
Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by JtS - 26-03-2008 12:40

I am currently reading http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51D6QNZJ2AL._AA240_.jpg which is about the 4th Modesty Blaise book I've read. In this one we go back to the days when The Network was just being wound up. Modesty has one last caper to achieve.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Lyra - 26-03-2008 12:46

I just finished *The Exception* by Christian Jungersen. It's really good, and has got me a little bit obsessed with the psychology of genocide.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by The Chubby Cyclist - 26-03-2008 12:56

I'm currently reading a simplistic history of the Persians (Achemedids, Arsacids and Sassanids). It's interesting stuff but it's very badly written so is taking me ages to wade through 200 pages of it.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by JtS - 26-03-2008 12:56

And what are you reading now...?

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Crusoe - 26-03-2008 12:57

I recently finished the immensely enjoyable *Yiddish Policeman's Union* by Michael Chabon, and before embarking on some Natsuo Kirino grimness (*Grotesque*) I'm easing through the fairly fluffy *Gold* by Dan Rhodes (an author I know nothing about).

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Andy C - 26-03-2008 15:01

Untold Stories by Alan Bennett: marvellous writing, as ever, displaying his wonderful ear for phrase and his gentle and human understanding of the world he finds himself in. However, at times his customary self-deprecation sometimes seems to edge into a determination to reveal and draw attentions to the more unpleasant aspects of his character, as if he's bent on dispelling the image he has that I've heard described as that of "the nation's teddy bear".

The Elegant Universe by Brian Greene, prompted by a couple of offers and by my wish to get up to speed on all this esoteric new stuff that's going in in theoretical physics. And it's very good indeed, written clearly and even patiently for the layman readership. He seems to have taken to heart the publishers' dictum that each equation means a halving of sales - there aren't any, but the book has no less a feel of precision for that. It meanders a bit when he's writing about the history of his own work, but this in itself is a nice glimpse into the world and workings of high-level academic research at the forefront of physics and mathematics. For me, the one irritation is the American writer's habit of mixing imperial and metric units, which as worst-things-you-can-say-about-a-book go isn't bad at all.

It's good enough to spark a few supertsing-theory-related questions in my mind, and I might get around to starting a thread seeking a bit of extra enlightenment from our resident experts one of these days.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Lyra - 26-03-2008 15:03

And what are you reading now...?

Me? Erm.

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali
and Eating Less by Gillian Riley
and Green Rider by Kristen Britain.

But there's not much to say about any of them. Well there's a lot to say about Patanjali but I'm not sure what, yet.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 26-03-2008 15:18

Just finished The Siege of Mecca, about half way through The Two Faces of Islam.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Matej - 26-03-2008 15:46

Just started The Geographer's Library.

Half-way through Reading Lolita in Tehran.

Just finished a re-reading of H.M.S. Surprise.

Waiting for the amazon release of Soccer in a Football World

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by JtS - 26-03-2008 15:57

Matt (Crusoe), I saw Gold for the first time in Waterstones this week, it reminded me that I read Dan Rhodes's Anthology about 10 years ago (if not more) which is great!

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by garcia - 26-03-2008 16:09

human smoke by nicholson baker.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Hieronymus Bosch - 26-03-2008 16:14

The Age Of Assassins, a book about Putin and his state apparatus, translated from the original Russian. I've got to review it. It's balls-achingly dull -- every page is a laundry list of dates and names but the author cannot tell a story to save his life.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by boris - 26-03-2008 16:38

Just finished Calcio, by John Foot.

Just started The Unsinkable Rubber Ducks by Christopher Brookmyre, which Chippy very kindly leant me.

Next up: Dynamo, the story of Dynamo Kiev (or whatever it's called).

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Coffy - 26-03-2008 16:41

I'm about 3/4 of the way through Underworld by Don DeLillo, not really enjoying it but am too far along to quit. It better start redeeming itself.

Yesterday, in Urban Outfitters, I saw a small cookbook called Good Kitchen Magic. I wonder if it's any good.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by E10 Rifle - 26-03-2008 17:56

I'm nearly finished Edith Wharton's The House of Mirth, which took me a good while to get into but is actually a terrifically written, extremely acute novel about class and gender and the stifling restrictions on personal freedom they impose. A properly good feminist book I reckon.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Belhavka - 26-03-2008 18:10

Second try on Master and Margarita by M. Bulgakov. Gave up the first time as I found the translation insufferable. Enjoying it immensely this time around.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Billy Casper - 26-03-2008 20:58

I've ordered World War Z by Max Brooks. I know I'm going to hate it but I have a soft spot for zombies. I'm basically killing time until pants recommends something fantastic again (The Road, Cloud Atlas....)

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World War Z

Posted by Crusoe - 26-03-2008 20:59

I really enjoyed World War Z. The multiple viewpoints give the book a much broader view than other zombie novels manage.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 26-03-2008 21:32

Why would you hate it? It's superb.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 26-03-2008 23:04

Just started At Swim-Two-Birds by Flann O'Brien, because so many people on here rated it and I've never read anything of his.

Also reading Pictures & Tears by James Elkin. Elkins is one of my favourite art educationalists. A highly accessible academic who is always thinking about ways to get people to talk about art. Here he explores how and why certain paintings move people to tears. Number one in this regard, he reckons, is Rothko's chapel in Houston, a distant number two probably Guernica. He also considers — though I haven't got to this bit yet — why the art establishment is uncomfortable with the phenomenon. At the moment he's dealing with Stendhal Syndrome which I'd never heard of and is really fascinating.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Inca - 26-03-2008 23:13

Matej wrote:

Waiting for the amazon release of Soccer in a Football World

Look for my name in the introduction!

Finishing up Glitter Stucco and Dumpster Diving a collection of essays on mostly Southern California architecture by John Chase. I normally really like Verso, but this was really sloppily edited--missing punctuation and a few misspellings. I have the first hardcover edition, so hopefully it was corrected.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by CarnivorousVulgaris - 27-03-2008 00:54

Currently I'm about a third of the way through Allan Bullock's excellent Hitler & Stalin: Parallel Lives. The author has intelligently broken the subject matter into alternating chapters on each man covering about a decade of their lives. It's the first time since leaving school that I've read any historical work of this depth on the topic of the Soviet Union so I'm only now learning about the Ukranian famine caused by collectivisation, the birth pangs of the first Five Year Plan, etc. It's harrowing but simultaneously gripping and all the more sobering considering that the loss of life suffered by Russia during and between the two World Wars still hasn't really been acknowledged in our culture (7.8 million Ukranians died during the famine caused by Stalin's enforcement of collectivisation on the largely rural population). Certainly not to the same extent that the Holocaust, the First World War or the Western Front have been recognised.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by SamLKelly - 27-03-2008 02:12

Tales Of The Alhambra by Washington Irving. I've not had much time for it since starting it but it's dead good, although it might prove an expensive purchase in the long term because it's making me really really REALLY want to go back to Granada and see it all again.

My first ever post outside 'Football'... the new board's had some effect then.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Gangster Octopus - 27-03-2008 10:34

Currently I'm reading no books at all. And haven't since I finished Revolution In The Head by Ian MacDonald. I'm just not in the mood for books at the moment. I hope that this feeling will pass. Soon.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by ale - 27-03-2008 11:09

just finished White Heat by Dominic Sanbrook which takes his post-war review of GB up to Heaths 1970 election win...

decent concise summaries of the Wilson period without being ground breaking...

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Fuzzy Dunlop - 27-03-2008 12:07

Market Forces by Richard Morgan.

Executives fight duels with each other in bids to win contracts and promotions. To the death, in armoured vehicles. Kind of Mad Max 2 meets Wall Street.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Crusoe - 27-03-2008 12:18

Ha, I read Market Forces too. Enjoyable guff, perfect for non-taxing summer holiday reading.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Fuzzy Dunlop - 27-03-2008 12:29

Have you read any of his other stuff, Crusoe? I have Black Man lined up next.

I liked the Takeshi Kovacs novels - Altered Carbon, Broken Angels and Woken Furies. Intelligent action movie sci-fi is how I think of them.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Crusoe - 27-03-2008 12:39

No, my dad gave me that one - let me know how they turn out. I'll look at the Kovacs ones as well.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 27-03-2008 15:14

Just finished Understanding Comics - it's ace. I'm now debating whether to reduce my stack of unread novels, or head

back into The Quest For Consciousness.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Bafflin Smoke Signals - 27-03-2008 15:21

I've just finished NonNonBâ, a BD by Shigeru Mizuki, about his childhood in a small village in 1930's Japan. It's full of supernatural elements and is quite moving in places.

It's beautifully produced by Editions Cornelius. It reads Japanese-style, right-to-left and starting from the "back". You get used to it within a couple of pages.

I also quite enjoyed Shenzhen and Pyongyang by Guy Delisle, about his trips to China and North Korea, where he worked as an animator. Nothing massively profound by way of observations, but I like his drawing style.

That's comics for me for a bit, so, after ten years, I'm finally reading A Confederacy of Dunces again. It's such a delight to read.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by toro toro - 27-03-2008 15:59

Pound's cantos, a guide to pound's Cantos, George Steiner's Grammars of Creation, two books by Simon Blackburn, and my thesis in excruciating detail...

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Broken Clock - 27-03-2008 19:27

Currently splitting my time between:

The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda's Road To 9/11 by Lawrence Wright....does what it says on the tin. Cant recommend it enough, although I keep getting dragged away to read something else.

and

Conned by Matthew Klein.....A California con-man crime thriller.
Its OK.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by imp - 27-03-2008 21:00

Recently finished novel: Wallace Stegner's Angle Of Repose. One of my favourite writers, and a beautiful book written (circa 1970) by an aging misanthrope in a wheelchair as he writes the novelised history of his own grandmother.

Recently finished 'I should really try and be a bit more intelligent about science and stuff' book: Simon Singh's Big Bang, which taught me that I didn't pay anything like enough attention to physics at school (I dreamt the other night my old teacher Mr Fox gave me a B+ when I told him I was reading Singh's book), and which has also made me start buying astronomy magazines and looking at expensive telescopes on the internet.

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Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by Crusoe - 28-03-2008 08:52

Just finished Gold by Dan Rhodes. Strange but likeable. The ending was not a complete surprise and lightened what could have been an otherwise sickly read, but even so the slightly sad aftertaste was a little unwelcome.

Now starting on Natsuo Kirino's Grotesque. I really enjoyed her first English translation (Out, which I only picked up because I liked the covers of the Vintage East editions) and this one seems to be going the same way of cold, clinical and slightly unnerving characters getting into unpleasant situations.

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Re:Current Reading (first century thread)

Posted by CarnivorousVulgaris - 28-03-2008 09:20

Broken Clock wrote:

The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda's Road To 9/11 by Lawrence Wright...does what it says on the tin. Cant recommend it enough, although I keep getting dragged away to read something else.

Sounds interesting, might check it out. Have you read Jason Burke's book on the same topic? Superb study of militant Islam, extremely well-researched and well-balanced.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by toro toro - 28-03-2008 15:29

yeah, Burke's book is superb.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by SamLKelly - 28-03-2008 23:10

If you're into that (last 2 posts) I'd also recommend Voices of Resurgent Islam by John Esposito. Not the easiest book to get hold of but for a textbook it's very readable and it puts the thinking and actions of various factions of Islamism into context superbly. It was one of the recommended texts in my second year Political Islam course at uni (half of my degree was in religious studies), but I was the only person who actually managed to find a copy. If you can track it down it's worth a look.

And GO, are you mad? There's no such mood as 'not in the mood for books', there's only 'not in the mood for any of the unread books I currently own'. Go and buy a couple... have you read any Borges?

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by SamLKelly - 28-03-2008 23:11

Ahem, sorry, a small correction to previous post: Voices... is EDITED by John Esposito.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by toro toro toro - 29-03-2008 15:44

Esposito's Islam: The Straight Path is very, very good, although not really (at all) concerned with modern geopolitics so much as religious history.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Fatter Hipper - 30-03-2008 14:43

I've got three on the go at the moment...

Hamlet- I thought it was about time I read it.

Summerhill by A.S Neill- An account of the school of the same name. Odd in the extreme (the way it's written, not the philosophy), but very inspiring stuff.

Nietzsche- JP Stern- I've read a lot of Nietzshce, but not a lot of secondary stuff about him (normally it's vice versa with philosohy and me), so I thought I should read a quick intro. I think I get Nietzsche, but I'm never totally certain what the important bits are.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Gyuri - 30-03-2008 17:06

I just finished reading Master of the Senate about Lyndon Johnson's rise to Majority Leader and pragmatic/quasi-ideological swing from a classic Southern Senator to the man who would end up passing the Great Society programs. One of the best books about American politics I've read.

