



**Selected Amazon Reviews**

KEVIN KILLIAN

# Key



**Books**



**Film & Music**



**Food, Shelter  
& Clothing**



**Luxury  
Items**

selected amazon reviews.

by kevin killian.  
edited by brent cunningham.

hooke press // oakland // 2006

**A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S**

Hooke Press would like to thank Michael Nicoloff for his eagle eye.

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\$12.00

Book design by Brent Cunningham & Neil Alger

This is book three from Hooke Press

Hooke Press is supported, in part, by a grant from the Holocene Research Foundation

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If there was a space for a dedication I would write, "For Dodie Bellamy."

selected introductions.

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

As of the writing of this introduction, there are 1,241 reviews by Kevin Killian stored securely on Amazon.com's servers: reviews of movies, books, CDs, and every so often an object or product. Since Kevin now averages over a review a day, there will surely be quite a few more before this chapbook reaches its readers.

At the moment, I think I may be the only one besides Kevin who has read them all. And I can tell you that they form, as a group, daunting evidence of the breadth of Kevin's knowledge and curiosity.

As Kevin implies in his introduction, many selections and impressions could have been made from so much material. But to my mind, his reviews fall into three broad categories. First, there are the reviews that rely on inventive narrative techniques. Because Kevin is a natural and accomplished writer of fiction (specifically "New Narrative" fiction), the reviews of this type offer insights not only into Kevin's life and experiences but also into his compositional instincts. The second type relies on humor and ironic wit; the funniest of these are reviews of objects and products, and I selected a disproportionately large number of them. Yet a third type can look like straightforward tributes or summaries but meanwhile contains some extremely singular ideas, including much literary and film criticism that's as sharp as anything out there.

What all three types have in common, in my view, is something that can be found not only in Kevin's writing but also in his local performances at readings or in plays. It comes to this: It can be surprisingly difficult to map out not only when and where Kevin is being ironic in his art but also what might constitute a fixable value system for his artistic universe.

This trait, something like a "cryptic openness," has always drawn me to Kevin's writing. On the one hand, like Kevin himself, the works are entirely conversant with post-structuralist philosophy, avant-garde poetry, the politics of literary publishing, radical (queer) politics, and most other components of what can perhaps still be considered serious or "high" culture. On the other hand, this in no way delimits his devouring curiosity in the most extraordinary range of "low" cultural products.

In his reviews, Kevin is most often sincere. He really does like and think the things he claims to like and think. At the same time he is demonstrably aware of the degree to which high-cultural readers of reviews will read *any* valuation of *anything* outside the high-culture repertoire as either misguided or ironic. Nor does he seem exactly concerned that this should be so. It's as if he blithely accepts that a given reader will extract from a review the kind of things they already believe—and playing with this dynamic may even be what interests him about the form. If a reader can't seriously comprehend training a pet for stardom, they can laugh at that review and enjoy the ironic exposure of perverse American celebrity culture and its over-determined citizens. But if they *can* take it seriously, they can appreciate Kevin's deep affection for his pets and his fascination with the reciprocity of human-animal relations.

I don't want to overstate the ambiguity here. There are plenty of ways, mostly formal, that Kevin repeatedly signals at least some ironic intent. Variations on clichés occur repeatedly and with a relished awkwardness, especially phrases like "so easy a child could use it," "just what the doctor ordered," "man on the street," and "take it from me." There's no mistaking that Kevin is toying with the form.

At the same time, he manages to have it both ways: low and high, satirical and heartfelt. Such radical swerves can still be destabilizing to the structures of value that American high literary culture relies upon. Why is Agamben but not *Guys Gone Wild* a proper subject for intellectual consideration and review? Why Pasternak but not Brad Pitt's *Troy*?

At least since Warhol, people have gotten used to such questions. But Kevin's writing, including these reviews, reminds me that while we've maybe gotten used to the Pop-art sensibility in the abstract, in practice it can still be unsettling. It's not that everything possesses equivalent value here; there would be no need for "reviews" in that case. But Kevin seems to posit a situation where value is made anew in each and every case, reviewed freshly by the mind from the midst of its particular situation, with nothing less than the entire extent of being as its area of consideration.

That'll likely sound like an overly grand claim for a project Kevin started while on Wellbutrin. No doubt it's best just to accept these reviews as brief, enjoyable summaries and diversions. And that makes it simple, too: I mean, we know how summaries and diversions operate, we know where they fall on the high-low spectrum, we certainly know why we turn to them, and by all means we know exactly what they are diverting us from.

Well, *these* reviews may make you think twice...

(B.C.)



## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

I started writing on the Amazon.com website I don't know when, but with Amazon's fatal tracking skills I'll look up when first I posted under my present e-mail address: For my birthday on Christmas Eve (2001), the artist Arnold Kemp gave me a book and I wrote about it to him, as one will writing a thank you note—then I figured why not publish it on Amazon? Double dipping. [See "*The Ghastly One*," *the final review in this book—Ed.*] To my amazement, 2 out of 5 people found it "helpful." I wrote other squibs when I found the time, always playing it so that people would find me "helpful."

And then, in November 2003, a heart attack weakened my defenses and forced me onto a regime of very few fun things except for the prescription drugs they gave me to stop this or that. I lost the need to write. And I was fine with that. The Wellbutrin made me permanently happy; I could carry very little, not even a grudge. Dodie did my writing for me. I figured that, hey, I had written a whole shelf full of books, did the world need to hear more from me? If they wanted to read something by me, they could just pluck a volume off the shelf. In the hospital, a friend, the poet Rodney Koeneke, bought me the new novel by a detective writer we both enjoy. And somehow I managed to write down what I felt and put it up on Amazon: December 28, 2001. However, I couldn't do much more than that; I was feeling too giddy. Criticism seemed stupid, beneath me. Is this how people felt in the 1960s? I went back to work, spooking everyone around me with my insensate grin and reduced frame.

But little by little I started to fret. What I was feeling, I think, was the desire to write, snatched from under the coverlet of feel-good-drug happiness. Or was it the desire to criticize, as I sometimes suspect? Whichever, writing for Amazon was the key (for me). By April 2004 I was writing away, often twice a day, commenting on this, that, or the other, whatever book I was reading, whatever DVD was in the machine. It's surprising how many texts you can actually experience in a lifetime, or, say, in the span of a year. This was my regimen, my therapy, if you will, and I kept it pretty quiet, not telling anyone what I was doing, though I wasn't exactly hiding under a cloak of anonymity. I was signing my own name—which isn't always the smartest thing to do, I guess. And after awhile, I built up the strength in my writing muscles and continued to work in other areas (completing a novel, writing plays, poetry, different sorts of critical work, etc.).

And then people started to notice, respond, write back, send me things, and I suppose I got a little self-conscious. I don't know, what do you think? The later reviews get more bulky, but is that just me being able to write longer sentences and, in fact, think more thoughts about a given subject? Or am I on stage like Moira Shearer, forever poised between the man she loves and the public that gasps at her spinning nimblity?

I am pleased and touched that the editors of Hooke Press wanted to make a selection of my work in the genre. I would have done it differently, but that's the great thing about selection, as I learned long ago, walking the seashore with my grandfather he'd pick up the shells I discarded, and I only liked the ones he didn't. The day we both wanted the same abalone or whatever is the day I stopped doing it with him.

(K.K.)

selected reviews.



Rock Hudson by David Bret

Price: \$9.72

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful:

### *Hudson Hawk, March 14, 2006*

I've never had the pleasure of reviewing anything by David Bret before, but his new biography of the late film star Rock Hudson is one of the best biographies I've read in years. There are some figures for whom there can never be enough biographies to suit my taste, and I've read five or six or seven apiece on Kipling, Oscar Wilde, Hitchcock, Emily Dickinson, Custer and who knows how many more. To that list add the improbable name of Rock Hudson. Bret is a British journalist who seems remarkably free of Hollywood cant. He tells it like he sees it, and when he doesn't know something, he says so.

Hudson was born Roy Scherer Jr in 1925, in Winnetka, and had what seems to be a difficult relationship with his family. Before long he had sort of drifted into acting, becoming the protégé of the he-man director Raoul Walsh, who directed him in several early pictures. Hudson also informed Walsh of his homosexuality, and the two of them apparently didn't think it would be much of a problem. Hudson did the Cary Grant—Randolph Scott thing at first, living openly with a lover or two on the fringes of Hollywood society, but as his parts and his fanbase grew bigger more censorious minds prevailed and Rock became a ladies man in the press, although hardly to his friends and intimates.

As an actor Hudson was more of a star than anything else, but he was so great in all of his pictures that one hardly cares about his "skills." After all, you don't pay money to see good acting, you buy your ticket to get close to your dreams. And Rock Hudson was the man of everyone's dreams, male or female, straight or gay, for a good ten years in a row, during which time he made several films for Douglas Sirk.

