

Reading 2023

A collection by title and date of my reading for the year. A few details in each entry, but more than anything, this is a simple chronological record. You will find previous years' lists and my "Watching" list for Films and TV in my [DayBook directory](#).



Over the last several years I've become not only an avid reader, but also a dedicated **rereader**. Rereading is a way of revisiting what has pleased me in the past and a recognition that as we grow — and grow older — our sensibilities can change.

For instance, in my late teens I adored *The Catcher in the Rye* and, just a few years later, *The World According to Garp*. But soon enough those books fell out of my favor, and now I recognize them as short time enjoyments. On the other hand, I presume if I were to revisit a book (or music, or film) that I wasn't so fond of, I might have changed my mind to see them now more positively. In 2023 such was the case with my reading of Russell Banks, Henry James, and John Steinbeck.

"It feels really good to stop hating something. And music is a good place to start. Because while records don't change over time, we can and do. Better late than never." — Jeff Tweedy, ["I Thought I Hated Pop Music. 'Dancing Queen' Changed My Mind."](#)

You'll notice several similar entries on my list, what I call "reading connections." In an [appendix](#) I've tied these together by topic and/or author.

Here's my reading list for 2023:

1. A Stillness At Appomattox, Bruce Catton (1953). Vol 3 of [Army of the Potomac](#) series in LoFA. Started 010123. Completed 010823. From LoA: "In *A Stillness at Appomattox* (1953), which won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, the Army of the Potomac, now under the grimly determined direction of Ulysses S. Grant, engages in a relentless campaign against the Army of Northern Virginia that devastates its own ranks but ultimately forces Robert E. Lee to surrender, giving its survivors their long-sought final victory."
2. Bring on the Empty Horses, David Niven (1975). So many times recommended by WFB Jr in his Overdrive and other books. Finally found a hardcover copy on [Thriftbooks](#). Started 010823. Completed 011423. [WFB 1975 review in NYT](#).
3. Dead Lions, [Mick Herron](#) (2013). #2 in Slow Horses series. Kindle. Started 011523. Completed 012023.
4. The List, Mick Herron (2015). Novella in Slow Horses series. Kindle. Read 012123. | Lamb craned his head forward, caught the rim of his glass in his teeth, and easing his head back again, allowed the contents of the glass to pour into his mouth. He swallowed, then set the glass back on his chest. "When Daniel Craig can do that," he said, "tell him to give me a ring." (Loc 555)
5. The Bad Angel Brothers, [Paul Theroux](#). Hardcover. Started 012423. Completed 012823. Moving and difficult. As Motherland treated

Theroux's mother, I wonder if this is a treatment of his brother. Frank is horrible as he is portrayed.

6. *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, Joan Didion. Part of v1 of LofA series. Started 020323. Completed 020923.
7. *The Names* (1982), Don DeLillo. LofA volume: Three Novels of the 1980s. Started 021023. Abandoned on 021723. I couldn't keep the characters straight and grew weary of all the conversation. [Author's Wikipedia page](#).
8. *Seabiscuit*, Laura Hillenbrand. Hardcover (2001). Started rereading 021723. Completed 022123.
9. *The All-True Travels and Adventures of Lidie Newton* (1998), Jane Smiley. Hardcover. Started 022423. More horses! See 244. More horses! Jeremiah. Completed 031023. Lydia Harkness Newton. "Having lived all his life among New Englanders, [Thomas Newton] thought that the talking could go on forever and arrive finally at reason. Having lived all my life along the river, I knew the more likely outcome." (127) "Northerners, even abolitionists, knew more about how and why to chop down the slavery tree than they ever knew about what to do with its sour fruit." (132) "Frank and I didn't pray. It didn't occur to us. We had swum in the ocean of religion all our lives and not gotten wet." (148) "Taking care of these Missourians was my business, and I welcomed it." (277) "We [Lorna and Lidie] looked hard at each other, and I saw that I had done it again, that is, taken a stranger for a companion and set out on a journey whose destination I had no notion of." (411) [Thomas Mallon's not glowing review in NYT](#). I found the book pure C19 fiction, at times Thackeray, at times Trollope, at times Stowe. Lacks the edge she may have intended.
10. *Coasting: A Private Voyage*, [Jonathan Raban](#). Paperback (1987). Started 031123. Completed pi day, 031423. "It was an explorer's, not an exile's library, with books on British history, British geology, British birds, British flora, books on the making of the English countryside and the sociology of modern Britain. I wanted to find out what, on earth or sea, made my peculiar country tick ..." (50) "The sea is a much friendlier place than the land: when you see someone else afloat on it — at least in difficult weather and away from yachting slums like the Solvent — you salute them to acknowledge a solitude momentarily brightened for being shared. You take an inordinate pleasure in what little passing company you can find." (97) The days of Thatcher, the Falklands, and a rendezvous with Theroux as he, too, writes a book about traveling around Britain (*The Kingdom by the Sea*). "At noon, I spotted my visitor a hundred yards away across the catwalks. Focusing on him with the binoculars, I saw he was wearing an elegant miniature pair of binoculars himself. In his Papa Doc tinted spectacles and an LL Bean duck hunter's camouflage shirt, with a little brown backpack hoisted on his shoulders, Paul Theroux was on his travels." (199) "It was only when I was rowing back to Gosfield Maid, with sea trout leaping by moonlight, that I cheered up. There were some crazy characters to be encountered on my voyage too. If you were looking for a memorable player in the Masque of Britain, could you do better than to find a Minneapolitan of Swedish extraction, wearing Dress Gordon and pretending to be a houseguest at a shooting party in a Scottish baronial lodge which was actually a hotel run by Mormons from Upper New York State?" (246) [NYT obit](#) (2023).
11. *Continental Drift*, [Russell Banks](#). Paperback (1985). Started 031523 after seeing a brief piece, "[Read your way through Miami](#)," in NYT. "Few novelists have attempted to capture Miami's various cultures — and cultural collisions — with the seriousness and empathy that Banks employs in his sweeping epic. The novel follows a New Englander who moves to Florida and gets involved in human trafficking. Meanwhile, in a parallel narrative, a Haitian woman seeks to start a better life in the United States.... The beauty of the novel — and perhaps the beauty of Miami — is how it destabilizes our ideas about who is foreign and who belongs." Completed 032423. Bob Dubois and Elaine. Brother Eddie and

