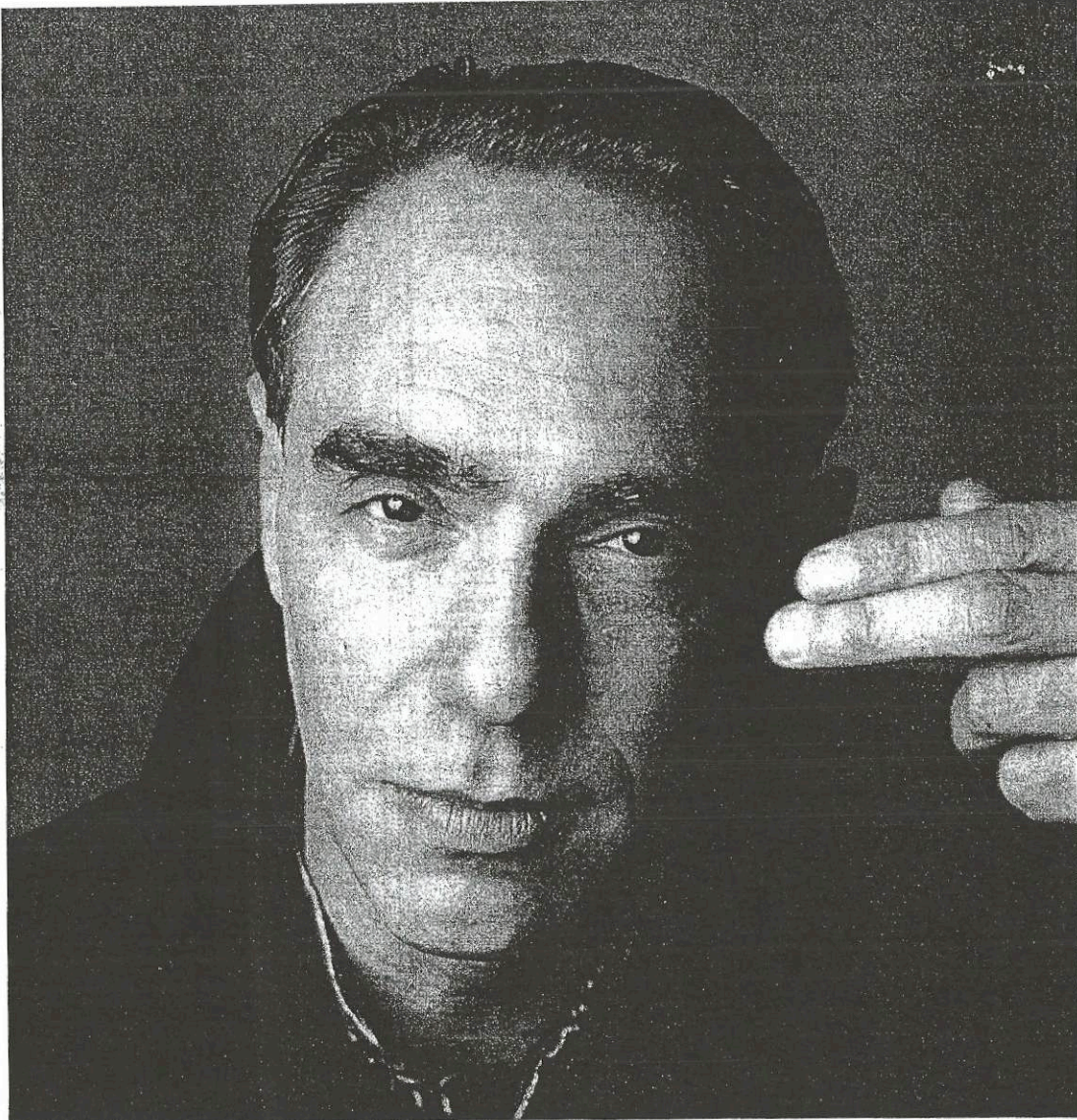
the pan in the garden rather than confess that she had ruined it."

From this repressive middle-class upbringing, Jarman retained respect for good manners. Everything else was war against the forces of an established order that dictated a universal morality which he knew to be a lie. It took him some time to come to terms with the mystery of his sexuality. He knew he was different, but not quite how. Once the gay life beckoned, he felt released. He became a painter and embraced the Sixties.

For heterosexuals, Jarman poses a threat. His films are overtly homoerotic, lavishly imaginative and at times incomprehensible. His honesty cannot help but prevail, which excludes those who find male genitalia God's little joke. He found beautiful boys and handsome young men irresistible, not only in a salacious way but like a flower or a bust by Michelangelo. There are times when you feel that he wrapped innocence in a pretence of sophistication, although pretence implies insincerity which would have appalled him.

He was a loving friend and a kind man. His charm excused just about everything. He wanted people to be happy. He wanted his films to be enjoyable to work on. When cruising Hampstead Heath he discovered sex is democratic. Even before Clause 28, he knew that Margaret Thatcher wasn't.

Tony Peake has written an exhaustive biography. Jarman would have been delighted by the thickness of it and pleased, perhaps, that despite 600 pages he remains an enigma. Multi-talented, he could have



Derek Jarman's enormous creativity was matched by a seemingly self-destructive element in his character.

Picture: Camera Press

excelled in any of the arts. Once he was shortlisted for the Turner Prize and won international awards for his films. Examples of his writing only emphasise Peake's pedestrian prose. He had a literary style that was at times dazzling and yet everything he did, even the diaries which were as much public statements as private musings, acted as camouflage.

