

15/11/1997

(Fresh on the shelf)

piled by Tan Gim Ean

JUNIOR

* THE MYSTERY OF THE GOLDEN SPHERE by Ni Kuang, illustrated by Wee Tian Beng, translated by Clara Seow (Asiapac): On the last day of her Paris vacation, Bai Su gets a strange request from two visitors - retrieve the Golden Sphere, symbol of the highest authority. But the ousted government and the military junta also have their eyes on the God-given object. The search takes Bai Su to Mysteryland, where, with the help of fiance Wisely, a battle of wits and weapons is fought out.

POETRY

* MOON OVER MELBOURNE AND OTHER POEMS by Ouyang Yu (Papyrus Publishing): Chinese poet Yu gives voice to the migrant in this collection which examines his new surroundings, racism, his ties with family and homeland, love and sex, and the need to translate himself. His poetic voice is said to be direct, aggressive, confident and complex. Latest title by Victoria-based Papyrus, set up in 1991 to "provide services to Australian authors who were either being ignored or discriminated against".

FICTION

* LAMBS OF GOD by Marele Day (Allen & Unwin): Nuns Margarita, Carla and Iphigenia live according to the rhythm of nature and the rituals of the church, cocooned from the outside world. Each knows her place in the scheme of God - or so she thinks - until a young priest enters the monastery. Father Ignatius plans to transform their lives. Can he, given how resourceful the nuns can be?

* THE MISTRESS OF SPICES by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (Black Swan): In between blending ingredients for curries and kormas, Indian immigrant Tilo, who runs a spice shop in Oakland, helps her customers obtain their heart's desires. Tilo taps the magical powers of spices to dispense wisdom, restore sight, cleanse evil, and soothe the pain of rejection. But one day, a lonely American walks in and puts the Mistress of Spices in a spot. Should she succumb to the forbidden desires he arouses, and risk losing her power?

* KOWLOON TONG by Paul Theroux (Hamish Hamilton): For 43 years, Neville (Bunt) Mullard has enjoyed the good things Hong Kong has to offer - high tea, race meetings, roast beef, and the odd hour shared with a girl in a rented room in Kowloon Tong. Then Mr Hung, a mainland Chinese, offers to buy over his family's 50-year-old Imperial Stitching. Bunt refuses to sell, and soon, young female workers start disappearing from the factory. Shaken out of his complacent routine, Bunt is forced, for once, to make decisions that matter.

* THE LAST SIX MILLION SECONDS by John Burdett (Hodder and Stoughton): Chief Inspector Chan fishes out a plastic bag in the sea near mainland China and finds the unidentifiable, decapitated heads of a Caucasian female and two oriental males. But the British Political Adviser won't let the Royal Hong Kong Police Force investigate the case until after the colony's handover - in six million seconds. But the mainland authorities are pushing for quick action, and a New York Police Department captain has joined the fray. Next move, Chan?

* MONKEY KING by Patricia Chao (Judy Piatkus): Artist Sally Wang is no stranger to hospitals, after a botched suicide attempt and a series of emotional upheavals. She blames them on a childhood demon - the Monkey King, a notion pooh-poohed by her uptight mother and flaky sister Marty.

To crush the demon, Sally resorts to paint and brush. She resurrects memories and stories of her Chinese-American family on canvas, and begins her slow climb back to sanity.

NON-FICTION

* ISLAM ZAMAN MODEN - Cabaran dan Konflik by Associate Professor Dr Fadhlullah Jamil (Thinker's Library): Explores several key events of the modern Muslim world - the Islamist movement in Algeria, the struggle of Badiozaman Said Nursi and the rise of the Qadiani movement in the Indian sub-continent, Zionism and its impact on Palestine, and the Islamic response to Snouck Hurgronje in Indonesia. Fadhlullah shows how certain individuals have influenced society, and the implications of struggles for Muslims today.

* NERAKA JAHANAM & SYURGA FIRDAUS MENURUT AL-QURAN by Abdullah Sani S.H. (Thinker's Library): Abdullah examines the verses in the Quran which deal with heaven and hell.