Am starting Darkmans by Nicola Barker. I've heard great things about this, but am having a hard time getting engaged in the first 20 pages or so.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Baroudeur - 30-03-2008 17:31

I've just finished Richard Dawkins-The Ancestor's Tale which was good for someone who gave up biology at 14 (me not Professor Dawkins). The 100 pages in the middle with a succession of small, worm like creatures were a slog though. Currently reading too many books about the history of NHS IT systems for Uni. I think something light like Malcolm Pryce beckons next.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by toro toro toro - 30-03-2008 17:39

Heh. No, Dawkins waited until twenty years ago to give up biology.

FH - have you read Sebastian Barker's The Dream of Intelligence? it's an absolutely fucking brilliant exegesis of Nietzsche, as well as masterful poetry.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 30-03-2008 20:57

Done with The Two Faces of Islam (an abortion of a book - avoid it). Am now moving on to Madawi Al-Rasheed's Contesting the Saudi State which I am sure will crush me through sheer boredom in about 48 hours.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by toro toro toro - 30-03-2008 21:36

Darkmans as well, Gyuri? Truly a man of taste.

Stick with it, it's fantastic.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by mackstress - 30-03-2008 23:23

I just read On Chesil Beach by Ian McEwan. It's excruciating, but brilliant. A great, tight little study of how the wrong reactions at the wrong moment can ruin your entire life.

So yes, quite cheery.

Just before that I finally got round to reading Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino. It was dazzling, but I think I need to read it again.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Gyuri - 30-03-2008 23:31

mackstress wrote:

Just before that I finally got round to reading Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino. It was dazzling, but I think I need to read it again. That's pretty close to how I always feel after reading Calvino. I usually feel as if I've been dazzled, but I'm not exactly sure why.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Lyra - 31-03-2008 10:54

Agnes Grey which is really great. I didn't expect so much discussion of animal rights...

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by TonTon - 31-03-2008 18:34

I am now actually reading a book, which is a step forward.

It's Silver Pigs by Lindsey Davis.

I'm not so far into it yet.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Lyra - 31-03-2008 18:58

Oh I love Lindsey Davis, she's really brilliant. I hope you like it.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by TonTon - 31-03-2008 21:42

Her intro to this reissue is a bit up herself, but I'm hoping the book is better. It is so far.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by EIM - 01-04-2008 01:51

I've started reading 'The Adventures Of Huckleberry Finn'. I never seem to have time to read any more though. It does my head in.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 01-04-2008 20:54

A recent documentary on the subject prompts me to recommend a wonderful non-fiction called Into The Heart of The Sea: the voyage of the whaleship Essex, by Nathaniel Philbrick. It's the true story that inspired Melville to write Moby Dick. Incredible tale of seafaring and survival.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Fatter Hipper - 02-04-2008 09:28

FH - have you read Sebastian Barker's The Dream of Intelligence? it's an absolutely fucking brilliant exegesis of Nietzsche, as well as masterful poetry

I've not, no. I shall endeavour to do so, however.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 02-04-2008 09:42

The small wormlike creatures are fascinating, though. They laid down (correct me if I'm wrong, academics) fundamental features/constraints like bilateral symmetry, the anteroposterior axis, Hox genes, and so on that have remained with us ever since.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 02-04-2008 09:43

Oh, and welcome back, Mackstress.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Fuzzy Dunlop - 02-04-2008 12:17

let me know how they turn out

Black Man by Richard Morgan.

Violence. Violence. Genetic engineering. Violence. Sex. Space flight. Mars colony. Sex. Violence. New world order. Violence. Violence. Religious fundamentalism. Sex. Violence. Conspiracy. Violence. Violence.

Excellent stuff.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by The Chubby Cyclist - 03-04-2008 10:54

Thanks to the praise it received over on Old OTF, I've just started on Vineland by Thomas Pynchon. I'll probably post on this thread next in about 6 months.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by robw - 04-04-2008 14:29

Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia

by John Dickie

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by mnb098mnb - 06-04-2008 00:48

Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai

Some of the writing is fantastically beautiful but it's definitely not the sort of book you can read half-heartedly. It requires full and devoted attention - something which I don't think I'm quite giving it at the moment as I normally read when I'm half-asleep on the train on the way to work.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by meltdowngraphics - 08-04-2008 03:42

"The Satanic Verses" by Rushdie. I've always been curious about it. Very inventive, but quite dense. It reminds me of "100 Years of Solitude" (which took me two tries to finish...it can be done).

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by ursus arctos - 08-04-2008 06:35

Welcome meltdown. I also found that to be a bit of a slog. Nice to see the Chicago contingent growing.

I also have a lot of sympathy for mnb's point, there are certain types of books that just don't lend themselves to "casual" reading.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by JtS - 08-04-2008 08:44

I'm still reading Modesty Blaise: Night of the Morningstar, mainly because I've got Watchmen and The Complete Maus on the go and the same time.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by noby - 08-04-2008 10:49

I have just started reading "The Stolen Village: Baltimore and the Barbary Pirates" by Des Ekin.

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by toro toro toro toro - 08-04-2008 14:41

I adored The Satanic Verses, though it really is tough going. Not as tough as when I first attempted it, at age nine, though.

I just couldn't get along with The Inheritance of Loss at all. It seemed deeply, deeply average to me, though for no reasons I could put my finger on. Marking essays, you sometimes feel as if the only honest comment/instruction you can make to tell the student how to get a better mark is "Be More Clever" - there's nothing in particular wrong with it, it just doesn't... pop. I felt a bit like that.

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by The Chubby Cyclist - 08-04-2008 14:46

That was my reaction to Inheritance of Loss, too. Lots of little things bugged me about it, and there was nothing to raise it above the ordinary. I sometimes feel that if books about India, and particularly which reference Independence, are thought of as brilliant purely because of the association with Midnight's Children.

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by 1890 - 09-04-2008 12:08

I've started "Whutering Heights"...Emily Bronte invented "Emo" I think with that novel. The other night I was reading it by candle light, for authenticity purposes...

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Andy C - 10-04-2008 09:31

Just finished the Elegant Universe and started Bill Bryson's Shakespeare.

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Tubby Isaacs - 10-04-2008 09:56

Reading Ruskin's memoir, "Praeterita", a title that will have Lyra cooing with the sense of warmth only Latin can bring. Wonderful stuff on the youth. Home educated, when he went off to Oxford, his mum moved there as well.

It's the only book Ruskin ever intended to bring pleasure, written in breaks between his "brain fever" at the end of his life. Mostly very pleasant, he does have the occasional relapse, mostly when he comes across a Catholic priest or cathedral.

Not expecting much on his wife or the Whistler trial.

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Lyra - 10-04-2008 10:14

Awww, indeed, that's a lovely title.

I'm reading The Conqueror, the follow up to The Seducer which I constantly bang on about as being one of the best books ever.

It's as good as I expected it to be; taking a different look at the same subject as it were, which is basically the evolution of Norway into what it is today.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by boris - 10-04-2008 22:07

I've just started Robert Ludlum's The Janson Directive which is, so far, surprisingly compelling. I must admit I'm a sucker for spy fiction and espionage stuff, but I prefer the slower pace of a Le Carré usually. This is the first Ludlum I've read (although he's got an extensive catalogue), and I approached it with a bit of trepidation because I recently read a Bourne book, but written by Eric Van Lustbader, and it was appalling, and I suspected something similar. In terms of action, setting, and plot there's not so much difference, but Ludlum is clearly a far superior writer.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Not me - 10-04-2008 22:53

I'm 50 pages into Victor Pelevin's The Sacred Book of the Werewolf, and it's shaping up to be his best yet, an absolute corker. The atrocious The Helmet Of Horror (from a couple of years ago) seems to have been a dashed-off-for-the-money blip, I'm happy to to say.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Andy C - 17-04-2008 09:31

I finished Bill Bryson's Shakespeare yesterday, having found it rather inconsequential, really. Its problem is that it does exactly what it sets out to do and doesn't attempt to stray outside its remit, so we have a biography of a man about whom precious little is known and no analysis of the plays and poems save what scant illumination the texts might offer to the biographer. There's nothing whatever in the book that would help anyone, even the complete beginner, towards an appreciation of Shakespeare - and that's a woefully missed opportunity.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by toro toro toro toro - 17-04-2008 15:05

Still mired in the Cantos, and accompanying commentary. Finished the Steiner, which was wonderful, and am now reading Nietzsche's Twilight of the Idols. Combined influence of FH and Sebastian barker.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Lyra - 17-04-2008 15:27

That Norwegian book I was reading recently had some stuff about the Cantos in. Something about them being able to keep you reading and rereading forever.

I don't know what to read next.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 17-04-2008 20:58

What Sport Tells Us About Life by Ed Smith. Suprisingly good, though it would be better if each chapter were 5-10 pages longer and went into more depth.

The Koran as told to the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him. I hadn't realised the extent to which this book is lacking in narrative. It's really nothing like the Bible or the Torah at all - more like a field manual for how to keep a beleaguered desert religious community inspired and fighting fit while under attack from all sides. It's made me re-evaluate what a religious text is all about.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by erwin - 17-04-2008 21:42

Hitting the Groove by Phil Hogan. Blokey kinda book, fun, and I associate with lots of stuff (especially the difficult relationships ...). The protagonist is a Beatles fan, and the angle is served with a trowel.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Rory Bunk - 21-04-2008 07:03

I have just finished Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake which was very enjoyable although one or two events occurred a bit unsatisfactorily.

I'm now reading The Grapes of Wrath in which I'm still at the early stage where every time I pick it up I get an image of Nelson Muntz in the Simpsons, "There's the grapes, and here's the wrath." I expect to lose this habit early into the last third of the book.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by JtS - 21-04-2008 08:38

Ha! I finally finished Night of the Morningstar. It was pretty good all in all.

Next on the list is Harry Harrison's Bill the Galactic Hero

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Aidan - 21-04-2008 13:26

Just started The Editor's Wife (Clare Chambers)- written in the first person & the main character is a man. Impressed so far.

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Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by toro toro toro - 21-04-2008 16:13

Finished Twilight of the Idols, onto The Anti-Christ now...

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Re:Current Reading

Posted by Lyra - 29-04-2008 12:51

I'm reading Lud-in-the-Mist by Hope Mirrlees. It's completely aces. It's so obviously what Susanna Clarke must have read before she wrote Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell. Just the same sort of allegorical things. and because I am obsessed with bucolic landscapes in literature, perhaps even something I can actually get something out of for my work too...

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Re:Current Reading

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 29-04-2008 16:22

Guilty of Everything John ('Buck Cherry') Armstrong's memoir of the punk scene in Vancouver. As such I suppose it's of mostly local interest except Armstrong is a better than average writer with a wry sense of humour:

" notable only in that it would book our band and that it had a steel-plate dance-floor. Why, no one ever found out, but it made for real excitement the night a guitar player who hadn't checked his amp's ground jumped into the audience. Beer on metal is not only slippery as hell but an excellent electrical conductor; when his guitar hit the floor the crowd looked like dancing chickens at a county fair."

=====

Re:Current Reading

Posted by Bafflin Smoke Signals - 29-04-2008 17:23

That's made me want to see dancing chickens at a county fair.

I once saw The Clash at the Hammersmith Palais. Leaping about on a proper sprung dancefloor was extremely enjoyable.

I'm currently reading Harry Pearson's Around The World By Mouse, which as high-level concept probably sounded great (man stays in bedroom and explores countries he's never visited using internet; writes humorous travel guide). But it's straining my interest.

I like all his other books, and he's always good for a chucklesome line and interesting fact, but you can't help feeling a lot of it would be funnier as captions to the photos or sites he's looking at. I may have to set it aside and mention it in a different thread.

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Re:Current Reading

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 29-04-2008 18:06

I once saw The Clash at the Hammersmith Palais. Leaping about on a proper sprung dancefloor was extremely enjoyable.

Oh absolutely! I too saw the Clash (and many other bands) at Vancouver's Commodore Ballroom which, among aficionados, rates as one of the top half-dozen dancefloors in the world. Being among a couple of hundred people bouncing up and down on it is an experience like no other, some find it terrifying, others as exhilarating as group bungee jumping. It was put down in the 1920s so no one knew what gave it its elasticity until ten years ago when it was relaid, under the boards they found hundreds of truck tyres packed with horsehair.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 29-04-2008 18:38

Hm...I wonder if my ex-wife makes an appearance in Armstrong's book...that was very definitely her scene...

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 29-04-2008 18:45

A quick PM will satisfy your curiosity AG, I'll finish the book by the end of the day.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 29-04-2008 19:04

PM sent.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Gangster Octopus - 30-04-2008 10:20

I've still not picked up a book. I'm beginning to wonder if I ever will...

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 30-04-2008 14:09

AG: PM reply.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Scouseroo - 01-05-2008 01:01

I'm currently working my way through John Foot's Calcio and very enjoyable it is too

After that I have Lukyanenko's Night Watch and Day Watch awaiting me.

