

2004

Berry, Wendell - *Citizenship Papers*

I saw Berry on C-SPAN's Book-TV. Good essays. Oblique criticism of the Republicans but also the Democrats. Pro-agrarian life.

Best American Short Stories 2003 (Walter Mosley, ed.)

ZZ Packer is so great. So are Nicole Krauss, Anthony Doerr, E.L. Doctorow ("Baby Wilson"), Edwidge Danticat, Dorothy Allison ("sad" but not sloppy).

Best American Short Stories 2004 (Lorrie Moore, ed.)

Read about ¾ of the stories before I left the book in the seat pocket in front of me on the Lufthansa flight to Frankfurt. Not as good as I would have expected from Lorrie Moore. I didn't love as many of the stories as I do in her collections. I will buy another copy and finish reading, but I had to let the one on Lufthansa go.

Boyle, T.C. - *The Inner Circle*

My first TCB read upon PH's recommendation. Since I had read Jones's biography several years ago, there were no surprises about Kinsey. I want to read other books of Boyle's. The prose is excellent. I want to see if it is indigenous to the novel or if he writes with the same voice always. [Doesn't.]

Carville, James - *Had Enough?*

A great adjunct to Franken's book, Ivins's book, Michael Moore's book, Hillary Clinton's book. Same messages reinforce one another; you can't make this stuff up. It's in writing, in the news, on TV. Bush is as bad as I've always believed. Most important aspect of this book is the list of suggestions Carville gives for individuals and groups to **START DOING SOMETHING NOW!**

1) Put a member of congress on the spot. Write letters to local news outlets and tell how his/her vote has negatively affected your life or the life of someone you know.

2) Subscribe to *Washington Monthly*

3) Call/write your congress person (293)

Coetzee, J.M. - *Boyhood*

Read this memoir on my 24 hr. journey from Amsterdam to Lubbock (via Houston). My memory of it is quite jumbled because of many short readings and re-readings. \$18.69 for such a slim tome (€14.95)! But it was the **ONLY** literary author or book in the entire stand at the English section of Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport.

Coetzee, J.M. - *Disgraced*

Like *Map of the World* (Jane Hamilton): one long, slow train wreck from opening page. Man embarks upon a path of behavior he knows he shouldn't (by several counts): an affair with one of his students (he is 52, she is 20). He is *disgraced*, but the term takes on a much broader meaning than the bourgeoisie would attribute to it. He falls from grace. He is de-graced, as well as dis-graced. When his daughter is raped by South African "aborigines," and she does not "handle" it in the usual way, evading legal establishment and its racist tendencies, her father is "disgraced" even further. There is nothing he can do for her so he returns to Cape Town. His abandoned house has been ransacked, a kind of "rape" in its own right. Literary references abound primarily by way of Byron about whom the main character is "writing" an opera (he is not the composer, but the librettist). Though the references are a great part of the novel's weft, they are not a heavy-handed usage, nor do they exist for their own jewel-like brilliance. This man is Byron; Byron is this man.

Conason, Joe - *Big Lies*

Excellent. Detailed documentation of Republican lies. Overlaps Franken and Ivins but offers more information in places.

Fox, Stephen - *Transatlantic: Samuel Cunard, Isambard Brunel, and the Great Atlantic Steamships*

The story of steamship travel on the Atlantic Ocean, 1850-1915. Very interesting, particularly his vivid descriptions of the horrible conditions people tolerated to get across the ocean.

Frank, Thomas - *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*

A truly fine book. It may outshine all the other books I've read in this anti-Bush genre. Frank has really done his homework to show how the moderates have aligned themselves and used the conservatives to get (barely) larger numbers to win elections. Barely, in presidential elections. He shows that even though Gore won the popular vote, Bush "won" more counties or more square mileage than Gore did. Put in these terms, it's easier to see how Bush and others won. Hopefully, these Kansans will someday see through the BIG LIE to see that Bush is no more a Christian (or even a moral man) than someone not claiming to be so.

Gardner, John - *On Writers and Writing*

Good if not snotty advice. See annotated text.

Gibbons, Kaye - *Ellen Foster*

Goldberg, Natalie - *Long Quiet Highway: Waking Up in America*

Great memoir about her life, her writing life, her Zen writing life. Gave me ideas about how to approach a memoir of my family life. Her idea of “first thoughts” is fantastic and makes so much sense (78, 162).

Her ideas about “success” would be great for an epigraph: “Some people write for fifteen years with no success and then decide to quit. Don’t look for success and don’t quit. If you want writing, write under all circumstances. Success will or will not come, in this lifetime or the next. Success is none of our business. It comes from outside. Our job is to write, to not look up from our notebook and wonder how much money Norman Mailer earns” (105).

Goldberg, Natalie - *Writing Down the Bones*

Excellent book about writing.

Houston, Pam - *A Little More About Me*

Great essays, especially after spending a week in workshop with her. Just love them all—a whole different side of Pam. Her fiction is so spicy. In these essays she’s vulnerable, not so sardonic. Both are honest but in different ways.

Lewis, Sinclair - *It Can’t Happen Here* (©1935)

Set in late 1930s. A really wild jerko gets elected president and becomes a dictator. Reconstructs the U.S. into six BIG regions. So many phrases seem apropos of Bush and his dictatorship (sorry, “presidential authority”). See text for more comments.

Pierce, Todd James - *The Australia Stories*

Very good stories, the kind of competent but almost bland writing that comes from CW programs today. Sour gripes? I don’t think so. No fire or no passion, or else it’s been so pasteurized that the reader cannot feel those things. To be fair, I should read them again sometime. [I haven’t.]

Salinger, J.D. - *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour an Introduction*

Will always love his prose and what he has to say.

Shapiro, Walter - *One Car Caravan: On the Road With Democrats*

Heard of the title on Book-TV. Parts were good. Parts were quite opinionated without much substance, it seemed.

Sohn, David A. - *Ten Top Stories*

“Old.” Sixties, mostly. Some good stories. Some seem dated and talk down to the

youths they are addressing.

Stuckey-French, Elizabeth - *Mermaids on the Moon*

Novel doesn't seem to have the oomph or clarity of her first collection of stories. Theo is perhaps the most interesting, most developed character. I really wanted to like it because of my connection with E. as a teacher. She's such a fine teacher of creative writing, but the book just doesn't strike a chord with me.