One thing boarding school in the Fifties did was repress emotion and teach homesick children how to hide their feelings. His father performed a

role all his life - the authoritarian figure in uniform. Jarman couldn't find one for ages, although discovered in the anonymous hinterplay of gay sex a perfect metaphor for escape. The onset of AIDS gave him a platform. Anger against the Government for not taking it seriously at first encouraged him to flaunt the truth of HIV at every opportunity.

The work ethic had always been strong. Now, it went into overdrive. He achieved more in his last three years - almost blind, occasionally

incontinent, exhausted from itching and insomnia, too ill to eat - than a diligent man would in a lifetime. He made some of his best films, especially *Edward II*, when he should have been in hospital.

He created a garden at Dungeness, published books, put on exhibitions, notably his two-boys-in-a-bed show in Glasgow, continued to make pop videos, staged *The Pet Shop Boys'* first live concert and won the Michael Powell Award for *Blue*, a film without images, at Edinburgh in 1993. Ulti-

mately, he was a designer who picked up a camera, as he had picked up a brush and a pen and a boy in the park. Beneath the charm, humour and clever defences, an angry man raged against the authority of dunces. He believed that he was "defended by an impregnable bastion of love", meaning his friends, so many of whom died before him. You cannot help but admire his tenacity, courage and ability to have fun. His last words were: "I want the world to be full of fluffy little ducks."

Back to the wall

Biography

DEREK JARMAN

Tony Peake

Little, Brown, £25

TONY Peake was Derek Jarman's literary agent. This hefty tome is Jarman's authorised biography, but not, I suspect, the definitive book about a brilliant and innovative man who added greatly to the gaiety of the nation as a filmmaker, writer, diarist, painter, set designer, gardener, and puller of Establishment legs.

Jarman, who died from Aids in 1994 aged 52, was, and still is, a gay icon, but he was much more than that. He was someone who did his own thing regardless.

Jarman was not a great filmmaker, but he made films which achieved their aim of upsetting the bourgeoisie. His first feature film, *Sebastiane*, is a mind-bogglingly boring snail's progress homoerotic tribute to the celebrated pierced saint, but got taken seriously because everyone spoke in Latin.

Subtitles can do wonders for a film's reputation. Only Jarman could have got away with *Blue*, in which the audience listened to what is basically a radio play, although a very good one, and watched an unchanging blue screen intently. It was undeniably an event, performance art even, but a film it was not, although one would never have suspected that to listen to the audience.

His journey from troubled masturbating schoolboy, blessed, it appears, with an enormous "snake" and unsure of his sexuality, to his discovery as a young man that he was homosexual, and his life as a Soho habitue, visitor to louche clubs of whose existence, until now, pretty well most of us will have been unaware, by way of King's College, the Slade, and sundry European capitals, is undeniably intriguing. But Peake's distinctly pedestrian prose makes it rather less exciting than it should be. Perhaps Jarman said it all, anyway, in his various journals of his life and they cannot be improved upon.

Fuelled on vodka and ice, with the occasional tab of Ecstasy, acid, or even opium, and ever more cigarettes, Jarman enjoyed life to the full. Peake says that in an odd way Jarman seemed almost to embrace Aids, and that schooled in stoicism, the son of an air commodore, one of the positions in which he had always felt comfortable was with his back to the wall.

One sees what Peake means, but he could have put it better since, by then, Jarman was more likely to have been facing the wall. It is a life of mingling and working with the famous, going from one financial crisis to the next, painting, writing, and travelling. But one does have to plough through the pages. Reading Peake is hard going, whereas that is not true of Jarman's films, which even although sometimes roughly made and in need of sharper editing, are always challenging.

They take on the accepted standards of society head on. What comes over clearly in Peake's book is how bravely Jarman faced the inevitable as the disease took ever greater toll of his health, promoting *Blue* for as long as possible, supervising the garden, possibly his greatest work of art, which he had created at his seaside cottage in Dungeness. Of his painting, he once said: "I've never been a great painter, but I like to think I've made a bit of a contribution." That could be his epitaph. He really did make "a bit of a contribution" to the pleasures of the century about to end.

WILLIAM RUSSELL

(GLASGOW) THE HERALD

9/12/99

More to the man than his presence

Derek Jarman

by Tony Peake
(Little Brown, £25)

Reviewed by **Ciaran Carty**

WHEN Derek Jarman died of AIDS-related causes in February 1994, the *Modern Review* asked: "Had Derek Jarman not been gay, would his home videos have been shown on Channel 4?" The *Daily Mail* complained: "How can they turn this man into a saint?" While art critic Brian Sewell, reviewing a retrospective of Jarman's paintings, concluded: "Without the alchemist, there is no alchemy." Even Tony Peake, Jarman's biographer, suspects that if Jarman had genius, it "resided as much in the sheer incandescence with which he existed as it did in the fruits of that existence". Which I think is selling him short, although Peake's 613-page book is far too long. Jarman too often is almost lost in the detail.

There was much more to Jarman than his presence. Moments from his movies – in particular *Edward II*, *Caravaggio*, *Wittgenstein* and *Blue* – linger in a way those from most other movies don't.

I remember Jarman telling me, in 1981, how he'd made his debut film, *Sebastiane*, as a dare. "Over lunch I came up with the idea of something filmed entirely in Latin and then I was landed with it," he said. Up to then he had been known only as a painter and the designer of Ken Russell's *The Devils* and *Savage Messiah*. "Film-making became a way of opening up subject matter for me," he said. "All the other elements in my life could come into it."