Bret names names, and you will be startled, as I was, to find out exactly how many Hollywood leading men of the 1940s and 1950s were actually gay but hiding it. By the time the book was over my mind was reeling with all the

names. On the set of AIR CADET, so Bret tells us, troubled leading lady Gail Russell was more troubled than usual when she found her new husband Guy Madison in bed with one of the cadets. The story of Hudson's "beard" romance with the equally troubled dancing star, Vera-Ellen, is a pathetic parable of Hollywood truths and illusions.

Of course the charade eventually came to an end, first with Hudson's spectral illness which no one could identify, then with his accepting a romantic role on TV's DYNASTY which would require him to kiss Linda Evans, and then with his admission that he was gay and he had AIDS. Even after his death the glamor continued to evaporate as his onetime boyfriend, Marc Christian, sued the Hudson estate for concealing the fact that Hudson was seropositive. A parade of gross details followed on the stand, things that made one's heart sigh. I suppose in the end it doesn't matter. The pictures that he made will live forever and I predict that each year from now his stock as an actor will rise until the day comes when people will show him the respect they now give to, oh, I don't know, that old fraud Spencer Tracy.



Gerber Tender Harvest 1st Foods Sweet Potatoes, Baby Food, 2.5 oz  
Offered by Gristedes Supermarkets of New York  
Price: \$0.79  
Availability: Usually ships in 1-2 business days  
4 of 5 people found the following review helpful:

*Mmm-mmm good, March 19, 2006*

"Tender Harvest" is one of Gerber's best-selling lines, and I believe the sweet potatoes form their all-time best-selling specialty item. Why? Because of its tantalizing blend of organic goodness and a soft, piquant flavor to the root vegetables pureed within that makes you think of a big sweet-potato pie with all the fixings. You'll be asking yourself, is there sugar in this? It's as resolutely sweet as a twenties Irving Berlin standard, but if you search the ingredients on the label you'll find zero added sugar, it's all in the starch; and the starch itself has this robust bite, as though if you dipped your collar into the open jar, it would emerge forever crisp and dapper, suitable for office wear.

I first was introduced to Gerber as a wee laddie, when Mom never dreamed I'd ever graduate to anything but baby food, for I would sit in my high chair and refuse to eat anything but mashed-up Gerber's vegetables. If Mom, Dad, or our extended family attempted to sneak something else onto my tray, wham! It would hit the opposite kitchen wall. Back then, sweet potatoes were not on every baby's bill of fare, they were thought to be too tough for baby's delicate stomach, but since then stronger minds have prevailed. Let's face it, a baby will eat a license plate if it wants to, and many in our native populations believe in feeding an infant a tiny amount of dirt every day, believing in the old saw that we all have to eat a peck of dirt before we die.

Disappointingly, gift wrapping is not available with this item, so if you order it, be prepared for just getting the plain jar with no fancy party flavor to it. However, the label is attractive, as the inner baby inside of you will, no doubt, be letting you know as your tongue and front teeth attempt to gnaw it off the jar.



Alcatraz: The True End Of The Line by Darwin Coon  
Availability: This item is currently unavailable.  
11 used & new from \$0.74

*Prisoner: Cell Block H, February 16, 2006*

I too met Darwin E. Coon during a recent trip to Alcatraz, which was brilliant. Coon sat in a shack on the pier with a young man who claimed to be his "nephew." This nephew did all the talking and would occasionally nudge old Darwin, who sat beside looking stolid and bored, with his elbow, prompting him to answer some questions from a countless stream of fans who, right off the boat from the island prison, wanted to ask him a zillion questions. Apparently he finds his way to the souvenir shack every Saturday, so you can often meet him, shake his hand and get him to autograph a copy of ALCATRAZ: THE TRUE END OF THE LINE. Otherwise he's sort of like Iron Eyes Cody, a man of few words. The nephew said to me, "My uncle wants to know if you want him to sign your copy of the book with his prison number." "Sure," I replied, after a glance at my companion, the video artist Karla Milosevich. "That number thing would be awesome." Darwin Coon took pen from nephew and scrawled his number on the front free endpaper of my book: "#1422." We looked at it in awe. "I had no idea the numbers were so short."

Darwin Coon looked at me impassively as though to say, "LIFE is short, you little pipsqueak."

His book is great and tells you all about the different animals kept by the Alcatraz inmates. No other book I know goes into such detail about the different pets smuggled in by prisoners. There's a great story about Sam, the fellow who found a lizard and trained it to be his pet, and every day he would walk the lizard around the prison on a gold chain, rather like the French symbolist poet Gérard de Nerval who walked around the Luxembourg Gardens with a pet lobster on a leash. In Sam's case the ending was tragic, for a seagull swooped down and carried off the little lizard!

Another prisoner made a tiny tuxedo for his pet mouse, complete with top hat! They were like a bunch of male Beatrix Potters over there; their love of animals will warm any human heart.



Poets Talk by Pauline Butling and Susan Rudy  
Price: \$34.95  
Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours  
21 used & new from \$8.00

### *Wish They Were Here, May 14, 2006*

What a terrific book, and one that should be more widely known on this side of the border, for even though all the poets and both the interviewers are Canadians born and bred, the questions they address are ones that we need to listen to, and very few of us here in the USA are bothering with their construction or phenomenological coming-into-being. The two interviewers sometimes act as a tag team, and at other times (like *Charlie's Angels*) split up for more effective coverage and/or investigation. For example, on her own Susan Rudy interviews Fred Wah, perhaps because her partner, Pauline Butling, is married to Wah and maybe wouldn't be unbiased or something? Although Rudy also shares a certain, I don't know, easy familiarity with Wah that makes reading their interview sort of like listening to close country cousins kibbitz.

The book begins with a very intense interrogation of Robert Kroetsch, the venerable postmodernist about whom Rudy has written a whole volume already. Kroetsch notes that some people think he's gone too far (outside of grammar) in his "Poem for My Dead Sister," but Butling seems to scoff at such a notion, instead egging him on to prove that his work is any more difficult than, say, Gertrude Stein's. He is forced to quote individual lines from his poem and insist on their opacity, while Rudy and Butling murmur in the background about "Yes, you certainly make it incomprehensible in the reading, or first reading," and a certain skepticism pours through, especially in regards to Kroetsch's gender values, which are mystifying. Good work all around! I don't think that Kroetsch IS indeed as well known in the USA as the editors state in their preface to this interview, despite his having taught at Binghamton for decades. But then again, I'm no expert.

Their interview with Daphne Marlatt is equally focused: This time they examine Marlatt's book *SALVAGE*, in which she digs up some of her own work and rewrites it, teasing out the threads of lesbian identity and politics that an earlier discretion or unknowing led her to obfuscate. They seem in general admiring of Marlatt's progress, although they



leap at her use of the neologism “Stanzagraph.” PAULINE: “What do you mean by stanzagraph?” Good question, for Marlatt was trying to let it slip by as though everyone in the world knew what a stanzagraph is. To me, it’s one of those words that didn’t need to be, but as Marlatt describes why she came to use it, my sympathies grew as her discourse became more intimate. Maybe that’s the secret of all good interviews—they let the person come out more, the figure behind the poem. Though this is exactly what Erin Mouré dislikes about interviews, as she admits, and throughout her interview she seems panicky, as though losing part of her heteronymity through having to sit still for an hour while Butling and Rudy try to pin her down.

Pauline Butling’s talk with Jeff Derksen ends so abruptly I wondered if one or the other of them had to run out to put money in a parking meter. Also, it is ironic that apparently the University of Alberta couldn’t afford a proofreader to clear up some of the spelling in the book—ironic especially when the black poet Dionne Brand reproves Butling and Rudy (and all white critics and poets) for not knowing enough about black American writers, including Gayl Jones, and then the book misspells Jones’ name, as though to underline the point.

But all in all a splendid edition, and one longs, not for a sequel, but for a whole encyclopedia of Butling and Rudy just talking about anything.



The Stripper's Guide to Looking Great Naked by Jennifer Axen and Leigh Phillips

Price: \$10.17

Availability: Usually ships in 5 to 7 days

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful:

### *Looking Good and Feeling Good About Yourself, the Stripper Way, December 2, 2005*

How many people, male or female, really feel good when we're naked? The authors of this little handbook advise us to "Flaunt It"! After all, we've all got the same hang-ups about vulnerability, aging, shame, lack of self-esteem. This book has a lot of tips, many of them from actual strippers, about how to put your best foot forward from a nude perspective. I liked the chapter about what to do when you have to shed your clothes and, uh-oh, you just remembered last night you got a hickey. How to hide it? There's a great chapter about strip poker, with lots of advice about what to take off first.

The women who wrote this book are regular Joes who go to the experts when things get rough. For example, say you're one of those unfortunates who have what they call "butt-thigh syndrome"—that's what happens when onlookers can find "no real distinction between your ass and your thighs"—then what you do is apply bronzer underneath each cheek to give the illusion of some 3-D depth.