I also have the last two volumes of Orwells Collected Essays, Journalism and General Musings sitting on the bookshelf (As I Please, 1943-1945 and In Front of Your Nose, 1945-1950). Looking forward to them - Orwell is never anything less than readable and even his most mundane letters give some insight to wartime life.

Unfortunately I never seem to get time to read more than a couple of paragraphs a day these days, so they could well be sitting there for a fair while yet.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by toro toro toro toro - 01-05-2008 12:41

Finished Michael Lewis' very entertaining Liar's Poker. Now reading Iris Murdoch's Metaphysics As A Guide To Morals which, since it bears no relation to the title, is superb, and the Cantos. Still.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by King Mob - 01-05-2008 14:53

I'm about two thirds of the way through Paul Morley's 'Nothing', an account of his father's suicide. As you would expect from Morley it's exceptionally literate, heartfelt and compelling, and wanders quite formlessly all over the place. His life story often takes second stage as the book becomes a series of philosophical discourses on the reasons why a person might choose to extinguish their own existence, and the repercussions of such a decision. At times Morley's garrulous style becomes overwhelming, but appropriately, his concern often seems to be with filling in the blanks left by a distant relationship with his father.

Despite the subject matter it's a warm, rather than depressing, read.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by JtS - 02-05-2008 13:43

toro x4, that's weird, I'm re-reading Liar's Poker at the moment, having read it about 10 years ago.

It's strangely in tune with the current state of investment banking isn't it.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Coffy - 05-05-2008 20:30

Tonight I'll end the fourth-month marathon that was Underworld. I suppose my low brow won't come as any surprise here, but I didn't like it. Any defenders who can make a case for it?

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by ursus arctos - 06-05-2008 06:30

I liked Underworld, but didn't love it, and don't consider it to be on the same level as, say, White Noise. In my experience, people who like Underworld tend to already have a well-developed mythic view of Bobby Thompson's home run, and are therefore captivated by the first 80 pages or so, which supply a momentum that gets one through the rest of the book (this was certainly the case for me). Those who don't come to the novel from that point of view seem to find it much heavier going.

Liar's Poker is pretty close to being timeless; individuals change, institutions change and instruments change, but the underlying dynamics that Lewis captures so well are what make much of "The City" and its international counterparts tick.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by meltdowngraphics - 07-05-2008 03:06

I've just finished "The Satanic Verses" (at age 54), and it was worth it! Now for some more lighthearted reading – "The Far Corner" by Harry Pearson. Great anecdotes and stories about North-east football. Has anyone else read this?

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by ursus arctos - 07-05-2008 05:56

Lots of us have, Meltdown (welcome, by the way).

It is a genuinely great book, perhaps the best of the flood of books about the life of a football supporter that came out in the wake of Fever Pitch. You have much to look forward to.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 07-05-2008 12:36

Just finishing Peter Heather's *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History*. It's excellent. I know next to nothing about this period, but for a long time there was a lack of readable general works on ancient and early medieval history (Robin Lane Fox perhaps excepted). In the last few weeks, though I've read this and Tom Holland's *Rubicon*, which is also excellent. Scholarly enough to be worth reading, but not overly burdened with footnotes, and the prose is very accessible.

This book is very, very good at demystifying all the various "barbarian invasions", and showing which ones were important and which were not. His argument is that the Western Empire, even after repeated invasions and the sack of Rome in 410, was basically still solvent until the Vandals took Carthage, at which point the money started to run out. Even the Hunnic invasions were survivable - the collapse of the Hunnic empire did more strategic damage than its creation. The failure of the invasion to re-take North Africa in 468 was the real nail in the coffin because without Africa there was not enough money to pay off all the remaining enemies.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by toro toro toro toro - 07-05-2008 14:15

Lots of people hate *The Satanic Verses*, but they're wrong, and they're grotesquely ugly freaks. It is a work of very rare genius.

Nothing new for me, still ploughing through Murdoch and Pound. I may take a break in the latter for Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions*.

Ursus and JTS - spot on about *Liar's Poker*. It reminds me very much of *Rough Ride* by Paul Kimmage in that respect - the means may change, but the underlying stuff stays exactly the same.

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by dogbeak - 09-05-2008 12:17

Congratulations Toro, you are the 100th poster.

(edit: or 100th replier, if anyone wants to get pedantic - and I'm sure they do.)

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Lyra - 09-05-2008 13:46

Yeah and on that topic can we get rid of the bit in parentheses in the thread title? It's really really really annoying. Really.

=====

Re:Current Reading

Posted by Crusoe - 09-05-2008 15:55

Easily done...

=====

Re:Current Reading (first books century thread?)

Posted by Wyatt Earp - 11-05-2008 11:34

meltdowngraphics wrote:

I've just finished "The Satanic Verses" (at age 54), and it was worth it! Now for some more lighthearted reading – "The Far Corner" by Harry Pearson. Great anecdotes and stories about North-east football. Has anyone else read this? Yeah, it's great.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by toro toro toro - 12-05-2008 20:03

Breakfast of Champions is fantastic. Written in this incredibly blank, childlike fashion, which by never mentioning its moral critique of what it observes at all, points it all the more sharply.

Loved it loved it loved it.

Coming to the end of the (wonderful) Murdoch book, and just starting into Beckett's For To End Yet Again. And (still) working through the Cantos.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 12-05-2008 21:06

I just finished The Rebel Sell and will offer a full book report on OTF soon. I'm reading Gibson's Count Zero which is sort of the sequel to Neuromancer, but not really.

I've got a bunch of stuff on my reading table - novels, graphic novels and other. I think I'm going to re-read the first two volumes of Hellboy soon.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Lyra - 12-05-2008 21:20

Excellent, perfect...

Me I'm starting on The Mysteries of Udolpho. I need some thrills.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 13-05-2008 09:36

Working on Mark McKinnon's The New Cold War, which is quite good. I hadn't quite realised the extent to which George Soros and Madeleine Albright were involved in the overthrow of Milosevic, and the extent to which senior Otpor leaders later became "revolution consultants" (paid by Soros) to the rest of the former Warsaw Pact. I mean, great that Milosevic got kicked out when he did (and better the way he got kicked out than by, say, invading Serbia), but still a bit slippery-slope-ish.

On the weekend, finished Iain Banks' Look to Windward. I had never read any of his stuff before, and I really enjoyed it. I bought a couple of more Culture novels to read on my next insane journey (only twelve days away, o joy o bliss).

Reed: Count Zero is not bad as early Gibson goes, but I liked Mona Lisa Overdrive better. And Idoru is possibly best of all (though it's a bit later).

Did you like The Rebel Sell?.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Lyra - 13-05-2008 10:03

I'm glad you liked Look to Windward. I love love love the Culture novels. What else have you got?

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 14-05-2008 11:19

Er, I'll have to go look...

(dashes into the house and up the stairs)

Excession and Use of Weapons. You read them?

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by toro toro toro toro - 14-05-2008 23:29

The Beckett is superb, albeit very brief - again, under sixty pages all told. The Murdoch is now done, and was utterly superb - a total mind-changer. She's an absolutely brilliant philosopher, it's quite amazing that such a high proportion of the comparatively small amount of philosophical work referencing her is so appallingly slipshod.

I'm about to start Pierre Vidal-Naquet's The Jews: History, Memory, and the Present about which I know almost nothing, save that the blurb is enticing, and it was dirt cheap in the British Library bookshop when I was joining there.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 15-05-2008 00:17

"Reed: Count Zero is not bad as early Gibson goes, but I liked Mona Lisa Overdrive better. And Idoru is possibly best of all (though it's a bit later).

I have Mona Lisa Overdrive. I'll read it soon after I finish Count Zero.

Did you like The Rebel Sell?."

Most of it, yes. I've been meaning to write about that, but I have a lot of thoughts and haven't had time.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by boris - 15-05-2008 21:51

I've recently finished Single and Single by John Le Carré, and am now reading (by pure coincidence, because it just happened to be the next unread book on my pile of unread books) another Le Carré: Absolute Friends.

I do like Le Carré's style: very easy to read, very sensible, cerebral, and (unlike, say, Robert Ludlum) for 'spy' novels they concentrate on characters and relationships rather than action and the literary equivalent of SFX. If I'm not careful, I could get to become a Le Carré completist.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 18-05-2008 02:19

Since my last post on this thread, too long ago, I've finished Irving and gone through Wonder Boys, which is as wonderful as everything I've read thus far by Michael Chabon. He's a really seriously bloody good writer, that man.

That was followed by Richard Gott's Cuba: A New History, in preparation for my trip in July. Very interesting, although the first 450 years take up just under the first half of the book, and the most recent 50 take up just over the second half. Inevitable I suppose.

Also inevitably, given that it was published last year, it's now going out of date at a rate the author couldn't have predicted would happen quite so soon.

Today, I started Paul Auster's The New York Trilogy, which I'm enjoying so far. I'm also having a go at Federico García Lorca's Blood Wedding in Spanish. Well alright, no need for 'having a go', I'm just reading it. It's incredibly simple language but utterly beautiful.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Matej - 19-05-2008 15:26

As I figured, I did nothing on my vacation during the day but sit on the beach and read.

Pale Fire what a strange and wonderful book. Probably deserves its own thread.

Oh Play That Thing A very quick and enjoyable read. I quite liked it too. When is Part three coming out?

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by toro toro toro - 22-05-2008 19:40

Les Juifs was fantastic. Really, really enjoyed it.

I'm currently in the middle of Roland Barthes' Mythologies, Vikram Seth's quite wonderful The Golden Gate, and The Cantos.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by willie1foot - 22-05-2008 20:44

Just started The Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold on the recommendation of a couple of friends. Enjoying it so far, but it is a harrowing read.

Unfortunately, my workload at the moment is so high that I;m not getting a lot of time to read.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Broken Clock - 22-05-2008 23:26

Just finished Tim Moore's "Do Not Pass Go" Its a history/guide to the streets of the London edition of Monopoly. Some interesting stuff included but its way way too long.

Starting Chris Ayres "War Reporting For Cowards" anyone read it?

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by erwin - 23-05-2008 02:17

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Vikram Seth's quite wonderful The Golden Gate

Dunno about that, but had to read his Two Lives last year - in light of which dishwater began to take on immense interest.

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by JtS - 23-05-2008 14:08

Right, in the last 2 weeks, I finished Watchmen which I felt was underwhelming; Lee Child's Jack Reacher novel, Persuader; Lucky at Cards a Hard Case Crime novel by Lawrence Sanders; and on the tube this morning, Double Deuce one of Robert B. Parker's Spencer books.

I've got the Complete Maus to finish, and I'll probably start one of The Yiddish Policeman's Union, another Reacher book, or another Spencer book.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by toro toro toro toro - 23-05-2008 23:27

I haven't read his prose, but The Golden Gate is, so far, a fantastically witty and funny verse novel.

I finished the Barthes, which was excellent, and am now reading Freud's writings on sexuality.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Lyra - 28-05-2008 09:56

In Italy I read the first volume of George RR Martin's short stories, which are mostly aces, and also began The Charterhouse of Parma, which is lots of fun so far. And then I chanced upon a French copy in France (who would have thought it) so I took it as a *sign* and I am going to read it in French at the same time. Being as how I need to improve my French sharpish.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 28-05-2008 15:06

Well, The New York Trilogy is bloody brilliant, but I shall have to read it about five times more before I can even hope to understand it all. It's not what I expected and it's not always easy, but it's very noir and very good, the final story in

particular.

I'm now onto giving Bodas de Sangre (Blood Wedding) my full attention.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by ursus arctos - 28-05-2008 15:24

I used to eat in the Moon Palace and still don't feel I've got all of the New York Trilogy.

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by toro toro toro toro - 28-05-2008 18:11

The Freud was a bit disappointing - it's all so widely accepted (or at least known) now as to feel lacking in any really new insight.

I'm following it with Susan Sontag's On Photography.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by erwin - 28-05-2008 21:46

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Elmore Leonard's Out of Sight. I've seen the film (very good - with George Clooney and J Lo) and was a bit wary of reading the book because I'd seen somewhere that the film was very faithful to it, and therefore I'd already know the story). But it's brilliant - humour and style and sassiness absolutely drip from the dialogues and descriptions:

(Foley learns that his friend Buddy is going to use a guy called Glen - who likes to wear sunglasses everywhere, even when it's pitch black - to help him break out of prison. Foley phones his ex on the day of the breakout. "Tell Buddy I see this guy wearing sunglasses. I'll step on 'em. I might not even take 'em off him first.")

I love that kind of stuff.

