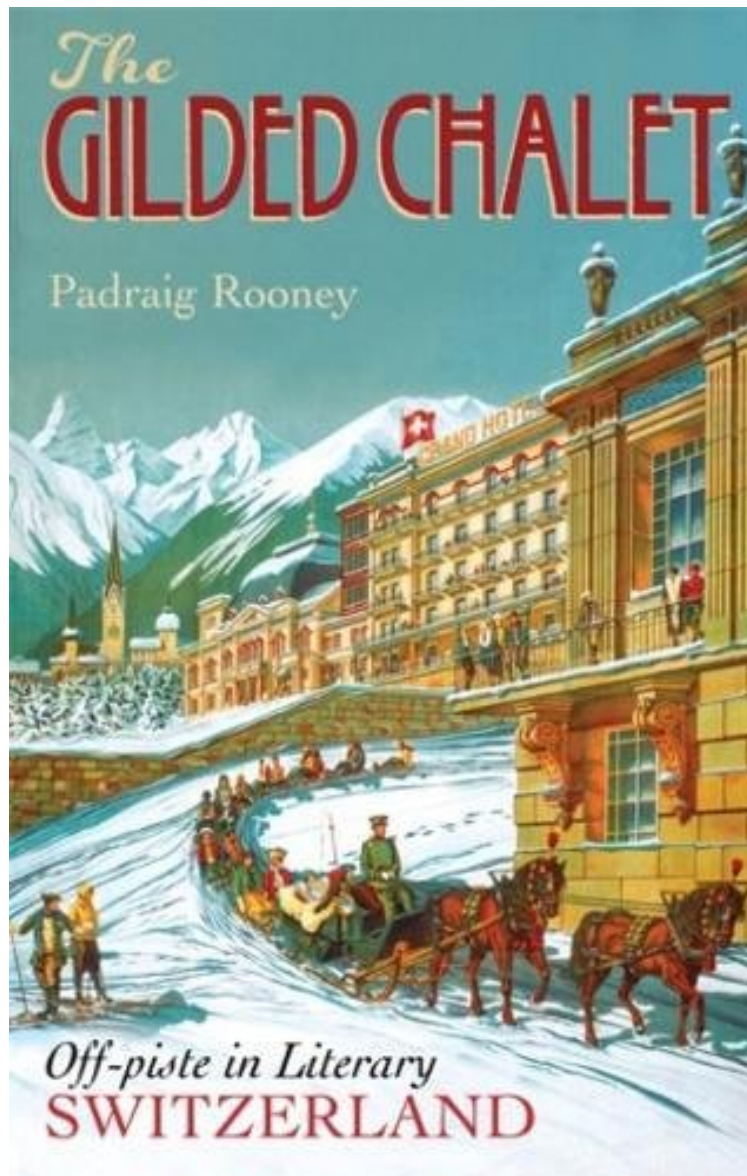


The Gilded Chalet: Off-piste in Literary Switzerland

Padraig Rooney

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Padraig Rooney : The Gilded Chalet: Off-piste in Literary Switzerland before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Gilded Chalet: Off-piste in Literary Switzerland:

In the summer of 1816 paparazzi trained their telescopes on the goings on of poets Byron and Shelley - and their

womenfolk - across Lake Geneva. Mary Shelley babysat and wrote Frankenstein. Byron dined and penned The Prisoner of Chillon. His doctor, Polidori, was dreaming up The Vampyre. Together they put Switzerland on the map. Switzerland has always provided a refuge for writers attracted to it as an escape from world wars, oppression, tuberculosis... or marriage. While often for Swiss writers from Rousseau to Bouvier the country was like a gilded prison or sanatorium. The Romantics, the utopians (Wells, D. H. Lawrence) and other spiritual seekers (Hesse), viewed Switzerland as a land of milk and honey, as nature's paradise. In the twentieth century, spying in neutral Switzerland, spawned espionage and detective fiction from Conan Doyle to Maugham, Fleming, and Le Carré. Pádraig Rooney finds the rooms crammed with curios: lederhosen and Lepidoptera, spas and spies, fool's gold and numbered accounts. Literary detective work and treasure chest, history and scandal, The Gilded Chalet will make you strap on your skis and go off-piste to find out the real Swiss story.

