

BESTSELLERS

NON-FICTION Hardbacks

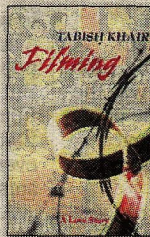
Last week's ratings in brackets

- 1 (2) **The Secret**
by Rhonda Byrne
(Simon & Schuster, £12)
- 2 (1) **Chinese Food Made Easy**
by Ching-He Huang
(Harper, £16.99)
- 3 (-) **Pop Goes the Weasel**
by Albert Jack
(Allen Lane, £12.99)
- 4 (4) **Don'ts for Husbands**
by Blanche Ebbutt
(A & C Black, £2.99)
- 5 (3) **What I Talk About When I Talk About Running**
by Haruki Murakami
(Harvill Secker, £9.99)

Paperbacks

- 1 (1) **The Suspicions of Mr Whicher: or the Murder at Road Hill House**
by Kate Summerscale
(Bloomsbury, £11.99)
- 2 (2) **Shakespeare: the World as a Stage**
by Bill Bryson
(HarperPerennial, £7.99)
- 3 (4) **A History of Modern Britain**
by Andrew Marr
(Pan, £8.99)
- 4 (5) **My Booky Wook**
by Russell Brand
(Hodder, £7.99)
- 5 (9) **The Duchess**
by Amanda Foreman
(HarperPerennial, £7.99)

PICK OF THE PAPERBACKS



Filming
by Tabish Khair
Picador, £7.99

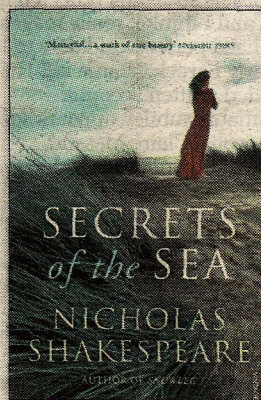
Harihar dreams of making films but merely shows other people's

creations to villagers with his travelling bioscope; Chote's love of music and dance has been stifled by his controlling father; Saleem was once a star of silent films, but is now almost forgotten. These are just a few of the characters whose stories unravel in this novel about unfulfilled dreams and the silver screen, set during India's fight for independence. The complex multiple-narrator format can be bewildering, as it jumps between stories and historical moments, but the characters are well drawn and the denouement is satisfying.

Jo Caird

Secrets of the Sea
by Nicholas Shakespeare
Vintage, £7.99

When people describe a landscape as "empty", they usually aren't looking at it carefully enough. In *Secrets of the Sea*, Alex and Merridy Dove set up home in an empty corner of Tasmania that is "one of earth's more remote places". As they struggle to understand their unyielding surroundings, they are forced to confront the difficult terrain of their own relationship. Their failing farm is like an unkind commentary on their barren marriage. Their fortunes only



begin to improve when Merridy discovers a whimsical new use for this old country: seeding the lagoon with a delicate crop of oysters.

Nicholas Shakespeare has created a moving drama that pits his characters against the absurdities of

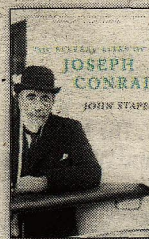
the land and a small community where "everyone is left to be as idiotic as they please". His lyrical prose is an ideal medium for the detail of their emotions. He reserves his subtle satire for the gossips and property men who will never learn from the land.
Thomas Marks



Storm and Conquest
by Stephen Taylor
Faber & Faber, £9.99

By 1809, Napoleon's forces on the tiny "Isle de

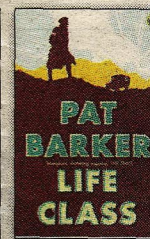
France" menaced British shipping across the Indian Ocean. This isolated outpost sparked a conflict that stretched HM Navy until its timber shrieked. Stephen Taylor tacks nimbly between ferocious trials of storm and battle at sea, and the striking collection of personalities that traded, travelled and fought at the Empire's edge. His compelling account is anchored on rigorous research. Richly evocative of an age when "Strange sail!" meant death or glory, *Storm and Conquest* holds the attention like a cyclone at sea.
Jonathan Bray



The Several Lives of Joseph Conrad
by John Stape
Arrow, £8.99

Throughout his life, Joseph Conrad was

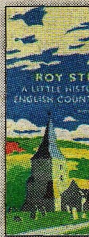
lost at sea. After 17 years sailing the globe, his literary work emerged from a turbulent domestic life, ruled by the "monstrous themes" of gout, debt and death. John Stape's biography charts the main "lives": Conrad the Pole, sailor, author and father, and adds Conrad the curmudgeon and spendthrift. By 1921 he was spending £4,000 (now £500,000) a year. We might doubt the sincerity of Conrad's melancholia: he remains, as a friend noted, "Conrad the elusive, Conrad the recluse." But this is a detailed portrait of a remarkable man. JB



Life Class
by Pat Barker
Penguin, £7.99

Pat Barker's *Life Class* is a beautifully crafted story of passion and art set

against the backdrop of the First World War. Paul and Elinor's student life in the London of 1914 is vividly described, but not always entirely believable. The second half of the novel, set in a Red Cross hospital in Belgium, is more convincing. The lovers' correspondence during Paul's secondment brilliantly captures a human response to an inhuman situation. The characters' struggle to reconcile art and war is the real crux; the conflicts of a nation are conveyed through a resonant tale of trauma and discovery.
Amy Grier



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