There's also a lot of material about how to shave your pubic area. But most of all, what Jennifer and Leigh want to give you is confidence. Not all of us have great bodies, but most of us could learn something in the presentation department. The authors go over such common life-changing situations as going camping and suddenly you're forced to skinny dip, otherwise you'll seem like a wet blanket. What to do? How to do it? You'll never believe the kinds of things they say.

I also enjoyed finding out about the top-five fantasy costumes worn by women who are trying to seduce some strangers. Nurse, schoolgirl, cheerleader, French maid, and "country girl." And don't forget, "candlelight is the sexiest form of lighting and luckily for us, the easiest, the cheapest, and the most readily available." How true! — Except for the last part, I actually think more people have electricity than have candles.



Safe Stud: The Safesex Chronicles by Max Exander

Price: \$7.95

Availability: This item is currently unavailable.


5 used & new from \$2.22

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful:

### *Look into the Past, January 29, 2006*

Walking down Eleventh Street I literally stumbled across a copy of this book, here in a neighborhood where its author, now long gone to us, had so many friends. Out of curiosity I picked up the book and plunged right in. The experience took me right back to a very different time, to a strange new world in which many of us had to re-learn and re-think everything we had been brought up to accept unchallenged. Max Exander was a "porn name" for the novelist Paul Reed, and Reed as well as many other intellectuals had at that moment to make a choice between a radical, modernist disengagement with society or with direct political action in the name of fighting AIDS. When it came to diverting sexual impulses, they were all walking into murky waters. John Preston, the famous pornographer, came up with an anthology called *HOT LIVING*, in which he got all his contributors to write sexy stories extolling the medically approved "safe sex," while others argued that, because porn is only a fantasy anyway, why not let unsafe sex live on in writing at any rate, if not in life.

This question was so debated during the first half of the 1980s that re-reading *SAFE STUD*, yet another product of the era of re-education, gives one a vertiginous feeling. I see angry faces all around me, the faces of those of us who had to curtail our sex lives or die, the faces of those dying, raging in an indifferent sea of government inertia or opposition. They, the state apparatus, tried to play it as though human rights were now in opposition to sexual rights. I had forgotten how much of *SAFE STUD* does not speak the language of porn, how much of it borrows from Reed's "straight" writing as it were, to tell the story of a gay community not only coping with the plague while trying to find the silver lining to new, restrictive sex practices, but just ordinary guys living life in 1980s San Francisco. The characters go to see *GHOSTBUSTERS*, *INDIANA JONES*, *GREMLINS*, etc. They're reading Jackie Collins' *HOLLYWOOD WIVES* as well as Milan Kundera. Phone sex must have just been invented, for they spend hours talking to each other (and to strangers) on these newfangled phone lines, one hand dipped in lube, the other rapid dialing.



It might almost be an age when Ansel Adams was still alive, for Max and his boyfriends and cohorts spend safe sex weekends at all the fabled Ansel Adams sites in Northern California and Nevada. If I remember right, Paul was a protégé of the Lesbian novelist May Sarton and had dozens and dozens of letters back and forth from and to her, her advising him on how to write a novel, etc. None of her advice really worked, did it, for he never wrote anything especially distinctive, but he was always a sturdy craftsman and he had something more than that, perhaps an earnestness and a sense of humor that his friends found delightful. You wanted him in your corner.

The new ways of having sex that Max discovers in this novel didn't last that long, I don't think. Deprived of bodily fluid exchange, he finds pleasure in being ordered to pleasure himself. In one vivid scene he is led to the middle of a warehouse and strange commanding voices order him to spank himself while they watch. This turns him on. I just found it, I don't know, it seemed distant. In the end Max finds a boyfriend, Eddie, who believes in safe sex as much as he does. They share a sexual faith that, they hope, will lead them out of the valley of the shadow of death. Alas, we know what happened.



StarPet : How to Make Your Pet a Star by Bash Dibra

Price: \$10.20

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

34 used & new from \$2.95

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful:

### *Shining Stars With Shining Fur, October 26, 2005*

We picked up this book during our research about how to get our two cats, Ted and Sylvia, jobs in the entertainment industry, for we had agreed among ourselves that they are super cute, and if we liked them, and we are very picky, why shouldn't the world?

You get a lot for your money with STARPET. At first I thought author Bash Dibra was from India; his name sounds like a Bollywood star. But, as he reveals, he grew up in a refugee camp in his native Albania, where he became obsessed with dogs and how to train them properly for entertainment. Growing up, he went to Hollywood where he met the legends of star pet training, including Rudd Weatherwax, the man behind LASSIE, and Frank Inn, the man who trained BENJI. The Old Masters, Bash calls them. They told him their secrets and now he passes them on, like a baton made of beef jerky.

The author has done work training the pets of a dozen or more Hollywood and music stars, including the pets of Jennifer Lopez and Mariah Carey. Catfight? He doesn't reveal, but I would hate to see those two cats pitted against each other, for it is said their owners aren't too fond of each other. Bash holds private StarPet workshops where he will work with you individually, but we are so far from Hollywood it's good he has condensed his training into nearly 400 pages, illustrated with dandy photos and some cleverly conceived line drawings. Bash reveals the three keys to motivation—the three P's he calls them—persistence, praise, and patience, but never punishment. He doesn't believe in cruelty to animals, even in the service of making them stars. That would be crossing the moral line.

He envisions a world in which you and your pet can enjoy the truly creative, collaborative work done by “Strasberg and Monroe,” or “Scorsese and De Niro.” That’s aiming a little high, but you get the idea. A heartwarming book by a man with old-fashioned show business charm and moxie.

P.S., we decided not to train Ted and Sylvia for stardom after all, but they are still probably the most appealing cats in North America.



State of Exception by Giorgio Agamben  
Price: \$12.00  
Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours  
8 used & new from \$14.43  
5 of 7 people found the following review helpful:

### *Solid "State", November 17, 2005*

The jaunty gray-on-yellow cover reminds us that, at his best, Giorgio Agamben is like a breath of spring air across the dreary landscape of geopolitical quagmire. When I got this book, I panicked because it advertised itself as the sequel to an earlier Agamben essay which I had not read! Nevertheless, I sucked it up and dove on in, prepared to be baffled and bemused, but believe me, STATE OF EXCEPTION is a stand-alone as well, and you need no prior knowledge of what happened in the earlier book HOMO SACER to understand the concepts here. I'm no scholar, but it seems to me that even he or she who knows absolutely nothing about Latin will be able to understand the history he delves into (perhaps a refresher course in HBO's series "ROME" would be in order). Partly this is due to the exemplary translation, by UC Davis' Kevin Attell, whose work I have not run across before. He's great. He has re-translated, or so it appears, not only Agamben's steely prose, but also each of Agamben's citations from the original Latin, German, French, Greek, Italian or whatever. How does he do it? I have no idea, but his expertise is quite helpful, especially when the reader needs to see where the emphasis falls in Agamben's particular use of his sources; it's now crystal clear.

Along the way Agamben and Attell demolish all our previous ideas about the so-called "state of exception." Even such obvious ones such as the ease with which we on the left have applied the term "dictator" to such figures as Mussolini and Hitler, even though, legally speaking, neither of them were dictators. It's easier for us to dismiss them this way. In general the book gains power, sweep and poetry the deeper you get into it.

I feel like I've already read HOMO SACER, it must be more about how under martial law (or say in the case of Hitler's death camps) humans were reduced to what Agamben called "mere life," with their citizenship stripped from them, so that they live in a state of nowhere, like that Beatles song. STATE OF EXCEPTION is to Agamben's body of work what STATE OF INDEPENDENCE was to Donna Summer's—a crisp, dry, declaration of moving on, wiping it up, and tearing the mind a new hole of opinion.



How to Draw Spirit Stallion of the Cimarron and Friends (Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron) by Lawrence Hamashima  
Price: \$6.99  
Availability: This item is currently unavailable.  
5 used from \$3.74

### *I'm Not From Germany And Yet Still, I Enjoyed This Guidebook, September 27, 2005*

I always had trouble drawing Spirit, Stallion of the Cimarron, until I found this guidebook sitting on top of a pile at a recent garage sale of a troubled family who had moved away from our neighborhood. The boy and girl who lived there grew up too fast, leaving behind their children's books and simple toys and becoming crack addicts—or, to use the language of the animated feature SPIRIT, addicts of the crack. Thus their abandoned toys seemed to speak of a childhood pushed away too quickly, like a spoiled child will push away the food on the table he secretly craves, in order to illustrate some point of self-esteem! Sad the way we starve ourselves of the things that matter.