The irony of Jarman's life is that while he struggled to raise minuscule budgets for early movies such as *Jubilee*, *The Tempest* and *Caravaggio*, he was belatedly 'discovered' in 1987, after revealing that he had been diagnosed as HIV positive.

"I became a curiosity," he told me the last time we met. "Suddenly things were bankable." The BBC backed *War Requiem*, his setting of Wilfred Owen's poetry to Benjamin Britten's music and his *Edward II* won Tilda Swinton the Best Actress award at the Venice Film Festival.

Jarman's autobiography, *Modern England*, stirred controversy with its frank disclosures about his childhood and his homosexual relationships with the American photographer Robert Mapplethorpe and the serial murderer Michele Lupo. His Air Commodore father had force-fed him as a small child and once threw him out a window – "If our society condoned patricide, I think both my sister and I would have attempted it," he revealed.

At prep school, Jarman was publicly whipped after the headmistress discovered him – innocently – sharing a friend's bed. "This was the moment that I grew to hate and mistrust the grown-up world which had cruelly destroyed my sexuality, sowing the terrible seeds of doubt and self-hate and starting a trail of destruction through my adolescent life."

It was at extra-curricular art classes given by one of his teachers in a cottage on Romney Marsh – a sort of Dead Poet's Society – that Jarman discovered himself as a painter.

Pleasing as his paintings were, however, film was the natural outlet for his exuberant creativity. "I'm certain most people think I'm out to corrupt everyone's morals," he told me. "But film-making is a kind of terrorism, the terrorism of joy."

(Glasgow) SUNDAY HERALD 19/12/99

Film

A feast of exhaustive movie guides and glossy coffee table tomes of stills means film buffs will be in for a treat this Christmas.
By Allan Hunter

FILM is such an intensely visual medium that it's not entirely surprising that an increasing number of recent high-profile books have tended to let the pictures do the talking. Both *The Movie Book* (Phaidon, £24.95) and Geoff Andrew's *Directors A-Z* (Prion, £15) are filled to overflowing with memorable images in glowing monochrome and glorious Technicolor. The perfect accompaniment to a fine coffee table, they are the kind of volumes you browse and admire without ever really coveting.

Film fans hungry for more than bite-size captions and mini-essays will welcome *The Penguin Book Of Hollywood* (£12.99), a real treasure trove of some of the finest writing on the film industry capital from those who have lived and breathed its pungent atmosphere. Contrib-

utors range from PG Wodehouse to Kenneth Tynan in a constantly engrossing and entertaining anthology that doesn't have a single photo on its 700 pages, just the many vivid images painted by the writers. Peter Biskind's *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* (Bloomsbury, £8.99) is also one of the most readable film books of the year. Using unusually candid interviews and gossipy insider knowledge, it charts the rise and fall of the Francis Ford Coppola-Peter Bogdanovich generation and the last golden age of American cinema.

The handy Orion series of compact volumes on individual directors has grown to include *Ridley Scott: The Making Of His Movies* (£12.99) whilst recent additions to the Bloomsbury Movie Guides include Mick Brown's volume on *Performance* (£10.99) and Nigel Andrews's enthusiastic tome on *Jaws* (£10.99), which relates everything you could possibly want to know about the Steven Spielberg shocker.

It hasn't proved a particularly distinguished year for biography or autobiography but one would commend Tony Peake's authorised

life of *Derek Jarman* (Little, Brown £25) and David Bellos's insightful account of *Jacques Tati: His Life And Art* (Harvill Press, £25). A number of valuable volumes have now made their way into paperback editions including John Baxter's clear-sighted study *Woody Allen: A Biography* (HarperCollins, £8.99) and Patrick McGilligan's unauthorised and distinctly unflattering *Clint Eastwood* (HarperCollins, £8.99).

Editor John Walker has managed to inject large measures of sanity and reason into the former *Filmgoer's Companion* and the new edition, now re-titled Halliwell's *Who's Who In The Movies* (HarperCollins, £16.99) is an essential part of any film buff's library. In terms of value-for-money reference books, the traditional recommendations hold good for a further year with the wide-ranging *Time Out Film Guide* (Penguin, £14.99) now in its eighth edition and the old and trusted friend *Leonard Maltin's Movie And Film Guide* (Penguin, £8.99) having recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. The number of times it has proved indispensable over those three decades is countless. ■

SCOTLAND ON SUNDAY 5/12/99

Derek Jarman

Author Tony Peake

Format 613pp, Hbk

Publisher Little Brown **Price** £25



Written by his literary agent, a massive memoir about the artist and film-maker who died of AIDS in 1994. Much insight into the man whose work (Caravaggio,

Edward II etc) often displayed more style than substance. ★★★★★

DEREK JARMAN
TONY PEAKE



DEREK JARMAN Tony Peake (Little
Brown, £20)

**Not since Warhol has there
been a more unclassifiable
artist than Derek Jarman. Tony
Peake, his literary agent and
close friend, had begun work
on this splendid, authorised
biography before Jarman's
untimely death from AIDS-**

**related illnesses five years ago. Reading this
fascinating, compelling book, you become aware
that Jarman's life virtually encapsulated the social
and cultural history of the latter half of the 20th
century, making it the story of both a person and a
time. Without wavering into over reverential
hagiography, this book is unlikely to be surpassed
as the ultimate assessment of a unique, colourful
and subversive genius still sorely missed.**

PHILIP HAMER

CITY LIFE (MANCHESTER)

26/1/00

The film-maker, painter, writer and visionary, Derek Jarman, who died from Aids in 1994, was described by Ken Russell as 'the last true bohemian'. Tony Peake's perceptive, entertaining and moving biography, **DEREK JARMAN** (Little, Brown £25), is the story of a late 20th century Renaissance man with a passion for life, whose influence across several rapidly-changing decades was far-reaching, and whose genius is still being evaluated.