friend Avery Boone. "... just keep on moving, keep breeding and pissing and shitting, keep on eating the planet we live on, keep on moving, alone and in families and tribes, in nations and even in whole species: it's the only argument we have against entropy. And it's not truly an argument; it's a vision. It's a denial in the form of an assertion, a rebuttal in the form of an anecdote, which means that it's not a recounting, it's an accounting; not a representation, a presentation." (39) Others: Vanise and Claude; Marguerite; Tyrone; Ted Williams. "Why do they do that? He wonders. Why do they throw away everything they know and trust, no matter how bad it is, for something they know nothing about and can never trust? He's in awe of the will it takes, the stubborn, conscious determination to get to America that each of them, from the eldest to the youngest, must own. But he can't put that willfulness together with what he sees before him — a quiescent, silent, shy people who seem fatalistic almost, who seem ready and even willing to accept whatever is given them." (305) "To say that Bob Dubois is intelligent is to say that he is able to organize his experience into a coherent narrative; to say that he's worldly is to say that he is in the world, that he does not devour it with his fantasies. Not anymore.... Bob has no particular interest in, or need for, broadening or deepening his experience per se. He's not an especially *curious* man.... He does not need, therefore, to poke into the mystery these Haitians present to him. What are they to him or he to them, except quick means to ends? They need him to carry them to where starvation and degradation are unlikely; he needs them to help him stay there." (307) ... **the ongoing history of the New World.** (351) "If he simply loses the money, however, if he gives it over at knifepoint to four young muggers on a dark back street of Miami, Florida, there will be no hope for any kind of redemption. No hope. He's got to have hope. How is what must replace fantasy in his life. Without it he'll end up like Eddie, dead in his Eldorado, or like his father, drunk and dreaming to 'Destiny's Darling,' or like Ave Boone, a cynical, small and cheap, and in jail. A dead man, a foolish man, a shallow man — these will be his alternatives. Bob wants to be a good man. And then he can begin to hope for redemption." (361) "*The larger world goes on as before, quite as if Bob Dubois never existed. In the vast generality, a statistic is merely a statistic, regardless of the column it's in, and once an ordinary man is dead, all possibilities of his ever becoming a hero, are gone.*" (364) From Russell Banks [obit in NYT](#): "Bob Dubois, a disillusioned New Englander looking for a break in Florida, and Vanise Dorsinville, a young Haitian woman trying to make her way to that state by any means necessary, drove the narrative as Mr. Banks traced his personal reckoning with race and class through the separate trajectories of these two disparate characters."

12. *Bad Land: An American Romance*, Jonathan Raban. Paperback (1996). Started 032423. Reading the first few pages, I thought of 1883, the Taylor Sheridan prequel, ([trailer](#)) and the show's immigrant wagon train, heading west toward Oregon. *Emigrant* (a person who leaves his/her own country in order to settle permanently in another) vs *immigrant* (a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country). [Evelyn Cameron photography](#), from the "Pictures" chapter. Claude Barr: *Jewels of the Plains* (1983). See p. 150. *Bad Land*, like *Sailing*, falls into the loose construction series I enjoy so much in WFB Jr's *Cruising Speed* and *Overdrive*, also Theroux's train and travel books. The device is constantly expanded upon and rabbit-holed. In fact, Raban dedicated this book to "Paul and Sheila Theroux." Completed 032723. "Villagers did not pack up and travel in steerage on emigrant ships in order to become villagers in America. They wanted land of their own. So landowners were often lonely. But there was an enviable dignity in their proprietorial solitude." (142) "In 1911 in the new West, it was bracing to live without the benefit of clergy. For everyday inspiration and enlightenment, for a code of practical morality, for as much in the way of uplift as a body can reasonably stand, one could look to the schoolhouse on the hill. The building and its books stood for a creed that everyone believed in: progress; self-improvement; a faith in the great metaphysical abstraction of America." (162) "The government and the banking system now had a solid purchase on the homesteaders, a lever to pull to bring

- them into line.” (205) From the NYT obit: “Raban explored how homesteaders were lured to settle desolate, desert-like counties in eastern Montana in 1907 and 1908, brought there by the railroad, but who, after a few thriving years, left in an exodus when the weather turned dry again. They left the prairie littered with the wreckage of their dreams.”
13. The Mark Twain Anthology: Great Writers on His Life and Work. Ed. by Shelley Fisher Fishkin. Library of America edition. Reading in preparation for discussion about *The Lincoln Highway*. Essays included those by Toni Morrison, Erica Jong, Roy Blount, Jr.
 14. The Epic, Harold Bloom. Picked up again on 034123 as I consider Huck Finn and *The Lincoln Highway*. Hardcover. Part of Bloom's 20th Anniversary Collection. “In my own judgment, Walt Whitman is the central writer yet brought forth by the Americas — North, Central, South, Caribbean — whether in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Yiddish or other tongues. And Walt Whitman is a healer, a poet-prophet who discovered his pragmatic vocation by serving as a volunteer, unpaid wound-dresser and nurse in the Civil War hospitals of Washington, D.C.” (x) Wouldn't it have been wonderful if Whitman had made a cameo in the hospital scene in Spielberg's “Lincoln”? “What defines epic, ancient and modern, for me is heroism, which transcends irony.... Call it the persistence of vision, in which everything is intensified by a spiritual aura.” (xiv)
 15. South To America: A Journey Below the Mason-Dixon to Understand the Soul of a Nation, Imani Perry. Hardcover (2022). Started 040123. Dropping it on 040223. It's just too angry without adding anything to my sensibility. | In the South you are more likely to hear “me ‘n’”: Me ‘n’ yo’ mama got to talking, and before you know it, we had talked all night. Me ‘n’ Buck went down to Wingstop. “‘N’em” is a companion orientation: Clara ‘n’em lost they home in the storm. I’m going over by Johnny ‘n’em’s party. The “me’n” and “n’em” give you the flexibility of grouping. They specify, but you know that the intimate relations with parent, child, spouse, cousin elder, are many. This is the language of people who are used to thinking of family as a sprawl. (47) On not finishing, this from [Charles Frazier](#): “If I’m really not enjoying a book, I bog down after 50 pages or so and stop. In those cases, I try to remind myself that not every book was written specifically for my tastes and that it’s best not to confuse my own preferences with gospel truth. I also find it useful to recognize that the writer may have spent years writing the book and knows it better — or at least deeper — than I do, so maybe the fault or flaw resides partially or completely in me.”
 16. The Lincoln Highway, Amor Towles (2021). Reread complete 041423. See notes in Amor Towles [notebook](#).
 17. Rule of the Bone, Russell Banks (1995). Hardcover. Started 041623. See “day-by-day” notes for 041623 in Sketchbook 2023. Completed 042223. A coming of age story that frustrated me often while I was reading, but later, when I reviewed my notes and highlights, I began to see the story more for what it is. “Bone” is a self-described kid just trying to make it. Learns there are three people he can love and trust: Sister Rose, I-Man, and Bruce (who tried to save him and Russ from the fire). “But still, that morning in Mobay when I saw Russ for the last time I saw clearly for the first time that loving Sister Rose and I-Man and even Bruce had left me with riches that I could draw on for the rest of my life, and I was totally grateful to them.” (384) “Dealing skunk to the bikers and so on I knew was illegal but that didn’t make it a crime so it wasn’t on account of committing any actual crimes that I became a criminal ...” (16) “I was still a kid and all and small for my age but I looked more like a true intentional outlaw now and not so much a homeless kid pretending not to give a shit that no one wanted him. I took out my nose ring for the first time in a year ...” (130) “She said in a low voice, almost a whisper, Then go, Chappie. Go away. / I’ll always remember that moment.” (208) Loses his virginity with Evening Star, whom he’s seen earlier with I-Man. Natural father, Doc, also a fraud, probably assigns I-Man to be killed for this. “I had some unfinished business with my father, with Doc, with Pa.... I didn’t know what the unfinished business was exactly but I was

