



The Goth Bible: A Compendium for the Darkly Inclined

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What you don't know about goths could fill a book!

An artistic culture that revels in the Victorian romantic movement, *The goth Bible* brings to light the traditions and history of all that is goth. The goth culture has been one of the most controversial and maligned in media history. Presented as homicidal, suicidal and socio-pathic, in the national consciousness goths are coupled with everyone from Marilyn Mason to the murderers of Columbine. But this is not who the goths are. *The goth Bible* will help bridge the understanding between goths and non-goths.

From their historical origins as a Germanic tribe in the sixth century who fought along side the Romans against the Huns to their current incarnation as creatures of the night, *The goth Bible* presents the most complete and broad perspective of this society, culled from hundreds of interviews with bands, artist, designers, and goths from all walks of life.

The Goth Bible: A Compendium for the Darkly Inclined Details

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Author : Nancy Kilpatrick

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From Reader Review *The Goth Bible: A Compendium for the Darkly Inclined* for online ebook

Maryann says

If this is *The Goth Bible*, then what goth needs is a New Testament.

Sometimes a snappy title indicates an author's talent. Often, however, it obscures a mediocre effort by piquing interest with a promise that will never be delivered. What I had hoped for was an authoritative compendium of all that is goth. At the very least, a worthy reference guide.

I suspected I was going to be disappointed from the moment I read the gem that is the first paragraph of the foreword:

“When my agent, Lori Perkins, said a publisher was interested in me writing a book about the gothic culture I thought, Hey, that's cool! I'm a writer, with twenty-six published books under my black and leather chain belt. And I'm goth. As several of my friends said, ‘Who better?’”

Firstly, no, Nancy Kilpatrick, you did not think that. Nobody (at least I hope nobody) thinks in language that stilted and self-congratulatory. Secondly, if I were you I wouldn't pose the question, “Who better?” You might not like the answer.

Personally, if I were to choose “Who better?” I'd say any of the number of the people who should probably be credited as co-authors of the book. Kilpatrick uses quotes so long that they're no longer mere quotes. There are entire sections of this book written by random and sundry people from whom Kilpatrick was able to extract the content she needed.

The segment that stands out in particular, as it's arguably the most important part of any book about goth, is the piece on the history of goth music ? and by extension, the history of the goth scene. The second section of chapter five (*Music of the Macabre: In the Beginning...*) is entitled *And Then There was Goth Music*. Kilpatrick wrote almost none of it. The segment is written, in pages-long quotations, by Deacon Syth, Thomas Thyssen, Pee Wee Vignold, and Joshua Gunn, who occasionally contradict one another. In twelve pages, Kilpatrick writes only eight paragraphs, which are mostly about Syth, Thyssen, Vignold, and Gunn.

This section ends with one of Kilpatrick's eight paragraphs, “What does [Marilyn] Manson think of goth? He tells us in his autobiography, *The Long Hard Road out of Hell*.” The segment ends here. She never tells us what he thinks of goth, merely that it's somewhere in his autobiography. (Unless the title was meant to be the answer, in which case, “he tells us in the title of his autobiography,” would have been more helpful.)

This same chapter begins with a brief history of how music that could be described as gothic began. There are humongous holes and shifts in Kilpatrick's narrative, which for mysterious reasons culminates in an

indictment of Richard Wagner (who is described as having possibly been an anarchist, socialist, and proto-fascist ? three demonized philosophies of governance too disparate to coexist) and Adolf Hitler. That's followed by a very truncated history of WWII and the Holocaust. (What the flying *fuck* does this have to do with goth?) It segues into why German goths sometimes catch crap about being goth. As some kind of odd afterthought, Kilpatrick finishes the chapter's opening segment with, "Other classical composers speak to goths, especially Handel's ethereal tones."

Nowhere in her classical musings does she mention Saint-Saëns (composer of *Danse Macabre*, although he is mentioned in an unrelated segment of the book), Grieg (*In the Hall of the Mountain King*), Mussorgsky (*Night on Bald Mountain*), Beethoven (composer of a variety of dramatic and melancholic pieces dear to goths, such as *Moonlight Sonata*), Bach (notable due to his infamous pipe organ piece *Tocatta and Fugue in D*), Orff (*O, Fortuna* ? a selection so popular with goths and related subcultures that it's been sampled and covered), or any of the other composers widely enjoyed by goths for their gothic ambiance. Ignoring Carl Orff in a book about goth, in a chapter about gothic music, in a segment about pre-modern gothic music, in favor of a rant about the horrors of WWII is, in my opinion, unjustifiable.

