

[**HARDCOVER:** US]

A candid look inside some troubled lives

A radio DJ who overeats, a grandmother addicted to crack, a bisexual bodybuilder — just three of millions of people living with the blight of addiction

BY **JOHNNY DIAZ**
NY TIMES NEW SERVICE, BOSTON

Meet Bobby, Marvin, Janice, Todd, Ellen, Jody, Sean, and Kate. They are addicts living with various forms of addiction: food, gambling, alcohol, sex, shoplifting, crack and steroids.

Their stories of survival and recovery serve as the illuminating narrative of *America Anonymous: Eight Addicts in Search of a Life*, by Boston freelance journalist Benoit Denizet-Lewis. Through his protagonists, the author examines how society tends to misinterpret what it means to be an addict. He offers a candid look at each of these individuals' struggles, relapses, and hopes for a sober, stable and healthy life.

As Denizet-Lewis drops in on each of his subjects over the course of three years, he weaves in tales of his own sex addiction. He reconstructs what a typical day was like for him when he couldn't tame his sexual urges and blew off his friends and jobs.

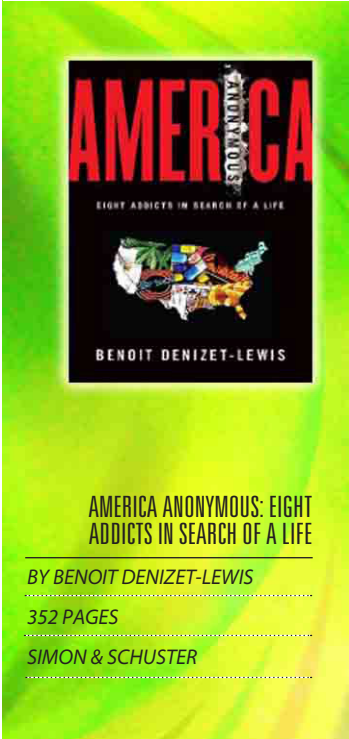
In revealing his story and those of his eight subjects, Denizet-Lewis produces an intimate journal that reveals the different forms addiction takes. He shows us how gambling and food disorders can be just as physically and emotionally debilitating as addictions to alcohol and drugs.

The book's subjects are as varied as their addictions. Among them: an 80-year-old alcoholic, a housewife who shop-lifts, a radio DJ who overeats, a grandmother addicted to crack, a bisexual bodybuilder, and a 34-year-old South Boston man who wrestles with cravings for heroin and alcohol.

Although each person had a compelling story, two characters stood out. One of them is the crack-addicted grandmother, 55-year-old, unemployed Janice. The author shadows her as she returns to her Harlem neighborhood after she receives a 24-hour pass from her recovery center. Passersby and drug dealers welcome and applaud her for staying clean. "Janice is kind of a grandmotherly rock star, and our stroll through the area feels like her reunion tour," Denizet-Lewis writes.

In scenes like this, he draws the reader into Janice's private and public recovery as she works toward a General Educational Development and a full-time job. Her chapters crackle with street dialogue and insights from family and counselors who tell us more about her former life and how Janice is forging a path of healing and transformation.

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Then there's Todd, the 40-year-old bodybuilder and male escort who wants the perfect body and abuses steroids and ephedra to get it. Denizet-Lewis meets up with him as he prepares to meet clients in various cities. The author captures Todd's emotional seesaw as he experiences the highs and lows of his drug use, which combine to affect his sense of self-worth. Denizet-Lewis questions whether Todd really wants to break free: "Todd has talked a lot about taking action to improve his life, but he's rarely followed through ... Todd is an active addict, and addiction routinely trumps commitment."

Throughout *America Anonymous*, the author provides historical and sociological context, noting, for example, that "in 1841, the Washingtonian Society of Boston offered rooms under its meeting hall for struggling alcoholics" and that "nearly 23 million Americans — 9.2 percent of the population twelve or older — are hooked on alcohol or drugs."

At the end of the book, the reader learns who has succeeded or relapsed. "Where are the millions of addicts in this country who are sober and have turned around their lives? They need to be on the front lines of this war," Denizet-Lewis writes, daring other recovering addicts to share their stories on a larger stage.

And in writing this book, he has done just that.

in 1930s Manchuria; the second as a film critic on the post-war *Japan Evening Post*; and the third through his involvement in making soft-core romantic movies in Tokyo before going to the Middle East as a convert to the cause of Palestinian militancy. I counted 41 films mentioned by name in the book, and in addition several illustrious film directors appear in cameo roles.

This device allows Buruma to follow the career of Yamaguchi through its many phases in a way that would have been impossible using a single narrator. She is a real-life figure, of course, and Buruma informs us that she "graciously allowed me to interview her on several occasions in Tokyo." Now called Otaka Yoshiko, her birth name, she grew to fame in 1930s Manchuria as Li Xianglan (李香蘭, Rì Koran in Japanese) playing Chinese roles in films that presented the Japanese presence there in an almost invariably favorable light. The fact that she was actually born



Can the fallen 'King of Pop' thrill one last time?