- pretty sure it had to do with my betraying I-Man to him the night that I-Man hooked up with Evening Star, then night of my birthday party. That was like a sin which is different from a crime ..." (356) "Stealing is only a crime but betraying a friend is a sin. It's like crime is an act that when you've committed one the act is over and you haven't changed inside. But when you commit a sin, it's like you create a condition that you have to live in. People don't live in crime, they live in sin." (366) He has sex with Evening Star at least partly to get back at his father, to steal something from him, to realign himself with I-Man ... in memoriam. He "ships out" on the *Belinda Blue*. (See *Continental Drift*.)
18. Cloudsplitter, Russell Banks (1998). Hardcover. Started 042323. Completed 051533. [NYT review](#): "As a novel, however, "Cloudsplitter" makes for some highly entertaining — and at times, deeply affecting — reading. For all its flaws, it emerges as Banks' most ambitious and fully realized novel since "[Continental Drift](#)" (1985), his dazzling dissection of contemporary America and the American dream." "Banks' Owen sees himself as playing Isaac to his father's Abraham, Job to his father's God, Iago to his father's Othello." ... "while Owen's account is long-winded and self-indulgent, it does accomplish Banks' end: it immerses us persuasively in his father's world, and it makes us understand, in a very visceral way, the familial repercussions of living with a visionary and martyr. / Like the best novels of Nadine Gordimer, it makes us appreciate the dynamic between the personal and the political, the public and the private, and the costs and causes of radical belief."
 19. Norwood, [Charles Portis](#) (1966). LoFA volume. Started 051623. Completed 052023. Norwood Pratt and Rita Lee. Vernell is Norwood's sister, who has taken up with Bill Bird. Norwood goes on a journey to NYC to collect \$70 owed him by Joe William. Edmund is the midget. Norwood is always asking about what job people do and how much they earn from it. Fring the Kredit King: "Don't let your mouth write a check your ass can't cash, son." (106)
 20. True Grit, [Charles Portis](#) (1968). Rereading as I slide through Library of America volume. Started 052223. Completed 052623.
 21. The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder, David Grann (2023). Hardcover. Started 052923. Completed 060423. Nice to read history again, a rendering of what happened told in storyteller fashion.
 22. Trust, Hernan Diaz (2022). Hardcover. Started 060323. "It all came tumbling down in 1926. Back then, I believed it was the end of our marriage. In time, I understood that was when it really started. For I've come to think one is truly married only when one is more committed to one's vows than the person they refer to." (382) clouvel. "God is the most uninteresting answer to the most interesting questions." (396) Completed 060923. [Michael Gorra review in NYT](#): "[Trust] recognizes the human costs of a great fortune, even though its characters can see nothing beyond their own calculations; they are most guilty when most innocent, most enthralled by the abstraction of money itself. Diaz gives an extreme form of that fascination to his most attractive character, who says, 'Short selling is folding back time. The past making itself present in the future,' like a modernist writer dealing with the flux and flow of consciousness. The speaker of those words cannot even imagine that such a fortune might hide a crime. That doesn't mean there isn't one." [Covered in Blue Ridge Saloon](#).
 23. The Spy Who Came in from the Cold, [John Le Carre](#) (1963). Hardcover. Started 061123. Completed 061223.
 24. Crossing to Safety, Wallace Stegner. Paperback. Rereading start 061323. Completed 062023. Previous readings in June 2020, then September of 2022. Sid and Charity Lang; Sally and Larry Morgan. "I didn't know myself well, and still don't. But I did know, and know now, the few people I loved and trusted. My feeling for them is one part of me I have never quarreled with, even though my relations with them have more than once been abrasive." (12) Chapter 6 (61-95) is his recreating, using what he's been told and a heavy dose of imagination, the fateful meeting Sid had with Charity's family. Marvelous. Italy trip: 240 and ff. **"There it was, there it is, the place where during the best time of our lives friendship had its home and happiness its headquarters."** (6)

