

OLD READING MATERIAL

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I am getting more and more requests for reading recommendations, especially now that I have crossed through most of my [best books from more than eleven years ago](#). My readers are asking what's left, and if I have any replacement recommendations.

One thing I have reread recently is *The Idiot* by Dostoyevsky. Part one may be the finest start to a novel I can think of, though I don't recommend the rest of it. Dostoyevsky creates a fantastic cast of characters, led by Prince Myshkin, and gets you into the head of each of them like no other author is able to. I remember swooning the first time I read it, and I still swoon. However, Dostoyevsky completely runs out of gas after book one, and the novel crashes and burns. But book one is so amazing, it makes me want to rewrite the rest of it. Rash, I know, and maybe even presumptuous, but I think it would be fun.

Crash and burns like this are more common than most critics would like to admit. *Huckleberry Finn* leaps to mind as perhaps the best example. Brilliant first half, embarrassing second half. Also *Lolita*, which has an amazing start, hangs on for 150 pages or so, then peters out altogether, with a very disappointing ending.

I have also reread *Anna Karenina* again recently, and my opinion of it has not paled. Many have called it the greatest novel ever written, and that may be true. Again, the first half is better than the second, but the second is still very good. As with *The Idiot*, the first part is awe-inspiring, and it makes you wonder why these Russians in the 19th century were so damn good. Turgenev could hit the same heights, though he couldn't maintain them like Tolstoy. To see Turgenev at his best, read *Sketches from a Hunter's Album*, especially the story "Bezhin Mead".

The only thing the Russians lack is humor: they can't touch Dickens for that. They have more psychological depth for sure, but you can't beat Dickens for charm. I still think *David Copperfield* is his best, but *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* are also great. If you haven't read them, you really should. I now think *A Tale of Two Cities* is propaganda, but it is no great loss. I never much cared for it anyway.

Let's see, what else. Colette's *Gigi* is charming, much better than the famous movie.

Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* is rarely read these days, but is still a romp. I highly recommend it.

Almost anything by George MacDonald is fun, but you could start with *At the Back of the North Wind*. It was a favorite of Tolkien.

Irish Fairy Tales by James Stephens is written in a very expressive language, but be sure to get a copy that has the illustrations by Arthur Rackham. Together they are very mysterious. This may also give

you a thirst for James MacPherson's *Ossian*, which has its moments. Despite being later savaged, it was one of the most popular books of the 18th and 19th centuries, and not for no reason.

Jules Michelet was one of Van Gogh's favorite writers, and if you read him you will see why. I recommend *La Femme* and *L'Amour* to all those who are now being seduced by the MGTOW movement.

Most people who read Camus start and end with *The Stranger*, but I would recommend *The Fall* instead. For me it is the best existentialist novel.

Wendell Berry's *Unsettling of America* is a classic, and looks better and better as the years go by and we see how much dross it was surrounded by and followed by.

If you are one of my art readers, I will repeat some recommendations I think I have already dropped elsewhere. We will start with James Whistler's *Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, which never gets old. The centerpiece there is his Ten O'Clock Lecture, but many of the letters to the editor are also gems. Rodin's conversations with Paul Gsell, usually entitled *L'Art*, are a little known treat. Van Gogh's *Letters* are a must-read. Even if you don't like his paintings, read his letters. The depth of his spirit was amazing. Nietzsche's *The Case of Wagner* is usually overlooked in favor of his more famous books, but as a critique of Modern art it is unparalleled. There is nothing else like it.

John Ruskin is sometimes still recommended, but the wrong things are recommended, in my opinion. Rather than read *Modern Painters*, read instead *The Stones of Venice*, *Sesame and Lilies*, or *The Crown of Wild Olive*. Ruskin was one of the great stylists of all time, and his polemics is often astounding. "Traffic" in *Crown* is one of his best. As far as art critics go, Walter Pater is also worth reading. Far preferable to any 20th century criticism. Matthew Arnold's criticism is likewise worth a look.

Tolstoy's *What is Art?* is an amazing expression of his later attitude, after he had given up on the world as created by the Phoenician navy, been excommunicated by the Russian Orthodox Church, and found himself. If you want a shorter version of the same thing, you can read the section called "On the significance of science and art" in his book *What to Do?* It is a blistering critique of both, peaking in section VI, which may knock you completely cold. I highly recommend it. I don't agree with Tolstoy on everything: he seems to have become a joyless old ascetic, forever whipping himself for his prior errors, and those of his people. But his critique of Modern culture is mostly spot-on. And of course it has only gotten worse since then. Imagine what he would think of art or science now! Or, no, wait, you don't have to imagine it: you can just read my papers.

Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky were Jewish*, and I am asking new questions of them now. Such as, were they controlling the opposition. If Tolstoy had won the Nobel Prize, it would help me decide, but he didn't. He was nominated several times but did not win. Rereading things like *My Confession* lead me to believe he was in earnest. Either that or the greatest literary actor of all time. His attacks on the status quo were so blistering, I don't see how they could benefit the Phoenician Navy. As with Nietzsche and Thoreau and Salinger, I still think they had to be genuine. Back in the day, some prominent members of the family escaped and caused trouble, and their influence wasn't able to be suppressed, even decades later. We must assume they had support and promotion from within, and still do. Which is a sign of hope.

But we saw Tolstoy influence Gandhi, and we have seen that Gandhi was not what we were sold, so

perhaps I have simply not yet hit the bottom of the rabbit hole with these others. I do keep the question open.

While I am here, I will recommend a few films that may have passed you by. *Ethan Frome*, with Liam Neeson, is one of them. It really brings Edith Wharton's novel alive. *The Secret of Roan Inish* is beautifully shot in Ireland, with a cute little girl as the memorable lead. You won't see many films like it. A lesser known Merchant/Ivory film is *Feast of July*, always left off the best-of lists. Not a happy ending, which explains that, but it is still one of my favorites. It has many great performances, including the leads Embeth Davis and Ben Chaplin. Catherine Cookson's *The Fifteen Streets* is very entertaining, and you get to see Sean Bean as the bad guy. There is an animated adaptation of *Watership Down* that very much worth seeing. I especially recommend it for those between 15 and 30. Also for young people, *The Three Lives of Thomasina* is a great old Disney movie before the arrival of CGI and noise. Among my favorite old black and white movies are *I Married a Witch* and *The Thin Man* series.

*Dostoyevsky was from Lithuanian nobility and rich merchants. He came out of the army. He was born 11/11/21. Like Tolstoy, his uncle was named Lev (think Levi). Dostoyevsky's father was murdered by his own serfs, telling us how "Socialist" the family really was. D was allegedly called Monk Photios while in the army, which is a huge clue. Photios was the Patriarch of Constantinople who is famous for excommunicating. . . the Pope. It worked: he remained in power for the next 19 years. D wrote his first novel at age 23, and it was accepted and promoted heavily. In the 1840s he became a Socialist, and we know what that means. I believe D's arrest and exile were faked. Easy evidence of that is that almost immediately upon being released, he was "forced to serve in the army". You have to laugh: do you think the army would want this convicted Socialist and dangerous dissident? At the very same time he was supposed to be serving in the Siberian Army, Dostoyevsky was somehow also tutoring the rich children of upper officers in Semipalatinsk. You might argue they would put this dangerous dissident on the front lines as cannon fodder, but would they simultaneously put him in the houses of colonels and generals? Semipalatinsk is also a clue, since it was always a center of Russian Intelligence. It later became the main site of Russia's fake nuclear testing. And despite supposedly being poor and one of the most dangerous dissidents in Russia, D soon married Maria Constant, the widow of [Alexander Isayev](#), a nobleman and head of the Astrakhan customs district. Maria's grandfather was Captain of the Royal Palace Guard under Louis XVI of France. He left France in the retinue of Duc de Richelieu, going first to Austria and then Russia. [Maria's father](#) was secretary to General Insov, Governor of Bessarabia, and later Captain of the Astrakhan port. He was a Full State Councillor. Her mother was of wealthy nobles from Taganrog.

We also have fake photos of D. See this one where he is supposed to be a military engineer:



Look closely at his legs and the legs of the chair. See how the chair seems to float in space, and his legs don't look real. Most of that photo has been painted in very poorly. His head has just been pasted in there. And look closely at his face. Who does he look like?

Lenin. In fact, both Lenin and D. have links to the French and to Tatars. To me, this just means they come from closely related Phoenician lines.

Does this mean you should pile up all your D. books and burn them? I don't think so. Some Phoenicians used to have a lot of talent, and there are undoubtedly things we can learn from some of them. Storytelling is definitely one of those things. We just have to be sure that in future we tell true or benignant stories, instead of false or malignant ones.