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Lyra - 29-05-2008 07:56

Elmore Leonard is brilliant. Now I want to go and read one right now.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Inca - 29-05-2008 17:46

Started Drew Gilpin Faust's book This Republic of Suffering, about how Americans dealt with death during the Civil War. Her chapters each deal with a specific part of death--dying, burial, remembering, etc.--and how the Civil War challenged and changed American practices of death and mourning. It's very good so far.

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Not me - 30-05-2008 10:53

Drew Gilpin Faust is a remarkable name.

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Inca - 30-05-2008 13:30

She's the new (well, new-ish, I think it's been about a year) president of Harvard.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Coffy - 30-05-2008 13:39

I had a class on the South taught by her, many moons ago. She was one of those professors who would bring their dogs to class with them.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Inca - 30-05-2008 15:27

Never knew such professors existed.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 31-05-2008 00:27

I'm onto the introduction to Bodas de Sangre now. I read a synopsis of it on (English) Wikipedia when I'd finished and discovered that two of the approximately five words I wasn't quite sure as to the meanings of, were absolutely crucial to being able to follow the plot properly. Which explains why I wasn't quite sure what was going at certain points (the other reason being I've been absolutely exhausted all week)...

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Broken Clock - 01-06-2008 23:01

We had a teacher who used to bring his dog to school, he used to leave it in his Ford escort van during lessons....it was like something from Shameless. Thank (his) god that Keith Joseph closed the school down a few years later.

Elmore Leonard's the reason Guttenberg persevered in my opinion.

Just finished "War Reporting For Cowards" by Chris Ayres. An overstretched mildly amusing account of his time as an accidental war correspondent in Iraq.

Cant decide between Billy Braggs "The Progressive Patriot" or Jeremy Paxmans "The English" for the journey to work tomorrow. Any suggestions?

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by The Chubby Cyclist - 03-06-2008 09:24

Finished Vineland on Friday which opened up floodgates and meant that I read Iain Banks's The Business and half of The Human Stain in the last couple of days.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by boris - 03-06-2008 10:01

I'm now about a third of the way through How the Dead Live by Will Self. It's the first Self novel I've read, and so far I like it, although he tends towards turgidity at times. An excellent premise too, about an cantankerous, cancerous old woman, who continues with her ill-temper even after she dies from her cancer. The passage of her actual dying was extremely powerful, and I've just started on the post-death chapters.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by snoro snoro snoro snoro - 04-06-2008 00:33

The Golden Gate was mesmerising. A great, great stylist, moving easily between transcendence ans the lightest of light verse, in the tightest of tight structures - even the contents were in sonnet form.

Just finished The Last Llanelli Train by Rob Lewis. I stole it from someone who had stolen it from someone else, because many people I know were eager to read it, and few to give the author money.

I mean no negativity in calling it second-rate David Peace. That's still very good.

Getting close to the end of The Cantos, and have just started Susan Sontag's On Photography.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 04-06-2008 01:36

Relish it. If we were doing a Non-fiction Top 20 it would be way high on my list. Certainly the finest collection of essays on a single medium I've read in the past thirty years. When you're finished I'd be really interested in your opinion.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by snoro snoro snoro snoro - 04-06-2008 01:52

Then you shall have it:) It was actually a spur-of-the-moment add-on purpose - Amazon recommended bundling it with Barthes' Camera Lucida, after I'd been so impressed with the last of his I read...

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Nuno Gomes Loves Lyra - 10-06-2008 12:20

So I'm still reading the Stendhal but intermittently as I keep picking up and putting down other stuff. I will spare you the details of various serial killer thrillers. But I did reread Pattern Recognition by William Gibson and I liked it much more this time than when it first came out. I wonder if it's because OTF is much more like the forum he describes, so it seemed more real to me (I think at the time I read it I was spending much more time in the kinds of places where on-topic posts were the exception, maybe).

And thenyesterday I started on Lautreamont's Chants de Maldoror which is top stuff. Horribly sadistic 19th-century surrealist dream nonsense, it's brilliant.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by toro toro - 10-06-2008 20:09

I've just, five minutes ago, finished The Cantos. Finally.

I may start a thread, when I get my breath back. Bloody hell, that took a while.

The push to finish it (them?) has dented my headway on Sontag, but I've started into Sartre's The Age of Reason, which like of all of his stuff is great, albeit pushing way too hard for his wrong philosophy of wrongness. Why didn't Merleau-Ponty write novels?

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Nuno Gomes Loves Lyra - 10-06-2008 21:07

Crikey. Congratulations.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 13-06-2008 12:30

Since Lorca I've gone through Raymond Chandler's The Big Sleep and have now started on Farewell, My Lovely. I've got them in a one-volume trilogy which ends with The Long Goodbye so although I wouldn't normally read three books by one author consecutively* it's going to happen this time...

*Borges excepted, of course.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by goldstone97 - 16-06-2008 18:02

I'm currently reading Nixonland by Rick Perlstein, a seriously in-depth look (900 pages) at Nixon and American society based around the elections from '64 to '72.

It's full of interesting detail excavated mainly from his long study of newspaper archives, though much of the material is familiar to any novice student of the period (hardly an understudied one). Unfortunately, at times it feels like reading bits of all the nation's daily newspapers chronologically, interspersed with Perlstein's sometimes clumsy attempts to inject pithy analysis (by following quotes with notes in parenthesis and using exclamation marks! or italics!).)

The writing is a little too forced; whilst I get tired of traditional dry historical writing, there's a little too much effort to insert some colour into every paragraph here. That said, the vast array of anecdotes Perlstein's collected have many gems amongst them.

The central thesis is to emphasise the conservative backlash that developed in the period, and which Perlstein seems to think has been underexamined compared to the counter-culture he also explores, and led to the blue-red divide still with us today.

I'm only halfway through so I'll reserve judgment on it as a whole for now.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by JtS - 17-06-2008 08:29

SamKelly, if you haven't done so already, you should read Chandler's short stories, they are brilliant.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by toro toro - 17-06-2008 23:42

I'm making good headway on the Sontag, which is every bit as superb as AdeC says. I'm also nearing the end of The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner, which is staggering. Having not read him before, I'm definitely seeing why people talk about him with such awe.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Etienne - 18-06-2008 14:31

The sociology library at Cardiff is currently doing its summer purge of books, so I'm getting lots of free books, whose analysis is somewhat out of date.

Just read Steve Barnett Games and Sets on the history of Sport and TV, which was very interesting, but being written in 1988 was a different world from today. Think I might start a thread on it in fact.

Am now splitting my time between The First Casualty by Phillip Knightley, a history of war correspondents, which is great, readable and informative, and with some very quotable anecdotes; and Ursula le Guin The Disposed, which is good fun too. Think I'll be looking for more of her stuff afterwards.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by bull bull - 18-06-2008 22:27

Finished Sontag and Faulkner, am now embarking on David James Duncan's The River Why (his The Brothers K is pretty much my favourite book ever) and Charles Taylor's Sources of the Self, which I always feel I skimmed through waaaaay too fast the first time I read it.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 19-06-2008 00:31

Thanks for the recommendation, JtS, I will be doing (although not immediately).

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by The Fifth Beatle - 23-06-2008 20:34

Am stocking up on summer reading and have these in a checkout at Amazon - would like your comments before I click to purchase...

What a Carve Up - J. Coe
The Accidental Woman - Coe again
(I have read and enjoyed Rotter's Club and House of Sleep)

Mother's Milk - E. St Aubyn
Teenage - Jon Savage

White Noise - DeLillo
Being Dead - J Crace

Am currently reading 'In Irons : Britain's Naval Supremacy and the American Revolutionary economy' which is actually really fascinating stuff.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Etienne - 23-06-2008 21:04

I didn't like What A Carve Up (having enjoyed House of Sleep a lot), I thought it was a bit like being repeatedly hit with a sledgehammer of liberal outrage - and I'm all in favour of liberal outrage.

I haven't read any of the others.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Jimski - 23-06-2008 21:38

Ooh, no What A Carve Up! is excellent. My favourite Coe is The Rotter's Club, but for me What A Carve Up! runs The House of Sleep close as his next best.

The only one of his I thought disappointing was The Closed Circle.

Funnily enough, I'm currently close to being finished his latest, The rain Before It Falls, which is a definite return to form.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by J1s - 23-06-2008 21:48

What A Carve Up is certainly the most overtly political/satirical of Coe's books but it's also brilliantly plotted and has a few genuine laugh-out-loud moments (for me, anyway). I thought Accidental Woman was okay but nothing special. It was his first novel but the fifth one I read by him so maybe that's what underwhelmed me.

I haven't read any of the others either.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Jimski - 23-06-2008 21:57

I think his earlier ones are slighter than 'the big three' but still very enjoyable reads.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 24-06-2008 00:23

Finished Farewell, My Lovely and I'm now onto The Long Goodbye. After that I'll probably have to get down with some MORE spy fiction and read Our Man In Havana, on account of I'm going there in three weeks!

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 24-06-2008 03:06

Enthralled with Why Art Cannot Be Taught by James Elkins, though I realise it won't be of much interest to anyone not involved in art education. Also dipping into the gorgeous Lucas Cranach catalogue from the spring exhibition at the RA. Bedtime reading is Big Money by P.G. Wodehouse. Perfect to nod off with, the plot is tissue thin so there's no worry about forgetting anything, or losing the place, but every page has at least one hilarious paragraph to guarantee you'll fall asleep with a smile on your face.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 24-06-2008 08:20

Charles Taylor's Sources of the Self, which I always feel I skimmed through waaaaay too fast the first time I read it.

I keep picking up A Secular Age at the local bookstore and thinking I really should read this.

And then I remember my classes with Taylor and how infrequently I really understood what the hell he was on about and realizing how little I would likely enjoy it.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Nuno Gomes Loves Lyra - 24-06-2008 08:34

I thought Being Dead was awful, I'm afraid.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by bull bull - 25-06-2008 00:01

Waitwaitwaitwait...

AG, you were taught by Taylor.

Fucking hell, SR got taught by Bernard Williams, Inca or Reed by Rorty, and UA by Quine.

I feel all behumbled.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 25-06-2008 02:01

The equivalent of two full-year courses as an undergrad, yeah. But it was wasted on me, unfortunately.

He taught this great first-year course with two other profs - Jim Tully (who has something of a name in Canada) and James Booth (now at Vanderbilt). They'd pick three texts each term (starting with Plato and ending with Arendt) and just argue about them in front of 150 kids. Tully and Booth were comprehensible, but Taylor's mind was working several levels above where the students were. so you could see his mind whirring along quickly in these discussions and he was just grabbing little bits and pieces of it he thought we might understand. There were nuggets in there, but it could come across as a little disjointed.

Lovely man, though.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Not me - 25-06-2008 21:54

I'm getting stuck into Stephen Pinker's *The Stuff Of Thought* (fascinating so far) and limiting myself to one helping of *What Ho! The Best of P.G. Wodehouse* per day. The extract from *The Clicking Of Cuthbert* with the Russian novelist is my favourite so far.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Andy C - 26-06-2008 12:15

PG Wodehouse not bad.

I've just finished *Hot Water* as it happens, one of the very best of his novels that don't belong to a series.

In parallel I've been tackling *The Tale of Genji*, the eleventh-century story of life in and around the Japanese court written by Murasaki Shikibu. It's heavy going for a number of reasons. Though I'm reading a modern translation, it remains highly stylised. Most of the meaningful exchanges between characters centre upon allusions to Chinese poetry and contain symbolism and wordplay that seems largely lost to the reader in my situation, despite the translator's footnotes. It's also difficult to understand the characters' motivations and morals because the world of the book is so far removed from our own. It's a polygamous society, and the treatment of women both before and after they're seduced is really difficult to understand. The protocols of things like gift-giving and visiting are wholly alien to the modern western reader. It's pretty much assumed that the reader is familiar with the structures and hierarchy of the court and surrounding society - very much an unwarranted assumption in my case. And it doesn't do enough to help me understand from this great remove the society that it depicts - I don't feel I'm learning very much at all about the way that the Japan of the time worked or what it was like to live in it.

The biggest problem of it is that it's incredibly samey. For the most part it's a litany of affairs, with pretty much the same sequence of events each time: manoeuvring to get into the woman's (or her relations') favour, the brief contact, and the subsequent responsibility for the taken woman.

Having said all that it remains a remarkable work. The claims made for it that it's the world's first novel are debatable; nevertheless it's an astonishingly accomplished piece of work for one with so few, if any, precedents. It's very long - nearly 1200 pages in the version I'm tackling - and covers a span of maybe seventy years, and yet the consistency with which the author handles the many characters is remarkable. They all age at exactly the same rate, for example.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Not me - 26-06-2008 17:13

Aye. Not good, but not bad.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Kowalski - 26-06-2008 23:38

John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* - I like so far.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by bull bull - 26-06-2008 23:44

Loving the Charles Taylor, and I've just started into William Gaddis' *Carpenters' Gothic*. A hell of a lot lighter than *The Recognitions*, but physically and (so far) in tone, but great fun.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 03-07-2008 14:30

I need to get hold of everything Raymond Chandler's ever written. The Long Goodbye is absolutely ruddy brilliant.