- Though I have been busy, perhaps overbusy, all my life, it seems to me now that I have accomplished little that matters, that the books have never come up to what was in my head, and that the rewards — the comfortable income, the public notice, the literary prizes, and the honorary degrees — have been tinsel, not what a grown man should be content with.” (11) “And so, by circuitous and unpredictable routes, we converge toward mid-continent and meet in Madison, and are at once drawn together, braided and plaited into a friendship. It is a relationship that has no formal shape, there are no rules or obligations or bonds as in marriage or the family, it is held together by neither law nor property nor blood, there is no glue in it but mutual liking. It is therefore rare.” (96) | “As for repaying,” she said to me in rebuke, “friends don’t have to repay anything. **Friendship is the most selfish thing there is.**” (140) “Though I had worked among people who traveled constantly, dispersing America throughout the postwar world, we had not been able to travel ourselves.” (254) “If we could have foreseen the future during those good days in Madison where all this began, we might not have had the nerve to venture into it. I find myself wondering whatever happened to the people, friends and otherwise, with whom we started out. Whatever happened to poor Mr. Hagler, who had only his salary? Whatever happened to Marvin and Wanda Ehrlich, and the Abbots, and the Stones? How much would they understand, from their own experience, of what has happened to *us*? / I hope they have done more than survive. I hope they have found ways to impose some sort of order on their chaos. I hope they have found enough pleasure along the way so that they don’t want it ended, as Sid may right now be trying to persuade himself he does.” (326)
25. Rough Sleepers: Dr. Jim O’Connell’s Urgent Mission to Bring Healing to Homeless People, [Tracy Kidder](#) (2023). Hardcover. Started 062123; completed 062523.
 26. Avid Reader, Robert Gottlieb (2016). Paperback. Started 062723. Completed 063023. Reminds me so much of WFB’s *Cruising Speed and Overdrive*. As a memoir it’s fun, dishes from time to time, name-drops, virtually perfect.
 27. Heartburn, Nora Ephron (1983). Hardcover. Started 070123. Completed 070223. Thoroughly enjoyable, including the several recipes I gathered for preparing at home. On 071523, we made *Linguine alla cecca*: “It’s a hot pasta with a cold tomato and basil sauce, and it’s so light and delicate that it’s almost like eating a salad. It has to be made in the summer, when tomatoes are fresh.” (100) Excellent! [Falling in Love with Nora Ephron](#), NYT other films.
 28. In Cold Blood, Truman Capote (1965). Paperback. I’m more than a little surprised that I had not previously read this book. Now I have. Completed 071323.
 29. Trust, Hernan Diaz (2022). Rereading to prep for Blue Ridge Saloon session on Aug 15. Started 071623. Completed 072023. (Completed previously just over a month ago.)
 30. American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer, Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin (2005). Paperback. “Einstein was right. Oppenheimer was foolishly subjecting himself to a kangaroo court in which he was soon stripped of his security clearance and publicly humiliated. The charges were flimsy, but by a vote of 2 to 1 the security panel of the Atomic Energy Commission deemed Oppenheimer a loyal citizen who was nevertheless a security risk...” (from [Op-ed by Kai Bird in NYT](#)). “After America’s most celebrated scientist was falsely accused and publicly humiliated, the Oppenheimer case sent a warning to all scientists not to stand up in the political arena as public intellectuals. This was the real tragedy of Oppenheimer. What happened to him also damaged our ability as a society to debate honestly about scientific theory — the very foundation of our modern world.” [Film review](#). Started 072023. Completed 080123. In 1927 Einstein didn’t agree that quantum physics experiments depended on chance: “An inner voice tells me that this is not the true Jacob. The theory accomplishes a lot, but it does not bring us closer to the secrets of the Old One. In any case [Einstein said], I am convinced that He does not

- play dice." (64) [I recognized this as a lyric from something: found in ["God's Mistake,"](#) by Tears for Fears.] "In the rarefied world of physics, Robi would come to be regarded as the deep thinking and Oppenheimer as the great synthesizer. Together they were formidable." (77) In "the Chevalier affair," "what was said, and how Oppie chose to deal with it, so shaped the reminder of his life that one is drawn to comparisons with the tragedies of classical Greece and Shakespeare ... over time it took on some of the qualities of *Rashomon*, the 1951 film by Akira Kurosawa in which descriptions of an event vary according to the perspective of each participant." (195) [See also 525: "... extraordinary cast of actors addressed Shakespearean themes. How should a man be judged, by his associations or by his actions?..."] Oppenheimer said in his first interview with Truman: "I feel I have blood on my hands." [Lewis Strauss](#) is his [Claggart](#). ("The initiation of Strauss' campaign to destroy Oppenheimer's reputation can thus be precisely dated; it began on the afternoon of May 25, 1953, with his appointment by [President] Eisenhower.) (467) Another nemesis was [Edward Teller](#). Read ["The Beast in the Jungle"](#) by [Henry James](#). Oppenheimer felt the Cold War needed candor among nations. "Officials in Washington, D.C., had to start leveling with the American people, and tell them what the enemy already knew about the atomic armaments race.... 'We may be likened to two scorpions in a bottle, each capable of filling the other, but only at the risk of his own life.'" (465) "Perhaps recalling his own experience in Nazi Germany, Einstein argued that Oppenheimer 'had no obligation to subject himself to a witch-hunt, that he had served his country well, and that if this was the reward [America] offered he should turn his back on her.'" (495) "The broadcaster Eric Severeid noted, '[Oppenheimer] will no longer have access to secrets in government files, and government, presumably, will no longer have access to secrets that may be born in Oppenheimer's brain.'" (547) "Edmund Wilson attended one of his lectures and afterwards described his impressions in a diary." (561)
31. *Modoc: The True Story of the Greatest Elephant That Ever Lived*, Ralph Helfer (1997). Paperback. Highly recommended by Betty. Started 080223. Completed 080423.
 32. *The Making of Another Major Motion Picture Masterpiece*, Tom Hanks (2023). Hardcover. Started 080623. Completed 081023. A number of stories wrapped within stories and culminating in the film "Knightshade: The Lathe of Firefall." Lone Butte, CA. [NYT review](#). "Robby Andersen (pen-name TREV-VORR), ... had been inspired by an uncle, Bob Falls, a Marine in World War II." The comic book about a WW2 flame-thrower is captured in a film by director Bill Johnson. My favorite characters are the get-it-done pair, Al MacTeer and Ynez Gonzalez. When Ike Clipper is asked to take on the [#2](#) role, Firefall, two days into shooting, "He is both giddy and terrified, sure of his self-worth and positive of his fraudulence. The only certainty in his life was that his most recent Five-Year Plan had gone out the window. The only two words that came into his head and made it to his lips were 'Watch this'." (298) "Everybody works the hardest," Ynez [y-not] says ... At some point, and there's no telling when that moment is, someone is responsible for the whole movie, right then and there...." (373) ["Forever Night Shade Mary," Latin Playboys](#).
 33. *Crook Manifesto*, Colson Whitehead (2023). Hardcover. Started 081123. Completed 081423. **1971**: Ray Carney looking for J5 tickets for his daughter. Munson and Buck Webb are the (very) bad detectives in the Knapp/Serpico era. Also, the Black Panthers and the Black Liberation Party. **1973**: Pepper serves as security for Zippo's Blaxploitation film. Nefertiti (Lucinda Cole) is safe. "City like this, it behooves you to embrace the fucking contradictions." "Pepper's opinion ... the Fried Chicken Principle: Why make it when you can buy it?" (143) Carney on socks: "Why didn't you take off your damn shoes?" (166) "A man has an hierarchy of crime, of what is morally acceptable and what is not, a crook manifesto, and those who subscribe to lesser codes are cockroaches." (Pepper, 179) **1976**: Harlem burns. Carney and Pepper want revenge for a young man burned in an arson fire, but what they find is a politician named Oakes. "How many kids and mothers had he