Max Almond first broke on to the music scene in the 80s with Soft Cell and soon achieved global fame with *Tainted Love* in 1981. He has since created over 16 albums of unique and diverse material, although at one point fame, drink, drugs and sex derailed him almost to the point of madness. He tells all in his autobiography **TAINTED LIFE** (Sidgwick & Jackson £14.99), a frank and honest account of a wild outsider in the music business, who clambered back to success with this year's solo album *Open All Night* and a sell-out tour.

The world of music comes into its own at Christmas. Look out for **A FINE KIND OF MADNESS** (Headline £20), a biography of Ronnie Scott by his daughter, Rebecca, which tells the full story of the much loved but troubled musician whose world famous club in Frith Street celebrated its 40th birthday this year. Charlotte Breese's **HUTCH** (Bloomsbury £25) is the biography of the charismatic singer/ pianist who became one of Britain's leading


MIDWEST

13/12/99

Friends of the famous

SHERIDAN MORLEY dances along to a selection of cabaret, musical and film books

A SINGULAR JOURNEY
by Mel Gussow
Oberon £14.99



The first authorised and also the first full account of the life of Edward Albee, one of the greatest living American dramatists and an obsessively private man. Gussow, the ainstaking New York Times

critic, has won Albee's confidence to such an extent that we get a superlative account of an isolated life in the American century, only before distantly glimpsed in his many plays. The finest theatrical biography of the year.

A VOICE REBORN
by Kyra Vane
Arcadia £12.99

This is the miraculous story of

Kyra Vane, born in Petrograd in 1916. Though she starred with Gigli, Gobbi and the young Janet Baker, her career collapsed with the suicide of her agent, and she spent much of the rest of a long life as a BBC secretary before rediscovery in the early 1990s. Her tale makes you wonder what other talents have been lost in the long, chilly corridors of Broadcasting House, and how much better they

might have been than those of us who actually make it from there to the airwaves.

DEREK JARMAN
by Tony Peake
Little, Brown £25


In this massive book, Peake, who was Jarman's agent, has, depending on your viewpoint, produced either a fascinating account of a pioneering gay filmmaker and artist or a desperately overlong life of a tiresome old queen who died, albeit tragically, before a less gullible movie generation rumbled his overblown work.

THE COLUMBIA STORY
by Clive Hirschhorn
Hamlyn £40

THE MOVIE BOOK
Phaidon £24.95

On the Hollywood front, Clive Hirschhorn's magnificently updated history of a great studio, The Columbia Story, and The Movie Book (which follows the formula of The Art Book and The Photo Book) are indispensable millennial reference books.

FIREFLY by Chris Salewicz
Gollancz £17.99



This is a fascinating account of the house where Noël Coward spent most of his winters from 1948, until he died in 1973.

I declare the interest of having written it a brief preface, but now that we have the book itself (a gorgeous amalgam of diaries, interviews with neighbours and wondrous photographs), it seems to me that all of us who have in any way told the story of Coward's life can finally understand why Jamaica meant so much to him after the war, not just an island in the sun, but an escape from the rainswept south London of his suburban childhood and the repressive, anti-homosexual British class system.

HUTCH
by Charlotte Broese
Bloomsbury £20

On the woefully underdocumented cabaret shelf, this rich and rare biography fills a real gap, telling the remarkable story of the highly sexed and sexy West Indian nightclub pianist who rose and then crashed through the keyboards of prewar Mayfair café society.

SUNDAY TIMES
28/11/99 AS

100 LIVE

1 A SINGULAR JOURNEY
by Mel Gussow
Oberon £14.99
Bookshop £12.99

2 GARRICK
by Ian McIntyre
Penguin Press £25
Bookshop £22

3 IVOR NOVELLO
by Paul Webb
Stage Directions £10
Bookshop £6

4 JACQUES TATI
by David Bellos
Harvill £25/Bookshop £22

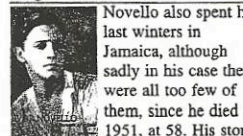
5 MARILYN MONROE:
Christie's auction catalogue
Christie's £50/Bookshop £47