I'm now on Our Man In Havana in preparation for my holidays (12 days and counting), and it's quite comfortably the silliest book I've read all year. Very enjoyable indeed.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 03-07-2008 17:21

Thomas Mann, Joseph and His Brothers

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by ursus arctos - 03-07-2008 18:23

Sam, you need this and this.

But what you really need is to go to Los Angeles and have Inca show you what it's all about.

Impressively obscure pick from Bruno (and one Mann that I haven't read). As much as I may decry their club allegiances, I'm genuinely thrilled that Bruno and SixMartlets are around to disprove the universal applicability of general stereotypes of Milanisti and Juventini.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 03-07-2008 18:58

ursus-
there's, like, a new translation, it is teh awesome.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 03-07-2008 19:00

did i mention it's a brisk read.

well, no, it isn't. effing great though.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by ursus arctos - 03-07-2008 19:03

Is it Stephen Mitchell? He's the Paolo Maldini of translators of German into English.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by bull bull - 03-07-2008 19:59

Carpenter's Gothic was dazzling, and hilarious. Much easier to follow than The Recognitions, but without the same erudite depth. I'm about to start Slaughterhouse Five.

The Taylor is utterly great. Incredibly wide-ranging, incredibly learned, incredibly provocative. It's really a major, major work of philosophy.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 03-07-2008 20:50

ursus arctos wrote:

Is it Stephen Mitchell? He's the Paolo Maldini of translators of German into English.

No, it's John E. Woods, who has already done Buddenbrooks, Zauberberg and Faustus. To critical acclaim and all that. Joseph is a good 1500 tiny print pages in English, so I'm assuming it's at least 3000 pages in German.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by ursus arctos - 03-07-2008 21:00

I tried Zauberberg auf Deutsch.

I didn't make it to the first base camp . . .

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 03-07-2008 21:55

I've met Germans who would rather read Mann in English.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by SamLKelly - 04-07-2008 18:19

ursus arctos wrote:

Sam, you need this and this.

Thanks, Ursus. Think I'll stick to Amazon UK though. My Christ, books are expensive in the States!

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 06-07-2008 23:57

Our Man In Havana finished (and watched the film with my brother last night). Pity about the final couple of chapters, which are a bit of a rubbish end to an otherwise very good book.

I'm now onto Huckleberry Finn, which I think I've probably read before but can't remember, and I can't have read all of it (an abridged kiddies' version, possibly. I've definitely seen it on stage).

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by toro toro - 07-07-2008 00:08

I loved The Magic Mountain, and intended to reread it like Mann says. But shortly after finishing, I had a serious lung disease, which necessitated an ever-lengthening stay in a ward up at the top of an old hospital. I'm really not sure about going back.

Am loving Slaughterhouse 5, though it's not on the same level as Breakfast of Champions. Yet.

Finished the Taylor, which was nothing at all short of magnificent, and am now reading Freud's "Dora" and "Little Hans" case studies.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Jimski - 07-07-2008 16:53

I'm about 100 pages into Richard Ford's The Sportswriter, and finding it very very good so far.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by JtS - 09-07-2008 08:32

I'm reading Frequent Flyer by Kinky Friedman, the writing is ok, but the storyline isn't all that at the moment.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Fatter Hipper - 09-07-2008 14:46

I'd recommend Sirens of Titan, toro toro. An incredible read that builds and builds and ties together everything perfectly at the end, despite it all seeming rather disparate and all-over-the-place on the way there.

I've just read two books in one sitting, which I don't think I've done before. The first was 'Lathe of Heaven' by Ursula Le Guin, who's one of my favourite authors. A good read, although not in the same league as Left Hand of Darkness or The Dispossessed. The premise is good (a man who changes the world with his dreams is used by a utopian scientist) but it's a little clunky in places (the scientist is called Haber- Habermas- and the dreamer is George Orr). The end doesn't quite work either, but I'd still recommend it to anyone after some intelligent sci-fi.

The other was The Road by Cormac McCarthy. I know there was a long thread about it on the old board, and I'm afraid I have to join the 'don't get the fuss' group. A great page-turner and a good account of father/son relationship, but I found it very underwhelming overall. I was riveted, but never shocked, never appalled and didn't have my faith in the power of humanity restored like all the reviews told me I would.

It seemed to be in a strange limbo between Samuel Beckett (the old man tapping his cane talking in semi-riddles was straight out of Waiting for Godot) and that ITV post-apocalypse drama 'The Last Train' from about 1998.

I actually think it might make a better film than it did book- and I hear Viggo Mortenson's playing 'Man', so I've reasonably high hopes for that.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Ginger Yellow - 09-07-2008 15:37

FH, did you read my Lathe of Heaven post on the old board? I'd be interested to get your thoughts.

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Jimski - 09-07-2008 16:58

Has anybody else here read The Sportswriter then? (I'm sure I recall Ford's name being mentioned here when it meant a lot less to me.) The more I get into it, and I'm about halfway, the more I'm beginning to think it is a seriously good book.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Fatter Hipper - 11-07-2008 14:08

I just have, GY. I'd not given much thought to the lack of character development of Orr. Compared with main characters in other Le Guin stories we certainly know little about him, though his thought processes are spelt out fairly clearly, so we sympathise with him from the off. I didn't see this as any particular literary tactic other than to cut the book down; perhaps Le Guin experimenting with a more direct form of writing (this fits in with her saying that she wanted to write a book like Dick). The character of Orr is not important, just as the ideology (communist/fascist) of a utopian movement is not important- any attempt at designing a static utopia is doomed to failure.

I've started reading one of those Jasper Fforde books you see all over the place but after 57 pages it's starting to grate. 1 in 4 supposedly funny bits are funny but the other 3 are painful. I didn't like The Hitch-Hiker's Guide as a novel much, so I guess I'm unlikely to like a second-rate Hitch-Hiker's. I'd probably like it as a radio serial, though...

I really can't decide what to start next but I think Fowles' The Collector might just win the day.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by JtS - 14-07-2008 08:55

Frequent Flyer finished well but was a tough slog for a while, it was a bit too much of a mystery for the first 3/4 of the book.

Onto Gold by Dan Rhodes, which has started very nicely, reads really well. I read his book of "2 paragraph" short stories Anthology years and years ago, it was aces.

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http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51QF98ZC3TL._SL500_BO2,204,203,200_Plsitb-dp-500-arrow,TopRight,45,-64_OU02_AA240_SH20_.jpg

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Doctoro Doctoro - 15-07-2008 22:52

The Freud was excellent, far better for getting a handle on what he thinks and why it makes sense than any of his "theoretical" writings. I was reading Our Man In Havana and loving it, until I lost it on the tube two pages from the end. Ironically, I'd been out at a Salsa night with an old friend and her Cuban fiancé, wearing a Vuelta Ciclistica A Cuba Socialista t-shirt. I suppose something had to give.

I'll finish it in a bookshop.

I'm reading Ezra Pound's Selected Prose right now - thoroughly deranged, but utterly brilliant. This morning I finished Andrew Sullivan's Virtually Normal; a superb and courageous work, extremely rigorous, yet never remotely detached from the incredibly personal nature of its message and reflections. Not quite right in every argument, but certainly one of the best books about homosexuality - and about politics generally - that I've ever read.

It took me a while to realise why I was getting the eye from so many blokes on the tube while reading it. Duh.

I'm just about to start Saul Bellow's Herzog now, meandering through the introductory essay, which I do hope doesn't Pale Fire it all to hell...

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Lyra - 16-07-2008 09:27

Speaking of which. I have finally decided to start Pale Fire. I did not read the introductory essay.

It's interesting so far but I can't help wondering if I'm missing something. Or will it all fall into place later on? I mean, I think I get what's going on but I thought I ought to be more overwhelmed by it. Maybe it's because following a commentary is too much like work. The kind of bitchiness about the critical process is pretty funny, and the stuff about variant readings I like a lot, and all the kind of metanarrative flights of fancy are really nice.

also I think I might have to call one of my chapters 'the innocent author' although I will no doubt be the 8,957th person to do so.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Lyra - 16-07-2008 10:22

From the programme I'm watching at the minute:

Nobody's really familiar with Pound.
They just fake it.

Toro's proving them wrong by the looks of it. I wish I had the space in my head to read stuff like that.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Melbourne Arab - 16-07-2008 13:44

Have just finished JG Ballard's "Kingdom Come" - it was absolutely awful. It's not particularly long but it was a real struggle to finish - in fact, I'm not sure why I bothered.

The start is moderately promising but, for the most part it's just plain silly and I can't think of any other book I've read where I've finished up knowing virtually nothing about the central characters (and caring even less).

Even the proofreader did a crap job - one of the main characters, Tom Carradine, is twice described as David Carradine.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Doctoro Doctoro - 16-07-2008 18:56

Ly - the prose is actually pretty straightforward and accessible. Deranged, and very erudite, but he's explaining what he means as he goes along, rather than assuming you can read greek letters, chinese ideograms, egyptian hieroglyphs, and are intimately familiar with all the same books of history, economics, and provencal troubador poetry that he is, as he does in the Cantos.

I mean, it would be hard to stress enough how necessary a commentary is for that book. The prose is extremely clear, though.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 16-07-2008 21:00

I don't claim to know what he means, but he sounds totally far out

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Doctoro Doctoro - 17-07-2008 18:11

Ah, brilliant!

I love that poem.

"Damn it all! All this our South stinks peace!"

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Doctoro Doctoro - 17-07-2008 18:12

He writes pretty much as he sounds, actually...

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 17-07-2008 23:59

Yeah, I should probably give him a go (though I prefer to listen rather than read poetry on the whole— but we've already done that). He's one of those genuinely mad/brilliant artists who wandered Edwardian London and I love that period. It was like the early days of Rock 'n' Roll.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Aidan - 24-07-2008 08:18

Nineteen Minutes (Jodi Picoult). I'm at the trial stage - some 500 pages in, another 100ish to go. Longest I've ever stuck a book for.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 25-07-2008 00:10

Finished the Pound Selected Prose about five minutes ago, and coming towards the end of Herzog - I've liked it a lot, but not been ever really dazzled.

Coming up; A Time To Fight by Jim "Not the VP nominee" Webb, and Nabaokov's The Luzhin Defense.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 25-07-2008 02:21

A Time To Fight by Jim "Not the VP nominee" Webb,

The one who wrote MacArthur Park is it then?

Before kickstarting Proust, I'm juggling The Case for Literature by Gao Xingjian and The Cold Six Thousand by James Ellroy. The latter seems to have whittled his prose down to a succession of eight word paragraphs — I wonder what Henry

James would think. Gao is a course book. he has much to say concerning the role of the artist in the 21st century, we'll be playing footsie with him in seminars I'm sure.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by gerontophile - 29-07-2008 06:44

'Homeland' by Sam Lipsyte. Really strange. I like it a lot, although I am just about halfway through, and it is becoming more difficult. So far, its about a man who is updating his High School/College yearbook, and isnt the star that everyone else seems to be, but is a writer, and from what I can tell the word BITTER oozes from his keyboard. Seriously good (so far).

'Addition' by Toni Jordan. I didnt realise that this was touted by Richard & Judy, and normally I would have run a mile (dont know why), but it is absolutely riveting. Its about a youngish lady with serious OCD, and how meeting someone, changes her life. Again, I am about 100 pages in and its captivated me. (although the fact that I am 100 pages in and havent finished it, is perhaps means it is not so riveting)

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by JtS - 29-07-2008 09:54

Gold reads very nicely, but not a whole lot happens, and it ends very strangely.

Onto The Hard Way by Lee Child, which is one of those you want to read all the time and stop doing anything else.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Andy C - 29-07-2008 14:44

I'm still reading the Tale of Genji.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Broken Clock - 29-07-2008 20:52

Just finished "Hallucinating Foucault" by Patricia Duncker. Winner of "the Dillons First Fiction Award 1997"!!!!. Nearly threw it away after the first page as it starts with "a dream sequence" and thats my pet hate in fiction. It got better but only just.

Ive now read two books with Foucault in the title, (Foucaults Pendulum by Umberto Eco) and Ive still got no inclination to google him. He sounds bloody hard work to be honest. Lifes too short.

Hmmm "Bobby Fischer Goes To War" (Chess) or "Bringing Down The House" (Las Vegas Scam) or "Touching The Void" (Mountaineering) or "Night Train" (Sonny Liston)next?

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Crusoe - 30-07-2008 15:51

Holiday reading from the honeymoon:

Eighth Air Force, Donald Miller - chunky & visceral history of American bombers in Europe. Standard modern day World War II history fare.