But happily for me, little Benji had not done much coloring in this how-to guidebook. Like I say, I always had trouble sketching in the faces and bodies of the CIMARRON crew—Spirit, Rain, Little Creek, the eagle. Nothing worked, and I couldn't find anyone skilled enough at Dreamworks Animation Technique to help me at my office. The faces of Rain, Spirit, Little Creek and others would haunt my dreams at night, and when the shadows of morning crawled in across the windowpane I would struggle for a pencil, trying to trace their faces on a pad of paper. But the faces I loved grew misshapen, and the eraser at the end of the pencil was in for a beating.

Now along comes a book which shows you exactly how to get the results you desire. From the slightly square, trim face of plucky little Spirit, to the bold human planes of brave Little Creek, the whole range of anatomy is stripped bare. I said to my dog, "You'd be able to make your own tattoo of these guys if you wanted to," for as all animators know, once you know the secrets, a few brisk strokes in the right direction will bring recognizable faces to life, just as we see them in our hearts. I went through the whole course in a little under ten weeks, turning this into the "Summer of Spirit, Stallion of the Cimarron, and Friends."





Midnight Express DVD ~ Alan Parker

Price: \$13.45

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

47 used from \$4.88

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful:

### *Dream Couple*, August 29, 2005

Billy Hayes went to my high school, a few years ahead of me. This was an all-boys school on Long Island, and when he was in jail at that Turkish prison we used to joke that it was better than being stuck in our high school, and also that on the whole the freshman class did more hashish every day than Billy Hayes was able to smuggle across the entire width of his body. We were encouraged to pray for the soul of our fellow schoolmate William Hayes who was languishing in prison, unjustly convicted. Good-looking guy, though not so sublime as Brad Davis, who plays him in the movie.

Billy's girlfriend, Susan, who joins him in a half-baked scheme to smuggle moderate quantities of hashish out of Istanbul, is played by the incredible Irene Miracle. A year or so later she was to come into her element fully as Rose Elliot in Argento's masterful *INFERNO*, but here she is more subdued, though still ravishingly beautiful. She and Brad Davis have got to be the hottest couple ever put on film. Of course, their love gets torn apart once the jail portion of the movie begins, around reel 3. Giorgio Moroder, whose soundtrack is one of the epochal moments of 1970s cinema, wrote a beautiful love theme for Billy and Susan; it is tender and filled with longing and frustration. Sometimes I hear that theme played even on elevator Muzak and even now it brings back all the sorrow of lovers violently parted from each other, like Nino Rota's theme from the Zeffirelli *ROMEO AND JULIET*.

Is the movie racist for depicting Turks as menacing, ugly, brutish thugs? Maybe so. Maybe that's the lure of the movie, to suck you in telling you this is a true story and thus letting your moral judgments get let off the hook. The book on which this film is based shows a different angle on the story (in addition, Billy admits to enjoying sex in prison with men, an element that Oliver Stone excised out completely, later making up for it I suppose by including Jared Leto in his movie *ALEXANDER*), but while watching *MIDNIGHT EXPRESS* all you experience is fear. I'm sure that the success of this movie led to the depressing statistic that only 19 percent of Americans own or use passports. The rest of us are too terrified of going overseas and being hung upside down naked in chains and flogged by Turks.



Hohner Soprano Crow Sounder (Woodblock)

Offered by West Music

Price: \$1.30

Availability: Usually ships in 1-2 business days

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful:

### *Sound and Vision, August 23, 2005*

I used to be decidedly unmusical, couldn't hold a note, embarrassed myself when singing the National Anthem, hopeless at disco, couldn't even distinguish between keys on the piano, to me the black and the white ones looked pretty much alike. I might as well have been sitting on the keys, rather than playing them; I got the same general effect. A friend recommended joining a band, to get me out of the house at nights, and when I said I didn't know how to play any instruments he recommended the woodblock.

First I acquired the regular one with the ridged edges, sort of like the old medicine pins we used to toss around in high-school gym class. With these ridges you can scrape along with your rhythm stick and produce a nice funky sort of sound. (Even with your thumbs if you're not dainty about it.) But I was looking for something with a bit more pitch and when I was in the Hohner showroom I found the soprano version of the woodblock.

It lacks the Two-Tone's serrated edges—why, it's smooth and polished as a Brancusi sculpture, and almost as beautiful. What it does have is a high-ringing clear-bell tone that (they tell me) will stop a bird in its flight, for its sound is so high only birds can really hear all the reverberations. They call it the "crow sounder" because of the legendary aural prowess of our old friend the crow.

Soon you'll be pounding out beats like an old-school rocker. Listen to the very beginning of "Honky Tonk Women" by the Stones, you'll hear this distinctive crow sounder (+ cow bells for that down-home farm effect).



Airport Planning & Management by Alexander T. Wells

Price: \$47.50

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

3 used from \$40.00

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful:

### *The Book Of Choice For Students and Dreamers, August 22, 2005*

Like many young men, and I daresay women, I was drawn to airport management after exposure to Burt Lancaster's sterling portrayal of a harried airport manager in the Ross Hunter classic AIRPORT. Lancaster showed us that a man could handle a million problems all at once, if he had the right combination of grit and gray cells. It wasn't only the glamour, it was the idea of helping people get through their day—even when the people in question were six or seven miles up in the air—that made me consider airport management as a major at school.

Other factors prevented me from achieving my goal, but I continue to pick up textbooks and manuals to keep abreast of the way airports have changed over the last 35 years. From a technical point of view, one of the best resources for the lay manager is the Alexander Wells book AIRPORT PLANNING & MANAGEMENT (AP & MANAGEMENT), co-authored with Seth Young, both of them prominent in the field—and the airfield—today. This book brings you thoroughly up to date on the way the skies (and the terminals) have changed since the day of infamy, 9/11. Their information is laid out with dispatch, not a wasted word between them. In addition, they know their stuff, that's for sure. Over five-hundred pages and I could detect only a few minor inaccuracies.

If you were assigned to develop your own airport in some understaffed part of the world and were limited to bringing one textbook with you, this would be the volume you would bring. Of course, the old joke among airport-planning students is, what CD would you bring? Why, Brian Eno's MUSIC FOR AIRPORTS, of course.



Victorian Pottery Festival of Berries Short Bread Mould by Cuthbertson

Price: \$14.99

Availability: Usually ships in 1 to 2 weeks

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful:

*Get the Quilt and the Lace Varieties Too!, August 4, 2005*

There's nothing like entertaining, whether you do it in England or in your own home, which you can make into a mini-England with Victorian pottery and food.

I was having a bunch of clients to my apartment, and one of them I knew was really what you might call an Anglophile. He plays golf in Scotland (only) and has all his suits made in London. His wife has some royal blood in her, but none of us at the office know from what country. Nevertheless, they love shortbread and biscuits, what the British people like to call the same snacks we call "cookies." I was in a quandary, not knowing how to prepare any of their special food, so I organized a potluck (which happily are just as popular in the UK as they are here, under another name of course—our "potluck" comes down to us from American Indian roots), and I volunteered to make the shortbread, using my white Cuthbertson dinner mould.

It's big—almost nine inches from corner to corner, and you can't beat the price. In Britain such a fine product would cost nearly twelve pounds—minimum—\*if\* you could find it and were lucky enough to have a shopkeeper or friend who would sell you it. My guests were all oohing and aahing as I pulled out my silver biscuit tray and displayed my Cuthbertson shortbreads, not too heavy, not too lightweight, and my royal guest was the first one to point out the cunning pattern of intertwined berries on the top of the dessert, saying it reminded her of Boxing Day (favorite holiday overseas, and berries a traditional element in a good Boxing Day celebration). Next time I might try some berries within the shortbread for a different kind of tasty thrill. In the meantime, I keep my mould on the "plate rack" built into my traditional mantelpiece with some other kitchen items that have gotten too numerous to store in the pantry.

P.S., I got the promotion!



Gigi (Le Livre de Poche) by Colette Sidonie-Gabrielle  
Price: \$10.36  
Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours  
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful:

### *First Love, August 12, 2005*

Gigi was the first novel I read in French, and at the time that I read it, probably it was the raciest book I ever read—I was a mere lad of, I don't know, eleven or so. I couldn't figure out exactly who was who. I tried reading GONE WITH THE WIND in French but that was too long. Gigi was perfect. She was, after all, a young girl, though from a different world than mine. She had several aunts who wanted to train her into the high-level world of the Courtesan. A good parallel would be the recent novel MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA by Arthur Golden.

What distinguishes Colette from Golden is that the French writer built a legend around herself in terms of the beauty and poetry of her language. Not only did she possess a stern and acute mind—no nuance of regret or longing escaped her gaze—but she wielded a pen like an angel. She was incapable of writing a phony sentence, and like the American modernist poet William Carlos Williams, she found beauty in the ordinary and the commonplace. A swatch of wildflowers growing in the graveyard where Gigi's mother lies becomes the palette of an artist, with the dappled colors suggesting possibility. Gigi's hopes, dreams and fantasies lie mingled, like sooty water, with the harsh realities of her existence. Basically, she must find a rich man to cling to or lose all her status.