There is a general introduction to each topic, followed by detailed explanations of the relevant verses.

Not as exhaustive as Al-Ghazali's monumental Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife, but this well-organised book is a useful introduction to the subject.

* LEE KUAN YEW - The Man and His Ideas by Han Fook Kwang, Warren Fernandez and Sumiko Tan (Times Editions): The authors, senior political journalists with The Straits Times, had 13 lengthy, exclusive and fresh interviews with Lee for this book. They chronicle Lee's life and ideas, the people and events that shaped his world view, the choices he made, the insights and lessons, Singapore's social and economic transformation, and Lee's current position as Senior Minister.

* RAFIDAH AZIZ SANS MALICE by Zhou Mei (Yuyue Enterprise): Growing up as a "have-not", Selama-born Rafidah knew the only way out was through education - in English.

Her parents had placed her in a Malaya school at five; two years later, she found her way to the Bukit Nanas Convent and got herself enrolled. That was her maiden step to breaking new ground. Over the decades, Rafidah charted many 'firsts' as a student, and in politics. Zhou traces the ups and downs of the Minister of International Trade and Industry, who became a grandmother late last year.

* ECLIPSE! - The What, Where, When, Why & How Guide to Watching Solar & Lunar Eclipses by Philip S. Harrington (John Wiley & Sons): Missed the last eclipse? Get this book and you'll be prepared right up to the year 2017. It tells why eclipses happen, when and where they will occur, and how to view and photograph them. If you plan to watch with a group, find out what you can do to make the outing memorable - following the pointers on equipment, travel needs and weather conditions. Charts and pictures enhance the text.

* MASTERPIECES OF CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN PAINTERS by Esmeralda and Marc Bollandsee (Times Editions): Authenticity, creativity, technical mastery, aesthetic appeal and content are the criteria for the choice of paintings which make this book. Ten top artists talk about the diverse styles and themes of Indonesian art, and their paintings in particular. Work-by-work comments, on the facing page of over 60 paintings, add to the visual gallery.

* PLAIN TALK - Lessons from a Business Maverick by Ken Iverson (John Wiley & Sons): Like the once-near-bankrupt steel company that he leads, Iverson is tough and to the point.

Hang bureaucracy, committees, job descriptions and performance appraisals, and just pay employees according to what they produce. That is the policy of Nucor, a US\$3.8 billion (RM12.5 billion) corporation that

boasts just 22 people at its HQ, and four layers of management, from top to bottom. It is a policy which hinges on informality, caring, freedom, respect, equality and the simple truth.

* IN LIBERAL DOSES by Marina Mahathir (Archipelago Press): Pick of the best from The Star columnist Marina, over the last six years.

This activist/publisher groups her pieces under seven chapters, namely 'On Being Malaysian', 'Marina vs the Censors', 'Malaysia's Social Values', 'A Malaysian Looks at the World', 'Talking to Young People', 'Women in Malaysia' and 'AIDS'. She picks up issues which affect the country and people, and speaks her mind with pride with compassion.

* RUN SPOT RUN - Advertising in Malaysia (Association of Accredited Advertising Agents Malaysia): In the dog-eat-dog world of advertising, one has to be spot on with changing ideas, attitudes, behaviour and the status quo.

But, did you say the whole thing is a sham? Hang on, rebuts the 4As: "We're a respectable, serious business".

To prove its point, this book charts how the industry has grown in the country, complete with expenditure figures from radio, TV and the print media for the last six years.

The Consumer Revolution by Conghua Li (John Wiley & Sons): What are the current needs, tastes and trends in "the last remaining consumer utopia of the world"? How do the Chinese decide what to buy or spend their money on when confronted with an array of products and services from around the world? How can producers and providers, out for a piece of the pie, tackle the taboos, fads, fashions, cultural values and socio-economic factors that rule the market? Study Li's facts and figures on China's new breed of consumers.

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