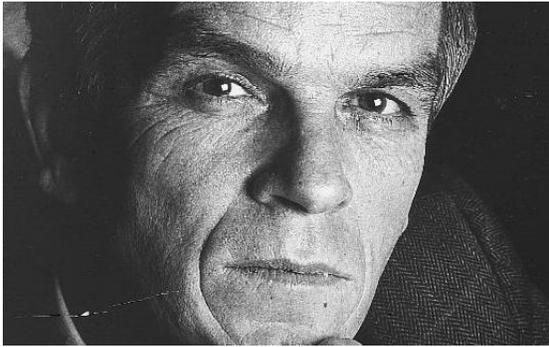


Matthew Evans – Old Scholar – YG 1960 - Lord Evans of Temple Guiting, born August 7 1941, died July 6 2016

Obituary from The Daily Telegraph 7 July 2016

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2016/07/07/lord-evans-of-temple-guiting-publisher--obituary/>

Lord Evans of Temple Guiting, publisher – obituary



Matthew Evans CREDIT: NIGEL PARRY

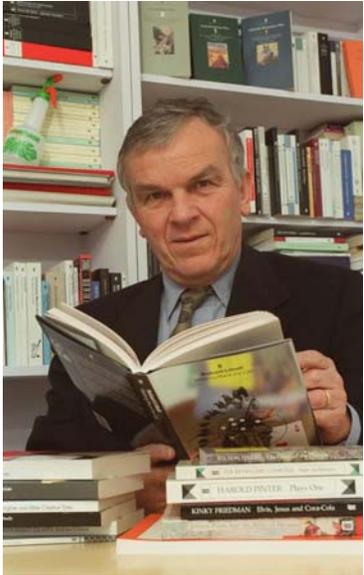
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Lord Evans of Temple Guiting, who has died aged 74, was, until his appointment as a Labour whip in the House of Lords, better known as Matthew Evans, the long-serving former managing director, later chairman, of the publishers Faber & Faber, as well as a consummately

glamorous partygoer.

Evans joined the publishing house in 1964, when he was in his early twenties, 18 months before the death of T S Eliot, who, as a founder director, had established Faber & Faber as the leading champion of literary modernism. He started as a “gofer” to the then managing director Peter du Sautoy, before working his way into his boss’s seat eight years later. In 1981, after the retirement of Charles Monteith, he added the role of chairman to that of managing director.

Evans recalled that when he became chairman he had been handed a file that was thought to be too “hot” to be placed in the archive. Among the letters in the file was one from Eliot to the firm’s founding editor Geoffrey Faber, written in the late 1940s, saying that it was fine to publish good books, but that it was necessary to publicise and sell the books, rather than just rely on the Faber name. Faber, Evans recalled, “wrote an angry letter back saying wasn’t it enough that Eliot had won the Nobel prize and had an international reputation as an author, and would he please leave the running of Faber & Faber to him.” Evans had, he claimed, “some sympathy for Faber”.



Evans in 1996 CREDIT: UPPA/PHOTOSHOT

Yet it was Eliot's appeal that he took to heart, and Evans's time as the public face of the publishing house marked a significant break with the past. Irreverent, entertaining and astute, he managed to modernise Faber's somewhat fusty image without sacrificing its commitment to writing of the highest quality. So, while he brought on authors such as Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney, Hanif Kureishi, Kazuo Ishiguro, William Golding and Paul Auster, he upset some traditionalists by ditching whole categories of books, including philosophy, religion, international affairs, sociology, farming and gardening. He also brought in The Who's lead guitarist Pete Townshend as an acquisitions editor.

The appointment, in 1983, described in one newspaper as a "s--- stirring exercise" by Evans and his then head of fiction, Robert McCrum (another Evans appointment), raised eyebrows among Faber writers and staff. P D James was not impressed by Townshend's hellraising credentials, while one elderly editor was said to have asked whether the new appointee was "the dashing Peter Townsend who was almost engaged to Princess Margaret". But Evans was unrepentant, explaining that he was keen to change Faber's reputation as a "classy literary publishing house, slightly conservative, and in no way competitive on the street [and] make it more modern, get a more varied, unusual list."

It seems that Townshend quickly took to the day-to-day publishing grind, commissioning an eclectic and offbeat range of books on everything from a revolutionary drug-addiction treatment, to bikers (by a Hells Angel), to John Lennon. Along with the publication of such titles as *Who's Had Who* (1987), "a billet doux to the promiscuous" by Richard Curtis, Simon Bell and Helen Fielding, and Stephen Bayley's *Sex, Drink and Fast Cars* (1986), Townshend's presence undoubtedly raised the imprint's "street cred", leading one commentator to dub the publishing house "Fabber and Fabber".

