



No Regrets: The Life of Edith Piaf

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The iconic French singer comes to life in this enthralling, definitive biography, which captures Edith Piaf's immense charisma along with the time and place that gave rise to her unprecedented international career.

Raised by turns in a brothel, a circus caravan, and a working-class Paris neighborhood, Piaf began singing on the city's streets, where she was discovered by a Champs-Élysées cabaret owner. She became a star almost overnight, seducing Paris's elite and the people of its slums in equal measure with her powerful, passionate voice. *No Regrets* explores her rise to fame and notoriety, her tumultuous love affairs, and her struggles with drugs, alcohol, and illness, while also drawing on new sources to enhance our knowledge of little-known aspects of her life. Piaf was an unlikely student of poetry and philosophy, who aided Resistance efforts in World War II, wrote the lyrics for nearly one hundred songs (including "La Vie en rose") and was a crucial mentor to younger singers (including Yves Montand and Charles Aznavour) who absorbed her love of *chanson* and her exacting approach to their métier.

Here is Piaf in her own world—Paris in the first half of the twentieth century—and in ours. Burke demonstrates how, with her courage, her incomparable art, and her universal appeal, "the little sparrow" endures as a symbol of France and a source of inspiration to entertainers worldwide.

No Regrets: The Life of Edith Piaf Details

Date : Published March 22nd 2011 by Knopf (first published January 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9780307268013

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Format : Hardcover 282 pages

Genre : Biography, Music, Nonfiction, History, Cultural, France

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From Reader Review No Regrets: The Life of Edith Piaf for online ebook

Rosie Beck says

Loving biography of the truly remarkable Edith Piaf. From her early life--abandoned by her parents and raised in her grandparents brothel--until her father, a circus contortionist, takes her "on the road" to perform with that heavenly voice, one realizes how impassioned she was with music. France's "little sparrow" climbed to the top. Her connections with Lepee, a possible mobster from the very seedy Pigalle, through an astonishing amount of lovers to the death of her one true love Marcel Cerdan are covered. What is glossed over somewhat is her descent into alcohol and drugs leading to her early death. What a gal.

Lacey says

Edith Piaf lived an amazing life. Tragic, triumphant, and utterly entertaining. It reads like fiction, but indeed Piaf's amazing story is true. She has a mother who was a prostitute and drug addict who abandoned her, so she lived in her grandmothers brothel. Then taken away for a time to live with her father a contortionist gypsy.

She was discovered when she was petting for cash on a street corner, singing. This tiny little 'sparrow' has a story you wouldn't believe.

I couldn't put it down. I also listened to her music intermittently while reading this book, and I highly recommend you do so.

Elena Sotelo-McCrary says

I always loved the way this woman sang. But, I never knew much about what "made her" the international star. Even her name was a revelation--Piaf (French slang for Sparrow). She loved life in the fierce sense, as she was unloved by her mother (who only sought her out for a handout). How awful for her. But, that is what makes her story so incredibly gripping. You want her to succeed, even when life (or critics) try and sometimes succeed in tearing her down. Yet, like a phoenix she rises to new heights. I never knew she wrote music, but was at first shutdown with her lyrics. Yet, she persisted. Here we have a street fighter, a lover, a muse, a mentor. So much in such a small package. If you have ever felt as if you struggled, you must take time to read, "No Regrets" for Mome Piaf lived as she sang with every fiber of her being.

To ?σχημο Ρ?ζι Καρολ?να says

Γεννημ?νη στα 1915 στις λα?κ?ς συνοικ?ες της Belleville απ? πατ?ρα ακροβ?τη και μητ?ρα τραγουδ?στρια η Edith Piaf ? Edith Giovanna Gassion ?πως ?ταν το αληθιν? της ?νομα ?ρθε για συγκλον?σει τον κ?σμο με το ανεπαν?ληπτο μ?ταλλο της φων?ς της. Π?ρασε τα πρ?τα χρ?νια της ζω?ς της σχεδ?ν τυφλ?, αν?μεσα στις π?ρνες που εργ?ζονταν στον ο?κο ανοχ?ς της γιαγι?ς της και

Ήπειτα ως τσιρκόλ?να και καλλιτ?χνις του δρ?μου μαζ? με τον πατ?ρα της. Ήμεινε Ήγκυος στα δεκ?ξι της και Ήρχισε να τραγουδ?ει στα καταγ?για της Place Pigalle, μπλεγμ?νη ως τον λαϊμ? στα πλοκ?μια της τοπικ?ς μαφ?ας, κ?τι που παραλ?γο να της κοστ?σει τη ζω?.

