

# BOOKS OF THE YEAR



PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN RASHBURN

• **BRIDGE CHAUVIN**  
"quite a shit..."



PORTRAIT: AUGUSTUS JOHN

• **WEEK**  
"MARK COLLINS CASATI is legendary"

• **JAMES ST. JAMES**  
"so funny it made me ache..."

Israel but back to the Jewish East End of London, which had vanished, along with Rodinsky, some time in the 1960s, taken over by a new wave of poor immigrants from India and Bangladesh. I was lucky enough to have worked in the dress trade in the East End before this happened, and this book brought back many happy memories of the warm, vibrant, protective Jewish community that had a home there for the best part of a century. I personally found Iain Sinclair's contribution to the book, in which he attempts to put Lichtenstein's researches into some kind of context, unnecessary, and it is her voice which comes across loud and clear. A moving and memorable read.

## Philip Hoare

DON'T yawn, but a *fin de siècle* lassitude came over me in 1999. Perhaps it was a result of delving too deeply into my own past, but I found consolation in the drifting shadows of former decadents and aesthetes come back to haunt the end of the century: the kohled-up Marchesa Casati in Ryerson and Yaccarino's biography of the legendary prowler of St Mark's Square, **Infinite Variety** (Viridian Books, £18); and Cecil Beaton's account of his rococo rural idyll, **Ashcombe** (gloriously republished by Dovecote, £8.95). Judith Watt's **Penguin Book of 20th-Century Fashion Writing** (£25) provided sartorial provenance for the mythic figures of the period; Richard Davenport-Hines's fantastic **Gothic** (*Fourth Estate*, £20) excavated the morbid excesses which shape the modern era. Dave Haslam's fine **Manchester, England** (*Fourth Estate*, £12.99) expanded a Northern pop consciousness explored by Michael Bracewell, whose essential **England Is Mine** appeared in paperback (*HarperCollins*, £7.99).

Fictional city angst informed Jo-Anne Richard's novel of pre-election Cape Town, **Touching the Lighthouse** (Review, £6.99), with its intense relationship between two women played out against a backdrop of a febrile, hypersensitised, schizophrenic city where emotions grow and decline like gusts of the Cape Doctor winds. A must-read for anyone familiar with the place. And Annie Proulx's sublime **Brokeback Mountain** reappeared in **Close Range** (*Fourth Estate*, £12), further evidence of her ability, like Willa Cather before her, to create humanity out of America's yawning expanses. Which is where I came in...

## Francis King

MY fiction choice for the year is Sheena Mackay's volume of short stories, **The World's Smallest Unicorn** (Cape, £12.99). Mackay has never struck me as a marathon winner in the literary Olympic games; but as a sparky, spunky sprinter she is the champ. She writes of one of her characters in this lat-