

GIVING BOOKS

by Heather Shaw



*Some books are undeservedly forgotten;
none are undeservedly remembered.*—W.H. AUDEN

Is it possible there exists a better gift than a book? Sure, a diamond lasts forever, but after all, what is it really but a costly token. It might rock your world, but it won't get you an evening with Richard Burton, da Vinci, or Orson Wells (reviewed on page 35, 41, and 48). And there are the clothes that make the man, but all too soon they're worn out, out of fashion, outré. Yet for less than the price of a pair of sneakers, you can hold an entire Valentino wardrobe in your lap and never have to dry-clean or mothball (reviewed on page 43). Travel is priceless gift, but it can't take you back to the Eden Dance Palace in 1931 Germany. Nor can it take you to the courtroom where Hitler was later called to testify (reviewed on page 46). Finally, food, food, glorious food. A good meal is worth a thousand words—but what's a potato chip worth, or poisoned candy, or cat food? (Contributor Peter Skinner covers these and more on page 59.)

A good book ages, but never grows old. It has infinite patience. It reinvents itself on every reading. It's a dark alley, a sleigh, a love story, a battlefield. The gift of a book can be more intimate than lingerie, more candid than red roses, more practical than a hammer. Right now, write down the titles of your favorite books of the year. Who can you share them with this giving season? Support your independent booksellers, and Happy Holidays. **E**

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