Η μουσικ? παρ?δοση την οπο?α υπηρ?τησε σε Ήλη τη ζω? της, εμπλουτ?ζοντ?ς την με Ήλλα ε?δη, ε?ναι εκε?νη των chansons realistes. Τραγο?δια συναισθηματικ? Ή ακ?μα και σατιρικ? που περιγρ?φουν τις ζω?ς και τα π?θη των ανθρ?πων που ζουν και πεθα?νουν μ?σα στη φτ?χεια και το περιθ?ριο. Κ?τι που ευχαριστ?θηκα στο βιβλ?ο της Burke ε?ναι πως παραθ?τει Ήλα τα τραγο?δια της Piaf, την ιστορ?α που κρ?βεται π?σω απ? τη δημιουργ?α του καθεν?ς, και Ήνα μικρ? απ?σπασμα απ? τους στ?χους στο γαλλικ? πρωτ?τυπο και σε αγγλικ? μετ?φραση. Κ?θε φορ?, σταματο?σα για να ακο?σω το τραγο?δι, και καταλαβα?νοντας το περιεχ?μεν? του πλ?ον, Ήμουν σε θ?ση να κατανο?σω το Ήργο της καλ?τερα. Να βλ?πεις στη σκην? το “σπουργιτ?κι” με το μα?ρο του φ?ρεμα, να τραγουδ?ει το “Padam” και την στιγμ? που αρχ?ζει η μουσικ? να τη σταματ? με μια χειρονομ?α, εν? στο τ?λος ο τρ?πος που χτυπ?ει ρυθμικ? το στ?θος και το μ?τωπ? της αφο? Ήχει πει τους τελευτα?ους στ?χους του τραγουδι?:

J'en ai tout un solfège sur cet air qui bat...

Qui bat comme un cœur de bois...

Θε? μου π?σο καταλαβα?νω το κοιν? της που μαγεμ?νο την αποθ?ωνε κ?θε φορ?.

Παθιασμ?νη γυνά?κα η Piaf, μεταμ?ρφωνε σε τ?χνη τα π?θη της και Ήταν πολ? αληθιν?, ειλικριν?ς και τ?μια, δ?νοντας, κ?θε φορ?, επ?νω στη σκην?, Ήνα κομμ?τι απ? τη ψυχ? της. Και ε?χε πολλ? π?θη. Παθος για τον Ήρωτα, για το αλκο?λ, για να ναρκωτικ? τα οπο?α Ήπαιρνε σε μεγ?λες ποσ?τητες για να καταπολεμ?σει τα προβλ?ματα χρ?νιου π?νου που ξεκ?νησαν απ? πολ? νωρ?ς στη ζω? της. Σκορπο?σε τα χρ?ματ? της χωρ?ς να νοι?ζεται για το α?ριο, περνο?σε απ? τον Ήναν εραστ? στον Ήλλο αναζητ?ντας π?ντα την Ήμπνευση μ?σα σε μια αγκαλι? και απεχθαν?ταν τη μονάξι?, γιατ? της ξυπνο?σε τους εφι?λτες της περασμ?νης της ζω?ς. Ήπως τ?τε που αναγκ?στηκε να κοιμηθε? με Ήναν Ήγνωστο Ήνδρα για να εξοικονομ?σει τα 10 φρ?γκα που της Ήλειπαν για την κηδε?α της μικρ?ς της κ?ρης, που π?θανε απ? μηνιγγ?τιδα. Ωστ?σο π?ρα απ? τον Ήρωτα ε?χε Ήλλες δ?ο γιατρει?ς για τα προβλ?ματ? της: Το γ?λιο και τον αποκρυφισμ?.