The book rambles and jumps along like this endlessly and unrepentantly. Kilpatrick surveyed a panel of ninety-five goths, whom she's dubbed "The † Section," and relies on them for much of the book's content. A substantial amount of what she couldn't squeeze from the panel, she appears to have simply snatched from anyone who would grant her an interview or even just send her a coherent e-mail. She resorts to printing (mostly long-dead) web addresses for further information.

Not that I can really complain. The book is better when exploited amateurs are writing it. When she's writing for herself, Kilpatrick sometimes slips into simply listing things goths like with no further information, such as the list of authors she didn't feel like profiling but did feel the need to mention. (Still better than what she did with the composers.) Even more questionable is her list of artists, which appears to simply be a list of notable artists, rather than only those relevant to gothic art. (Monet, O'Keefe, Picasso, Warhol and... Yoko Ono?) She manages to give more real estate to gothica on the internet than to the rich tradition of gothic literature, and much of gothic art is given short shrift in favor of her own preferred schools. Architecture, and the ancient history that led to the gothic movement, is barely mentioned.

Insultingly, the book is also poorly edited. (All the more galling in light of the fact that Nancy Kilpatrick is an editor.) I'm tempted to imagine a publisher who was literally so afraid that goth was going to go out of style before the book got printed that they simply cranked it out as quickly as humanly possible. There are errors all over the place, from simple things like "then" instead of "than" to the admittedly rather amusing description of Vampire Beach Babes as being "gothability." (They are, of course, gothabilly.) And Kilpatrick is prone to an error I outgrew in elementary school; the overuse of exclamation marks to make her prose seem exciting.

Some of Kilpatrick's portions are relatively satisfactory. Her profiles of Poe, Baudelaire, Lovecraft, Burton, Gorey, and Brite are relatively comprehensive. (Although how she managed to give Anne Rice two paragraphs and Poppy Z. Brite two pages is beyond me.) And, to her credit, Kilpatrick touches on BDSM/fetish without dwelling on it. (The photo of a man chained up with whip welts on his back that precedes the chapter on domesticity makes promises that the chapter doesn't keep.) There's crossover with goth, but the two are often wrongly conflated.

There are a few gems in the book, unsurprisingly mostly from outside sources. Several editions of the comic *Writhe and Shine* by Robert Tritthardt are a rather delightful illustration of goth's cheeky nature. Personal photos of "The † Section," especially the painfully sexy Sire Cedric, are a fun peek at everyday goths. And occasional tidbits like how to make absinthe-flavored wine, and a graphic on how to dance goth, make skimming the volume worth the time.

The one section ? written entirely by Kilpatrick and seasoned with photos by her partner, Hugues Leblanc ? that transcends the mediocre effort that is the rest of the book is the second segment of chapter ten (*Visiting the Vaults*), which she calls *Wicked Holidays*. I can't help but suspect that this is the book that Kilpatrick really wanted to write, as it's the one piece that isn't thrown together using whatever ephemera she could get her hands on. It's highly researched and written with a passion and authority that could only have come from the world travels that Kilpatrick and Leblanc have undertaken.

It consists mostly of a listing of cemeteries worldwide, with a few other gothic hotspots ? such as macabre museums and Lithuania's Hill of Crosses ? also profiled for variety. The graveyards are described in detail, with their architecture, histories, lists and tales of notable "residents," and various other pertinent facts. In the ample margins ? used throughout the book for asides ? are useful notes, such as a list of the different types of cemeteries and how best to make a tombstone rubbing.

This could have and should have been expanded into a whole book. Kilpatrick's writing is far more focused here, and her tendency to go off on tangents morphs into the recalling of detailed, on-topic anecdotes. Did she know this was the non-fiction book she ought to be creating, and her publisher demanded a book about goth? Or did she want to do a book about her subculture, only to find herself too indifferent to create an entire volume of content of this quality?

I'll probably never know. What I do know is that Nancy Kilpatrick is only particularly good at writing what she cares about. That's the thing about writing a non-fiction book on a broad topic. A successful volume is written by someone who can muster, or at least feign, interest in all the points necessarily covered. The greatest sin of *The Goth Bible* is that it is largely dispassionate, literally outsourcing the writing to people who give a damn. Kilpatrick might have had real credibility if she'd chosen a narrow topic she was capable of covering.