The End of Mr Y, Scarlett Thomas - good holiday reading - not the most likeable characters (a bit perfect-for-being-

imperfect) but a decent page-turner plot (very similar in some ways to The Raw Shark Texts).

The Last Godfathers, John Follain - I'd read his earlier history of the Corleonesi (A Dishonoured Society), this turned out just to be an update with the last ten years' activity. Decent mix of fact and sensationalism.

Spitfire: Portrait of a Legend, Leo McKinstry - worryingly over-enthusiastic, anally detailed history, endorsed bizarrely by both Jeremy Paxman and Jeremy Clarkson. Not a keeper.

Yes Minister - always a good read.

Nemesis, Max Hastings - okay. Not a bad potted history of the close of World War II against Japan, some interesting coverage of the war in China, but a bit skimpy and disconnected.

And the picks of the last two weeks:

Un Lun Dun, China Mieville - fantastic children's novel just as good for adults. Unsurprisingly not particularly in-depth but fantastically rich - Neverwhere meets Jumanji meets Harry Potter, sort of.

Neverwhere, Neil Gaiman - had been putting this off for ages, not as good as American Gods but still a nicely imaginative read. Something about his occasional jokes and the typeface used in every Gaiman book does annoy me, strangely.

Glass Books of the Dream Eaters, G W Dahlquist - still reading this one, nicely overblown Victoriana - Sherlock Holmes with more sex and violence. Like a slightly more serious version of Mark Gatiss' Lucifer Box novels.

And the overall winner:

Soon I Will Be Invincible, Austin Grossman - a real tribute to every superhero and supervillain cliché, action-packed, thoughtful, with added pathos and a real sense of sympathy and comic timing ("why does nobody fear my blaster?"). Doctor Impossible is one of my favourite characters in recent reads.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 30-07-2008 16:29

You did that much reading on your honeymoon? I hope Mrs Crusoe had a good time.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Crusoe - 30-07-2008 16:34

Heh. We waved at each other occasionally - her sunbathing, me at the pool bar.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 30-07-2008 21:22

The Luzhin Defense was excellent. Not (nearly) as polished as his more mature stuff, but one of the most engaging things I've read of his. Probably would have been a bit better had I understood more about chess, although it pulled off very well the trick of making me feel as though I did.

I'm getting through the Webb, which is very clear-minded and committed, if a tad self-important. And I'm just about to start into Sebastian Barker's The Erotics of God. I really (, really) liked his long Nietzsche poem, so it'll be interesting to see how that cast of mind fits into a smaller format.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by bewaldeth - 31-07-2008 09:26

Not long finished 'Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close' by Jonathan Safran Foer - slightly strange, but engaging and moving nonetheless.

Now juggling 'McCarthy's Bar' (light summer reading) with 'Gulag' by Anne Applebaum. If the latter is as good as the quotes liberally plastered all over the cover suggest, then it should be a worthwhile few weeks (I don't get as much time to read as I would like!).

Oh, and I should probably say hello.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Aidan - 31-07-2008 13:05

I like Ben Elton's books but not sci-fi ; would ye recommend Blind Faith? Got it from library yesterday, found the first two chapters a bit heavy.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 02-08-2008 02:54

Finished Huck Finn and since my holiday in Cuba I've been reading César Miguel Rondón's The Book Of Salsa (English translation of El libro de la salsa), which I'll probably finish this weekend.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 03-08-2008 14:53

Finished the Webb - impressive, and very informative on foreign policy/military stuff, but a bit self-absorbed...

Am reading Harlod Bloom's A Map of Misreading now, which is very tough going, but dazzlingly brilliant. I heart Harold Bloom. Not really started into the Barker properly yet.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 03-08-2008 17:08

So...just back from a week at the cottage (aka reading camp)on Lake Winnipeg and I plowed throughthe following:

We are Beginning Our Descent - James Meek
The Yiddish Policeman's Union - Michael Chabon
The Post-American World - Fareed Zakaria
Midnight in Sicily - Peter Robb
Consider Phlebas - Iain Banks
Football and Fascism - Simon Martin

Robb is excellent, the rest intermittently good, except Banks - that was the least interesting of the five Culture novels I've read.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 05-08-2008 12:46

I've now started The Travels of Marco Polo, which would be great if it weren't for enormous holes in the middle of the narrative...

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Lyra - 06-08-2008 10:42

Doghead by Morten Ramsland. "A saga of three generations of a family in the 20th century" would normally put me right off, but this is three generations of strange Norwegian men, rather than of working class women in Liverpool, say, so it's much better, and it's great fun.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 06-08-2008 15:36

Just finished DeNiro's Game by Rawi Hage, which is quite excellent and I recommend to all.

Now starting on Nudge, the new bestseller on Libertarian Paternalism by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, which will probably be worth a thread on its own once I'm done.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by gerontophile - 08-08-2008 20:53

Aidan wrote:

I like Ben Elton's books but not sci-fi ; would ye recommend Blind Faith? Got it from library yesterday, found the first two chapters a bit heavy.

Apologies, bit late replying.

It isnt particularly sci-fi, more a case of what may be possible in the not-too-distant future.

I thought it was very enjoyable, and not quite as annoying as some of his previous efforts.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 09-08-2008 10:48

Finished the astounding Bloom, and the slightly disappointing Barker. Am now reading J.L. Austin's How To Do Things With Words, which it's practically a matter of professional negligence not to have read before, and a Pablo Neruda Selected Poems.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toby Gymshorts - 09-08-2008 14:43

Currently it's "Where Have All The Good Times Gone?" by Louis Barfe. A warts n' all history of the recording industry - fact heavy, but in a good way, and extremely interesting.

No, I'm not on commission.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Jimski - 09-08-2008 21:17

I've been mainly reading American authors named Richard. That is, Richard Ford and Richard Yates. Very similar in some ways (subject matter), and very different in others (style). Yates in particular is effortlessly brilliant, describing events with a minimum of fuss. Ford is more meditative, writing in the first person, with hundreds of pages describing the events of two or three days, and mainly the thoughts of the protagonist who is living through them.

Both are very well worth reading. I've had some difficulty with attempts at reading contemporary US novels, and even started to wonder if there was indeed more of a cultural difference/barrier in books than there is in films, but these two have shown me the way. (The Road of course was another recent hit with me. I must've just been trying the wrong authors before that.)

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by gerontophile - 09-08-2008 21:41

Just finished 'Morality for Beautiful Girls' by Alexander McCall Smith, which is from the 'Number 1 Ladies' Detective Agency' series.

Gentle, but as good as always.

About to re-read Robert Heinlein's 'Stranger n a Strange Land'.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toby Gymshorts - 09-08-2008 23:05

Oh, and I'm reading "Big Sur" - Jack Kerouac.

For about the 15th time.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 11-08-2008 18:07

The earlier works of Neruda's career, at least as represented by the Penguin bilingual/selected edition I have, are certainly, uh... "born of sincere feeling."

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by G.Man wants a hyphen - 11-08-2008 20:32

I'm deciding to first read Alexander McCall's The No 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, to see what the fuss is about, or Tony Parsons' Stories We Could Tell, just to see if there might be a time when I could agree with the ghastly Julie Burchill.

Last book I read was an anthology of writings about Cape Town. I'm now very keen to find a 1979 book on the city by one Willem Steenkamp Sr, a journalist who had something like eight sons who were all called Willem and also all journalists (or so it seemed). Steenkamp Sr was a terrible apologist for apartheid army, the kind critical of the National Party but more so of the liberation movement. I was primed to hate his piece, of course, but it was utterly delightful, probably because it had nothing to do with politics.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by gerontophile - 13-08-2008 05:59

G-man: dont expect a thriller. Expect a wee story that will hold you, and want to make you continue reading forever, and if you know anything about Botswana, then even more so.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by G.Man wants a hyphen - 13-08-2008 10:21

All the better. I'm not a great fan of the thriller novel.

I've started reading the Parsons book. I'm rather enjoying it so far.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Rory Bunk - 14-08-2008 03:42

I'm keeping with my vow to try and read some more of the earlier classics by reading supposedly the big daddy of them all, Don Quixote.

250 pages in and it's excellent so far. I often tend to think of pre-20th Century humanity as almost a simple, inferior species (because they don't have Wikipedia and the Simpsons) and am always reminded that they are the same as us, with the same brain, capacity for humour and wit. Don Quixote demonstrates that.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by 1890 - 14-08-2008 22:25

Just finished a John Rebus story by Rankin, Set in Darkness. Kept me entertained whilst on holiday and I enjoyed the Edinburgh setting. As I was in the mountains for a few days, Hell of a Journey by Mike Cawthorne was a rather appropriate read although I suspect I had it easier than him, the Alps in summer being rather more welcoming than the Scottish Highlands in winter...Recommended for those who enjoy gruelling tales of man battling against the element whilst feeling at one with nature and pushing his ecological agenda. I certainly did enjoy it.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 15-08-2008 05:30

So, having now read Nudge by Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler, I've decided it's not worth starting a thread about. It's not wrong for the most part (except for the short bits at the beginning and end where the authors' megalomania leads them to suggest that their ideas genuinely represent some sort of new form of politics), but not in the least bit interesting. There is some interesting stuff going on in behavioural psychology and economics right now as they apply to public policy, and this is a simple re-gurgitation of it. Can't see how this book is making waves; have all of the reviewers and newspaper editors who have been promoting this book genuinely missed all this stuff before?

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by ursus arctos - 15-08-2008 07:07

I read their op-ed and had a similar reaction. I think that the hype is connected to Sunstein's general "superstar" status in certain circles and an effective campaign by their publisher and publicist.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 15-08-2008 11:02

Finally finished Joseph and His Brothers by Mann. It was dense & extremely prolix (duh) and hugely imaginative. It's supposed to be a vast sort of grand comedy but manages to be even less funny than Die Meistersinger, but is altogether dazzling and mind-blowing with all the sort of penetrating insights and visions you'd personally never have thought of on virtually every page. I recommend it to anyone who'd feel inclined to read a long serious book about a biblical story, very rewarding.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 16-08-2008 14:53

Reading Barthes' Camera Lucida and DeLillo's Cosmopolis. Differently dazzled by both.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Wyatt Earp - 17-08-2008 11:31

I'm halfway through Mark Twain's Roughing It, and for some reason I've suspended that in favour of some tragic relief, and am also halfway through Wilde's De Profundis. Which is predictably harrowing.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Tubby Isaacs - 17-08-2008 22:36

On King Lear again. I'm better with the language than ever before, but I'm still thick with plots. To paraphrase Jerry Seinfeld, I'm the bloke in the car park who suddenly shouts "Oh right! Lear's retinue weren't as noisy as Goneril said- she just wanted them out because they threatened her power"

I haven't got to the bit with the rainstorm and about 3 people acting mad yet, so it's quite jolly.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 18-08-2008 07:56

Just finished The Shadow of the Sun, a collection of writings on Africa by off fave Ryszard Kapuscinski. As usual, brilliant. Better than The Soccer War, I think. The focus on a single continent allows certain themes to gestate properly.

Has anyone read the book that was published posthumously, Travels with Herodotus? How is it?

Now about a third of the way into The World Without Us, by Alan Weisman. Enagagingly writren, although it does slither about from "what would happen if weren't here" to "what would have happened if we'd never been here" a bit maddeningly.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by JtS - 18-08-2008 16:30

I'm currently reading Dashiell Hammet's The Maltese Falcon, and heaving heard it's supposed to be fantastic I'm not that impressed. Some of the turns of phrase a very good however some of it is atrocious.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 21-08-2008 01:59

I'm reading the complete major works of St. Anselm, and a very large anthology of C20 English-language poetry.

About 1200 pages between them, don't expect updates on this thread any time soon...

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Tubby Isaacs - 21-08-2008 09:01

I've read a bit of Herodotus, AG, if that's any good. In Greek too.

I always get St Anselm and St Augustine muddled up, so some updates would be good.

As for King Lear, Gloucester has just tried to throw himself off a non-existent cliff.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 21-08-2008 10:07

Tubby Isaacs wrote:

As for King Lear, Gloucester has just tried to throw himself off a non-existent cliff.

Is he practising for a real jump later, or is he just a safety-first kind of guy, looking to minimize injuries in the whole cliff-jumping experience?

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 22-08-2008 10:27

I take back the bitchy stuff about the Weisman book - it's pretty good overall. An interesting way to think about our species' impact on the environment.

Also ploughed through mathematician/playwright John Mighton's book *The End of Ignorance*, which is a reasonably engaging book on math education (no, really). Although I recognise that one of the reasons I liked it was because it reinforced my existing prejudices about the ways curricular decisions are made.