Order at the Sunday Times Bookshop special prices inc p&p on 0870 165 8585

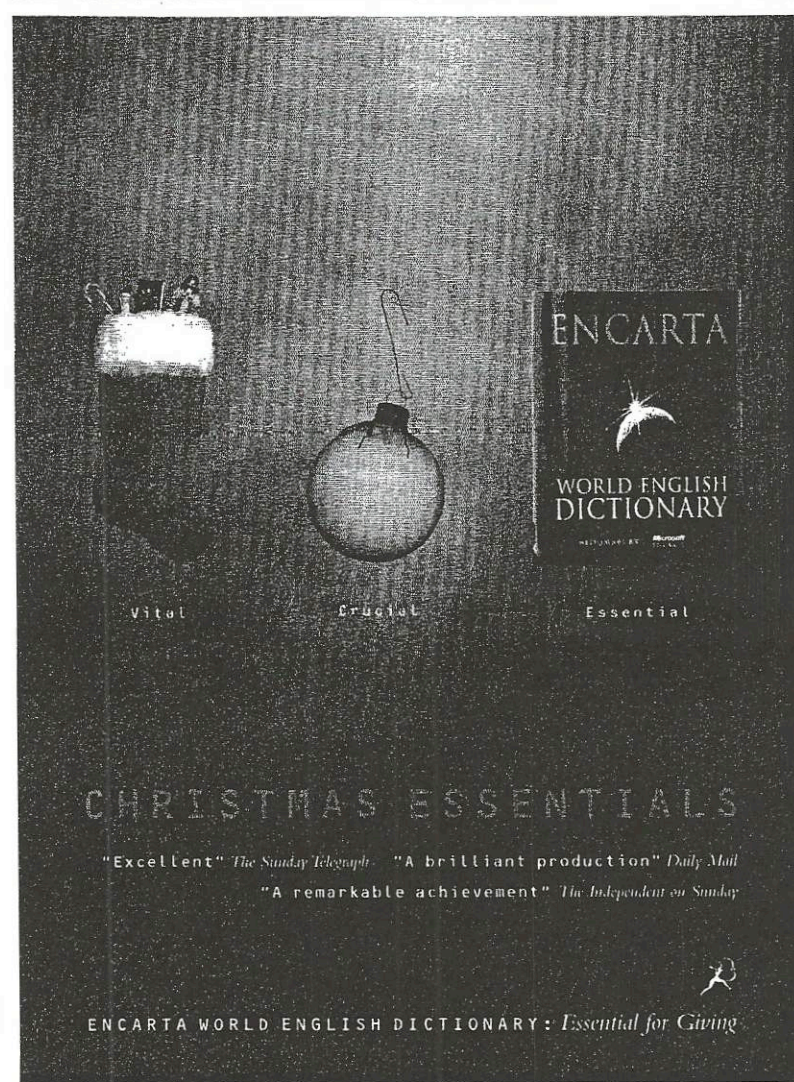
1999 bestsellers

- 1 Parcel Arrived Safely by Michael Crawford (15,311)
- 2 Watcher's Guide: Buffy the Vampire Slayer by Christopher Golden (6,835)
- 3 Official Friends Companion (6,641)
- 4 Dawson's Creek: The Official Companion (5,813)
- 5 Only Fools and Horses, Vol 1: The Bible of Peckham (5,039)

IVOR NOVELLO: A PORTRAIT OF A STAR by Paul Webb
Stage Directions £10



Novello also spent his last winters in Jamaica, although sadly in his case there were all too few of them, since he died in 1951, at 58. His story is intriguing: among much else he was Britain's first international silent film star, a Tarzan screenwriter in Hollywood, and the first writer to use the Nazis and television as plot devices, well before the second world war. There have been several earlier biographies, but it is an indication of the average London publishers' shameful determination to abandon theatre history (several honourable exceptions are mentioned in this roundup), that Webb has had to self-publish; happily, he is well on his way to a richly deserved profit.



Vital Crucial Essential

CHRISTMAS ESSENTIALS

"Excellent" *The Sunday Telegraph* "A brilliant production" *Daily Mail*
"A remarkable achievement" *The Independent on Sunday*

ENCARTA WORLD ENGLISH DICTIONARY: *Essential for Giving*

A good read Shedding light on darkness



ROBIN VYRNWY-PIERCE
reviews the best of
the new books

**FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA:
A FILM-MAKER'S LIFE, by
Michael Schumacher,
published by Bloomsbury,
£20.**

BIOGRAPHIES normally fall into two categories — authorised and unauthorised.

The first quite often tend to be hagiographies and the second can frequently end up as demonographies.

Schumacher's look at the life of Coppola tends to fall between the two. He was not authorised to write a biography and Coppola was only told about it on completion.

At that point he did ask for a sight of the manuscript but purely for checking of factual content.

Although he disagreed with some interpretations he did not seek to have them altered, although he was granted the right of reply.

Thus the book has become a type of unauthorised authorised biography and neither sanctifies nor demonises Coppola.

Where do you begin to examine the life of such a man — Schumacher chooses the moment when the film-maker bought a Mercedes and christened it with champagne to mark his first box-office success, *The Godfather*.

This film, or its Italian links, tend to dominate many sections



FIGHT FOR ACCEPTABILITY:
Film-maker
Derek Jarman
has been an
inspiration to
many to fight for
what they believe
in and not to give
up.

Picture: SUPPLIED

of the book just as much of Coppola's work is intertwined.

In fact two of his widest-known films are *The Godfather* and *Apocalypse Now* — both featuring Marlon Brando.

Schumacher tends to bring in a number of anecdotes and snippets but also deals in solid fact to give an insight into the darkness that sometimes seems to surround Coppola.

DEREK JARMAN by Tony Peake, published by Little, Brown (h/b) £25.

IN death as in life Jarman has been an inspiration to many to fight for what they believe in and not to give up.

For himself it was the fight to live and make his lifestyle acceptable — not enforceable on

others but just to be seen as acceptable. He did it through arts and films and much of his life could be seen as one of his films.

Peake begins at the end to go back to the beginning, through the middle and finally reach the point where the end really comes.

Sometimes one fears Peake has to highlight Jarman's sexuality — at a time when he shows that Jarman started to act at school, both on stage and in the dorm, he has to add "he would invariably play the female".

The fact that in an all-boys school someone did have to play the female is ignored and this comment is left hanging as though to say "and see his later life."