- burned up, burned out? Carney knew the kind of man who did such things. They were never called to account. / Perhaps it was time." (225)
 "One thing Pepper had learned from working with the family over the years, you'd have an easier time grabbing a bone from a junkyard dog than getting a Carney man to let go of a grudge." (277) I read **Harlem Shuffle** in October 2021. There's a third in the series planned. [David Remnick interview with author](#).
34. Tom Lake, Ann Patchett (2023). Hardcover. Started 081623. Blue Ridge Saloon choice for #2. ([See Google Doc](#)) Completed 081823.
 35. The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store, James McBride (2023). Hardcover. Started 082023. [James McBride does not read critics' reviews](#). (NYT). Completed (in tears) on 082523. "The book is a murder mystery locked inside a Great American Novel" [from Danez Smith's [NYT review](#)]. "He has reached back into our shared past when, by migration and violence, segregation and collision, America was still becoming America. And through this evocation, McBride offers us a thorough reminder: Against seemingly impossible odds, even in the midst of humanity's most wicked designs, love, community and action can save us." "Blue coat, red coat, who cares?" Doc said. "It's just a damn parade. What difference does it make?" It turned out to make a big difference. All the difference in the world. (361) More notes in McBride Notebook.
 36. Up Country, Nelson DeMille (2002). Hardcover. Started 082623. Completed 090123. 1968, 1972, and 1999. Paul Brenner, Susan Weber. Cynthia Sunhill. Former CID Brenner (see "The General's Daughter") searches for eyewitness to murder that is said to have taken place during Vietnam War. Captain Edward Blake. Vice President Blake. Col Karl Hellman. Col Mang. Doug Conway | Karl said to me, "The issue here, Paul, is not guilt or innocence, or even justice or morality. The issue here is the past. I told you, the shadows stretch from here to home. We, as soldiers, were collectively reviled and spit on at that time, and we don't owe anyone any explanation for our actions, or any new revelations about the war. If we have any guilt, it is a shared guilt, if we have any honor, it's amongst ourselves only. We are bound together for all time by blood and common nightmares. I tell you this, my friend, this has little or nothing to do with Edward Blake; to a greater or lesser degree, we are all Edward Blake." (695) "The journey home is never a direct route; it is, in fact, always circuitous, and somewhere along the way, we discovered that the journey is more significant than the destination, and that the people we meet along the way will be the traveling companions of our memories forever." (702) *Finis*. See Apple Notebook: "Project | Modern Wars: American-Style." [NYT Obituary](#) from 092124.
 37. Because of Winn-Dixie, Kate DiCamillo (2000). Paperback. Read 090123. W-D is a stray dog a little girl comes upon in the grocery store. Also, it's a movie too, featuring Jeff Daniels, Cicely Tyson, Eva Marie Saint, Dave Matthews. (Watched.)
 38. A Short History of a Small Place, T.R. Pearson (1985). Paperback. Started rereading 090323. Hilarious version of the Christmas Story beginning on 72. Abandoned on 090523.
 39. The Summer Friend: A Memoir, Charles McGrath (2022). Hardcover. Started 090823. Completed 090923. [NYT review](#). "The friend in question is a man named Chip Gillespie, who lives year-round in the town where Chip McGrath's family spends its summers. After a chance meeting at a local square dance, the two Chips start hanging out whenever they can — racing sailboats, setting off fireworks, taking garbage to the dump, playing all-day golf marathons — and thoroughly enjoying each other's company." "This book is what I should have given him.' McGrath's book is an act of love, a fitting tribute to his old friend and a poignant reminder to all of us to squeeze every last drop out of the summers that remain." "I fantasize about grabbing [my father's] arm, Ancient Mariner fashion, and bringing him up to date. With so much in common these days, we would get along, I like to imagine, the way we did when I was a child." (100) "And then, when I was sixteen, I gave the game [golf] up, turned my back on it. We had sold the Camp and no longer belonged to the club, but my defection was really political, or so I told

