



NON-FICTION FIONA CAPP

Captivated: J. M. Barrie, the Du Mauriers & the Dark Side of Neverland
 Piers Dudgeon
 Chatto & Windus, \$34.95



THE DARK SIDE OF Neverland has been the subject of much literary speculation. Letters and fiction by J. M. Barrie make it plain that he harboured pedophilic desires for the Llewellyn Davies boys – the inspiration for the Lost Boys in *Peter Pan*. Piers Dudgeon introduces a new twist to the story with the claim that Barrie used hypnosis on the boys; that he mentally “interfered” with them, if not sexually – a response to his own mother’s emotional rejection of him. A further twist comes with the revelation that writer George du Maurier, grandfather of novelist Daphne and the Llewellyn Davies boys, was also a devotee of hypnosis for the satisfaction of dubious desires. Thus Daphne is drawn into this extraordinarily convoluted story that aims to fathom the fantasy world these three writers inhabited. There’s a fascinating story buried in this book but Dudgeon’s failure to provide a clear narrative line makes it hard to extract.

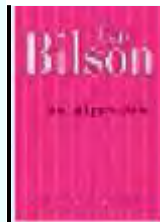
The Writer as Migrant
 Ha Jin
 Chicago University Press,
 \$22.95



WHEN CHINESE writer Ha Jin emigrated to America, he viewed himself as a spokesman for the Chinese, particularly for the downtrodden. In time, he came to the conclusion that “too much sincerity is a dangerous thing” and that it was folly to claim to speak for his countrymen and women, especially

when he no longer lived among them. He draws lessons from Solzhenitsyn, who saw himself as writing for Russians during his exile in America, only to find, when he returned to Russia, that his new work was considered out of touch with Russian reality. The complex position of the writer in exile is the main preoccupation of this thoughtful and searching collection of essays. Not surprisingly, Ha Jin – who writes in English and whose novel *Waiting* won the National Book Award – identifies strongly with writers such as Nabokov and Conrad, who also committed what he describes as “the ultimate betrayal” and wrote in the language of their adopted country.

On Digestion
 Gay Bilson
 MUP, \$19.99



DIGESTION HAPPENS slowly. It can take half a lifetime to digest some things. After many years of running a well-known and highly regarded restaurant, Gay Bilson now posits the ideal restaurant as the opposite to the fancy, self-conscious and exclusive commercial enterprises lauded in the media. Her utopian restaurant would be local, modest, have no waiters, have a set menu, provide communal serves and diners would pay on arrival. The fundamental principle would be to replicate, as far as possible, the experience of eating at home and thus return dining to its social and agricultural roots. It’s a shame about the indigestible pink cover, but the contents of this elegant and subtle essay more than compensate. In these post-stockmarket crash days, her Marxist-inspired critique of the divide between food production and restaurant culture with all its egos, its technologically inspired gimmicks and its artistic pretensions, feels most timely.

What I Talk About When I Talk About Running
 Haruki Murakami
 Harvill Secker, \$29.95



ANY NOVELIST WILL tell you that writing a novel is like running a marathon. You have to pace yourself, you have to be in there for the long haul. But Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami doesn’t use the simile lightly. He actually knows what it is to run marathons. At almost 60, he still runs one marathon a year. Murakami began running when he began writing because he feared sitting at a desk all day would make him unfit. Running soon became an obsession and over time he realised it gave him the stamina to keep writing – an activity that, he discovered, is as much manual labour as mental. This collection of often-droll, well-honed essays comprises a sustained meditation on the relationship between running and writing. Most of what he knows about writing, Murakami says, he learned through running every day. “Exerting yourself to the fullest within your individual limits: that’s the essence of running and a metaphor for life – and for me, for writing as well.”