Απ? τις πιο Ήμορφες φιλ?ες της αυτ? με τον Jean Cocteau, ο οπο?ος π?θανε μια μ?ρα μετ? απ? εκε?νη, μ?λις του ανακο?νωσαν τον θ?νατ? της προχ?ρησε σε μια δ?λωση στο ραδι?φωνο:

“Η Edith Piaf κ?ηκε μ?σα στις φλ?γες της Ήδιας της δ?ξας. Δεν ξ?ρω αλλον Ήνθρωπο που να αδιαφ?ρησε τ?σο για το πνε?μα του. Δεν κρ?τησε τ?ποτα για τον εαυτ? της, Ήδινε τα π?ντα αφειδ?ς. Ήπως Ήλοι οι γεννα?οι Ήνθρωποι, δεν σκεφτ?ταν τον θ?νατο. Τον απ?φησε. Μ?νο η φων? της παραμ?νει, αυτ? η υπ?ροχη φων?, σαν μα?ρο βελο?δο, που εν?σχυε Ήτι τραγουδο?σε. Μπορε? να Ήχω ακ?μα τη φων? της, ωστ?σο Ήχασα μια σπουδα?α φ?λη”.

Μια Ήρα μετ? τη δ?λωσ? του αυτ?... π?θανε. Ο θεατρικ?ς μον?λογος με τ?τλο “ Le Bel Indifférent” που Ήγραψε για εκε?νη στα 1940, παραμ?νει Ήνα Ήργο συγκλονιστικ? που αν?δειξε το πολ?πλευρο ερμηνευτικ? ταλ?ντο της Piaf.

Απ? τα πιο γνωστ? τραγο?δια της το πιο αγαπημ?νο μου ε?ναι το Milord, Ήπου οι δ?ο διαφορετικ? ρυθμο? ο χαρο?μενος και ο μελαγχολικ?ς μου δημιουργο?ν Ήνα ζεστ? α?σθημα ανθρωπι?ς και παρηγορι?ς:

“Allez, venez, Milord!

Vous asseoir à ma table;

Il fait si froid, dehors,
Ici c'est confortable.”

[...]

“Mais vous pleurez, Milord?
Ça j'aurais jamais cru!
Eh ben, voyons, Milord!
Souriez-moi, Milord!
Mieux qu' ça! Un p'tit effort...
Voilà, c'est ça!
Allez, riez, Milord!
Allez, chantez, Milord!
Mais oui, dansez, Milord!
Bravo Milord!
Encore Milord!”

Απ? τα λιγ?τερα γνωστ? της αγ?πησα πολ? το μελαγχολικ? “ Dans ma rue”:

“dans ma rue y a des ombres qui s' promènent
et je tremble et j'ai froid et j'ai peur.”

Και υπ?ρχει ?να ?μορφο, νοσταλγικ? τραγο?δι “ J'm'en Fous Pas Mal” που θα το φυλ?ω για τις
δ?σκολες στιγμ?ς:

“Je m'en fous pas mal
Y peut m'arriver n'importe quoi
Je m'en fous pas mal
J'ai mon dimanche qui est à moi
C'est peut-être banal
Mais ce que les gens pensent de vous
Ça m'est égal!
Je m'en fous!”

Η συγκεκριμ?νη βιογραφ?α ε?ναι εξαιρετικ? προσεγμ?νη. Η Carolyn Burke αξιοποιε? με τον
καλ?τερο δυνατ? τρ?πο τις πηγ?ς της και δ?νει στο τ?λος του βιβλ?ου μια πλο?σια βιβλιογραφ?α
και αρκετ?ς, σπ?νιες φωτογραφ?ες ειδικ? απ? την ?γνωστη, νεανικ? ηλικια της ερμηνε?τριας. ?να
?ργο γραμμ?νο με σεβασμ? και αντικειμενικ?τητα. Για εμ?να ?ταν μια απολαυστικ? εμπειρ?α.
Αναγνωστικ? και μουσικ? συν?μα.

April says

Edith's life is utterly fascinating. Tumultuous from beginning to end, it's unbelievable the number of tragedies and triumphs she experienced. While the story is stranger than fiction, this telling of it is remarkably dry - quite a feat when considering the riveting details being told.