Now I have a real dilemma. I was going to read Sebastan Moffett's *Japanese Rules*, but I got quite depressed last night after a fight with the wife and so went out for a really serious dose of retail therapy and came home with 19 books. Which was overdoing it, really - it'll take at least 2 months to shift these. But still, what to read? Misha Glenny's *McMafia*? J-P chretien's *The Great Lakes of Africa*? Some Coetzee? Chinua Achebe? One of the three books on development in Africa?

So...what say you?

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by ursus arctos - 22-08-2008 11:00

Hah.

I read the Glenny book two weeks ago and have Travels with Herodotus on my bedside table (though I have a feeling I may wait to start it until after I finish the Landmark Herodotus, which hasn't arrived yet). As you know, I am a big fan of Kapuscinski, and actually think that The Soccer War may be his weakest book.

McMafia is worthwhile (and depressing), but not as good as some of the reviews, especially if one already knows something about the millieux he is writing about.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 22-08-2008 11:15

You may be right about The Soccer War (although I never really enjoyed Shah of Shahs); I used it as a comparison because it is his only other book which is a collection of short essays on various places rather than a prolonged essay on a particular place/time (Angola, Ethiopia, etc.).

I feel I owe Glenny for inspiring the NPS concept if nothing else (although I did enjoy his book on the Balkans in the early 90s).

Having now stared at this pile of books for awhile, I've narrowed it down to The Great Lakes of Africa (it has over a dozen references to the Kingdom of Toro, which must be worth something) and The Trouble with Africa on the non-fiction side. Fiction I think I'm definitely starting with Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by ursus arctos - 22-08-2008 11:21

Do you mean The Fall of Yugoslavia or The Rebirth of History? I thought the first was very good, but haven't read the second.

His later book trying to put the Balkans in a broader historical context seemed to me to be a step too far for someone who is a terrific reporter, but not really a historian.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 22-08-2008 11:23

The Fall of Yugoslavia. I've never heard of the other one, to be honest.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by ursus arctos - 22-08-2008 11:32

It came out earlier than "The Fall" and is supposed to be less focused on the Balkans then on the Velvet Revolution (he worked closely with Havel) and developments in what is now (again) called Central Europe.

Glenny would have done a much better job with a "New Europe" television series than Michael Palin did.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 22-08-2008 11:41

Having now looked up the second book on Amazon I realize that not only have I heard of it, but I have actually read it. An eminently forgettable book, apparently.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 22-08-2008 15:34

ursus arctos wrote:
the Landmark Herodotus, which hasn't arrived yet).

Is this a new release? I'm familiar with the Landmark Thucydides but went with the Grene/Hobbes' instead. I assume the Herodotus is same format and all. Any particular reason you're reading Herodotus?

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 22-08-2008 15:36

Also I just wiki'd Misha Glenny and apparently he is the son of Michael Glenny who must be the same guy as translated my copy of Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita (hence my deciding to look up Misha).

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by ursus arctos - 22-08-2008 15:46

The Herodotus is relatively new, and is by the same guy who did the Thucydides (which I also have).

Every now and then I like to get back to my roots as a historian (though I never did ancient history seriously), and ursus minor is going through a bit of a classical phase at the moment.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 22-08-2008 16:20

Roughly how old is ursus minor if I may ask.

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by ursus arctos - 22-08-2008 16:23

He just turned 10; he's a somewhat unusual child.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 22-08-2008 17:01

Wow, wish someone had got me started at that age. Good for him. If he needs to feel any better my 2nd grade niece is always asking me to quiz her about Greek mythology. It's a bit of a challenge navigating all the mature content with her.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 25-08-2008 02:07

Having now stared at this pile of books for awhile, I've narrowed it down to The Great Lakes of Africa (it has over a dozen references to the Kingdom of Toro, which must be worth something)

I'm putting it on my list right now...

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by ursus arctos - 25-08-2008 06:46

Bruno, have you encountered D'Aulaires Book of Greek Myths?

It was my favorite book as an 8 year old, and ursus minor loves it too, though he has now moved on to the Stephanides Brothers' series from Greece, which is really terrific. Their versions of the Iliad and Odyssey weigh in at about 400 pages each, and provided him with sufficient detail to take on the fanciful "Ljubljana variant" of the Argonauts story during our recent visit. "Papa", he said, "that just didn't happen."

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 25-08-2008 08:56

Looks like a perfect gift idea for her. I know she had some illustrated compendium with artwork by the guy who does all the Tolkien illustrating (Alan Lee). Thanks for that, I will definitely check it out.

sufficient detail to take on the fanciful "Ljubljana variant" of the Argonauts story during our recent visit. "Papa", he said, "that just didn't happen."

Just, you know, make sure and throw a ball with him sometimes, too. ;)

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by ursus arctos - 25-08-2008 09:09

It's really a great book (so much so that it has been adopted by The New York Review of Books as one of their childrens' book reprints). The same couple also have one on the Norse gods.

One of ursus minor's other favourite pastimes is making his father look like an idiot with a cricket bat. He even decided we needed to put on an exhibition of this form of parental humiliation for our visiting relatives. We only play baseball in North America (where he ruthlessly exploits my disappearing ability to run).

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 25-08-2008 10:00

I refuse to understand what cricket is. Fucking cabalistic and best left that way. My son's only 1 1/2...suffice to say the prospect of his one day saying something similarly priceless would be worth a hundred ball and bat sessions. His main literary accomplishment is 'Stop sign!' minus the p.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 25-08-2008 12:08

Toro De France wrote:

Having now stared at this pile of books for awhile, I've narrowed it down to The Great Lakes of Africa (it has over a dozen references to the Kingdom of Toro, which must be worth something)

I'm putting it on my list right now...

You might want to hold off - it's pretty heavy slogging. This is history for peoples with no written language, so it's a mix of linguistics, agriculture, archaeology and interpretations of mythology up until 1850 or so, mixed in with a large dose of historiography of works I've never heard of. Plus the guy's French, and either French academic works need better translators, or they're written like ass in the first place.

Oh, and there's no mention of Toro through the first 130 pages. So a slow start all around.

I took a break to read Sebastian Moffett's Japanese Rules, which all around is a much better book on football in Japan than the earlier Ultra Nippon, I reckon.

(I am, btw, actually going to be in the Kingdom of Toro in about five weeks, provided by clients stop changing their damn mind every two seconds. Send me your address so I can post you something appropriate.)

I forget if we did this in the children's books thread or not, but there is an illustrated Gilgamesh trilogy for children that is quite fantastic for kids about 5-7 years old. Though, admittedly, I tended to spice up the stories for my son by making Ishtar and Enkidu incredibly flatulent.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by JtS - 26-08-2008 11:47

I finished The Maltese Falcon in the early hours of this morning when I woke up and couldn't get back to sleep. The ending is the best bit of the book, he deals with it all quite nicely.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by gerontophile - 26-08-2008 14:38

I finished 'Stranger in a Strange Land' for the 3rd or 4th time, and what a fantastic book.

Very surprised that no-one has tried to make a film of it. Admittedly, it would have to miss out a lot of the verbal interaction between the characters, which can get very deep, and probably it would end up something like 'Starship Troopers' (ie: good book, tacky film)

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by meltdowngraphics - 29-08-2008 02:54

I'm currently reading "Nowhere Man" by Aleksandar Hemon. His wonderfully descriptive writing style makes me want to explore more of his writing.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 04-09-2008 01:11

The Travels having finally been finished on Saturday - interesting but by God, they're repetitive, and that didn't lend itself to being read quickly - I'm now halfway through Jonathan Wilson's Inverting The Pyramid.

It's absolutely fucking brilliant.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Tiny Bulcher - 04-09-2008 14:33

Current book is The Discovery of France, by Graham Robb, a very entertaining and informative jaunt through the obscure byways of French social history. No, it's good, really.

Next up: The Rotters Club. 1970s adolescence listening to prog rock? That'll have been me, then.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 05-09-2008 15:09

Finished the Anselm - it was pretty good in places, but dragged a bit in the (justly) less famous parts. I'm coming around to the view that (a) Norman Malcolm interpreted the Ontological Argument correctly, and that (b) that version of it is, more or less, valid.

I've now got Elizabeth Potter's book on Feminism and Philosophy of Science going, as well as the poetry anthology and various stuff for prepping lectures.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 05-09-2008 16:28

Are lecturing, Toro? Where?

Just re-read Kapuscinski's Another Day of Life. It really is sheer genius. Also finished Chinua Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah. I may be horribly culturally insensitive, but I don't see the fuss about Achebe. Small good bits, mostly kind of tedious. Nowhere near as interesting as, say, na Thiongo's The Wizard of the Crow.

Now to resume my quest to read all of Ian Banks' sci-fi in a single year (up next: the Algebraist), plus a new football book has arrived - When Friday Comes, about football in the middle east. So this should supply some sustenance on my flight tonight.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 05-09-2008 16:33

Back in Leeds - they've given me a year's posting, doing Philosophy of Science stuff.

And I've been *totally* remiss in not replying to you, after you sent those ads! Thanks a million, it was massively appreciated.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 05-09-2008 19:44

Oh, so no longer in London? That's too bad - I never make it to Leeds.

Do you want me to keep sending those ads? I'm happy to, if you like. The next couple of months are when most of the postings for 09-10 will go up.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 06-09-2008 01:24

Yeah, please do. I'm having to start thinking about second jobs and CV-building already...

Also, I spend loads of the time in London anyway, so do keep me posted on your travel plans.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 10-09-2008 12:52

Finished the Elizabeth Potter - it's very thorough and persuasive, and pretty accessible. I could see Wyatt getting a good deal out of it.

Am replacing it with Setting Sun, an anthology of Japanese Photographers' writings.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by indysleaze - 10-09-2008 14:00

Just finished Flood by Stephen Baxter. Alright, I s'pose, but the crushing inevitability of the end slowed the book down to a crawl.

Now starting The Burning Man by Mark Chadbourn, the 8th book in a series of ever-decreasing returns...

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 11-09-2008 23:23

Finished Inverting The Pyramid, read a very short book about The Book Of Kells today, and tomorrow I'll be starting The Remains Of The Day by Kazuo Ishiguro.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 13-09-2008 10:47

I am completely addicted to Robert Harris. I'm not generally a thriller kind of guy, but Fatherland was genius. And Imperium. So, on the plan home yesterday, I finished Ghost, and am completely unable to figure out how he avoided a slander suit from the Blairs.

Also read David Conn's The Beautiful Game (starring TonTon!), which was a truly excellent book. I've also been reading When Friday Comes, which has a rich and promising subject but is written by a rank amateur. Makes the Bennet book on Russia read like Simon Kuper. I'm holding out because I assume there will be nuggets, but yeesh!

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Lodzubelieveit - 13-09-2008 16:59

Just finished Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafon, and it was excellent. This morning I nipped into Barcelona and did this walk, which, if I'm being honest, was a bit underwhelming (obviously enough for a work of fiction, as you're just staring at random buildings half the time), though did give a good 'feel' for the book ...

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Jon - 14-09-2008 10:26

Did you like Ghost, Antonio? I've never read any Robert Harris but listened to the radio adaptation of Ghost on a Book at Bedtime and was distinctly underwhelmed. Maybe the adaptation didn't do it justice though and I'm pretty sure they abridge them anyway.

Talking, as Lodz was, of Spanish writers I've just finished La de Bringas by Benito Perez Galdos. Although it's set in Madrid, most of it takes place inside the Royal Palace so it doesn't really conjure up 19th century Madrid like the majestic Fortunata y Jacinta does.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 14-09-2008 22:26

Lodzubelieveit wrote:

Just finished Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafon, and it was excellent.

I had a bit of an odd relationship with that book. The first hundred pages or so are too descriptive by far for my liking... but after that it changed and became a really, really bloody good read.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 15-09-2008 02:54

I enjoy all of Harris' stuff, even the ones that aren't that good. Like this one, and Archangel (both set in the present and with wholly ludicrous premises). Not up to the standards of my two faves (Imperium and Fatherland).

None of Harris' novels stand on their own and make you say: "hey! great literature!" But he has a way of carryng you along - the pages do fly, even when he's not at his best (which this wasn't).

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Broken Clock - 15-09-2008 19:42

"Shakespeare" by Bill Bryson. A very good read and throws up all sorts of weird historical facts along the way.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by G.Man wants a hyphen - 16-09-2008 08:13

Ah, I want to buy that Shakespeare book.

I'm in the habit of doing two books at once. I've just finished a very good book on the Berlin Wall by somebody Taylor and at the same time finished Spud by the South African author John de Ruit, which is actually my son's book. I enjoyed it thoroughly. The sort of book teenagers and their parents can both enjoy. I'm looking forward to reading the sequel.

