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Burma Chronicles



Synopsis

THE POPULAR TRAVELOGUE NOW IN PAPERBACK From the author of *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea* and *Shenzhen: A Travelogue from China* comes *Burma Chronicles*, an informative look at a country that uses concealment and isolation as social control. It is drawn with Guy Delisle's minimal line, interspersed with wordless vignettes and moments of his distinctive slapstick humor.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

DeLisle's (*Pyongyang*) latest exploration of Asian life is probably the best possible argument against the ruling junta in the embattled (and now nearly obliterated) nation also known as Myanmar.

Readers will find themselves initially shocked and surprised at the country's differences, then awestruck by the new traditions and finally in love with and yet enraged by Burmese daily life.

DeLisle's wife is a French aid worker with *Médecins Sans Frontières* (Doctors Without Borders), leaving DeLisle alone with their son, Louis, and his cartooning. DeLisle's style is simple but highly

eloquent, and he tells more about the depth and breadth of the Burmese experience in the book's little nonfiction vignettes than he ever could in an artificially imposed narrative. *Burma Chronicles* is

not merely a neat piece of cartooning but a valuable artifact of a repressive and highly destructive culture that curtails free speech with unparalleled tenacity. Like Joe Sacco's *The Fixer* and *Safe Area Gorazde*, DeLisle uses cartooning to dig into a story that demands to be told. (Sept.) Copyright

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In previous graphic memoirs, Delisle, a Québecois animator, has documented in spare, whimsical black-and-white line drawings his visits to North Korea and China. Here, he turns his hand to another authoritarian Asian regime, Burma, where he spent a year after the 2004 tsunami with his wife and their infant son. Drawn with charming simplicity and brio, the book mixes traditional travelogue with glimmers of the unexpected, as when Delisle notes that in the local newspaper some articles contain nothing but a list of officials present at a given event, or discovers a lit light bulb placed in a drawer to keep paper dry during monsoon season. Delisle takes a whimsical approach but also logs political realities the increasing difficulty of getting travel permits for humanitarian work, the abrupt banishment of foreign videos from stores. Copyright ©2008 Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book was very eye opening about daily life in Burma at the time, some of the struggles the NGO and aid organisations go through to bring basic services to the rural populations and how people cope on a day to day basis with the repressive regime. It also showed a turnabout in the gender roles where the husband moved his life to support his wife in her career which is not usually the case. I found that Guy was a little bit of a complainer and at times was irritating, especially when he showed the importance and challenges of the work his wife did. I liked the cartooning style, it was very effective in conveying the tone of what was going on. It is a very good book and I would recommend it.

Presented primarily in tidy iconic panels, Delisle's Burma Chronicles paints a vivid portrait of the incredibly isolated though vastly intriguing Burma culture examined by a stay-at-home-abroad dad limited by constant governmental censorship. Delisle discovers the Burma regime's intensive censorship campaign while reading a severely-edited Time magazine on pg.9 and commenting "In Myanmar, all magazines go through the censorship bureau. Articles that are unflattering to the country are systematically removed." The theme of censorship and its effects on Burma's citizens is omnipresent throughout the Burma Chronicles. The censorship bureau is acutely thorough, extensively editing the 80+ Myanmarian magazines every week (66). Moreover, the country's censorship extends to individuals. A small magazine snafu in which a government official is apparently criticized results in the mysterious removal of a student from Delisle's private cartooning class (197). A Nobel Prize winner is currently under mandated house arrest for her views against

the government (33). Perhaps in response to the censoring nature of the Burma dictatorship, Delisle deliberately renders governmental officials not in his signature simplistic style but in fully-featured and in some instances downright frightening detail, as on page 22 a girl fawning over his baby retrieves her father, referred to merely as "the patriarch," and presents him like a stiff and leering corpse (23). The same drawing style used on this familial figurehead is used to depict the leaders of Burma as well--often in larger-than-life poses-- towering, for instance, over the country's deadly opium fields (207) or bulldozing homes (208). Delisle, by writing this account, is subverting the patriarchy's attempts to impose order through censorship of the Burma people. It makes sense that Delisle's most enriching experience arrives late in the novel when he mediates at a Vipassana temple (246-254). By placing himself into the imposed silence of the monks, he experiences true happiness. He is at initially uneasy, his thoughts spinning wildly on page 250. Then he resolves to enjoy the experience of meditation in solitude. Basking in what amounts to a self-imposed censorship of the external struggles of the world around him, Delisle finds peace. Perhaps the Burma government could learn a lot from the monks who roam the streets, praying and accepting gifts of rice; as Delisle remains silently studying himself under their guidance, he is controlled and contented. His experience is self-reflective, beyond the sway of larger governmental censorship.

Once I started this book, I couldn't stop sneaking off to read it. It actually sucked me in and my whole world for 3 days was Burma, in black and white. Not much else to say except that it is really like a blog with drawings and humor peppered here and there. Very easy to digest, and would be a great addition to any PoliSci course or literature course looking to go multi-modal or just change it up a bit. I loved the fact that the hardcover does NOT have a (useless and gratuitous) dustjacket. The image that would be on the dustjacket is actually the hard cover.

I saw Guy Delisle's new work "Jerusalem" in a bookshop and bought it on an impulse. Immediately hooked, I sought out his other graphic travel accounts. As with all of his similar work, I found this book to be easy to access and both very interesting and entertainingly informative. It is a fascinating combination of intimate travel diary and political commentary. I have read graphic works of non-fiction in the past but Guy Delisle now has me seeking them out wherever I can find them.

Great book about a man how finds himself in a strange country, with a baby, not speaking the same language and the things that happens to him. The experience of traveling to a country so different and the language limitation was treated in a very funny way. Very identifiable. I think it the best of the

series, followed by Pyongyang. Must read it!!

Burma Chronicles was good for several evenings of entertainment, along with insight of what it's like to live in another country on a temporary basis. This book was not as fascinating as Pyongyang Yang, but Myanmar is probably not quite as bizarre as North Korea. The book didn't really read as a complete story, it was more like a bunch of separate anecdotes.

Our man abroad follows his wife to Burma/Myanmar for yet another wonderful travelogue. Boy, Burma really seems like a crappy place in some ways, but once again, Delisle makes the place fascinating, both for its Kafkaesque political situation as well as the amazing people and culture of the country. A great book.

It is a good exploration with Guy Delisle to Burma. After I read this book, it gave me a lot of exploration about Burma. The author had many interaction with local people in Burma, he let me know about how the local people like and what is the characteristic of Burma people.

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