

Books to Be Read Before Burning

Spurs Jackson

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Come the revolution, these books will probably, be in plentiful supply but just in case we don't win, here's a list of some of my own eclectic favorites. While only some of them deal with wilderness issues, all express thoughts and ideas, feelings and values that are incompatible and incomprehensible to those American Dreamers out there cruising the Interstates, sleeping at the nearest Howard Johnsons in sight of the offramp, eating high-tech food in plastic places with names like Denny's and McDonald's: or to those obedient zombies whose idea of high foreign adventure is a week in Mazatlan at the Hilton. Scientologists. Moonies, Mormons and lobotomized folk of their ilk, probably won't like them either. At least I hope so.

THE DEATH SHIP by B. Traven. One of the single most important novels of the 20th Century. A masterful satire on life in the bureaucratic nightmare and life with no legal identity. While Traven's works are available in over 500 editions in 36 languages worldwide (over 35 million copies sold) he remains practically unknown in the U.S. except for *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (The John Huston film with Humphrey Bogart, Walter Huston and Tim Holt).

THE JUNGLE NOVELS by B. Traven. Traven's insightful six volume epic of the plight of the Indians under Diaz's rule in Mexico, their forced servitude in the mahogany camps and a brilliant record of the underlying reasons for the Mexican revolution. The individual titles are: *The Carreta*, *March to the Monteria*, *La Troza*, *Rebellion of the Hanged* and *General From the Jungle*. *La Troza* is currently unavailable in English.

SLICKROCK by Edward Abbey. Some of Abbeys finest nonfiction writing since *Desert Solitaire*. Often neglected and little read due to its being out of print since 1976 and because it's a coffee table picture book. Often just skimmed through. Look for it.

ON DESERT TRAILS WITH EVERETT RUESS. This posthumously published tribute to the original wanderer of the Southwest deserts was originally published in 1951. Through his paintings, poetry and letters to family and friends, the young Everett Ruess, who vanished in Southern Utah in 1934, attempts to interpret his beloved canyon country and describe the lure that the desert held for him and why he preferred the "lone trail" of the red rock wilderness to that of his fellow humans back in civilization.

APE & ESSENCE by Aldous Huxley. A little read novel on post-atomic society that sums up my views... "The leech's kiss, the squid's embrace: The prurient ape's defiling touch; And do you like the human race?, no. not much."

GANDLE FOLLOWS HIS NOSE by Heywood Broun. "If you don't care where you're going, just follow your nose." A curious book written in the 1920s...

CATCH 22 by Joseph Heller. Of course. I wonder what a catch-22 was called before Heller came along.

THE METAMORPHOSIS, THE TRIAL, PORTRAIT OF A HUNGER ARTIST by Franz Kafka. Anyone who writes stories about awakening to find yourself turned into a giant cockroach is my kind of misanthrope.

LETTERS FROM THE EARTH, A PEN WARMED UP IN HELL & MARK TWAIN IN ERUPTION by Mark Twain. Twain on “the whole damned human race.” Some of his finest caustic writing, most of which was suppressed during his lifetime and by his estate for years afterward.

CEREMONY by Leslie Marmon Silko. A powerfully written novel, interspersed with stories and poems from the oral traditions of the Southwest Indians. The story poem, “The Destroyers,” is a great indictment of the coming of the white man on the face of planet earth.

GO IN BEAUTY, THE BRONC PEOPLE & PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST WITH TWENTY-SIX HORSES by William Eastlake. Three lyrically written novels, evocative of the spirit of the Southwest, If you like Abbeyes early fiction (*Brave Cowboy & Fire on the Mountain*), these contain similar strength and spirit.

MOUNTAIN MAN by Vardis Fisher. Corrupted into the Robert Redford movie, *Jeremiah Johnson*, this novel remains a powerful statement on the spiritual values of wilderness and the late 19th century’s love/hate relationship with it.

POGO by Walt Kelly. Any of the 30 or so volumes of cartoons by one of the master cartoonists before his death in the late sixties. Pogo ran for president in 1952 on the I Go Pogo platform, Kelly coined the term “We have met the enemy and he is us,” and “Now that we’ve made the world safe for democracy, who’ll make democracy safe for us?”

ARCHY & MEHITABEL by Don Marquis. Wonderfully bizarre humor by the creator of Krazy Kat. Remember Ignatz Mouse, Officer Pup and Coconino County? Marquis’ surreal antiauthoritarian humor is not to be missed.

The Ted K Archive

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