For a young boy reading her story, and trying to puzzle through the evocative French, I found myself stumbling at times, but at the end I became convinced that I knew this girl, and I took pleasure in her small triumphs and her enemies became mine.

Today many of Colette's works have been translated, but she is still very much caviar to the general. Another couple of books I can recommend to you are CHERI and its sequel, THE LAST OF CHERI. (Cheri's a guy despite his name, which to me seemed feminine before I got the drift of things.)



Viva Poncho: Twenty Ponchos and Capelets to Knit by Christina Stork and Leslie Barbazette

Price: \$11.53

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

15 used from \$9.99

6 of 9 people found the following review helpful:

### *Knitting For Foggy Weather, July 20, 2005*

Viva Poncho—that's a clever title guaranteed to sucker male knitters in, with its bilingual pun on a popular old fashioned Spanish phrase still current in many parts of California at least (don't know how this book will do in Middle America, where Spanish is less spoken). Anyhow, I sat down with the book and breezed through the attractive pages, looking for a cool-weather poncho for the cold San Francisco summer nights. There are plenty of outdoor events which take place late into the night—say, the recent fireworks at Crissy Field—and why not dress warmly with a newly knitted poncho? Lucinda Williams came and gave a free concert in Golden Gate Park, and I wasn't the only guy there wearing a decorated poncho in honor of Barbazette and Stork's new guide.

It was a great idea to hire David Verba to do the photos. He's famous for his Western photos of desert stretches and big, throbbing moon shots; no one since John Ford has made Monument Valley look so good. But here in the knit department he does a good job, makes you look twice, expecting to see salamanders gliding across the model's boot.

The real reason ponchos are so popular among knitters is that there's practically nothing you can do that will go wrong. No amount of dropped stitches are going to make the poncho look deformed or like anything else but what it is, a sort of rhomboid shape with a hole for your head to poke through. VIVA PONCHO has many of these, though some are clearly designed for women, and few men, even in our liberated San Francisco, are going to wear some of the capelets in the book. In fact, one or two of them no one but a runway model could wear without looking like an idiot. They're "too" stylish, if such a thing might be, and you know it might for sure!

No matter if you prefer mohair or alpaca, or just yarn from Marks & Spencer, you'll find something to make. Now boys, get out those needles and set off some sparks!



The Complete Tales of Washington Irving by Charles Neider

Price: \$18.90

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

23 used from \$5.11

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful:

### *A Spicy Brew, June 22, 2005*

Some give the sheaf to Charles Brockden Brown, but I far prefer the mellow stylings of Washington Irving, the sage of Tarrytown. When I was a boy I was introduced to this splendid body of work by one of my grade-school teachers, a collateral relative of Washington Irving, a man who hailed from upstate New York and who carried in his bloodlines some of the authentically spooky platelets of colonial America. During the Napoleonic period the US was not necessarily a pretty place to live in, and Irving's famous story THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN shows us some of the dark underbelly of American life. You really weren't safe out of your own wood, and at night, travel was even more dangerous. Plus, as anyone who's read the story of Ichabod Crane knows, people were just as prone to jeer and mock the funnylooking as they are today. The story is heartbreaking on two levels; the naturalistic and the symbolic. We all know someone like Ichabod Crane, and many of us find ourselves mirrored in his lonely gaze and terrifying gallop through Hessian country. Irving, like Hawthorne, wrote out many of his tales swearing they were "as his grandfather told him," and thus they are set in a period before his own, a misty place of the past that he knew how to make terrifyingly real and relevant.

My teacher also reminded us that Washington Irving was a very cultured man who believed, like Johnny Appleseed, in planting America with the fruits of other, older lands, so that among his stories you will find some from Europe, re-told to make them apropos and socially relevant for the rawness of a new world.

For horror and fright Washington Irving has few rivals, and the bonus is an added richness as of old apples carpeting a winter meadow, and thus this book, edited by a Twain expert, smells like spicy cider on New Year's Eve; lots of good cheer along with your ghosts.



**Alien Green Belly Button Ring**

Price: \$3.99

Availability: This item is currently unavailable.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful:

*Body Candy Does It Again, July 5, 2005*

I had had enough of the popular Body Candy Cross Dangle ring, which was always getting caught in whatever I was wearing across the midriff. Or even if you were walking around bare-midriff, the tips of the cross (where the hands of the crucified god might be if there was a body nailed to the cross) kept getting caught in the car door, on brambles. Going past a picket fence, it would fly towards the left or right and slow me down. I wanted to get something that would set me off from the crowd and yet not be so Madonna oriented as the cross-dangle piece I had worn so long. (I had the old-world solar-blue ring.) I toyed with the notion of buying one of the beer-mug dangles, but it just might call attention to my incipient beer belly. Why tell people all about it when they can see it with their eyes open!

The "Alien Green" ring is just what the doctor ordered. On the beach or at the gym, first thing people ask me is, what is that on your navel? It has a lurid, luminous green like kryptonite, two eyes perfectly symmetrical and round, and it stares at you like aliens are watching you. I shaved my "treasure trail" so it looks as though the aliens landed on a perfectly smooth runway. Just apply a little talcum powder and you're "it" for the duration. Best thing, with the round construction of the balls, they don't catch on anything. Hey, maybe mother nature had the same idea when she dreamed up the whole testicle idea (make 'em round).

Sure, some people stare and some people preach at you, but my philosophy is, if you have to do it, might as well do it with Body Candy. I'd do TV commercials for this firm if I had to, that's how good they are. As for the haters, well, they can move on—there's no room for hate on my navel.





### Guys Gone Wild DVD

Price: \$15.99

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

19 used from \$11.00

25 of 26 people found the following review helpful:

#### *To sum it up for next time, June 10, 2005*

While we wait for the sequel, *SPRING BREAK EXPLOSION*, here's my impressions of the first *GUYS GONE WILD* disc. And maybe a lesson or two for the makers of the first one, because it let us down quite a bit, and maybe with *SPRING BREAK* they will make some reparations. First, the plusses: For the most part the GGW guys are great looking, with a few duds sprinkled in here or there to keep us grounded. It's true after awhile they all begin to look alike. They have the same body type, the same haircut, the same goofy expressions frozen on their faces as their jaws try to speak in words after twelve tequilas, they shrug, they give up speaking, they concentrate hard on opening the drawstring to their pants. The sound equipment the interviewers use is horrible, and this is one DVD that might be better viewed with the mute button on. The interviewers can be heard screeching extremely loud, but the boys' answers are pretty mumbled, and it's not only the liquor that makes them sound underwater, it's the lack of attention placed on getting the audio right. To a lesser degree the same is true of the video. These girls can get a guy to strip off his boxers and get down to nothing at all in ten seconds flat, but they can't photograph him worth a darn.

Hire someone who can work both ends of a camera is what I say. The camera's bobbing up and down like it's on a buoy out in a storm, it's like the *BLAIR WITCH PROJECT*, and when you can see anything, it's just for a flash. The other problem is, the running time is under an hour. I guess a fool and his money are soon parted but in this day of six-hour porn DVDS, who is going to be fooled twice with a 50-minute short? Get some extra footage in there, pronto.

I can't wait until these guys, who have all presumably signed releases, try to get work as adults. Hopefully they won't be running as congressmen or anything that would require full disclosure. Granted, we all go a little crazy when we're juiced up, but doing it for video, that's a lapse in judgment—however, it's one I'm glad they made. It will give a picture of what American youth thought appropriate in the year of our Lord 2005. Now let's just have more of it and I will rest happy. Oh, and to really add a star, girls, get them to have sex with each other on camera. How hard could that be?



Doctor Zhivago by Boris Pasternak

Price: \$10.85

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

78 used from \$0.01

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful:

### *In Praise of Marina, June 10, 2005*

Out of Zhivago's loves I always liked Marina the best, and when the movie came out, I was puzzled to see that David Lean and Robert Bolt had left her out, excised her completely. It made me wonder why, why leave out the enchanting figure of Marina, the only one in Zhivago's world who was as faithful to him as a dog is to his master, one who was there at the beginning.

Maybe they thought that audiences were already being asked to swallow too much. Yurii Andreievich had married Tonia already, and had Sasha with her, and then the good doctor had found himself madly in love with Lara. That tragic romance ended badly and then Yuri finds himself completely without friends or family and he stumbles, like a bum, back into the life of Marina. I guess the filmmakers thought that they were painting Lara and Yuri to have the greatest love of all time, so where did Marina fit in? Anyone who's read the book knows that Marina's love for Yuri was stronger by far than the crazy, tender, adulterous love of Lara. Zhivago is such a good poet that Tonia, Lara and Marina are all aquiver when he draws near them.