After a decade marked more by scandal than song, Michael Jackson is returning to the spotlight for a 'final curtain call'

AFP, LOS ANGELES

Michael Jackson was a child prodigy, a musical genius and one of the most idolized artists on earth.

But for all his iconic status, the 50-year-old pop megastar — who announced his first concerts in more than a decade on Thursday — risks seeing his legend overshadowed by pedophilia accusations.

While Jackson reigned as the "King of Pop" in the 1980s, his once-stellar career has been overshadowed by his colorful public behavior, his startling physical transformation and multiple allegations of child abuse.

Jackson has lived as a virtual recluse since he was acquitted in 2005 on charges including child molestation and plotting to kidnap his young accuser.

Despite his acquittal, the trial was a body blow from which the pop music superstar has yet to recover.

Four years later, the 50-year-old is still worshipped by fans for revolutionizing music, dance and music videos at the peak of his success.

The attention however paid to him in recent years has been less flattering, focusing on apparent cosmetic surgery — which he denies — his baby dangle antics and a decade of swirling child abuse allegations.

Born on Aug. 29, 1958, Jackson made his show business debut with four of his older brothers in the Jackson Five pop group, and went on to lead the stage clan with a piping soprano and dazzling dance moves.

By 1969, the group had signed with Motown Records and became one of the last great acts to emerge from the legendary label.

The Jacksons produced seven singles for Motown that each sold more than one million copies and three albums which each sold more than two million. They moved to CBS's Epic Records in 1976.

Despite the success, Jackson recalled those years as unhappy and lonely ones. Eventually the family act broke up and Jackson went solo.

In 1979, Quincy Jones produced Jackson's first solo album for Epic, *Off the Wall*, a huge disco-oriented success that sold 10 million copies.

They teamed up again in 1982 for *Thriller*, which became the top-selling album of all time, with sales exceeding 41 million.

According to Robert Thompson, an expert in pop culture at the University of Syracuse, New York, Jackson's later problems can be traced to the phenomenal success of *Thriller*.

"He got to the point that he was so rich, so powerful and so famous, that he was allowed to kind of withdraw from any kind of reality," Thompson said.

Thriller was followed by *Bad* in 1987 (20 million sold) and *Dangerous* in 1991 (21 million sold) with videos whose autoerotic dance contrasted with Jackson's sweet, childlike personality offstage.

In 1991 Jackson signed a deal with Sony Music described as the most

lucrative contract ever for a recording artist. Although Jackson's share was not disclosed, Sony estimated the potential in sales at a billion US dollars.

But in 1993, a 13-year-old boy made sex abuse allegations against his former pal Jackson and prosecutors launched an investigation.

A year later, Jackson struck an out-of-court agreement with the family under which he paid out US\$23.3 million, a deal which Jackson has said he now regrets.

The deal halted the criminal case, which was being pursued by Tom Sneddon, the chief prosecutor in Jackson's trial.

As Jackson's life became more complicated, he also started undergoing a dramatic physical transformation.

Over the years, his skin has become much lighter and he appears to have had extensive plastic surgery on his face. *Vanity Fair* magazine reported in 2003 that the tip of his nose is actually a prosthesis.

In 1994, he stunned the public by marrying Lisa Marie Presley, the 26-year-old daughter of Elvis Presley.

The marriage lasted less than two years and was a hot topic for the tabloids. However, the renewed interest in Jackson's love life did not spark interest in his music.

In June 1995, he released the double album *HIStory, Past, Present and Future — Book I* to negative reviews and weak sales — despite Sony Music's US\$40-million investment. Jackson's next album, *Invincible*, flopped.

Jackson then married Debbie Rowe, a 37-year-old nurse he met while undergoing surgery in 1997. They had two children, Prince Michael and Paris Michael Katherine, before divorcing in 1999.

Jackson had custody of the two children and of a third, Prince Michael II, born to an unknown woman, when in November 2002 he came under fierce public criticism for dangling his youngest child from a fourth-floor hotel balcony in Berlin for photographers.

Adding to his woes Jackson has also been hit by a flurry of lawsuits from former aides, promoters and others over alleged unpaid bills. In November, Jackson and a Bahraini prince struck an "amicable" deal to avoid a London court case over a US\$7-million-dollar lawsuit.

A treasure trove of Jackson memorabilia, including a wrought iron gate from his Neverland Ranch and his famous white glove, are to be auctioned off in Beverly Hills, reflecting the singer's change in circumstances.

But on Thursday, four years after his infamous child abuse trial, Jackson announced he will play 10 gigs at the giant London O2 arena starting in July.