Perhaps Evans's greatest single achievement was helping to persuade T S Eliot's widow, Valerie, that a musical version of *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* might be a good idea. He invited her along to Andrew Lloyd Webber's house so that she could hear the composer play a few songs he had sketched out on the piano. She was, Evans recalled, "bowled over". *Cats* went on to take more than £1.4 billion in world-wide box office sales, much of which went to the Eliot estate. But it also shored up Faber's financial position at a time when other independent publishers were being swallowed up by bigger companies or were disappearing altogether.

Evans's attempt to repeat the trick with a Pete Townshend rock musical adaptation of *The Iron Man*, Ted Hughes's best-selling modern children's fable, was less successful, however. It made the stage in 1993, but quickly vanished.

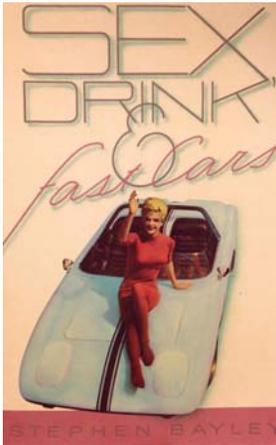
Matthew Evans was born on August 7 1941, the son of George Ewart Evans, a Welsh-born historian and Socialist who made his name as the author of *Ask the Fellows who Cuts the Hay*, a collection of anecdotes about country customs which were already

vanishing when it came out in 1956. His mother, Florence, was a teacher and ardent Quaker.

Matthew was brought up at Blaxhall in Suffolk and **educated at the Friends' School, Saffron Walden**, and the London School of Economics, where he took a degree in Economics. After a short period as a bookseller, he joined Faber & Faber aged 23.

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Quixotic, funny and engagingly indiscreet, Evans acquired a faithful following among writers, many of whom became close friends (Heaney and Hughes were godfathers to two of his children) and stayed loyal to Evans and to Faber rather than going for the big money. He had the ability to soothe and charm the most sensitive of egos, yet not everyone was a fan. His somewhat frosty relationship with Craig Raine (who eventually left Faber) was conveyed by a diary piece in the Guardian in which Evans described the poet as “a natural bullfighter” whom he (Evans) had tried with limited success to “stop... sticking swords into Faber authors”.



Stephen Bayley's Sex, Drink and Fast Cars

Nor did his colleagues at Faber always find him easy to work with. Though renowned as a practical joker (he once sent the publishing world into a frenzy by starting a rumour that someone at MIT had found the solution to the problem posed by new technology for the future of the printed book), not all his practical jokes were innocuous and he was given to occasional dark moods that left colleagues on edge.

“Sometimes you would just be depressed by it and have to keep away,” one former Faber junior was quoted as saying. “He was not really a shouter, but he could be quite cruel.”

Evans later held a number of public appointments, including as vice-chairman of the British Film Institute. But his spikier side came out in March 2000 when he was appointed first chairman of the new Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, created by the culture secretary Chris Smith, when he used his first speech to savage his new flock and suggest moving collections out from behind museum walls and into pubs, schools and shops.

If this did not happen, he threatened, “we risk turning into a cultural version of Marks & Spencer”. Brian Sewell, the art critic, described Evans’s diatribe as “the thoughts of Chairman Mao couched in the conventional waffle of Islington”, while Sir Henry Keswick, chairman of the National Portrait Gallery, accused Evans of driving towards an “Orwellian state”. “It ought to be possible to say something like that without people going bananas,” said an unapologetic Evans.

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Evans was a founder of the Soho media haunt, the Groucho Club, and he and his second wife, the literary agent Caroline Michel, were prominent in fashionable

cultural and political circles. Their marriage in 1991 was attended by Seamus Heaney, Harold Pinter, Ted Hughes, Salman Rushdie, Melvyn Bragg and Ruth and Richard Rogers; the Daily Mail columnist Richard Kay later observed that “an invitation to dinner at their magnificent white-stucco townhouse in Belgravia – crammed full of books, objets d’art and oil paintings – is an entrée to a world of celebrity and literary genius, where you might find yourself rubbing shoulders with everyone from historian Simon Schama to rock chick Pattie Boyd.”

Evans was appointed CBE in 1998 and created a life peer in 2000. In 2002 he resigned from his position at Faber to take up a post as a government whip. From 2003 he was a government spokesman for the Department for Constitutional Affairs and also served as a spokesman for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Treasury. He left the Government in 2007 to join EFG International, a Swiss private bank of which he became chairman in 2008. In 2010 he was appointed an opposition spokesman for the arts.

He and Caroline Michel separated in 2010, but they never divorced and they remained close. She survives him with their two sons and a daughter, and two sons from his first marriage to Elizabeth Mead, which was dissolved.

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