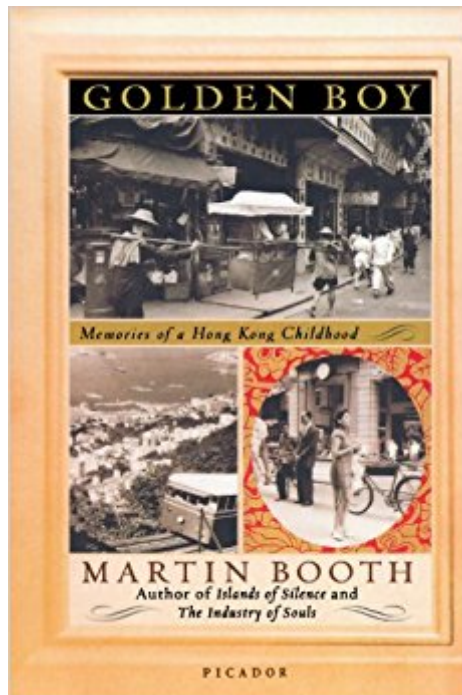




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# Golden Boy: Memories Of A Hong Kong Childhood



## Synopsis

At seven years old, Martin Booth found himself with all of Hong Kong at his feet when his father was posted there in 1952. This is his memoir of that youth, a time when he had access to corners of the colony normally closed to a gweilo, a "pale fellow" like him. From the plink plonk man with his dancing monkey to Nagasaki Jim, and from a drunken child molester to the Queen of Kowloon (the crazed tramp who may have been a Romanov), Martin saw it all--but his memoir illustrates a deeper challenge in his warring parents. This is an intimate and powerful memory of a place and time now past.

## Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Picador; 1st edition (November 14, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0312426267

ISBN-13: 978-0312426262

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 40 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,621,024 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #50 in [Books > History > Asia > Hong Kong](#) #445 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Asia > China](#) #587 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Chinese](#)

## Customer Reviews

In this genial, absorbing memoir of life in Hong Kong during his civil servant father's three-year (1952-1955) post there, British poet, novelist and popular historian Booth (*Opium; Cannabis; Hiroshima Joe; Industry of Souls; etc.*) recreates a time of wonder and recollects Chinese culture as absorbed by a fearless seven-to-nine-year-old boy. Booth makes the newness palpable as he evokes his first experiences with the taste of coconut juice, the glow of phosphorescent plankton and a rocky rickshaw ride. While his conservative father shies away from local culture, impromptu expeditions with his intrepid mother lead to a fortune teller, a leper colony and a Buddhist monastery. With innocence, insouciance and something close to a street urchin's freedom, young Booth soaks it up--a monkey ambush, a funeral procession, a typhoon, an opium den in Kowloon's Walled City--all the while stuffing himself at dai pai dong (street food stalls), hanging about the squatters' encampment, learning Chinese and spending time with characters he

was warned to avoid his experiences he drew upon in his later work. No matter that the protagonist is a mere nine-year-old at the memoir's conclusion; this is a pitch-perfect, captivating tale for grownups. (Dec.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Critics agree that Booth vividly captures the sounds, sights, and tastes of Hong Kong; from Kowloon's chaotic alleys to the stunning countryside. Simultaneously a portrait of a place, a childhood, and a marriage, *Golden Boy* should be savored for its wonderful prose and nostalgic, wise recollections. Booth, who died last year, wrote this book for his two children. Although he recounts his story from a young boy's perspective, most reviewers were touched by the authenticity of his voice. Despite the noxious scenes Booth paints of his family troubles, *Golden Boy* is an uplifting and "loving tribute to Hong Kong, which in some ways hasn't changed at all" (Wall Street Journal). Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Martin Booth, as a youngster from England, resides in 1950s Hong Kong with his father, a plodding minor civil servant, and mother, Joyce. The boy is fully alive and open to all opportunities offered up by this great city and is blessed with a spirited, supportive mother. A wonderful memoir. Those interested in Hong Kong and the interplay between cultures of the East and West will especially enjoy this very human book. Its author, sadly now dead, was a gifted writer of English prose and a wise man

