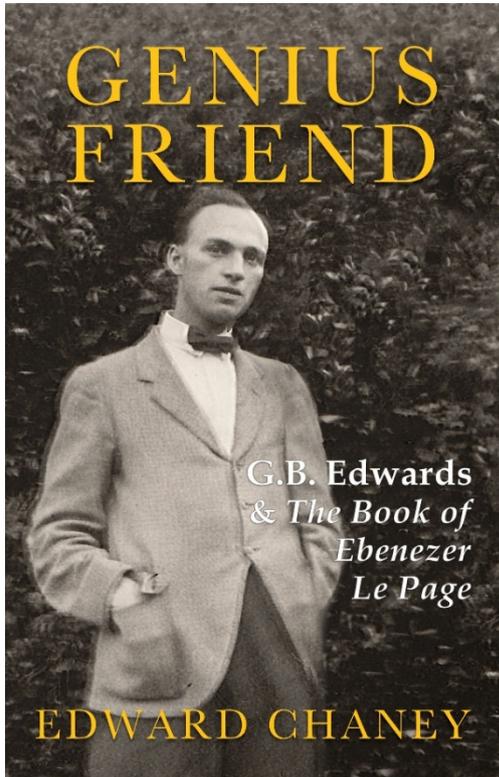


GENIUS FRIEND by Edward Chaney

A MAJOR NEW BIOGRAPHY OF A FORGOTTEN GENIUS



When G.B. Edwards's only novel, *The Book of Ebenezer Le Page*, was published in 1981, very little was known of its reclusive author. John Fowles opened his introduction to the novel:

'There may have been stranger recent literary events than the book you are about to read, but I rather doubt it.'
John Fowles

This seemingly provincial novel, set in the author's native island of Guernsey, was soon being feted as a 20th century classic by the likes of Harold Bloom, William Golding, Guy Davenport, Stephen Orgel and Harry Mathews. Roy Dotrice's radio serialisation on BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* was their most popular in 20 years. Following paperback editions in US and UK, as well as French and Italian translations, it was reprinted by NYRB Classics in 2007, since when it has found a whole new audience, witnessed by the hundreds of five star reviews on bibliophile sites such as Amazon and goodreads.com.

'The achievement is so intense and universal that the reader is rendered speechless... G.B. Edwards has succeeded in writing a great novel'
Isobel Murray, *Financial Times*

The author, Gerald Edwards, may have fallen into obscurity, but this had not always been the case. He had once been a contributor to Middleton Murry's *Adelphi* magazine, and was considered to be the next D.H. Lawrence. When the Penguin paperback edition was issued in 1982, J.S. Collis wrote a review for *The Spectator* in which he confirmed that they had been close friends in their youth.

'... we always thought of him as "our genius friend".'
John Stewart Collis

But the great novel only saw the light of day because of the persistence of a young art student and the novel's dedicatee, Edward Chaney, who succeeded in getting it published five years after the author's death.

In the thirty five years that have passed since then, Chaney has researched and collected a impressive body of material relating to the life of this mysterious author who did his best to make the job of a future biographer as difficult as possible.

'No one is better fitted than Edward Chaney to write this book. It is a seminal study of a great, but neglected writer, and it places G.B. Edwards in his proper historical, literary and philosophical context for the first time.'

Peter Goodall

Now the results of these efforts are being published in Edward Chaney's **Genius Friend: G.B. Edwards and The Book of Ebenezer Le Page** (ISBN: 978-0992879105).

The first part traces his early life in Guernsey to the London Literary scene of the 1920s, through to his eventual descent in to obscurity in the 1940s. The second part is a memoir of how Chaney got to know Edwards, and how the book was eventually published.

'This is a remarkable book which sets out to show us that the half-forgotten Gerald Edwards, author of a single magnum opus, should (like Lampedusa) be acknowledged as one of the great novelists of the twentieth century. Writing with skill and conviction, calling on some impressive witnesses (in particular John Stewart Collis) to give evidence, Chaney makes a powerful case that will surprise and impress readers to-day.'

Sir Michael Holroyd

The biography was launched at the Guernsey Literary Festival on 17 September, where demand for Chaney's session was so great that it was the first to sell out.

'G.B. Edwards was a cryptic and mystifying man, a writer with rare and sometimes perverse gifts, whose character mixed elements of the rascal and of the recluse, who yet produced one astounding classic, The Book of Ebenezer Le Page. In his last years he gave his trust and affection to Edward Chaney, whose matchless enthusiasm, perseverance and insight make him the best possible biographer of this puzzling misfit Guernseyman.'

Richard Davenport-Hines

About the Author

Edward Chaney is the Professor of Fine and Decorative Arts at Southampton Solent University, Visiting Professor at the New College of the Humanities and Braudel Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence. He has published numerous books, specialising in the history of collecting, the Grand Tour and 20th-century British art. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, the Society of Antiquaries and in 2003 was made a *Commendatore* of the Italian Republic.

Genius Friend: G.B. Edwards and The Book of Ebenezer Le Page (ISBN: 978-0992879105) by Edward Chaney is published by Blue Ormer Publishing Ltd.

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