Marina is more mature (when she re-encounters Yuri) and it's hard to imagine what actress of the mid-60s would have best been able to essay her character—had Lean and Bolt been more faithful to the novel and included the Marina-Yuri story in it. She is a woman whom time has touched, but lightly, and she has seen the ravages of the Revolution first-hand, while still remaining touched and open to the possibilities of new love. If they could have gotten her, Audrey Hepburn would have been a good choice, sort of the Audrey Hepburn of *ROBIN AND MARIAN* and *TWO FOR THE ROAD*. Another performance that comes to mind is Claudia Cardinale in *ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST*—women who have lived and suffered and whose spirit still flames and seeks the higher ground. But perhaps Hepburn and Cardinale were too beautiful (or glamorous) and Pasternak wanted us to find the beauty in a plainer woman.

The book is a very different experience than the movie; structured as a poem, the novel moves laterally from time period to time period, while individual associations link disparate stories. We remember that Pasternak was writing about characters of a generation other than his own and that he had already seen the death of Stalin and the public demolition of the dictator's relationship when he published his novel at last. As a boy he had dreamed of becoming a musician, and it is said that he aped Scriabin in his earliest works. Certainly some of Scriabin's theories of synaesthesia carry over into the marvelously sensual passages of *ZHIVAGO*, where everything—smells, tastes, the pressures of flesh and flesh—all blend into image.



**The "Diner" Birdhouse**

Offered by Gift Warehouse World of Products

Price: \$15.99

Availability: Usually ships in 3-4 business days

*And all you have to do is provide the seed!, June 6, 2005*

The "Diner" birdhouse is one of those products you wish you had thought of, for how cute it is to have a diner set up for birds that dispenses birdseed round the clock?

As the sign says outside, "Open 24 Hours"! Many fine birdhouses were available to us, but this is the one we chose. My grandmother owned an actual diner, in Jamaica, Queens, and we put this up on our pole to honor her memory and to remember all the delicious ways she served up humble people food. Comes with hand-painted medallions and accoutrements, including picnic tables lining the diner frontage, with gay red-and-white-checked picnic tablecloths for that festive summer effect. But this is one birdhouse that looks grand with snow capping its roof, too. Just make sure to keep the door open for birds looking for a quick bite or maybe just to get in out of the cold for a spell.

The things you do for these birds, after all, you do for Saint Francis, who loved his feathered friends as he loved the moon and the sun.

Check out the merry silhouettes of the customers manning the booths inside the diner; you can spot them eating right through the painted windows.

"Shakes . . . Hamburgers . . . Welcome!"



Ancient Echoes - Music from the time of Jesus and Jerusalem's Second Temple ~ San Antonio Vocal

Arts Ensemble

Price: \$16.99

Availability: Usually ships in 2 to 3 weeks

2 used from \$16.98

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful:

### *God Tubwayhun You, May 23, 2005*

Listening to this CD is like being transported out of your comfortable suburban lifestyle and plunged through time and space back into the Holy Land. You can almost sniff the figs and dates and the offerings made to the temple, the goat tethered down to the barbecue heap, and the wailing of the holy priests as they make offerings to God, as Abraham was prepared to do to Isaac before he was stopped by a merciful Father. From the very first track you will feel viscerally that this was a very different world than ours, and yet the hunger for worship is strong in all cultures. The unusual instrumentation and play of voices may remind you of some of the modern Eurovision entries which depend on minor-key melodies and Middle Eastern harmony, and then again listeners of an older generation who like pop music will realize that Cole Porter and other Broadway composers borrowed these Middle Eastern modalities for their more mournful or sensual numbers.

San Antonio has reason to be proud. It is one of the great multicultural capitals of our continent, and as such must have some psychic connection to the sprawling, multi-faith and multi-culture world of old Jerusalem. You can hear the spirit in the impassioned play of voices, a mosaic of creeds and colors. Bewildering as some of the music may be at first, listen long enough to a track like "Tubwayhun l'ahbvday sh'lama," and you will soon be humming right along with the wonderful technicians of the Vocal Ensemble. So many of the tunes have the word "Tubwayhun" in them (it means "sacred," or "blessed by God") you may find yourself using this ancient word in your secular vocabulary. Say when somebody sneezes, where you might say "Gesundheit," now you will be saying, "God tubwayhun you."



Michael Kors Khaki Shorts with Yellow Stitching

Price: \$24.99

Availability: This item is currently unavailable.

### *If you don't mind yellow, May 20, 2005*

Feeling flush last month I bought two pairs of these before I realized what an idiot I looked like wearing these big long shorts in khaki, with bright yellow stitches all over them like a flock of yellow butterflies had settled on my crotch. They're what we used to call beachcomber pants, and they're a pale orange khaki, rather like the color of St. Joseph baby aspirin, in a nice blend of linen and very fine cotton.

After awhile I grew to like the look and now I wear them everywhere. In San Francisco you can wear just about anything, but too often the crisp, cool weather precludes wearing something that bares your knees. Michael Kors does a lot of different styles of clothes, and he must have thought it would be amusing to see a lot of grown men running around with yellow embroidery all over their ass. What's good about them is the drawstring waist and the mesh pockets; you could put literally the whole contents of your knapsack into your pockets, say, if you were out hiking or climbing rock.



Radio Controlled Helicopters: The Guide to Building and Flying R/C Helicopters by Nick Papillon

Price: \$26.50

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

3 used from \$14.02

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful:

*New and Improved and a Must-Have, May 19, 2005*

Papillon's book has been revised substantially, but even the old one was a keeper. The new one has more information and less of the risible Anglicisms that peppered the text of the previous edition.

Nick Papillon, an Englishman with a French name (meaning "butterfly," hilarious for someone so involved in model helicopters), has a finely developed sense of what we hobbyists want from a book like this one, and he knows what to leave out, too. Here in San Francisco we have a club, the Flying Goobers, that meets monthly—and in the summer, weekly—at Baker Beach and I would say about forty percent of our members already own one or both of Nick's handbooks. Sometimes the air is awash with the sound of seagulls and the hovering buzz of our RCs. Indeed, sometimes we adjourn somewhere else when the air is too filled with static, etc.; too many speedboats patrolling the Bay seem to suck the energy right out of the controls. Feels like earthquake weather.

If you want to know about aerobatics, beyond your simple push-pull, up-down "flight patterns," he's got it all down in language that is fairly easy to understand even for the tyro. His chapter, "After the Crash," while sobering enough, is one of those classic, stop-feeling-sorry-for-yourself-and-get-out-there-and-do-it-again sort of pep talks. When I started I didn't know the difference between a transmitter and a receiver; they'd call me the "late great Johnny Ace" with a sneer. Now the shoe is on the other foot as I explain to the newbies why lithium is cheaper in the long run, et cetera, all knowledge I got either from fellow Goobers or from pal Nick's RC handbook.



The Path to Victory : The Mediterranean Theater in World War II by Douglas Porch

Price: \$23.10

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

50 used & new from \$1.08

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful:

### *Enthralling, April 18, 2005*

I have spent most of the past eight months going through this massive book, pausing from time to time to consult some other work of history to further elucidate Porch's astonishing arguments. I had never really thought about the Mediterranean theater, whether it was primary or secondary, never having really stood back and seen it as it were as a whole. Simon Evans has rightfully criticized THE PATH TO VICTORY for its lousy maps, but the first one is really emblematic—the Med is depicted as a gray entity, the only visible thing in a field of snow, the surrounding countries and continents, forcing us to look at the Sea as a living entity with, apparently, a mind of its own. It's a snappy way of letting us see that Gibraltar and Rome and Egypt are connected arms of the same living creature.

Porch anticipates much of the reaction his arguments will make and also seems to have thought out his statements, for good or ill. And he has learned the debater's useful trick of being able to swallow the opposing point of view in order to regurgitate it when most helpful. Thus, he lists the three main reasons why few have earlier seen the Mediterranean as a place of interest, much less importance. They are a general unwillingness to view El Alamein (for example) as the equal of the battle of Stalingrad; the desert war far too often seen as a clash of titans (Rommel and Monty) to the detriment of more nuanced ways of looking at North African conflict or indeed the war at large; and finally, the rise of "contrafactual history" that makes it all too easy to imagine that the Mediterranean war was fought at the expense of an imaginary 1943 D-Day which might have been launched had not the Allies (esp. France, England and America) been too busy pushing for victory in N. Africa and then Italy.

There is a fair amount of repetition. How many times do we have to hear Porch slating John Ellis for his comments about "The whole [Med] campaign barely merits an extended footnote"? But there is no book which, read for eight enthralled months, will not yield up a bit of "heard it before."





Lolita Lempicka Au Masculin by Lolita Lempicka for Men 3.4 oz Eau de Toilette Spray offered by Beautiful Perfumes  
Price: \$33.99  
Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

### *Smells So Fine, April 6, 2005*

It's not the scent that attracts you first about Lolita Lempicka, it's the way it holds in your hand, firm and sensual at the same time, as though the designer had taken a mold of your fist and poured liquid glass into your folded up palm.