Which brings me to my final criticism. This unbelievable abortion of non-fiction, found in chapter eleven (*Subscribing to the Dark Arts*), is called *Modern Gothic Writers on Their Art*. It begins, "Sèphera Girón, a goth, and a writer with several horror novels to her credit, talks with the top-four goth writers in the world about being goth, and about their work."

After introducing Storm Constantine and Caitlín Keirnan, but before introducing Freda Warrington, this clusterfuck appears: "Nancy Kilpatrick, born in the United States, now living in Canada, has published twenty-six books since the early 1990s, including novels, collections, and anthologies she has edited. Her popular contemporary *Power of the Blood* vampire world has a large goth following. Her most recent work of fiction is the horror novel *Eternal City*."

So we're clear here, Nancy Kilpatrick called herself one of the top four goth writers in the world (even while highlighting that much of her work has been as an anthology editor rather than a writer), wrote a glowing paragraph about herself... *in the third person*... and had herself interviewed by another author for her own book.

Kilpatrick's final statement of this roundhouse kick to the face, I mean roundhouse interview, begins, "I'm so grateful that goth exists ? otherwise I would have had to invent it!"

Thank Cthulhu we didn't have to rely on the great Nancy Kilpatrick. I'm betting goth would have gone un-invented. She concludes the interview, "May the power of darkness continue to permeate our souls!"

Oh, for Christ's sake.

Ella Howd says

A great resource on the Gothic subculture. . .

Inno says

I thought this was going to be a history of goth and punk as a rising subculture of fashion and music. Instead it's shameless plugs at websites and horrible attempts to give stereotypes and cliches some manner of classes and genres, often derailing in the margins with quips from local goths the author got in touch with. In a word: cringe-worthy.

Michael says

This book is a good introduction to the goth scene. It offers the basic information about goth music, fashion, and culture. It is by no means the most in depth source, but it can be a good reference to curious baby bats who want to get a good start on their own journey into the subculture.

Cheryl Valentine says

I was disappointed to discover that a large number of the referenced independent shops and/or magazines no longer exist.

Rachel Pollock says

A sort of "insider guide" of sorts, full of relevant information but poorly copy-edited. And general editing could have been better as well, as many of the chapters read like they had been compiled from C&Ps from websites, which judging by the list of relevant websites at the end of each chapter, may have been the case. The book also suffers from the obsolescence of a lot of print media of its time (early 2000s) that relied on web links as if they were going to be eternally relevant. Many of the sites mentioned are defunct, out of date, or totally gone.

Denise Monegato says

Good browsing Goth read. I like the way the book is organized; it's 'consumer goth' culture, but the author provides historical background on gothic influences across different mediums. Kilpatrick uses language well. so far, so good, only halfway through.

Caroline Åsgård says

I read a sample, and this book is basically based on questions answered by goths all around the world. Not particularly interesting for me, but if you are, go right ahead!

CM says

"Indugiate nel segreto piacere di sguazzare nelle artistiche ed erotiche tenebre. Sinceramente, non credo possa farvi del male."

"Essere goth per me equivale ad assumere un modo di pensare che estetizza la morte e il dolore. Rendendoli in questo modo, forse, accettabili."

† **Azazello**

"Molti goth lo sono a causa di una raffinata sensibilità nei confronti della vita, e di una particolare abilità nel riconoscere e tollerare gli elementi oscuri che molti membri della società sono impegnati a ignorare, come la morte."

"Una volta Neil Gaiman - che di solito appare in pubblico con una giacca in pelle nera - in occasione di una presentazione mi disse: «Non è una giacca, è uno stile di vita!». Ecco, ben detto!"

† **Lisiblac**

"Quando tutti si vestono di nero, entrano in azione altri sensi oltre alla vista, e questo incita la sperimentazione; forse, spinge perfino ad affidarsi a quel sesto senso, o seconda vista, che molti goth sembrano possedere."

"Tutti mi chiedono cosa significa quel nero che indosso. E' la sofferenza che mi corrode, la mancanza di onestà, il disprezzo nei confronti della creatività, l'ignoranza, le bugie e le false promesse, ecco cosa

simboleggia il nero. Avidità e miopia, la religione che distrugge le persone, la morale che uccide, l'ipocrisia di tutti, ecco cosa simboleggia il nero. La sensazione che non cambierà mai niente, la stupidità che si riproduce... Nero è il mio punto di vista. La coscienza è nera. La rassegnazione è nera. L'isolamento è nero."