- myself: golf was too Republican.” (139) He mentions Rabbit Angstrom, then goes on: “What it is, is a glimpse of perfection, or near-perfection, something seldom afforded to us in ordinary life, and yet golf provides such moments all the time, or at least the hope of them. Your very next shot might find it — that magic inner harmony that allows you to swing smoothly and effortlessly, so that the ball flies off the clubface with a satisfying little click and then soars up, up, hanging there for a gravity-defying instant before dropping sweetly to the green....” (146) “It’s too gloomy to play every round as if it were your last, but the knowledge that your golfing days are dwindling lends a special sweetness to the middle-aged game. The good shots seem more precious. They linger in the mind.... (161) ... | I, newly married and living in England, tried to navigate the roundabout at the Marble Arch in London in our little Austin, with the steering wheel on the American side. The traffic there comes flying in about four lanes wide and if you’re timid and uncertain, which we were, there’s no help for you.” (176) “Napping is a little like drowning — if drowning were panic-free. You slip under, slowly and sensuously, and wait for the current to carry you off.” (200) “Stage by stage, I watched my friend decline. My greatest regret is that we never talked about what was happening. I never asked if he thought about dying, whether he was frightened. I never told him how much he and our friendship meant to me. I was reluctant to bring up such awkward subjects. Call it cowardice if you want, but my sense was that he didn’t want to talk about death or friendship either. I thought it was enough that we were just there in the same room.” (210) “Now that I’m more than twice as old as I was when I met Chip, I think a lot about death, which I sometimes picture as a bus — a yellow school bus, to be precise — idling around the corner, waiting to run me over.” (222)
40. Pastures of the Empty Page: Fellow Writers on the Life and Legacy of Larry McMurtry, George Getschow, ed. (2023). Hardcover. Started 091023. Completed 091223.
 41. The Longest Silence: A Life in Fishing, Thomas McGuane (1999). Paperback. Started 091323. Handed to Dalt for his Atlantic crossing.
 42. Pure Colour: A Novel, Sheila Heti (2022). Papers. Started (and gave up) 091523. [Dwight Garner review](#) in NYT.
 43. Real Tigers, Mick Herron (2016). **Number 3 in Slough House series.** Paperback. Started 091923. Completed 092623. Catherine Standish, having been kidnapped earlier this day, has quit. There’s been a significant house-cleaning. All the higher ups are guilty. “The last Seb [Home Sec Peter Judd’s man] learns of this world before his ghost departs it is that, if you open enough doors, you’ll eventually find a tiger.” (360) Lamb has told Catherine about Charles Partner as double agent. (344) “The wardrobe was full, resembling a dresser’s rack from a Merchant-Ivory production ...” (60) Part One: False Friends. Part Two: True Enemies. What’s the intro about? Batman and Spider-Man.
 44. Books: A Memoir, Larry McMurtry (2008). Hardcover. Started 092723. Completed 093023.
 45. Literary Life: A Second Memoir, Larry McMurtry (2009). Hardcover. Started 100123. Completed 100523.
 46. True Grit, Charles Portis (1968). Last read in May, now taking up again to review with Blue Ridge Saloon. Started 100523. Completed 100823. Notes in [Google Doc for Blue Ridge Saloon](#).
 47. Spook Street, Mick Herron (2017). Paperback. **#4** in series. Started 100823. Completed 101123. Westacres terrorist attack, which we later learn was the work of a type of academy for terrorists bent on “protecting” Western civilization. O.B. Cartwright was indirectly responsible. A little of the Dr. No-type of spy intrigue, confusing sometimes among the aliases of the youth. Claude Whelan is First Desk, and he has his own secrets. We lose Marcus Longridge in this one, also one of Cartwright’s former bodyguards, Bad Sam Chapman. “Louisa sipped her vodka and felt it hit the right buttons: suddenly the bar’s edges were less harsh, and the noise from the other patrons subsided to a background murmur ...” (41) It’s p56 before Lamb appears. New head of Dogs is Emma Flyte. “Why did you identify the body as River’s?” Louisa said. / “Because, bizarre as it sounds, he’s now a Joe in the field.

- And you don't blow a joe's cover." (118) "He has a joe in the field, Ms Flyte. He'll be up to whatever he thinks necessary." (161) "Many a tear has to fall, thought Claude Whelan ..." (224) Frank Harkness is the evil mastermind. "[Lamb] raised the glass to his mouth without taking his eyes off Whelan. He resembled a hippo enjoying a wallow." (324) "If [Whelan] survives another month of Diana Taverner, I'll maybe start to take him seriously. Until then, he's just a mouth in a suit. **I've had bowel movements that worry me more.**" (334) J.K. Coe "is casting his eyes around an empty room; in his case, the sitting room he has spent little time in this past year or more, ever since the evening he spent here naked and petrified, at the mercy of a dangerous man." (338) At the conclusion of this book the remaining characters are Lamb, Standish, River Cartwright, Louise, Roderick Ho, Shirley, and J.K. Coe.
48. *Going Infinite*, Michael Lewis (2023). Hardcover. Started 101523. Completed 102123. A disappointment, both in subject and style/organization. I slogged through it, but I looked forward to finishing, a first, I think, for a Michael Lewis book. From a review in *The New Yorker*: "... Lewis has spent the past two decades wondering whether success should be measured by principle or by consequence." "As Lewis writes, of the aftermath of the implosion, 'All these people inside FTX suddenly wanted to seem to know less than they did, and all these people outside FTX thought that they knew more than they actually did. On Twitter, in the blink of an eye, a rumor became a fact, the fact became a story, and the story became an explanation.'"
 49. *The Firm*, John Grisham. Audible. Started during long drive from NC to FL on 101423. Watched the Sydney Pollack film, which resembled the last half of the book almost not at all. Book much more credible than film. Neither held up to a second dosage.
 50. *The Times: How the Newspaper of Record Survived Scandal, Scorn, and the Transformation of Journalism*, Adam Nagourney (2023). Hardcover. Started 102123. [Cf. May 2004 issue of The Atlantic: Raines' 20,000+ word essay, a "no-holds-barred assessment of what he sees as a great newspaper in crisis."](#) (339) Completed 102623. An excellent history of the modern era of the "paper of record," including virtually every major news event as well as the various scandals (Jayson Blair, Judith Miller, etc.) that befell the "gray lady." Motivates me to revisit documentaries about the Times and other books (such as Martin Baron's) about the current media.
 51. *Collision of Power: Trump, Bezos, and The Washington Post*, Martin Baron (2023). Hardcover. Started 102723. Completed 110123. The second in my series of reading about the great newspapers. (I've since ordered a copy of Gay Talese's "The Kingdom and the Power"; I've pulled down Halberstam's "The Powers That Be"; and I'm determined to watch "Spotlight" and several other journalism films — dramas and documentaries.) "We in the establishment press focused on his bigoted smear of people who had come from Mexico. Republican voters saw a candidate who would do something about immigration. We honed in on the questionable constitutional grounds for banning all Muslims and the discriminatory animus behind his proposal. The GOP primary electorate saw a candidate who would do something about terrorism. Our concerns, no matter how justified in law and fact and fairness, were not those of most Republican voters." (102) "The *Post's* editorial board had published one scorching editorial after the next about Trump throughout his campaign. 'The growing ugliness of Donald Trump's campaign poses a challenge to us all,' the editorial board wrote in November 2015. 'We have seen the likes of him before, in the United States and elsewhere: narcissistic bullies who rise to prominence by spreading lies, appealing to fears and stoking hatred.'" (135) [Reading list (244): *It Can't Happen Here*, Sinclair Lewis (1935). *The Plot Against America*, Philip Roth (2004). *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt (1951). *The True Believer*, Eric Hoffer (1951). *The Image*, Daniel Boorstin (1962). *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman (1985).] "I was increasingly convinced that Trump, if he lost the election, would not willingly leave the White House and that he would do whatever he could to retain power. The man who had always loved money and attention

