

= Bruno Maddox =

Bruno P. Maddox (born 1969) is a British literary novelist and journalist who is best known for his critically lauded novel *My Little Blue Dress* (2001) and for his satirical magazine essays .

After graduating from Harvard University in 1992 , Maddox began his career reviewing books for *The New York Times Book Review* and *The Washington Post Book World* . In early 1996 , he was appointed to an editorship at *Spy* magazine and within a few months he was promoted to editor @-@ in @-@ chief , a position he held until the magazine shut down in 1998 . Maddox wrote *My Little Blue Dress* between 1999 and 2001 . Since its publication , he has focused on writing satirical essays for magazines such as *GEAR* and *Travel + Leisure* ; he also contributes a monthly humor column to *Discover* magazine called " *Blinded by Science* " , drawing on his early exposure to science and technology . Maddox is likewise a contributing editor to the American edition of *The Week* magazine .

= = Early years = =

Maddox was born in London in 1969 to former *Nature* editor , the late Sir John Maddox , a writer on science and nature , and Brenda Maddox , a biographer of Rosalind Franklin , W.B. Yeats , Nora Barnacle and several others . He has one sister , Bronwen Maddox , who became a journalist , was Chief Foreign Commentator of *The Times* and is now Editor and Chief Executive of *Prospect* Magazine . Maddox enjoyed a privileged life during his childhood and youth , because of his father 's position as editor of *Nature* , encountering some of the leading scientific thinkers of the day and enjoying dinners with figures such as James Watson and Sir Fred Hoyle .

Despite his family 's background in science , Maddox was interested in the humanities while he attended Westminster School , an independent boys ' school in London . Maddox went on to study English literature at Harvard University and graduated in 1992 . He published his only article in the student newspaper *The Harvard Crimson* during his senior year . He won the undergraduate Thomas Temple Hoopes Prize for his senior thesis " on the use of adjectives in restaurant menus " titled *Maltese : A Gastrosophic Theory of Reading* . After graduation Maddox moved from Cambridge , Massachusetts to Moscow ? where he worked for three weeks as the English @-@ language editor of a Russian magazine ? and then to New York City , where he spent two years working odd jobs , including hand @-@ delivering celebrity invitations to local parties .

Maddox 's freelance writing career began in 1994 , when he became a book reviewer for *The New York Times Book Review* and *The Washington Post* , where he developed a reputation for writing scathing reviews that would later help him land a job as an editor at *Spy* magazine . Maddox described his book reviewing style as " pretty vicious " , and quipped that he " was a frustrated , twenty @-@ something guy , sitting in his bedroom venting existential rage on these nasty academics " . His last book review for *The Washington Post* was in late 1996 ; however , he continued reviewing for *The New York Times* up until 1998 , contributing only a couple of reviews thereafter .

At the beginning of the dot @-@ com boom , Maddox found full @-@ time work at an information technology company , where he worked for a year and a half .

= = Editorship of *Spy* magazine = =

In mid @-@ 1996 , Maddox was hired as a senior editor at *Spy* magazine , a satirical monthly , in New York City . *Spy* had ceased publication in 1994 but was quickly resuscitated under new ownership by Sussex Publishers Inc . , which reduced the magazine 's frequency from ten to six issues a year . At *Spy* , Maddox was assisted by deputy editor Adam Lehner , a satirist . In December 1996 , Maddox was promoted to editor @-@ in @-@ chief ; his editorial team included Jared Paul Stern and , beginning in late 1997 , future screenwriter William Monahan .

Maddox wanted to turn *Spy* into a national magazine rather than build on its legacy of covering stories that centered on New York . According to Maddox , two factors motivated the shift of target

market . The magazine 's past objects of satire , the " cheesy villains who anointed themselves as targets " in the 1980s , were no longer on the national stage . Meanwhile , the " sins of the ' 90s [were] those of a private , quiet cultivation of a sense of purity " , and were harder to expose or ridicule .

In early 1998 , Sussex Publishers increased Spy 's frequency from six to nine issues a year in an effort to boost readership and ad pages . Spy 's paid circulation continued to drop during Maddox 's tenure , and in March 1998 , the magazine once again ceased publication . Sussex 's President and CEO John Colman concluded that " [despite the] great work by Bruno and his team , there just wasn 't the [advertiser and consumer] acceptance that we need to make it financially viable " . Maddox conceded that " a satirical magazine in New York in the late Nineties really had no function " , because " everyone was being very modest and coy " .

= = My Little Blue Dress = =

In 1999 , Maddox sold the advance rights to his first novel , My Little Blue Dress , to a German publisher based on a five @-@ page fax proposal he sent on the advice of his literary agent John Brockman . Within a week Brockman managed to sell the rights to the novel to publishers in an additional eight countries on the strength of the proposal alone . (Maddox had not yet written even an initial manuscript .)

My Little Blue Dress was published in 2001 by Viking Press , a Penguin Group imprint . The novel begins as a memoir of a hundred @-@ year @-@ old woman , but several chapters later reveals itself to be a spoof of the genre . The protagonist is a fictional Bruno Maddox who is desperately attempting to create a forgery of an old woman 's memoir in a single night . Several book reviewers avoided spoiling the novel 's satire but others gave away its premise , reasoning that the publisher " reveal [s] all on the book jacket anyway " . The novel 's intrigue lies in the mysterious reason compelling the fictional Maddox to forge a memoir .