DERHAM & FAKENHAM TIMES
NORTH NORFOLK NEWS

20/100

Derek Jarman - Tony Peake

Little, Brown. £25

Jarman is a biographer's dream: an action-packed life, sensational death and a million wild anecdotes to spin through it all. This 500+ page biog plods chronologically through the director's fifty-two years, faithfully detailing his enthusiasms, projects, loves and lovers with a train-spotter's meticulousness. Although Jarman himself emerges with full honours - a life so

extraordinary, mischievous and frenetic would be difficult indeed to render colourless - Peake's leaden hand does not make the reading as pleasurable as it could - nay, should - be. You'd be better off reading Jarman's own journals, diaries and prose pieces. All the same, anyone who finds themselves questioning British values, our place in history, the politics of sexuality or the pigeon-holing of creativity will find much here. Jarman was driven to the point

of fanaticism, engendering fierce loyalty in friends and colleagues, inspiring thousands he never met and creating some of the most lavish visual masterpieces of the twentieth century, both on canvas and celluloid. He bridged the gulf between the hidden homosexuality of pre-1967 Britain and the 1990s of AIDS and direct action by OutRage! His anger and clarity never dimmed. He deserves to be remembered by something far sparkier than this. Mike Parker

WHAT'S ON IN BIRMINGHAM (no date)

Books of the Year

Darwin's Worms Adam Phillips (Faber, £7.99)

Ground-breaking yet playful re-thinking of evolution and psychoanalysis from a writer blessed with a colossal mind and a poet's ear.

Derek Jarman Tony Peake (Little, Brown, £25)

Exhaustively researched and exquisitely written biography of the avant-garde artist that also serves as a narrative of the British counter-culture.

The Mighty Waltzer Howard Jacobson (Jonathan Cape, £16.99)

Outrageously excluded from the Booker-list, this is a heart-wrenching portrait of literature, love and Manchester as seen through the eyes of a ping-pong player.

Graham Caveney

Paperbacks

Reviewed by Colin Spencer

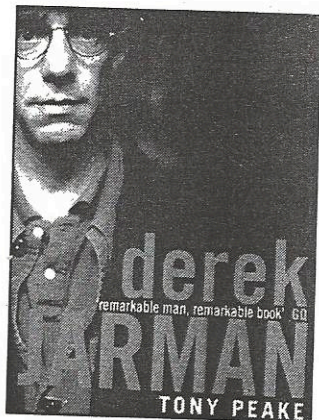
GET HAPPY: THE LIFE OF JUDY GARLAND BY GERALD CLARKE (Warner Books, £9.99). There have been numerous biographies of Garland, most of them slipshod and shabby. In contrast, this is serious and well-researched. The familiar story of the child with the remarkable voice, fed uppers and downers by a mother who saw her as merely a meal ticket, is given depth and detail by Clarke. It is both fascinating and terrifying to read how her mother and the heartless Hollywood machine destroyed Garland, turning her into a self-destructive drug addict who, in the end, became an aggressive maniac. Garland had adored her father, who was gay and who died when she was barely in her teens, and she had a tendency to fall in love with gay men. Her lovers were legion, and, generally, as famous as she – Tyrone Power, Frank Sinatra, James Mason. When she was sacked from films, she went on the stage and conquered new audiences, but in later years she was sometimes too drugged to give a performance. Towards the end of her life, I met her at a party and was enchanted by the wit and gusto that stemmed, at that moment, from such a fragile form. She was as great an actress as she was a singer, but her best film, *A Star Is Born*, was butchered by Warner Brothers, even after a public viewing had been a wild success, and it is thought no uncut copies now exist.

DEREK JARMAN BY TONY PEAKE (ABACUS (£14.99)). I AM ALWAYS ASTONISHED THAT ARTISTS who pour their life into their work in a quite brazenly autobiographical manner, also writing memoirs and publishing diaries, attract willing and eager biographers who find anything new to say. This is a hefty tome of over 500 pages, copiously annotated and well-indexed, which is sympathetic, but also objective enough to be critical, and is therefore enormously valuable to both friends and foes. It makes a fascinating story. Jarman was taught at the Slade by Robert Medley (who appeared as the Emperor Diocletian at the opening orgy in *Sebastiane*), and almost immediately designed a production of *Don Giovanni* for Gielgud, before going on to design the film *The Devils* for Ken Russell. Such a bedazzling start to a career might have sent him into orbit, but he felt driven to make his own films and refused other design commissions. The films, when they began to appear, were praised and attacked in equal measure, but Jarman was undaunted, creating on a shoestring with the help of friends and the use of tatty costumes, the cast and crew smoking pot and endlessly fucking. Jarman himself was compulsively promiscuous – his only unconquered territory appears to have been the Hamptons on Long Island, where the New York fags, all toned and tanned, despised his lack of muscle and uneven teeth. Oddly enough, his HIV status brought him a modicum of peace, with his fisherman's cottage at Dungeness, where he created an outstandingly beautiful garden, and his last boyfriend, nicknamed HB, who was dedicated and loyal. He had a loner's nobility and the best of his films will be bound to find new audiences in the future.

Derek Jarman by Tony Peake (Abacus, £14.99 in UK)

THE life of painter, writer, film-maker, designer, gardener and AIDS activist Derek Jarman in many ways reflects British life in the second half of the last century, from the post-war austerity and conservatism of the 1950s, the experimental creativity of 1960s London, the nihilism of 1970s punk, through to the gay rights and AIDS-awareness movements of the 1980s and 1990s. In chronicling the life of this remarkable neo-Renaissance artist, who died in 1994, Tony Peake has created a memorable modern history. His excellent, amazingly well-researched and comprehensive biography is also a sensitive and fascinating portrayal of the often outrageous Jarman, whose determination, courage, vision and individuality should inspire us all.