Currently I'm skipping through Steve Martin's Pure Drivel on audiobook, which alternately lives up to its name and has me roaring with laughter ("I would like to apologise to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for using the term 'Colored People'"), and reading the political memoirs of former ANC MP Mark Feinstein, After The Party, which reveals the inside story of how the Mbeki government and its lackeys closed ranks to prevent a parliamentary investigation into corruption in the country's scandalous arms deal of the '90s.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 19-09-2008 16:31

Started reading The War of the World: Twentieth Century Conflict and the Descent of the West, by Niall Ferguson. So far it seems big and long, though I'm still only on page xxxiv.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Broken Clock - 19-09-2008 19:54

G.Man : I cant recommend the Shakespeare book enough...its not a biog but rather an anti-biog in that its mainly about what "they" dont know about him.

Girlfriends an Eng Lit graduate yet I dont know the difference between a noun and a vowel...as my grammar/punctuation on of shows. I think shes now gonna try drip feeding me more highbrow culture.

Now reading Charles Mingus's autobiog "Beneath The Underdog".

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 20-09-2008 00:34

I've got a feeling I've got that Shakespeare book. I've got at least one Bryson I've not read yet (the writer's dictionary he did earlier this year).

The Remains Of The Day is a really good book, I've been lucky with my reading this year. It's been a long time since I read something I didn't thoroughly enjoy. I'm now onto Tomás Eloy Martínez's The Tango Singer, which reminds me of The Shadow Of The Wind, only it's better, and it's about a city that's more conducive to literary eulogising and character-building (Buenos Aires as opposed to Barcelona).

Tomorrow, if I'm feeling a bit better than I have been today, I'm going to start on Faust.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Tiny Bulcher - 21-09-2008 20:28

The Rotters Club was brilliant, especially as it was set in places I know, and namechecked music I know, but gets docked half a point for gratuitous Nazi interlude.

Now on The Damned Utd. Hmmm. I'll let you know.

Another thumbs-up for the Bryson Shakespeare, especially for the well-deserved kicking handed out to the Shakespeare deniers.

I usually like Harris, but Archangel was hogwash, and I am not tempted by Ghost. Bring on the next installment in the Cicero story.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Jon - 22-09-2008 16:04

The Rotters Club was brilliant, especially as it was set in places I know, and namechecked music I know, but gets docked half a point for gratuitous Nazi interlude.

Is that the bit that takes place at the Talbot Hotel in Stourbridge, where one of the characters is having a dirty weekend?

I liked it a lot, there was a TV adaptation a couple of years ago too. Plus a sequel as well but I've not read it.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by La Lanterne Rouge - 22-09-2008 19:24

I'm reading Gillian Tendam's *The House By The Thames*, which has interesting stuff about Bankside, but she's started doing something that really winds me up in biography, and treating the subject as a close friend, always Christian name, and so on "Bill enjoyed spending time with his family", etc. It's even worse because you know that it's all extrapolated from tiny bits of information.

Got sufficiently irate/bored that I needed a distraction book and I'm reading Riaan Manser's "Round Africa On My Bicycle", which is quite entertaining, although not very well written. There's enough going on (30 odd countries, with lots of jungle, corruption and punctures does that) to keep it interesting and not make me care about the writing quality.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Tiny Bulcher - 22-09-2008 21:18

Jon wrote:

The Rotters Club was brilliant, especially as it was set in places I know, and namechecked music I know, but gets docked half a point for gratuitous Nazi interlude.

Is that the bit that takes place at the Talbot Hotel in Stourbridge, where one of the characters is having a dirty weekend?

No, it's the encounter with holocaust survivors in Denmark. Didn't seem to have anything to do with the rest of the book.

=====

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 23-09-2008 10:17

Jonathan Wilson's excellent football tactics thing, and William Gaddis' stunning *Agapé Agapé*.

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by SamLKelly - 28-09-2008 02:05

The Tango Singer was finished a few days ago, and is superb to the point where I must get hold of more of Eloy Martínez's stuff. I loved it.

I'm now reading Goethe's *Faust* in the evenings and weekends, and because it's a very very large edition from the Folio Society that doesn't fit in my bag to take into work every day (although I'm tempted if only because I'd look absolutely hilarious reading it on public transport), I've also got the Folio Society's collection of 'Great Short Stories' to read during the daytime.

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 29-09-2008 16:13

Back to the Poetry Anthology, and also Martha Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought*.

Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Lyra - 29-09-2008 23:49

Toro, I was reading something today about how Pound asserted that Ovid influenced him - but apparently he actually lacked a knowledge of Ovid. does this sound right? could I just go and read a particular bit or is it more of a constant thread type thing do you reckon? (I didn't get the impression the author of the article knew for certain)

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Toro De France - 30-09-2008 09:33

Well, my knowledge of Ovid is not really sufficient to comment authoritatively;)

But it sounds in line with his general working methods - Pound was an incredible intellectual dilettante, reading anything and everything that came to hand, picking everything that fitted into his idiosyncratic worldview, and wedging it into his own work - particularly the Cantos - often verbatim. That means he covers, refers to in both form and content, a vast body of material. But it also means, necessarily, that much of it won't have been understood in great depth, or won't have been remembered very long afterwards. I think he more or less acknowledges this as one of the causes of his great error towards the end of the Cantos.

Just off the top of my head, though, there are certainly bits of the Pisan Cantos very similar in tone to Ted Hughes' Ovid - though the influence is probably working in the other direction there...

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the title

Posted by Lyra - 30-09-2008 12:27

Thanks, that's cool, I will try to follow that up.

I'm back in the library now; the reference in the article was to Guide to Kulchur and apparently Pound said that "a great treasure of verity exists for mankind in Ovid and in the subject matter of Ovid's long poem, and that only in this form could it be registered." So the verity is something external to both texts, I guess. Which means that it doesn't really matter how shaky his knowledge of the text was, maybe? And Hughes says wrt Ovid that the "right man met the right material at the right moment" so something quite similar. Certainly assertions of this sort de-privilege the notion of 'the original' - we are in any case conscious of the way intertextuality seems to work in a web-like structure, perhaps, not a straight line - and they allow the modern poets to claim the same for themselves as they do for Ovid. Which is probably fair enough. It's not as if he wouldn't have done the same.

Oh God I think I'm going to have to try to read Joyce. I don't want to! I'm scared.

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Re:Current Reading - with no parenthesis in the ti

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 05-10-2008 23:38

Finished off a couple of books this week - A book on Dubai by Christopher Davidson, which makes me think this is a much more interesting part of the world than I thought; Soccer Revolution by Willy Meisl, which is quite remarkable (review shortly on the appropriate thread), and Steven Hall's The Raw Shark Texts, which was very very enjoyable even if a bit fluffy.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Toro De France - 06-10-2008 13:55

Read Nabokov's Bend Sinister, which was fantastic. Now back in the poetry anthology and the Nussbaum, which is okay

but dragging and very, er, womanly...

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 06-10-2008 14:01

Have you read any other Nussbaum, Toro? I have this copy of Cultivating Humanity that's been staring at me from my bookshelf for a couple of years and am wondering whether or not to pull it down. I'm thinking not, but if you've had good experiences with her, I'll give it a go.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Toro Hussein Toro - 13-10-2008 15:27

I haven't, no. I enjoyed that, though it was pretty frothy and... the philosophical equivalent of chicklit, if that makes any sense. It couldn't possibly have been written by a man.

Now reading Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle and Herve This' Kitchen Mysteries, sort of a popular version of Molecular Gastronomy, which I'll have to get around to before too long. Also Alex Rosenberg's Darwinian Reductionism, Or How To Stop Worrying And Love Molecular Biology. Publishers have slightly garbled the subtitle there. Rosenberg is brilliant, perhaps my fave PhiBiGuy, but the position he wants to defend here, insofar as its clear at all, seems wrong to me.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 16-10-2008 16:18

Just finished Misha Glenny's McMafia. The first third of the book - the stuff involving Russia and the Balkans - is fucking superb. Really great stuff. The rest has some good material but is quite uneven and occasionally reads like Glenny has ADD.

The chapter on cybercrime, for instance, starts really promisingly, but after six pages and for no apparent reason suddenly becomes a chapter on criminal gangs in Brazil's favelas. Then it ends with a bit on how Chinese triads are infiltrating Brazil, which leads Glenny to say something along the lines of "I knew that to really get at the heart of this, I would need to go to China". Which, you'd think, is a pretty obvious segue.

Bafflingly, the following chapter is about the Japanese yakuza.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Toro Hussein Toro - 19-10-2008 14:55

Finished the This and Vonnegut - loved the second, graetly enjoyed the first, although it's a bit too beginner-ish, and I'll have to read the "proper" book. Am now on the home stretch of that poetry anthology, and also re-reading Bernard Williams' Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 20-10-2008 06:36

This weekend I was in bed much of the time, mostly despondent about a potential case of osteo-arthritis, but this allowed me to polish off David Bergen's The Time In Between (Bergen teaches at my old high school and this book won the Giller prize, which is Canada's equivalent of the Booker), and also, more prosaically, The Political Economy of Saudi Arabia, which was not bad as these things go (which is setting the bar quite low).

Have now started Neal Stephenson's new door-stopper Anathem, which, I can confidently state after 70 pages, is aces.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Toro Hussein Toro - 23-10-2008 12:28

I've started a reader on Theories of Memory, and Don DeLillo's Libra.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by La Lanterne Rouge - 23-10-2008 13:52

I've just finished the excellent Hokkaido Highway Blues, and have started the Murukami memoir on running.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 24-10-2008 00:19

I just finished Anathem and my head hurts. I think the two are related. Great read, though.

Now I'm off to conquer Saskia's Sassen's Territory, Authority, Rights. She is a genius, so I expect fireworks.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by EIM - 24-10-2008 10:45

I'm reading The Gangs of Manchester, a look at the roving gangs of lads, or scuttlers, who used to get all dressed up to kick the shit out of each other in Victorian times.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by noj - 24-10-2008 11:58

I'm reading 'Pies and Prejudice' - In search of the North' by Stuart Maconie.

It's alright with some interesting bits in it, but should really be subtitled 'In search of the North West'. After whole chapters on Manchester, Liverpool, Blackpool, and the Lakes along with and chunky bits on Wigan and Warrington, there's been about a page on Sheffield, a page on Bradford and about five on Leeds. I think there might be a bit on Newcastle, but I haven't got there yet.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Matej - 10-11-2008 18:47

I just finished Kafka on the Shore. Didn't particularly care for it. Did make me want to hear the Archduke Trio though.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Toby Gymshorts - 10-11-2008 19:39

Currently reading "The Vesuvius Club / The Devil In Amber" by Mark Gatiss. It's pretty good, with some genuine laugh-out-loud turns of phrase. Recommended to anyone as behind the times as I am.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by loose cannon - 13-11-2008 15:15

Just finished 'Europe: the State of the Union' by Anand Menon, recommended if you have an interest in how the EU is working (or not), good analysis of what it is doing compared to what it is made out to be doing. V readable especially considering the soporific subject

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 17-11-2008 07:52

back from vacation and read number of good books:

Restless - William Boyd
The Dante Club - Matthew Pearl
Buddha - Karen Armstrong
Buddhism: A concise introduction - Huston smith & Phillip Novak
The Elusive Quest for Growth - William Easterly
A Short History of Laos - Grant Evans

The Easterly book is quite sensible and excellent as an overview of what went wrong in development economics over the past 50 years. Neither the Armstrong nor the Huston books are brilliant on thier own as an introduction to the subject of Buddhism, but together they are quite good. I am certainly glad I read them - I felt much less clueless about SE Asia and its culture after doing so.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Toro Hussein Toro - 17-11-2008 16:48

Read a bunch of stuff, since I last posted here, won't try and make a list..

Currently Doris Lessing, The Golden Notebook and Roger White, The Structure of Metaphor. Enjoying the first, though it's yet to get to Nobel-winner's-masterpiece territory. The second, by an eminent colleague, is superb. Very accessible, yet deals with very technical stuff at a level of sophistication that hadn't been done before. The stuff professional reputations are made of.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by Felicity, I guess so - 17-11-2008 21:06

I've just finished Trezza Azzopardi's The Hiding Place.

I guess it may have been discussed before since it was Booker nominated in 2000. Ms Felicity loved it and has frequently pestered me to read it, now I have and it was really impressive.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by La Lanterne Rouge - 20-11-2008 07:03

I'm reading Three Men On The Bummel, the sequel I never knew existed to Three Men On A Boat. It's very fun and gentle and warm, and, even better, is about cycling round the Black Forest.

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Re:Current Reading - Books best thread

Posted by BrunoMaggiore - 20-11-2008 11:55

I'm starting a grand tour of Balzac, someone I sort of neglected when I was doing 19th century novels. Rereading Le Père Goriot for starters, it's delicious. Really looking forward to the rest.

That and some random histories and biographies and such mixed in, to include something from the non-fiction all-stars thread.

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