Critics applauded My Little Blue Dress but also expressed some reservations . For example , Salon.com 's Maria Russo cautioned that the novel " is one of those ' don 't try this at home ' literary experiments that could easily have turned into an unreadable , pretentious disaster " , but concluded that Maddox " pulls it off with a kind of fearless pizzazz " . The New York Times ' Emily Barton conceded that " for all its blunders " , Maddox delivers " a winsome and vastly entertaining novel " .

In an interview , Maddox praised Bret Easton Ellis 's 1991 novel American Psycho , stating that he drew inspiration from protagonist Patrick Bateman 's long @-@ winded monologues about Phil Collins , restaurants , clothes , and how to remove blood from his carpets .

In 2001 , Maddox promoted his first novel on a joint book tour billed as the " Minor Novelists Tour " with his friend William Monahan , another former Spy editor , but it was interrupted by the 9 / 11 attacks . Monahan 's Light House : A Trifle was also published by a Penguin imprint . Several years later , Maddox gave some indication that he was working on a film adaptation of My Little Blue Dress , but it is unknown whether Maddox completed the script .

= = Recent essays = =

After the publication of My Little Blue Dress in 2001 , Maddox was reportedly working on a second novel set in California , where " everyone 's aspirational and deluded " and the " people are quite happy being waiters and dreaming of stardom " . As of 2009 , however , no manuscript has been forthcoming .

Since 2001 , Maddox has written numerous articles for popular magazines , such as the now @-@ defunct GEAR . Published one year after the 11 September 2001 attacks , his essay " Before It Was Real " describes the callousness of the terrorists who flew into the World Trade Center through the experience of playing a flight simulator game . Another example of Maddox 's work is his 2003 profile of Karl Wencelas , leader of the Underground Literary Alliance , titled " The Angriest Book Club in America " and published in the fashion magazine BlackBook . Wencelas later derided Maddox for distorting the Underground Literary Alliance in his BlackBook essay and summed up the article as "

riddled with falsehoods " .

In late 2003 , Maddox began to contribute articles regularly to Travel + Leisure . His first article in the magazine was called " The Concorde , R.I.P. " , which chronicled his flight aboard the supersonic Concorde airplane before it was decommissioned ; it was later included in The Best Travel Writing 2005 , the second volume of the annual Travelers ' Tales series . In 2004 Maddox began working as a contributing editor for the American edition of The Week magazine and as of 2007 continues to contribute weekly to the print issue , handling sections including " Main Stories " , " Talking Points " , and " Only in America " . He also reviewed several books for The New York Post in 2004 and 2005 .

In 2006 , Maddox began contributing a regular humor column called " Blinded by Science " to Discover magazine . His writing draws upon his childhood exposure to science ; due to his father 's career , his family was immersed in science and he was regularly exposed to scientists at social events . Maddox 's first year 's columns earned him a nod as a finalist in the 2007 National Magazine Awards ' " Columns and Commentary " category .

Maddox 's Discover columns are occasionally criticized ; his essay " Fictional Reality " , in particular , has been controversial . Maddox declared science fiction obsolete in his essay " Fictional Reality " and was roundly criticized in the blogosphere , most notably by Scientific American 's J.R. Minkel . Maddox wrote that " fiction ? all fiction ? finally became obsolete as a delivery system for big ideas " as a result of the " scarcity of foreseeable future " , citing the decline of author Michael Crichton 's work as evidence . Minkel lambasted Maddox and pointed to author Neal Stephenson 's cutting @-@ edge work as proof to the contrary , venturing that " science fiction writers can dictate the future if they have the vim and vision " .

One of Maddox 's most recent Discover essays , " The James Watson Affair " , examines comments made by James Watson in an article in London 's Sunday Times which led to Watson 's suspension at the laboratory where he worked and his eventual retirement , and is skeptical of critics who found Watson 's comment about black employees " not that big a deal " yet charged him with racism for his proposition on black African intelligence ; in conclusion , Maddox derides the views held by several critics , stating that in comparison to Watson 's statements , " the most ignorant and hurtful idea of all , of course , is that the entire topic of race and genes and intelligence is off @-@ limits to all right @-@ thinking , compassionate people , just on principle " , which pejoratively assumes " that some races are innately and immutably much less intelligent than others " . Maddox 's essay , although published in the March 2008 printed edition of Discover , has not been published online .

= = Style = =

Satire is evident in much of Maddox 's work , from his years as editor @-@ in @-@ chief for Spy magazine to his numerous articles in Travel + Leisure , and his novel My Little Blue Dress . Maddox 's satirical tendencies extend to his interviews and publicity materials . In one interview he made the preposterous claim that he once " spent 2 days being a personal assistant to a mafia boss in New York " . Maddox 's Penguin biography skewers his own career , claiming he " elevated [Spy] to within spitting distance of its former glory , then accidentally bankrupted it after two short years " , which led The Harvard Crimson , his alma mater 's student newspaper , to speculate that " Maddox himself had a hand in writing " it . Maddox 's popular science columns for Discover magazine impart his own personal views on science with a markedly humorous and skeptical bent .

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