Sarah Marriott



IRISH TIMES 29/9/01 AS

IRISH TIMES 29/09/01

Economics choice

ROAD TO RICHES

By Peter Jay

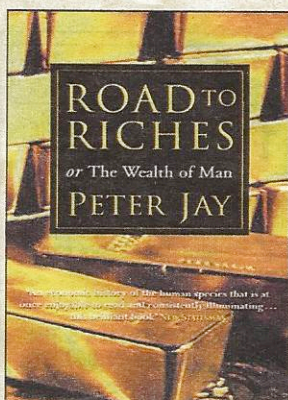
Phoenix, £9.99

ISBN 0 753 81264 9

☐ £8.99 + p&p (0870 160 8080)

PETER JAY sums up here in print what he ambitiously attempted on BBC television, nothing less than a history of the world economy. In his version there are two headline events: the creation of a settled agricultural system and the Industrial Revolution, still unfolding. The rest of the story, in relative importance, is footnote material.

For Jay there is no easy formula for economic development. Rather than anything so mechanical as the three-step dialectic of Marx, he prefers the fluid progress of the waltz, a figure to which he regularly returns. In any case, Marx is not his sort of thinker. Jay's intellectual heroes are impeccably British: Darwin,



Hume, Keynes, Locke, Malthus and Adam Smith. This is perhaps not surprising, since Jay believes that Britain produced what is still "the classical recipe for economic success" three centuries ago.

When it comes to explaining why wealth accumulated here not there, now and not then, Jay does not rely on specifically economic reasons. As befits a former Treasury man and

ambassador to Washington, he sees politics as crucial, particularly when he cautiously assesses our chances of avoiding a modern-day Malthusian Armageddon, triggered by a human inability to cope with its own wastes, thereby polluting our planet to the point at which it can no longer support us.

This is a richly furnished book, full of facts that will intrigue both amateur and expert. Jay revels in the intricacies of navigation, relishes the long list of China's technical innovations and tells us where the world's first chimney can be found (Southampton, apparently).

On the downside, he tends to prolixity. "A homelier way of telling this tale..." is no way to begin a sentence of 80 words. That tendency apart, his book can unhesitatingly be recommended.

Eric Jacobs

THE PICADOR BOOK OF JOURNEYS

THE PICADOR BOOK OF JOURNEYS

Edited by Robyn Davidson

Picador, £16

ISBN 0 330 36862 1

☐ £13.99 + p&p (0870 160 8080)

OUTSIDE ITS circle of devotees, travel writing has never had a particularly good press. Flaubert thought it a "low form of literature". Claude Lévi-Strauss hated travel books, yet was one of the finest exponents of the genre. Where once it was claimed that "the novel is dead", now it is over travel writing that the last rites are being read.

Robyn Davidson, in compiling *The Picador Book of Journeys*, has an equally jaundiced view, believing it "a decadent" literary form, but she has hope for it.

One of its selling points, she believes, is that it is infinitely capacious and, to prove her point, she presents us with the "literature of movement".

Her definition is the simplest possible: "A non-fiction work in which the author goes from point A to point B and tells us something about it." Within this category huge variety is possible, and her collection is wonderfully rich and various, the breadth of her reading truly impressive.

There are journeys in recollection — Martin Luther King's 1963 letter to his fellow clergymen, explaining why he was travelling the country campaigning for human rights. There are journeys in retreat: Robert Antelme's piece about being moved from a German concentration camp towards the end of the Second World War, the Allies fast encroaching. There is also, just occasionally, a more conventional travel narrative, and V. S. Pritchett's description of Castile from *The Spanish Temper* is a lesson in knife-sharp landscape description and concise cultural summary.

Edward Marriott

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By David and Hilary Crystal

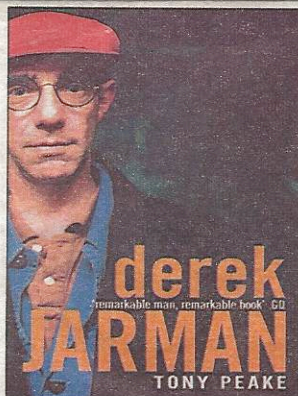
Penguin, £8.99

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SAMUEL JOHNSON thought: "Every quotation contributes something to the stability or enlargement of the language." The 5,000 quotations in this delightful anthology do that more directly than most, for they all have language as their subject. The range of authors is wide — from Aesop to Frank Zappa. There are surprises on every page and a brilliant index means that the reader need never be lost for words.

Ian Brunskill



DEREK JARMAN

By Tony Peake

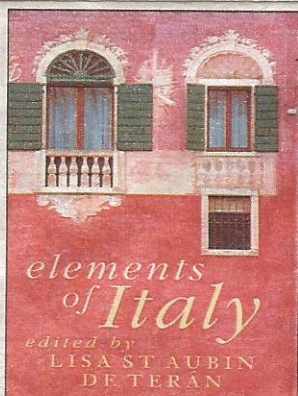
Abacus, £14.99

ISBN 0 349 11243 6

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SO MUCH about Jarman's life is known through his diaries that one initially balks at the need for Peake's biography. But here is a fresh overview of the film director's life and work written with sensitivity and a sharp critical eye. Encyclopaedic, though far from dry, it also charts the onset of Aids and Jarman's death in 1994. His last words were apposite to this most playful of mavericks: "I want the world to be full of fluffy little ducks."