'A lively and entertaining tour of literary Switzerland. Rooney has an eye for a telling anecdote. Informative and full of surprises, not least the portrait of Switzerland as a hotbed of literature and revolution. The Tablet With a sharp eye for detail and a historian's capacious knowledge, Pádraig Rooney has written a superbly amusing guide to all the writers who've been drawn to or emerged from Switzerland. This is a book that should be stuffed into every stocking - the perfect Christmas gift! Edmund White, author of The Frenchman Constantly engaging and highly entertaining. Rooney is almost casually brilliant on Joyce, Nabokov and Mann, but revelatory on such as Durrenmatt and Frisch. He shows a deftness of touch but can, too, be powerful. A love letter to reading that does not shy away from the sins of reality. The Herald An enjoyable wander around literary Switzerland. The Gilded Chalet tracks the snow prints, shattered booze-glasses and missed spy drops of the likes of Rousseau, Byron, Hemingway and le Carré, sniffing the air of inspiration they found in the hills, huts and bars. Wanderlust A gossipy feel [with a] touch of Clive James in its humour. What has Switzerland ever done for us? Quite a bit. Irish Mail on Sunday A fascinating look behind the scenery at how Switzerland has influenced and affected some of the greatest authors and some of my favourite books. Diccon Bewes, author of Swiss Watching A fascinating account of how Switzerland has always provided something of a refuge for writers - from war, oppression, tuberculosis and even marriage - as well as an inspiration to them too. The Bookseller The Gilded Chalet entertains, informs and whets the appetite for more. And there are more discoveries in Rooney's tasty assortment of literary bonbons. Portland Book PRAISE FOR PADRAIG ROONEY There is a mastery in his handling of prose-rhythm which I find exciting. It is in order for an ageing writer, in a valediction to Irish readers, to essay a prophecy about Irish letters. Mr. Rooney will be a credit to them. Anthony Burgess About the Author Pádraig Rooney was born in Ireland and studied at Maynooth College and at the Sorbonne. When he was sixteen he first came to Switzerland, saw the Rolling Stones in Berne, and never looked back. He has lived in Switzerland for fifteen years, and teaches English at International School Basel. He worked as a freelance travel writer for many years, for the Irish Times, Irish Press, Sunday Tribune, Bangkok Post, and many Asian magazines. www.padraigrooney.com Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. My compatriot James Joyce eloped from Ireland in borrowed boots in 1904. He fled both world wars to the safety of Zürich. War too caught the fifteen-year-old Borges in Geneva, where his dad arranged for the boy to get laid. Ian Fleming was recovering from a dose of the clap. The seventeen-year-old John Le Carré turned spy in Berne and polished his German. It would prove useful. For all of them Switzerland was a hideout, a refuge, the quiet good place. Switzerland took writers in, sometimes grudgingly, often with good grace. It gave them a room with a view and a place at the table - maybe not the Stammtisch, but you can't have everything. Service was brisk and efficient, the wine not too bad, the food rough and ready but nourishing. Demi-pension. You're a writer, are you? We've had a few of those. And the writers responded by doing what they do best: reportage, poems, horror fiction, travelogue, novel, detective fiction, great modern masterpiece, murder mystery. Biting the hand that fed them. Pointing out the dry rot. Suggesting there's a smell under the floorboards. Often enough writers just got on with it - up some secluded valley or in a flat in Münchenstein. From time to time there was fruitful exchange between the local scribblers and the blow-ins. But this being Switzerland they kept a wary eye on each other, knowing they might just be passing through, merely taking shelter from the storm.