Martin Booth had an amazing memory for the details of post-WWII Hong Kong and the times he had there as a seven to ten year-old boy. His civilian father gets transferred by the British to the far-flung colonial outpost. While his father is more of a spoilsport, his mother tries live life to the utmost--wherever that life may be--and she allows Martin the freedom to do the same. He takes her fully up on that offer, befriendng hotel staff, local storekeepers and more and tasting practically every Chinese dish and joining in every local festival with eyes wide open. However, there are actually very few stories of his escapades with fellow children, mostly stories with the adults that surround him and the nature and culture of Hong Kong. Hong Kong is ruthless with its built history, so a book like this is the only way to get to know the Hong Kong that existed only fifty years ago. It includes one of the few descriptions of a westerner in the 'Kowloon walled city.' And from an eight year-old boy too! I am grateful that Mr. Booth was able to finish this book before he died. I wish he

had lived a few more years for selfish reasons--so that he could have finished a book on his second time around in Hong Kong. I am sure he had just as many adventures as a teen as he did as a young boy. Richard Mason's 'World of Suzie Wong' takes place at approximately the same time and is a great and recommended look at a decidedly different part of Hong Kong. So it was neat when Booth's world and Wong's world intersected (innocently) in a few of Golden Boy's pages. Mason actually spent very little time in Hong Kong prior to writing the fictional Suzie Wong, so Golden Boy is a more knowing portrait of Hong.

I'd never heard of English author Martin Booth before. He wrote this personal memoir, recounting 3 years of his childhood in Hong Kong in the early 1950s, just before he recently died of brain cancer. He dedicated the book to his own children, as a way to pass on the story of his life to them. It reads like a novel - one incredible adventure after the next of a boy of 7 let loose on the streets of Hong Kong in the wild years after WWII. It also details the breakdown of the marriage of his mother and father. This is a real treasure trove, a look at the world through the new eyes of a child, but guided by the wise older hand of an older author. I feel like I have traveled and lived in Hong Kong - the sites, sounds, smells - the culture, food, weather, animals, people - all brilliantly alive and real. I also have a better sense of the Chinese and what it means to be Chinese, and a desire to learn more. I only wish Martin had a memoir of his entire life!

My mother who died last year, brought my sisters and I up on her stories about Hong Kong. She lived there for about ten years from 1929 until 1939 when not on a home leave in England. I lived some of her memories with her when we did a trip to HK together in 1989. We walked around many of the areas that the Author mentioned and of course had tea at the Peninsula Hotel. Surprisingly she could still find many old haunts and I was impressed that she at seventy could still walk long distances much of it up hill.

Usually a fast reader, I read this one slowly. I wanted to jump into and become a part of it. I read every word, and would sometimes go back and read a page or a description twice. Then I'd go off into my own world and remember my Hong Kong. Martin Booth has captured every nuance of Hong Kong, where I was lucky enough to spend part of my childhood because of my military father. Hong Kong steals hearts and never gives them back. This book is touching, humorous, evocative, and I will need to read it again very soon!

This is my favorite memoir! Martin Booth wrote this final book for his children to provide them a picture of his childhood in Hong Kong. I bought my first copy in Swindon's ( as Gweilo) in the 2000's and although the memoir is set in the 1950's, the author is able to replicate my experiences and create a longing for the current Hong Kong. Whenever my nostalgia gets too deep I re-read this lovely book. My only disappointment is that "Golden Boy" is just another title for Martin Booth's "Gweilo". I was hoping for another treasure.

Very nice. Insightful, charming, very clever...The way Booth writes, it almost doesn't matter whether you are interested in the topic or not. His writing is so wonderful you are guaranteed a good read either way. But in this case it's the best of both worlds. It's a quiet read, no explosions or car chases, but hard to put down nonetheless.

Martin Booth's story of his time in Hong Kong & Kowloon as a child reminded brought me back to the time our family visited Hong Kong when I was a child. A well told true story that would be enjoyed by anyone who has spent time in this wonderful city.I did not know about the Kowloon Walled City prior to reading this, and it made me interested in finding more out about it.I very much liked the author's writing style.

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