- clearly came to love power above all else. He could never tolerate the idea of losing." (439) Walter Lippmann: "I am convinced," he wrote, in a line that mirrors my own thinking, "that we shall accomplish more by fighting for truth than by fighting for our theories." (464)
52. *These Precious Days*, Ann Patchett (2021). I'm not sure what drew me to this book again, but I wanted to revisit the title story about the author's relationship with Sooki, the assistant to Tom Hanks, who lives with her and Karl as she undergoes a clinical trial for her pancreatic cancer. Read on 110223. "When she gave us the painting she'd made of sparky on the back of the couch, I felt like Matisse had painted our dog." (266) "All Sooki did was help me. **She was the magnet in the compass.**" (273) "Death was the river that ran underground, always.... Thanks to Sooki, I became aware of the quiet in my house, in my own mind. I could hear the river running underground, and I wasn't afraid." (278)
53. *The Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon*, [David Grann](#) (2010). Paperback. Started 110323. Completed 110723. The story of Percy Fawcett and his quest to find Z, or El Dorado, in the Amazon region. A number of explorations and, finally, his disappearance. Grann takes up his story and in his last visit, learns more than he ever imagined, not so much about what happened to Fawcett and his son and friend, but about the history and culture of the indigenous people. "While most of my articles seem unrelated, they typically have one common thread: obsession. They are about ordinary people driven to do extraordinary things — things that most of us would never dare — who get some germ of an idea in their heads that metastasizes until it consumes them." (32) "The writer Janet Malcolm once compared a biographer to a 'professional burglar, breaking into a house, rifling through certain drawers that he has good reason to think contain the jewelry and money, and triumphantly bearing his loot away.'" (103) "I had often heard about biographers who became consumed by their subjects, who, after years of investigating their lives, of trying to follow their every step and inhabit their world completely, were driven into fits of rage and despair, because, at some level, the people were unknowable." (303) "As the writer [Candice Millard](#) explained in *The River of Doubt*, 'The rain forest was not a garden of easy abundance, but precisely the opposite....' (110) "'Only the Indians respect the forest,' Paulo said. 'The white people cut it all down.'" (249) Michael Heckenberger: | "Anthropologists ... made the mistake of coming into the Amazon in the twentieth century and seeing only small tribes and saying, 'Well, that's all there is.' The problem is that, by then, many Indian **populations had already been wiped out by what was essentially a holocaust from European contact.** That's why the first Europeans in the Amazon described such massive settlements that, later, no one could ever find." (317)
54. *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, [Ronald Steel](#) (1980). Hardcover. Started 110923. (Finally) completed 111923. Upon the election of Warren Harding in 1920, Lippmann says, "I feel that we shall not have much immediate influence in America for perhaps a decade, but I'm not discouraged because we can use that time well to reexamine our ideas." // Among the ideas he wanted to reexamine was the notion that the average man could form an accurate picture of the world beyond his immediate knowledge. (170) In Ch 27 -28 Lippmann's human side is on display: his affair with his Helen Armstrong, his good friend's wife, releases him from an unfulfilling marriage to Faye. "Like all lovers, Lippmann went through periods of elation and depression, sometimes glimpsing a new life that would yield the things he had not found in the old, sometimes fearing their love would never survive. He confided in Helen without reserve." (351) I really don't like Lippmann, and Steel doesn't necessarily portray him as heroic. He's wishy-washy, changing with the seasons, avoiding his Jewishness even when Jews are maligned ... and worse. Difficult to tell if Steel likes him. Lippmann's heroes included TR, Churchill, DeGaulle. He basked in attention from LBJ, but soured, as he usually did eventually with everyone. His path crossed that of Rebecca West, Edmund Wilson, Learned Hand, Felix Frankfurter, Bernard Berenson ... "To be effective meant to have the ear of those

- who made the decisions.” (234) “Like Hoover, and indeed like Franklin Roosevelt at the time, Lippmann believed that the budget must be balanced and that deficit financing would set a bad example to the people.” (288) “If it took the war to make Roosevelt a truly great President, so the same war, and the Cold War that followed, made Lippmann the nation’s preeminent analyst of foreign affairs.” (417) “The history of diplomacy ... is the history of relations among rival powers, which did not enjoy political intimacy, and did not respond to appeals to common purposes.... For a diplomat to think that rival and unfriendly powers cannot be brought to a settlement is to forget what diplomacy is all about. There would be little for diplomats to do if the world consisted of partners, enjoying political intimacy, and responding to common appeals.” (445)
55. *The Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*, David Grann (2017). Paperback. Started 112023. Adding to my David Grann shelf. Completed 112223. Story told in 3 parts: (1) How the Osage came by their oil riches. (2) How the crimes add up, leading to part of the story; this is where the FBI story is told. (3) David Grann, as “the reporter,” and his role.
56. *The Last Picture Show*, Larry McMurtry (1966). Paperback. Started 112723. Completed 113023. Can’t get Cloris Leachman, Cybill Shepherd, Ben Johnson, Timothy Bottoms, and Jeff Bridges out of my mind; they inhabit their roles so perfectly in the [movie](#). “Why am I always apologizing to you, you little ... bastard....” (244) ... “he would have gone with [Lois] anywhere, just to see what she would do next, what crazy thing life would bring next.” (223) Coincidence: The NYT wrote about the [essential McMurtry](#) on 120223: “Two decades later, McMurtry revived Duane for *Texasville* (1987) as an avatar of ’80s excess: promiscuous in love and business; rich in family yet deeply in debt. The breathless pace of the book, which is cut into 98 chapters as skinny and potent as cocaine, is thrilling. Its project (the sublimation and eventual salvation of a would-be master of the universe in the noisy thrum of community) is profound. In 1999, McMurtry turned to his aging creation for ‘Duane’s Depressed,’ a low-key wonder in which Duane stops trying to fill the existential hole inside himself and instead learns to sit beside it. (The process may have been personal: One can practically feel McMurtry writing himself out of a post-bypass-surgery malaise with every page.)”
57. *O Pioneers!* Willa Cather. Library of America edition. Started 120253. Completed 120423. This is largely Alexandra Bergson’s story; Swedish immigrants in the Iowa farm plains. Emil is her younger brother; Oscar and Lou are her older brothers. She’s the brains, the strength of the family, even while her father is alive. “Don’t let [your brothers] get discouraged and go off like Uncle Otto. I want them to keep the land.” / “We will, father. We will never lose the land.” (150) Frank Shabata kills his own wife Marie and Emil, finding them lying together. “Suppose I do will my land to their children, what difference will that make? The land belongs to the future, Carl; that’s the way it seems to me. How many of the names on the county clerk’s plat will be there in fifty years? I might as well try to will the sunset over there to my brother’s children. We come and go, but the land is always here. And the people who love it and understand it are the people who own it — for a little while.” (289)
58. *Rules of Civility*, Amor Towles (2011). Picked up and read opening pages on 120423. Previously reread and completed 111421. Original reading in Sep 2017. (Reread in May 2025.)
59. *Butcher’s Crossing*, John Williams (1960). LofA edition. Started 120523. In three parts: Preparation. The actual slaughter. Returning home. Will Andrews. Miller, Charley Hoge, Fred Schneider, McDonald, Francine. Part 1: “[Will] felt that wherever he lived, and wherever he would live hereafter, he was leaving the city more and more, withdrawing into the wilderness.... / He turned. Butcher’s Crossing lay small and unreal before him. He walked slowly back toward the town, on the road, his feet scuffing in the dust, his eyes watching the puffs of dust that his feet went beyond.” (42) Part 2: “In the early dawn, on the twenty-fifth day of August, the four men met behind the livery stable where their wagon, loaded with six weeks’ provisions, waited for them.” (61) “Miller nodded.

