In the early morning, even before the marquee was broken in, the atmosphere was kinetic at the shop and in the Square. Speckled coffee-lips muttered anxious words about menacing skies. Volunteers compared clipboards and, marking anomalies, frowned... and then smiled again for what else could be done now? Authors hove, bear-like, around corners and up flights of metro steps before disappearing into the green room – for one doesn’t live hand to mouth as a young scribe without knowing, instinctively, where the coffee and croissants are served. Guilty cigarettes were smoked in purloined moments of leisure. A bearded fellow glanced about shiftily and then, sensing all that was clear, nailed something to a tree. Keys were lost, found, and lost again...

...And then, as though in an immaculately choreographed pincer, the audience arrived...

Books are available for purchase at Shakespeare & Company and in French at the independent French bookseller stand outside square René Viviani. There will be a signing by authors following most Festival events.

**Order of the Day**

**Friday 13th June**

**In the Marquee**

11:00 ~ 11:50 Alistair Horne

Paris: Biography of a City, a Sentimental journey. Introduced by John Baxter. In English with bilingual Q&A.

12:00 ~ 12:50 Victoria Glendinning


13:00 ~ 13:50 Rachel Cusk

Motherhood and Memoir. In conversation with Janine di Giovanni. In English, extract read in French.

14:00 ~ 14:50 English PEN

Another Sky in Paris chaired by former English PEN president Victoria Glendinning. In English.

15:00 ~ 15:50 P.M. Homes

Secrets, Lies and the Truth In Between. Introduced by Ian Jack. In English.

16:00 ~ 16:50 Antonia Fraser

From Mary Queen of Scots to Louis XIV with Love. Introduced by Jeanette Winterson. In English, extract read in French.

17:15 ~ 18:30

Béatrice Commengé and Amélie Nothomb

I Am the Other: Conversation in French.
Setting the pace early, Mr. Anton Gill tore into the life of Peggy Guggenheim, surrendering to his enthusiasm for a woman who — to his evident disagreement — was once described by an acquaintance of Guggenheim’s as “interesting... but not that interesting” Guggenheim as collector was overshadowed in Mr. Gill’s talk by Guggenheim as woman, as wife and as hyper-sexualised devourer of artistic men. Her marriages — first to Laurence Vail, then to Max Ernst — were turbulent, violent affairs, Mr. Gill explained, owing not only to Guggenheim’s temerity but also to the temperament of the men to whom she was attracted (Vail’s book about their marriage is soberly entitled “Murder, Murder”).

Samuel Beckett, one of Guggenheim’s battalion of paramours, proved, it seemed, particularly difficult for her to pin down. After a bed bound night and day together Beckett was said to have dressed up to leave before turning to Guggenheim, still in bed recovering from the ordeal, and declaring, “Thank you. It was fun while it lasted.”

Drake VS Lagerfeld

The imperious nimbustro finally discharged their burden as Mrs. Alicia Drake treated the festival audience to a lesson in the law. After the publication, in English, of her book The Beautiful Fall, one of its principal protagonists, Mr. Karl Lagerfeld, took umbrage at the content and sued Mrs. Drake for one hundred thousand Euros, plus ten thousand more for every copy of the book sold in France. Accusing Mrs. Drake of “exploiting the morbid curiosity” of the general public and possessing a “dèshis for salacious detail,” the case, which cited 18 passages of the book — claims of homosexuality and cocaine parties among them — was swiftly dismissed by the judge. Such an experience, Mrs. Drake confided, provoked deep reflection concerning the biographer’s role. How much of a biography, she asked herself, is necessarily fantasy and projection on the part of the biographer, and how much does the biographer’s experience with the subject effect the final outcome? From now on — although not, she stresses, as a direct result of this experience — Mrs. Drake plans to concentrate on fiction.

African Eskimo

Fear of snakes can drive a man to great lengths. In the case of Mr. Togo’s Kpomassie, it was a Togolese as far as Greenland. As a child in his native Togo Kpomassie, who charmed the damp assembly with his intelligence and warmth, narrowly escaped death from fever caused by a snake bite. Not long after he chanced upon a book entitled Les Eskimos de Groenland, In it he read that there were existed a country in which snakes were unheard of and asked himself, “Where is this paradise?” Without word to his family, he ran away at the age of six — and very naïve attitude. For me it was important to find out what had driven them to kill another child. To drag it back into the normal world, to look at families and what happens in families, and that meant looking at my own.” Mr. Morrison also gave voice to his view concerning why memoirs have developed a need for authenticity, that they belonged to another planet. In other words, let’s stop thinking about this, let’s not even acknowledge that they belong to our world. It was a very punitive and very naïve attitude. For me it was important to find out what had driven them to kill another child. To drag it back into the normal world, to look at families and what happens in families.