Christina says

This is the first biography that I have read. I was hoping for more info about the atmosphere that surrounded Piaf through the years. There were a lot of facts about where she performed and who she collaborated with and dated, in fact so many it was a bit boring at times. I felt like I know a lot more about Piaf, but I don't know who she really was in many respects.

Brooke says

Edith Piaf is an individual whose life would seemingly make for an excellent biography: her mother was a failed singer who abandoned her, her father an acrobat who toured with the circus; she was raised in a brothel run by her grandparents. She is France's nightingale.

She is also a woman who understood her own myths and embellished them accordingly, thus making the truth somewhat difficult to determine. I am a huge E.P. fan and this is not the first biography I have read about her, however I would say this is the most dispassionate, which I found to be a good thing. Many of E.P.'s biographies are hyperbolic when they recount her many lovers, her addictions, and her health issues. Carolyn Burke takes facts and replays them. Yes, sometimes it is dry (especially when she speaks of Edith's interest in religion, which I found doubtful), but I like that it leaves out a lot of the romanticism. A solid beginning about Edith Piaf.

Of note, this book explores several of E.P.'s relationships with men, however minor (my opinion). It gives short shift to nearly every relationship with women, including her 25-year collaboration with one of her top composers, Monnot. Biggest fault of the book. And the book's total omission of Edith's female lovers (does not mention that she may have had them) and only a hint that her husband and several young men in her life in the final years were, in fact, gay - well, that seemed odd. It's a biography - explore it.

Lia says

The best biography on Piaf I've read. Though I grew up with my mother playing her music it wasn't until about 10 years ago that I took a serious interest in her life. After documentaries and the successful film "La Môme" or in the US ""La Vie En Rose" this is the book that neatly and succinctly captures Piaf's life, talent and essence. I learned how devoted to love she was and how there were so many layers to her, actress, political activist during WWII, self-appointed manager of numerous talents, a mother, sister, daughter, wife and international icon. The book is very well researched and uses direct quotes and firsthand sources and is cleanly annotated and indexed. I highly recommend this to any fan of hers or fan of biographies. You will find a multi-layered individual with flaws and immense strength that inspires and awes the reader.

ian says

Crap.

Really difficult to get through.

Repeats itself. Doesn't go into much details...

though - if there aren't details there in the first place -

why bother writing the book?

Maybe we want a story that only Piaf herself knows to any extent. And her past was probably so painful that she never really told anyone her story. What's left is just the highlights - but nothing deeper.

The author tried... but doesn't make the book any better.

If Edith read this, the song would have gone...
Non, Je ne regrette rien (Mais l'achat de ce livre de merde)!
(I do not regret anything, but buying this shit book).

Caroline says

Good comprehensive biography of a fascinating artist and woman. However I found the writing to be less than compelling. It seems to me that it's more of a vanity project for the author to show off her knowledge of facts & dates than a real attempt to explain the context and history for her readers. For example, she switches wildly between calling people by their proper and nicknames and in some instances name drops celebrities of the era without telling you what they were actually a celebrity for. Very frustrating, especially when you feel like you need a scorecard of who's who.p in the book. Plus she starts out translating French lyrics for understanding, then Dorothy much drops the practice half way through. She barely mentions La Vie En Rose and doesn't translate the three lines she does reference. I do love Edith Piaf though and this seems a good attempt to chart her journey from street singer to national icon.

Zelmer Wilson says

It was only recently that I discovered Edith Piaf and her songs. After listening to both Non, je ne regrette rien and La Vie en rose, I was hooked. I have since then bought a two CD collection of her songs, a picture, the movie based on her life, and this biography.

I enjoyed this book. I knew some of her life story, but I had no idea how passionate she was about singing and love. Though she didn't find any long lasting happiness with any man, her fans were always there for her.

I would recommend this book to anyone who's a fan of this extraordinary woman and anyone else who wants to know why Edith Piaf is considered one of the best singers of the 20th century and understand why she is still fondly remembered in both her home country, France, and the rest of the world.

Belinda says

Fantastic. The best and most thorough biography of Piaf that I have read so far. I was on my monthly library trip (or book orgy as I like to call it) when I came across this book. I was of course thrilled as Piaf is one of my great loves and obsessions. I adore her music as well as her as a person.