Tim Teeman



ELEMENTS OF ITALY

Edited by Lisa St Aubin de Terán

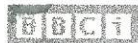
Virago Press, £16.99

ISBN 1 860 49826 4

☐ £14.99 + p&p (0870 160 8080)

TO CAPTURE Italy's complex character, St Aubin de Terán uses excerpts ranging from da Vinci to Dickens. She divides up her anthology according to the four elements, from the Water of Venice to the Fire of war, and brings together politics, passion and history in the hope of dispelling misconceptions. However, she seems driven by a frustrating conviction: that Italy is too mysterious a creature for a mere tourist to appreciate.

Kathleen Wyatt



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Peter Guttridge
December 2001

Peter's Picks for Christmas



Page 2

Non-Fiction:

Ashley Kahn: *Kind of Blue* (Granta £20)
If you're a music fan this is essential reading. US music journalist Kahn provides an utterly absorbing account of the personalities involved in the two impromptu sessions that created Miles Davis's epoch-making 1959 album, *Kind of Blue*. To be read at a sitting (preferably whilst listening to the album, of course).

Tony Peake: *Derek Jarman* (Abacus £14.99)
Novelist Tony Peake's acclaimed biography of the Renaissance man. It's warm, generous but also critical and provides a great insight into the creative process. Absorbing.

Robert Sapolsky: *A Primate's Memoir* (Jonathan Cape £17.99)
Sub-titled 'Love, Death and Baboons in East Africa', this is an exhilarating, amusing account of the twenty-plus years one of the world's leading primatologists has spent studying a troop of baboons in Kenya.

Jack Miles: *A Crisis In The Life of God* (Heinemann £18.99)
Former Jesuit, Jack Miles, won a Pulitzer prize for his astounding *God: A Biography*, a sort of retelling of The Old Testament. In this sequel he turns to the New Testament to provide the dramatic finale to the story. Engrossing - and I speak as an atheist.

Christopher Ross: *Tunnel Vision - Journeys of An Underground Philosopher* (Fourth Estate £12)
This book is profoundly funny. Ross, a philosopher and traveller, went to work for London Underground at

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★★★★★ Fascinating Biography

It is my great pleasure to let Amazon readers know about the exploits of Alexandra David-Neel, the explorer of Tibet, which the Fosters chronicle so vividly in the biography, THE SECRET LIVES OF ALEXANDRA DAVID-NEEL. This bio reads more like a novel or adventure tale due to the wonderfully-detailed scenes with such authentic touches I felt as if I were truly there, and often worried about David-Neel's ability to survive. Obviously the Fosters have done their research incredibly well and write graceful, lucid prose; I was captivated from the first sentence and actually resented having to put down the book to take care of chores. This is one of the best biographies I have ever read. The story cries out to be told visually on the big screen.

★★★★★ Unique Woman Explorer at Turn of Century

Little known crossdressing Victorian Frenchwoman undertakes a dangerous journey of discovery in forbidden country disguised as a monk and lives to tell her tale to the world. Thoroughly well researched, and well crafted The Secret Lives of Alexandra David-Neel is the biography of a remarkable woman. A woman born to the mannered and circumscribed Victorian era who chose to strike out on her own initiative to explore the spiritual secrets and she was among the first Europeans to report about it from inside to the rest of the world.

I found it a fascinating read about a remarkable woman of whom I knew nothing, a woman who accomplished amazing things in her life. I recommend this biography by Barbara and Michael Foster to anyone interested in tales of high adventure in exploration, in the golden age of exploration and of unknown exotic lands. If the story of resolutely fearless woman pursuing her dream of exploring Forbidden Tibet whets your appetite I recommend you read this well crafted biography. I can recommend it without reservation.

ZaneMason

★★★★★ Absorbing biography of a fascinating man

Derek Jarman was many things - artist, writer, poet, filmmaker, gardener, political activist, etc. and you will feel like you knew him well after reading this excellent biography by Tony Peake, who was a friend and collaborator to Jarman. Beginning with Jarman's childhood, it was easy to see that he was highly sensitive to beauty and the arts - he was fascinated with flowers and nature which would lead to his development of his famous garden at Dungeness. Also, he was greatly affected by the art and entertainment medium around him - when his parents took him to the cinema for the first time, it was to see "The Wizard of Oz" and Jarman was so wrapped up in the film that he closed out everything else around him and thought the events occurring in front of him were real and at one point, to the embarrassment of his parents, ran screaming up the aisles in terror. Jarman's early adult years found him leading a very bohemian existence, experimenting with art and

film and exploring his homosexuality. He was especially drawn to filmmaking and would eventually direct such avant garde features as "Sebastiane" and "The Last of England". When he was diagnosed with AIDS in the mid 80's, he became more and more involved in activism for AIDS reasearch and the basic rights of gays and lesbians. Jarman had many critics, both to his work and his activism, but he never buckled to them and spoke out any time he felt an injustice was being served. Peake's biography is daunting (533 pages) but it is not heavy handed and you almost feel that you are sitting with someone who knew Jarman well, listening to his stories about him. The last chapters deal with Jarman's devastating battle with AIDS, which left him crippled and blind, and if the last poem in the book (taken from Jarman's film "Blue") does not leave you teary eyed, nothing will.

1 November 2007 17:47


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Abacus, £14,99, 613pp

Derek Jarman by Tony Peake

Published: 24 August 2001

Told with exemplary clarity, this epic account maintains high interest due to Jarman's eclectic creativity.

 Told with exemplary clarity, this epic account maintains high interest due to Jarman's eclectic creativity. After his eye-popping designs for Ken Russell, he directed a dozen ambitious films at bargain cost, before creating his garden at Dungeness and a series of belligerent paintings as his sight deteriorated with Aids. Tony Peake's unblinker critiques add to the book's stature.

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