All In The Family

Mr. Blake Morrison then engaged in a touching conversation with Mr. Chip Martin about his attempts to “bring a man back to life by writing about him,” experience out of which two books grew (And when did you last see your father?) and more recently Things My Mother Never Told Me). He also dwelt upon the issue of how Mr. Francis Werding handled the case of murdered infant James Bulger, upon which he has also written. The presentation of the case, the Mr. Morrison said, “was very much that these two boys were evil seeds, that they belonged to another planet. In other words, let’s stop thinking about this, let’s not even acknowledge that they belong to our world. It was a very punitive and very naïve attitude. For me it was important to find out what had driven them to kill another child. To drag it back into the normal world, to look at families and what happens in families, and that meant looking at my own.” Mr. Morrison also gave voice to his view concerning why memoirs have developed a need for authenticity, that they belonged to another planet. In other words, let’s stop thinking about this, let’s not even acknowledge that they belong to our world. It was a very punitive and very naïve attitude. For me it was important to find out what had driven them to kill another child. To drag it back into the normal world, to look at families and what happens in families, and that meant looking at my own.”

Hearing Voices

After her talk on the life of Edith Piaf Mrs. Carolyn Burke gave some advice to would-be biographers in attendance. “Do not wait until you feel you have done all of your research before beginning to write, otherwise you will never start. The material will give itself form. Write as fast as you can. Write when it seems right to do so. You can always go back and revise. You will never have the full picture. If you expect to have the full picture before starting, then you will wait forever.” Mr. Burke was the second biographer of the day (the first being Mr. Morrison speaking about his book on Gutenberg) who reported experiencing an internal voice, a voice not her own, dictating what she was to write: a liberating sensation and one that this writer, at this very moment — precisely 2:13, the morning of Friday the thirteenth — deeply envies his colleagues!

Demystifying Mao

The extent to which Mao’s China departed from the communist ideal was illustrated by Mrs. Jung Chang as she recounted that, upon visiting England for the first time, she considered it a “wonderfully classless” place. It is an opinion she has since modified. Mrs. Chang’s address — a very human and impromptu one — dealt with the horrors of life under Mao and the cathartic experience of researching the biography. She wrote with her husband Mr. Jon Halliday. Mrs. Chang spoke about her personal experience of Maoist persecution — both of her parents were denounced and tortured — and the difficulties of shaking off the view, incubated into all Chinese, that Mao was omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. In a word, a God. Particularly chilling was his attitude towards the writer and somehow to be he taken less seriously than writing by men. About this perception Mrs. Winterson declared defiantly, “I jolly well stop the audience into affirmative applause.

The confabulatory juxtaposition of Mrs. Winterson, a fiction writer, with Mrs. Souhami, a biographer, also produced some provocative exchanges. On the subject of truth, Mrs. Winterson said the following: “People make mistakes, they see as real with what they think is true. They mistake autobiography with authenticity. In order to tell an emotional truth it may be very necessary to alter the facts of a perceived or objective truth, then you may get closer to what really needs to be said. My feeling is that anyone who sets out to be so should just write what they want to write and damn it!” To this Mrs. Souhami added: “Biography is ambiguous, but then again so is memory.”

Write What You Want and Damn It!

Day One’s proceedings were rounded off by Mmes Winterson (Jeanette) and Souhami (Diana) in conversation. Taking Woolf’s Orlando (described by Winterson as “a war against the nineteenth century”) and Hall’s The Well of Loneliness (described by both as “simply awful”) as opposing, though temporally and in some ways thematically linked, poles, they cut a stimulating trail across a wide variety of topics. Concerning the two texts, that Hall’s rather limp account of “sexual inversion” should be censored, but Woolf’s complex and barrier breaking text should escape similar restriction they attributed to the simple naivishness of the British government at the time — unable as they were to understand a book as intelligent as Woolf’s. They also spoke about the lingering perception that “Women’s writing” — as people still insist in categorising it — somehow to be he taken less seriously than writing by men. About this perception Mrs. Winterson declared defiantly, “I jolly well stop

The Festival and Co. team are very grateful to the good people at The New York Review of Books for all their support during the organisation of this year’s event. We would like to remind our readers that the latest edition of the latest edition are available in the shop. Thanks.