'Buffalo's a curious critter; there ain't a part of him you can't use for something.'" (74) "Buffalo never dies of old age. He's either killed by a man or dragged down by a wolf." (120) Winter comes and they're stuck for 6 months or more. "He could understand Schneider's impatience — he knew of Schneider's simple desire to fill his belly with civilized food, to surround his body with the softness of a clean bed, and to empty his gathered lust into the body of any waiting woman." (194) Part 3: "On a bleak afternoon late in May, three men rode in an easterly direction along the Smoky Hill Trail ..." (213) McDonald said, "You get born, and you nurse on lies, and you get weaned on lies, and you learn fancier lies in school. You live all your life on lies, and then maybe when you're ready to die, it comes to you — that there's nothing, nothing but yourself and what you could have done. Only you ain't done it, because the lies told you there was something else. Then you know you could have had the world, because you're the only one that knows the secret; only then it's too late. You're too old." / "No," said Andrews. A vague terror crept from the darkness that surrounded them, and tightened his voice. "That's not the way it is." / "You ain't learned, then," McDonald said. (232) The fire Miller sets at McDonald's, then when McDonald sees it: Andrews: "You said yourself the hides weren't worth anything." / "It's not that," McDonald said quietly. "It's not that they were worth anything. But they were mine." (249) "[Will] knew he would not go back. He would not return with McDonald to his home, to the country that had given him birth, had raised him in the shape he occupied and the condition that he had only begun to recognize, and that had relinquished him to a wilderness in which he had thought to find a truer shape of himself. No, he would never return." (253) "He did not know where he was going; but he knew that it would come to him later in the day." (255) As I reached the book's ending, I thought of Melville's *Moby-Dick* and the single-minded quest of Ahab. [Review in The Guardian](#).

60. *My Antonia*, Willa Cather (1918). LoFA edition. Started 120923. Antonia Shimerdas, Ambrosch, Jim Burden. Book 1: The Shimerdas. Book 2: The Hired Girls. Book 3: Lena Lingard. Book 4: The Pioneer Woman's Story. "Ain't it wonderful, Jim, how much people can mean to each other? I'm so glad we had each other when we were little. I can't wait till my little girl's old enough to tell her about all the things we used to do. You'll always remember me when you think about old times, won't you? And I guess everybody thinks about old times, even the happiest people." (910) (912) Book 5: Cuzak's Boys. "In the course of twenty crowded years one parts with many illusions. I did not wish to lose the early ones. Some memories are realities, and are better than anything that can ever happen to one again." Antonia has married, and they have so many children.
61. *Higher Gossip: Essays and Criticism*, John Updike (2011). Hardcover. In between Cather and McMurtry I wanted a few select shorts.
62. *Hollywood: A Third Memoir*, Larry McMurtry (2010). Hardcover. Started 121223. Completed 121323.
63. *Main Street: The Story of Carol Kennicott*, Sinclair Lewis (1920). LoFA edition. Started 121623. Last read in Feb 2022. See Notebook for that month for details.
64. *Upstate: Records and Recollections of Northern New York*, Edmund Wilson (1971). Paperback. Started 121723. "As a substitute for sexual activity, the Shakers made a ritual of their shaking, which was a strange kind of non-sexual orgy. They marched and whirled about, but the women kept apart from the men. They pretended to play on invisible instruments and became possessed by tribes of Indians or George Washington and the Founding Fathers." (17) Abandoned as the book binding fell apart.
65. *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–1968*, Taylor Branch (2006). Hardcover. V3 of trilogy. Started 121823. This volume begins soon after three white volunteers are murdered and before the series of marches. Note to self: Watch [Mississippi Burning](#) again.
66. *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck (1937). LoA edition. Last read and completed 011221. Read again on 122323. Carlson takes his Luger and mercifully shoots Candy's dog. Slim tells him to take the shovel too.

Later George Milton has to mercifully kill Lennie Small after Lennie

breaks Curley's wife's neck. Slim tells George he had to do it; otherwise Curley would bring Lennie's life to a violent end. [Wikipedia](#) for synopsis.

67. Angela's Ashes: A Memoir, Frank McCourt (1996). Hardcover. Started 122523. Completed 123123. Bleak memoir of McCourt, his mother and tragic family. Father is Malachy, and he drinks every shilling he can get his hands on. Story begins in America, but they are destitute so they return to Limerick, Ireland, where it's even worse for them. Period from 1930 up and through WW2. "I don't know why Mrs. O'Connell had to shame me before the whole world, and I don't think I'm too good for the post office or anything else. How could I with my hair sticking up, pimples dotting my face, my eyes red and oozing yellow, my teeth crumbling with the rot, no shoulders, no flesh on my arse after cycling 13,000 miles to deliver 20,000 telegrams to every door in Limerick and regions beyond? / Mrs. O'Connell said a long time ago she knew everything about every telegram boy. She must know about the times I went at myself ... She must know about Theresa Carmody and the green sofa, how I got her into a state of sin and sent her to tell ... A person that commits a sin like that is never good good for the post office or anything else ..." (339)

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