I have read everything I can find on her and sadly, much of it is so terribly slanted it is difficult to suss out the woman beneath the myth. I believe this book does such a good job of that. It does not ignore Edith's excesses in men, alcohol and drugs but it does truly bring home her true life force, her exquisite voice. The book is extremely well researched and is very current (including references to the Oscar winning film of her life, *La Môme* or *La vie En Rose* as it was called in the U.S.). One of the things I love about reading about Edith is that for a little while, she is alive to us. Her vivacity is that strong--just reading about her can make her alive for you. That is so beautiful for me--I love her and of course sympathize with her so much (it's impossible not to do so).

I loved that this book highlighted the extent of her Resistance work--while she was not political, she was patriotic and she took many great risks to help her people during WWII. Her love life and struggles with her health were so huge, they tend to dominate her biographies. While this is valid in terms of her love affair with love, she had many facets. Another of wonderful qualities that is highlighted here is her loyalty and generosity and kindness to others. Her wonderful quality of sharing everything she had with her friends and lovers, from rations during the war to her homes and money. There is much on her assistance to other performers (often her lovers) even at the cost of her own dignity and health.

One walks away with a true sense of Edith as a complete woman and a fascinating one. There is more here as well for those of us with romantic hearts, about her great love, Marcel Cerdan. Some people are very cynical about this love affair--feeling it would have gone the way of her others had Cerdan not passed away (this is not a spoiler as it's very commonly known--Cerdan was nearly as big a celebrity as Edith herself at the time)--but I have to say in reading this book, and dissecting her love affairs that this one was truly different. I do believe she grieved for him the rest of her life and was never the same. I do believe that had he survived her life might have taken a different turn. But that is only my opinion. I do know that along with Cerdan, her greatest love was her singing. That once her health began to compromise that, she lost her will to live and began to fade like a dying flower.

Despite the fragile aspects of her personality and body, the impression one walks away with is of an incredibly strong woman, compromised from the day of her birth by circumstance and resilient in the face of her many travails, both of the heart and body. Edith lived her life as if it was going to be short (she is the essence of the Kerouac quote about "the mad ones") and despite sadness, you appreciate how much she enjoyed so much of her life--every moment of happiness clutched to her breast and truly savored. Like Judy Garland, who she is often compared to, despite her reputation as being tragic, she was a woman who loved to laugh and had a true love of life.

Jenny Brown says

This tedious biography goes overboard in trying to heroicize its subject, but nevertheless presents her in a very unflattering way. Like most biographies of celebrities who left few or boring letters, it too often turns into a dull list of gigs followed by snippets of reviews.

The author's attempt to suggest that Piaf became an intellectual is strained and reeks of whitewashing. In the few scenes where Piaf actually comes to life in this book, we are left with the impression of her as an overwhelmingly self-involved and self-destructive woman who had no ability to form real relationships with other humans and a very limited emotional range in her music, the lyrics of which when translated give a new definition to the word "banal".

Elaine says

Even if you're not a devotee of The Little Sparrow, her amazing life is well worth reading about. At least, I found myself transported to a time, and times as well as cultures I found myself ignorant of. This is especially true of Piaf's early life in Belleville, Normandy, and the streets. Although I've certainly read about show biz before, the Gallic version is different.

Burke presents the lyrics of the songs Piaf sang interspersed with the story of where she appeared. Both in French and English translation, they reveal much about Piaf's longings, fears, sorrows, joys and beliefs. These enhanced the biography greatly.

One sidenote: I read this as an eBook. I mention this for one reason. Both in biographies and 1000 page Russian novels, a multitude of characters appear, disappear, and reappear. Burke adds to the burden of who's who by variously referring to everyone by their surname, first name, and nickname, either alone or in combination. Who is Guite, I'd wonder. With an eReader you can do a quick search for the pages each character was first mentioned on, and can quickly situate him or her. Perhaps your memory is better than mine so that you do fine with a physical book. Perhaps my growing reliance on electronic fact finding is ruining my memory.

Joy Page says

Piaf

What can you say .she was and still has the voice .just fantastic. Been a fan for over sixty years .must go back to Paris again.just realised there is also a museum for Edith .never knew that .has to be a must .best book I've read about her. Lots of information xx
