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Manchu princess, Japanese spy: the story of Kawashima Yoshiko, the Cross-Dressing spy who commanded her own army, Phyllis Birnbaum (book review)

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BIOGRAPHY

Birnbaum, Phyllis. *Manchu Princess, Japanese Spy: The Story of Kawashima Yoshiko, the Cross-Dressing Spy Who Commanded Her Own Army.* Columbia Univ. (Asia Perspectives: History, Society & Culture). Apr. 2015. 272p. photos. notes. index. ISBN 9780231152181. \$30; ebk. ISBN 9780231526340. **BIOG**

The story of Kawashima Yoshiko's life (1907–48) reads like a novel, so it's no surprise that even before her death she was the subject of fiction and film. The 14th daughter of a Manchu prince, Yoshiko was taken in by a Chinese-allied Japanese man after the fall of the Qing dynasty and grew up with a drive to restore the Manchu people to their rightful place, leading her to play a role in the establishment of the Manchu puppet state and in military and espionage activities during Japan's invasion of China in

thorough record of as much of Yoshiko's experience as she can. The author is aware of and up front about bias or inescapable gaps in her sources and sensitive to the complexities of her subject.—**Kathleen McCallister, Tulane Univ., New Orleans**

★**Longerich, Peter. Goebbels.** Random. May 2015. 960p. notes. bibliog. index. ISBN 9781400067510. \$40; ebk. ISBN 9780812996883. **BIOG**

Historian Longerich (history, Univ. of London; *Holocaust*) takes advantage of rarely utilized diaries and other sources to painstakingly document the life of Adolf Hitler's propaganda master and perhaps most loyal subordinate. The book balances its examination of Joseph Goebbels's professional and private life and proposes that his narcissism and obsession with recognition did not stem from his disability or relatively

describing a man always doggedly pursuing the approval of someone; whether his mother, a girlfriend, the German populace, or Hitler. **VERDICT** Highly recommended for German, Holocaust, and World War II historians and readers, biography lovers, and those interested in marketing and propaganda history. [See Prepub Alert, 4/7/14.]—**Benjamin Brudner, Curry Coll. Lib., Milton, MA**

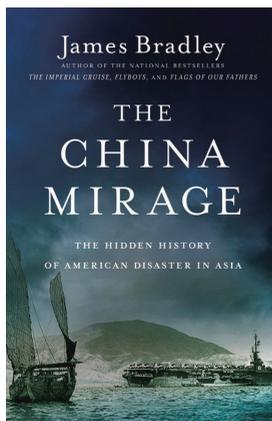
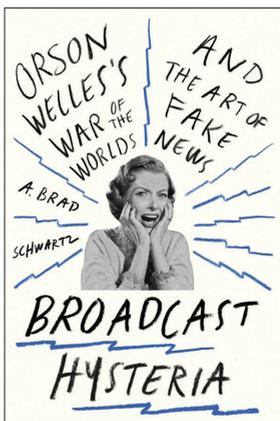
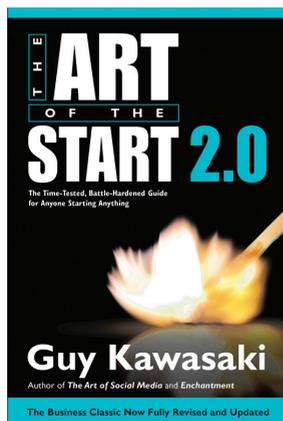
Rinaldi, Robin. The Wild Oats Project: One Woman's Midlife Quest for Passion at Any Cost. Sarah Crichton: Farrar.

Mar. 2015. 288p. ISBN 9780374290214. \$26; ebk. ISBN 9780374710811. **MEMOIR**

Magazine editor and writer Rinaldi and her husband, Scott, had reached a marital impasse—she wanted kids, desperately; he did not, definitely. Shortly after Scott got a vasectomy, Rinaldi came up with a plan B (or plan S-E-X) for herself. Instead of divorce, more counseling, or throwing herself into charity work, she chose to pursue erotic experiences. As she put it, she didn't want to look back on her life with “no kids and only four lovers.” She devised an open-marriage plan, the Wild Oats Project, whereby she spent weekdays and nights at a bachelorette pad, visiting dating websites, having assignments, joining sex workshops and groups, then heading home to Scott on weekends. As one might expect about her best laid plans, things go awry. But the author gets to put a few notches on her bedpost and perhaps find fulfillment and even more self-knowledge at the end of her project. **VERDICT** While at times the author is exasperating and one might marvel at her husband's patience, her daring project and avid search for passion is a true page-turner. For anyone who's wondered “what if” or “should I?” [See Rinaldi Q&A, p. 116.]—**Liz French, Library Journal**

Thondup, Gyalo & Anne F. Thurston. The Noodle Maker of Kalimpong: The Untold Story of My Struggle for Tibet. PublicAffairs. Apr. 2015. 352p. photos. maps. notes. bibliog. index. ISBN 9781610392891. \$27.99; ebk. ISBN 9781610392907. **BIOG**

This memoir by Thondup, the Dalai Lama's older brother, is also the story of an isolated and unprepared Tibet's annexation by China, long years of armed Tibetan resistance, and the eventual creation and administration of a Tibetan government in exile. It is a story about clandestine deal-



How to launch a successful business; the 20th-century industry of radio; U.S.–China relations

the 1930s. A daring and controversial figure, Yoshiko lived flashily, wore both women's and men's fashions, and freely embroidered and exaggerated her own exploits during the war—the last of these playing a major part in her accusation of treason and execution by the Chinese government. Yet owing to her controversial and larger-than-life status, many of the facts of her life—her upbringing, her true military activities, and even her age—have become obscured. Birnbaum (*Glory in a Line*) does her utmost to unravel the threads that make up Yoshiko's legacy by using information from memoirs, novels, surviving family members, and the lives of Manchu figures in similar situations. **VERDICT** In this thoughtful biography of a complicated woman, Birnbaum provides a

poor upbringing. The author instead argues that it was his inability to develop a sense of independence that led to a life of rabid loyalty to his dictator. Longerich expertly demonstrates how a petty mentality combined with brilliant powers of manipulation resulted in the development of a propaganda master capable of enthralling Germany into joining the Nazi movement, dehumanizing targets of the Holocaust, and sacrificing their very lives (he also gave his own) to the führer he worshiped. This work is, by far, the most complete treatment of its subject to date and is likely to remain so for a long time. Goebbels (1897–1945) was a contemptible man in both personality and deed, and while his life never inspires true pity, Longerich does an excellent job of

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