† **DJ Caluna**

"Vestire di nero ha un significato spirituale. Il nero assorbe la luce. Metaforicamente significa che sto 'assorbendo' ciò che mi circonda, accogliendolo dentro di me."

† **Calhoun**

"Lo psicanalista Carl Jung considerò la croce simbolo del pensiero creativo. [...] Il processo creativo conduce ad un crocicchio, un luogo in cui l'artista può scegliere in quale direzione andare e quale decisione prendere. Sia nel processo artistico, sia nel processo di vita creativo, quella decisione richiede contemplazione e ricerca spirituale. Esistono sempre due scelte ovvie. Ma lasciare scorrere il 'processo', come fanno molti goth, spesso equivale a non scegliere ma aspettare e lasciare che la tensione dell'indecisione prenda corpo. Il processo consiste nell'attendere pazientemente fino a che una terza, imprevista alternativa emerga spontaneamente."

"Sono interessato, ma non in modo patologico. Trovo la storia, e le storie, dei vecchi cimiteri particolarmente intriganti. Hanno pietre tombali molto belle. Ci vado più che altro per gli aspetti artistici."

† **Creepy**

Nicole Woolaston says

I really enjoyed reading this. I especially liked all of the links for online resources. There's a lot of info here. If you're already familiar with the Goth lifestyle, then reading this is like reminiscing. If you don't know anything about Goths, this book will answer your every question. I also learned a few things I didn't know, such as the meanings of certain colors. I've always been a little Gothic, so this book was definitely for me.

Sam says

I'll be honest, I was kind of disappointed by this book. While Kilpatrick does give a thorough although not entirely in depth look into the goth culture, its origins and influences, I found a lot of it aimed at disproving assumptions made by the mainstream or by showing those who think they're goth why they're not goth. It was this latter trend that I found rather excluding, which is not what the goth movement is all about. It doesn't matter how much of the lifestyle you do or don't follow, if you're a little bit goth then you should be allowed to consider yourself as such, which is not the view Kilpatrick takes. As far as this book seems to be concerned, it is either all or nothing, which as with any style, lifestyle or cultural choice is a load of tosh (IMHO), as long as you as an individual are happy with your choices, that is the important thing. I did find the background and development of the goth scene very interesting but as Kilpatrick delved into the consumer goth culture, the book seemed to turn into an advert for all those who have established themselves in the industry rather than about the unique variations that can be created within the scene and how you can achieve these, either through purchasing the designer trends of the goth world or with a little creativity at home. Overall an interesting read but very biased and off putting to those 'on the outside' (whether they consider themselves to be or not).

Viv says

An excellent book to take to bingo to reinforce the idea that you're a bit weird

Claudia says

anyone who has it i will but it!

Lára Arnarsdóttir says

This year I'm mostly doing the thing that, until 2014, I thought is not going to happen: rereading books, so I was looking at one of my home bookshelves and *Goth Bible* caught my eye. It's been years since I bought and read that one!

Once I settled in my bed, listening to Peter Murphy's new album, I started reading it and it's been so entertaining - for the 2nd time! I've haven't had that much fun in a whole year, at least not yet.

It's not a manual, but a book purely for entertainment. Lots of great photographs, nice words put together and lots of humour!

Sara says

I enjoyed reading this book. Nancy Kilpatrick wrote an entertaining and informative book about the goth subculture and about interesting, creepy, esoteric, haunting things in general. I learned quite a bit.

To start, I had no idea my husband's new Doc Martins made him so cool!

I learned quite a bit about music - punk, post punk, new wave, old stuff, new stuff. Looked up some of the bands online and listened to some of the music.

I learned about absinthe - history, current usage. The author has a chapter on famous cemeteries around the world. Art and literature were discussed - old authors, new authors. There are some authors in here I'd like to check out.

There's a section about the history of vampires in folklore, literature, and movies. The same with werewolves and other supernatural creatures. Also a section about goths and religion. Quite a few interviews with goths, many of them elder goths.

This book was full of fun and interesting things and was an enjoyable read.

This book is almost 10 years old, though. There are many, many links to websites in here and I haven't

looked up too many (yet) but they may be outdated. I am not sure about that. Would be nice to have an updated one from 2015. If there is one, my library didn't have it.

It was definitely a good book to finish up on Valentine's Day.