Wearing his trademark sunglasses and a silver-embroidered black military-style jacket, Jackson, appearing frail and unsteady, told some 2,000 screaming fans at the O2 concert venue: "This is it. This is the final curtain call. See you in July."

"I love you so much," he said, as he swayed and spoke indistinctly, his face hidden behind his pair of sunglasses.

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The many faces of Yoshiko Yamaguchi

In his second novel, 'The China Lover,' Ian Buruma takes readers on a tour of Japanese cinematic history through the life of one of its most colorful actresses

BY **BRADLEY WINTERTON**
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

This is only the second work of fiction that Japanophile and polymath Ian Buruma has published, and it isn't hard to imagine the thought processes that led him to opt again for the form. He's always been an enthusiast for Japanese cinema, and the long career of the Japanese actress Yoshiko Yamaguchi must have seemed like an ideal subject for his talents. But there may have been problems of accountability and confidentiality that led Buruma to reject his usual non-fiction approach. The good news, however, is that he's managed to come up with an exceptionally absorbing and enjoyable novel instead.

Buruma could write a history of Japanese cinema with ease, and *The China Lover* is in many ways an attempt at just such a project without the necessity of being all-inclusive. It has three different narrators and they're all film buffs: the first in his official capacity as promoter of Japanese culture

for other activities. His second narrator is a young gay American who finds the land of his heart's desire in the devastated Tokyo of 1946. He works initially censoring films, is sent back home in disgrace after director Nobuo Hotta's film *Time of Darkness* is passed for distribution, but manages soon after to return, this time as a film critic. This job leads to his extending his contacts with Japanese cinema celebrities of the day, Yamaguchi included.

In order to cover Yamaguchi's exploits as a political TV journalist beginning in the 1960s, Buruma invents his third narrator, this time a Japanese passionate about the cause of the Palestinians. He goes to the Middle East to train in guerilla techniques and is imprisoned in Lebanon after his involvement, as a member of the Japanese Red Army, in the Lod Airport Massacre of 1972.

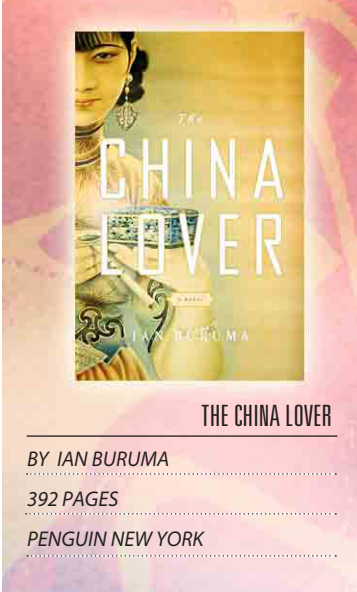
It will be obvious that this scenario allows Buruma to share his insights into huge swathes of Japanese 20th-century history.

These insights are welcome, and the fact that the three different narrative voices are not always made as distinct as a seasoned novelist would have made them scarcely matters. They're distinct when Buruma remembers to make them so, but when he's delivering what are clearly his own judgments on Japan and Japanese affairs there's rarely any doubt as to who's talking.

Nevertheless, this is a fascinating and highly readable book, informative about a whole range of topics from perceived Jewish involvement in 1930s Manchuria to such landmarks of Japanese cinema as its first on-screen kiss (given and received by Yamaguchi in Ichiro Miyagawa's *Sounds of Spring*).

There's a hilarious chapter describing a visit to Tokyo, and request for guidance from Buruma's second narrator, by Truman Capote. "I thought you might be my Cicerone in this garden of vice, or should I say my Mephistopheles?" He proves

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Pu Yi (浦義). Buruma imagines just such a romantic, however, as the first of his three narrators, a man who ran an organization there for the promotion of New Asian Culture, albeit in part as a cover

for other activities. His second narrator is a young gay American who finds the land of his heart's desire in the devastated Tokyo of 1946. He works initially censoring films, is sent back home in disgrace after director Nobuo Hotta's film *Time of Darkness* is passed for distribution, but manages soon after to return, this time as a film critic. This job leads to his extending his contacts with Japanese cinema celebrities of the day, Yamaguchi included.

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dissatisfied by the prospect, which the narrator finds so alluring, of young Japanese males, however — "Just look at their thumbs, honey. It never fails."

Yamaguchi is treated with respect, and even affection. Her short-lived marriage to the Japanese artist Isamu Noguchi, for instance, is evoked with discretion. She's seen in essence as an example of humanity's ability to make itself new, just as the Japanese nation remade itself after 1945. In a way it's her innocence that saves her, and Buruma's own humanity and wide-ranging cultural sympathies are the perfect tools for depicting so many attitudes, decades, characters and locations.

This fine novel is yet another opportunity for the author to display his love for a country that is so endlessly intriguing, so richly exotic and yet, inevitably, not without its faults — for which, as Buruma would be the first to argue, it has suffered so disproportionately and so hideously.