The lavender color may turn off some guys, but to me it looks like a scientific specimen preserved in some Natural History museum, a primitive relic carved out from the ice, a fossil of some ancient igneous fuel source. It looks remarkably resistant to time, heat or age. Hold it in your hand—I dare you to keep yourself from trying to undo its stopper.

The scent itself is sort of woody, warmer than you'd think. I don't think it will sweep the nation, but it'll look great in your medicine chest or on the hood of your car.

Lolita Lempicka Au Masculin also has a deodorant which I have tried often; it is just as effective as the spray. I played a round of golf, then got on my horse (if you know what I mean, and I think you do) and never had to use it twice.

I wonder if Lolita Lempicka is related to the futurist painter Tamara de Lempicka, whose pictures are going for zillions of dollars now. I can kind of relate the heft of the bottle to Tamara's style.



Britpop!: Cool Britannia and the Spectacular Demise of English Rock by John Harris

Price: \$18.95

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

13 used & new from \$8.36

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful:

*A Better Book on Britpop May Never Be Written, February 20, 2005*

I had never read anything by John Harris before, but after reading the superbly detailed and imaginatively researched BRITPOP! I picture him as a kind of Theodore K. White of music journalism. He is careful to place the phenomenon inside a political and social context that included the passing of the Thatcher kingdom and the birth of "New Labor" as exemplified by the triumph of the young, music-loving prime minister, Tony Blair. And paralleling also the rise of the Young British artists like Damien Hirst and/or Tracey Emin.

Against this changing backdrop of society and expectations, a new breed of British bands appeared all at once to world consciousness. Oasis, Blur, Pulp and more seemed poised to take over the world the way that the Beatles, Stones and Kinks has once dominated rock 30 years before. And yet within a few years, all this excitement had dried up, and the Gallagher Brothers were now seen only as a pair of drunken louts who slagged everyone they could, even their own wives and girlfriends. Harris is good at depicting not only the appropriation strategies of these bands but the way they knew how to play themselves in the media against their American or Australian counterparts for maximum effect, culminating in the episode where Jarvis Cocker showed up at a Michael Jackson TV taping to denounce the black R&B singer, or the way that Noel Gallagher assailed Kylie Minogue for being a "lesbian," or so he said.

The Koran says, "In our beginning are our ends," and this book Britpop! proves it over and over and over and over.

Well done, John Harris.



Black & Decker BDL310S Projected Crossfire Auto Level Laser

Price: \$99.00

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

13 of 16 people found the following review helpful:

*The Answer to a Nightmare, March 28, 2005*

Did you ever get yourself in a jam when hanging a picture, and no matter where you put up the nail in the wall, the picture still wound up looking crooked, even from far across the room? We had this nightmare happen to us on Wednesday, and after a few temper tantrums I remembered that we had the Crossfire Laser still sitting in its box from Christmas under the stairs.

It didn't take a minute to figure out how to use the thing, and as you are aware, twin lasers appear and trace any 90 degree angle you like. You'll be surprised that you won't need any chalk (or ballpoint pen) to put the mark on the wall, and it measures perfectly the distance between the floor and ceiling with ease, without having to squint to see the bubble line in the tube as we used to do for a level—in that tube that always looked like an oral thermometer. This one is far less messy. (As a sidelight, we found indeed that the reason the picture always hung crooked is because the frame itself wasn't perfectly rectangular but instead was made in a slightly rhomboid shape! Who would have guessed it, and without the Black & Decker Crossfire we still would have been kicking ourselves.)

I can see using this for so many things that needed doing around the house, inside and out. It's easy to understand, it's lightweight, and it's accurate, almost scarily so. It's the answer to a common household nightmare.



Kate Moss: Model of Imperfection by Katherine Kendall

Price: \$12.89

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

20 used & new from \$5.87

7 of 9 people found the following review helpful:

### *Happy 31st Birthday Kate Moss, February 9, 2005*

Every year my friends and I make a special day out of January 16 to celebrate the birthday of our fashion idol Kate Moss. This year we bought fourteen copies of MODEL OF IMPERFECTION and distributed them among ourselves during our fun-filled bash. In the days that followed our Moss party I heard many grumblings about how badly the book was written, but I paid them no mind, ascribing the bad reviews to the general hangover of our group.

Also, we've been worried about Kate Moss and her growing attachment to the Libertines' Pete Doherty, whose fascination with crack has imperiled our heroine and her beloved baby by Jefferson Hack.

Katherine Kendall's book doesn't find the space to cover these latest developments, but with a figure so stylish and dynamic as Kate Moss, it would be hard to write a book that could keep itself up-to-date—maybe regular CD-ROM supplements would do the trick? I liked the way she wrote about Kate Moss posing for Lucien Freud; it shows that she has a brain too, not just an appetite for sensation as a result of being brought up in an overly restrictive family that would not allow her sweets. Kate Moss has had to battle a lot of problems, including the bad press engendered by her rampages through hotels during the Johnny Depp days, and people feeling that she has no talent, and the rumors about bulimia and anorexia, and yet every time she gets written off, she bounces right back looking prettier than ever! In our crowd, we consider her the Babe Paley of the 21st Century, than which there is no higher compliment.

And her little daughter, Lila Grace, is so cute. There are some good snaps of her in the Kendall book.

Yes, the book is filled with re-cycled interviews and other sources, but it isn't all that bad. Perhaps next Katherine Kendall could write a book about the British actress-slash-comedienne Kay Kendall, who was Kate Moss' spiritual ancestor back in the 1950s. Trivia—did you know that Kate has appeared in ten films—always as "Herself"? What other star can boast such a high ratio of appearances as herself?



Romeoland ~ Lil' Romeo

Price: \$17.98

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

32 used & new from \$3.88

Club Price: \$9.99

12 of 18 people found the following review helpful:

*Sticks in Your Head, like Butter, February 17, 2005*

Soon there will be a movie based on MY CINDERELLA and it will be called LIL' ROMEO AND LIL' JULIET, starring the one and only LIL' ROMEO. I wonder who Hollywood will get to play LIL' JULIET, unless by then there is an actual rap personality with this name. In the meantime, fans of LIL' ROMEO will be playing Romeoland again and again until the thing just falls apart. Hopefully Nick Cannon (who adds his own style on the track) will be featured in the new Romeo + Juliet movie too as he could add some respectability to the product. It's a beautiful song in which he says that before he's 24 he can rule the world, but only if he can find the perfect little shorty to reign at his side as his queen. "I'm willing to grow, to the mountain top, if you're willing to go." His dad, the famous Master P, produces some of the other tracks. Who dares criticize Master P for having a son more famous than he is? That's like saying George W. Bush is more famous than his dad, who was also president. Lil' Bow Wow's got nothing on that. He is his own rival and worst enemy.



The Street of Clocks : Poems by Thomas Lux  
Price: \$10.40  
Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours  
9 used & new from \$3.94  
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful:

*The Clocks Are Ticking, November 28, 2004*

THE STREET OF CLOCKS is all about aging, and by now the middle-aged author who once had the gift of youth in the palm of his hand is feeling death's nostrils breathing warm patterns of air on the back of his neck, and on even more intimate places. When you think of Sarah Lawrence and you think of "poetry" your mind stumbles on the name of Thomas Lux, for he's been there for so long that some younger students weren't even born when he started his lucrative tenure there. He can be hilarious, as when he describes humans as being the only animal that make quote marks with their fingers to indicate sarcasm, "bewilderment and awe." The young in particular warm to Lux because he sees the world from their point of view, as an infinitely strange arrangement of pleasures and tribulations, never to be exhausted.

This volume took six years to write, and it shows in the repeated thrusts and mechanical coughs of the verse style. Contrary to previous reviewers, I did not find Lux's language to be always specific. Sometimes it seemed vague, as though he were trying to describe dreamlike experiences or states of feeling for which language does not suffice. Have you ever read the German poet Stefan George? Sometimes, or so it seems to this reviewer, George was born again as Thomas Lux in upstate New York or wherever it was and suffered through the typical milkman's son's life until he found Sarah Lawrence the way George found his Maximin. His writing is filled with violence, like "Rommel's Asparagus," the punji-like sticks which ripped the underbellies out of enemy pilots.

All in all, he should stop it with the long hair; it makes him look like he was part of ABBA.



Troy DVD

Price: \$9.99

Availability: This item is currently unavailable.

0 of 8 people found the following review helpful:

### *Why Its Box Office Fizzled, August 18, 2004*

My friend said that the ordinary man on the street didn't know about the Trojan War or that there was once a city called Troy, and when they saw the poster for TROY with Brad Pitt's face they thought he was playing a guy called Troy and it just didn't sound interesting. Maybe they thought he was playing Troy Donahue, the late Hollywood actor whose heyday in the 50s and 60s was as a blond teen idol, kind of like Brad, so it would have been good casting. Well, if you didn't know it was a war movie, you probably would have thought Brad was just wearing a leather dress in the poster and maybe you might have thought it was some kind of ZOOLANDER take on haute couture for men. In any case, or so my friend says, the Hollywood studios usually do market research for this kind of thing, and change the titles of any movies that they think will be too difficult for Joe Average to understand—thus ANHEDONIA became ANNIE HALL—and they don't like allusions either. But in this case it looks like they went ahead and called the movie TROY even though they already knew that many people did not go to see PEARL HARBOR thinking that it was a movie about a girl named Pearl. Thus the moguls have only themselves to blame, and also they might blame the abysmal way US students are taught history so that the average student can only name 3 or 4 presidents in total.



Amy Lowell: Selected Poems (American Poets Project) by Amy Lowell

Price: \$13.60

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

8 used & new from \$10.70

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful:

*"The Foxgloves Were Like Tall Altar Candles", October 10, 2004*

This new edition of Amy Lowell's poems is a dazzling success in every way imaginable, and I hope people take it up for earnest thanks to the prestige of the Library of America and perhaps of Lowell's new editor, the distinguished memoirist and poet Honor Moore. Moore's introduction to the volume hits just the right notes, and she is perhaps the ideal candidate to tell us why we should bother ourselves in the work of one of America's natural-born plutocracy who literally never had to work a day in her life. Despite all her advantages, Lowell was from the first interested in the ongoing "revolution of the word" that Pound, Flint, Hulme and others were promulgating, first overseas and then, bringing it all back home, here in the USA. And Lowell was ready every step of the way, not only with her money but with her amazing talent. Lowell's best writing is scintillating, sharp as anything Pound did in the way of Imagism, and yet she had something Pound lacked, perhaps a heart and certainly an openness to writing about sex experience that Ol Ez shied away from. Ezra Pound could never, for example, have written the poem Honor Moore includes here by Amy Lowell from 1919, called "Balls." At times Lowell and Pound seem to be occupying the same cultural space, as when Lowell proffers her own version of the "Ballad of the Fisherman's Wife," and when set head to head, Lowell seems to be, well, not quite as smart as Pound, but in her own way she is just as splendid, and her life was terribly cut short when she was still (as these things go) sort of young, and it's interesting to speculate on what would have happened to an American poetry in the 1930s that had Amy Lowell working in it!

The book is very handsomely done and I can't think of anyone who won't walk away from it with a new respect for Amy Lowell, and a renewed puzzlement over the byways of publicity and mania that make Robert Lowell (say) so well known and his cousin Amy (say) kind of a relic from out of the closet.





Scream Savers: Calming Ideas for Frazzled Moms by Karol Ladd

Price: \$3.99

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

3 used & new from \$2.78

2 of 19 people found the following review helpful:

*Might save your life! Your children's too, August 3, 2004*

Karol Ladd is an attractive, articulate woman who specializes in bringing Christ's teachings to the least understood group of human beings in America—the Stay-at-Home Moms who are often misunderstood, especially in Texas ever since that woman went a little crazy and killed all her kids. Don't let that happen to you, and get yourself a copy of "Scream Savers," which is a Bible-based guide to keeping your cool even when your kids get out of hand.

Whatever you do, spare your children from your own neuroses, especially if they are the fatal kind in which the children are not seen as loving dependents but as enemies of the Stay-at-Home mother. Karol Ladd, who has written over thirty books and spoken often to many Texas and national women's groups, can show you the way. She is not exactly a Stay-at-Home Mom herself, but she's been there, and she will help you to cope. Remember, murder is not a resort, even a last resort, but prayer and confidence can and should be your first port of call when you make your voyage into the often rewarding world of being a Stay-at-Home Mom.

There are many great tips here. Recommended. Karol Ladd could be the cousin of the starlet Cheryl Ladd, both are petite and blonde and very articulate and together women with a love of Texas that shines right through them.



John Gardner: Literary Outlaw by Barry Silesky

Price: \$16.47

Availability: Usually ships in 24 hours

6 used & new from \$4.25

6 of 8 people found the following review helpful:

### *Saga of a Born Writer, July 6, 2004*

Odd as it is to think, considering how important and envied he was in his prime, today John Gardner is nearly forgotten. Apart from a pair of writing manuals we now learn he wrote to make money when the IRS descended on him to pay over \$400,000 in back taxes, are any of his books in print? Silesky ends his story at the moment of Gardner's death, so we don't hear any of the innumerable reasons for the critical decline in Gardner's reputation, and he doesn't do him any favors by printing that photo on the cover with the big white mullet caught poetically in mid flight. It is a further shame that Silesky is so badly served by his proofreaders. As another reviewer has pointed out, who doesn't know the first name of the US novelist Alison Lurie? And on page 231, the eminent translator of Lorca, Ben Belitt, gets turned into "Bellit"—why? I guess because nobody bothered to check. My favorite misspelling is Silesky's rendering of the classic opera "AHMAL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS" (pg 283).

It doesn't seem to me that enough really happened to Gardner to justify such a long book. The tragic death of his brother apart, Gardner led a typical MFA-type of life. He catapulted himself into one writing job after another, replete with lots of booze, lots of admiring colleagues, lots of students all too willing to part him from whatever wife he was on at the time. Silesky's story turns tragic only when Gardner reaches fame with the publication of "The Sunlight Dialogues," and suddenly his character changes, and the friends who once called him "sweet" now realize he's a pompous windbag, a Father Mapple of the faculty lounge. It's all very sad but fails to convince you that a Gardner revival is in order, "moral fiction" or no. When Charles Johnson uses the word "legend" to describe his late friend, he's being loyal, but it's a terrible debasement of the word "legend."



### Silencio Silent Partner Earplugs

Price: \$6.95

Availability: This item is currently unavailable.

3 of 6 people found the following review helpful:

#### *Just the ticket for a good night's sleep, August 3, 2004*

There are all kinds of sleep aids, but the best is silent. Nothing in nature is silent, even erosion, but sometimes in the urban environment in which you're trying to doze off, you keep hearing all kinds of sounds...car motors, car alarms, the voices of babies crying, etc. That's when you wish you had gone ahead and bought a few pair of SILENT PARTNER ear plugs. They're so light and dexterous you'll hardly know you're wearing anything outside of your pajamas or whatever.

For example, the other night people were setting off fireworks outside my apartment window. It was the 4th of July and they were being patriotic, helping the neighborhood celebrate the founding of our country, sure. But I wanted to sleep, so I took my SILENT PARTNERS, plugged one in each ear, and within minutes I was in dreamland, listening to the sound of the celestial music of dreams.

The rockets' red glare won't bother you, if you've got two earfuls of SILENT PARTNER plugs. They're so easy to use I suppose even a child could wear them!



The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan by Jimmy McDonough

Price: \$26.95

Availability: Usually ships in 2 to 3 weeks

11 used & new from \$5.73

2 of 5 people found the following review helpful:

*Ouch!, December 28, 2001*

Stayed up all night, with a flashlight even, because a power outage knocked out all the electricity on our block, and yet I didn't want to stop finding out more and more about Andy Milligan (and about Jimmy McDonough, his biographer). By the end of the book my right hand was SO TIRED!

He's interviewed everyone, dug deep into some unsavory caves and dells, and come up and out the other side. I don't ever want necessarily to SEE any of Milligan's outre films now, but I have the great satisfaction of having read a splendid biography.

Selected Reviews is set in 9.5 point  
Segoe and 14 and 18 point Courier.  
These are fonts. We use them.

Kevin Killian, born 1952, is a US poet, novelist, critic and playwright. He has written a book of poetry, *Argento Series* (2001), two novels, *Shy* (1989) and *Arctic Summer* (1997), a book of memoirs, *Bedrooms Have Windows* (1989), and a book of stories, *Little Men* (1996) that won the PEN Oakland award for fiction. A second collection *I Cry Like a Baby* was published by Painted Leaf Books in 2001. With Lew Ellingham, Killian has written many essays and articles on the life and work of the American poet Jack Spicer [1925-65] and co-edited Spicer's posthumous books *The Train of Thought* and *The Tower of Babel* (both 1994). Their biography of Spicer, *Poet Be Like God: Jack Spicer and the San Francisco Renaissance* was published by Wesleyan University Press in 1998. He and Peter Gizzi are currently (2006) editing Spicer's complete poems.

For the San Francisco Poets Theater Killian has written thirty plays, including *Stone Marmalade* (1996, with Leslie Scalapino) and *Often* (2001, with Barbara Guest). He is the film columnist for the new online journal *Fanzine*. His next book—in fact, his next two books—will be all about Kylie Minogue.

HOOKE'S BOOKS

- one At All: Tom Raworth & His Collages // by Norma Cole
- two Burrow // by Lauren Shufan
- three Selected Amazon Reviews // by Kevin Killian // edited by Brent Cunningham