

## The Shipping News By Annie Proulx

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paperback, 337 pages published 2002 by scribner book company (first published 1993) more details... original title the shipping news isbn 0743225422 (isbn13: 9780743225427) edition language english characters quoyle, petal bear, bunny, sunshine, agnis hamm...more, jack buggit, dennis buggit, beety buggit, wavey prowse, billy pretty, tert card, b. beaufield nutbeem...less setting newfoundland (canada) canada

literary awards pulitzer prize for fiction (1994), national book award for fiction (1993), irish times international fiction prize (1993), chicago tribune heartland prize for fiction (1993), national book critics circle award nominee for fiction (1993) other editions (127)

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tony goriainoff i started reading it a couple of years ago after getting a copy from a local charity. i remember the book being touted as amazing back when it came ou...morei started reading it a couple of years ago after getting a copy from a local charity. i remember the book being touted as amazing back when it came out. pulitzer prize winner and all that. i started, then stopped.

the writing was quirky, but i could deal with that, but something wasn't gripping me. so, a couple of years later i thought i would give it another try. i finished it in about a month. i agree that the book is well written, and there are some interesting passages, but the story is about as interesting in the end as chewed gum. i got the feeling that the author left a lot of characters out in the open. she either didn't know what to do with their stories, or, perhaps, she herself was tired of them and could not be bothered to give them closure.

the aunt, to me the most interesting

character, is dealt with in a very odd way. she is an important character for about half the book, then she is shipped out of the plot, only to make a sort of cameo appearance towards the end.

quayle, who's only interesting feature appears to be the size of his manhood, is as interesting to read about in the beginning, as he is in the end. his journey could have been summarised in a very short short story. as for his quasi-psychic daughter... again, a potential story line which just fades, as do most of the characters in the end.

you reach the end of the book thinking, really? that was your story?

it was like watching a colourful stage set where the actors have few lines, and the decoration is more important than the plot. still, the language and her writing style are very interesting.

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how many people wanted to go to this island in the atlantic after reading this subtly entertaining book? i'm one. i could really feel the weather, the slow pace of life, and the color of the people. great work annie.

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german in usa i did. liked both the book and the film. a similiar mood and place can be found in the 2000 movie „deeply“ with kirsten dunst. flag

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write a review jan 07, 2008 nathan rated it really liked it · review of another edition this book snuck up on me. tricky tricky. it started out interesting enough. proulx's writing style is mesmerizing, almost hypnotic. i found the book initially to be a relaxing solace on my commute home after a busy day of work, solely because of its use of language and setting. but i hated the characters. all of them. quoyle, a big, damp loaf of a man, as proulx describes him, is the definition of pathetic. his daughters are brats. and his wife petal is a two-dimensional device created solely as this book snuck up on me. tricky tricky. it started out interesting enough. proulx's writing style is mesmerizing, almost hypnotic. i found the book initially to be a relaxing solace on my commute home after a busy day of work, solely because of its use of language and setting. but i hated the characters. all of them. quoyle, a big, damp loaf of a man, as proulx describes him, is the definition of pathetic. his daughters are brats. and his wife petal is a two-dimensional device created solely as a catalyst for the story to come. in the beginning it felt a little forced. then at some point in the second half, the book went from a nice little read to a ferocious page-turner, and i still am not sure how it became so compelling. there was no melodramatic conflict introduced. no secret codes to be found in paintings. instead, proulx builds her momentum slowly, slowly, taking you deeper into the lives of these characters, who started out so hard, unattractive, broken, and nasty. the thing of it is, they start to feel so honest. before you know it, their presence is comforting. i found i wanted to be with them. wanted to be in the boat with quoyle. wanted to see the green house. wanted to go to the christmas pageant. wanted to eat flipper pie with him and the girls. wanted to welcome aunt home.

quoyle finds redemption from a place that itself is bleak, full of hardship, and dying. i found this to be poetic and strangely uplifting. its sort of the anti-coming of age story. no beautiful starry-eyed twentysomething trotting off to exotic locations or big cities here. instead, the story of a middle-aged man who hates himself even more than he hates his circumstance, moving back to his modest roots, finding a lot of darkness in the places he comes from. he watches people fall on hard times and move away, endures monotony, deep cold, harsh storms and odd, forced relationships. and in the midst of it he finds friendship, love, and his own self-worth. i just thought it was beautiful. the scene near the end in which quoyle prepares to attend the wake for one of his close friends, looks at his gigantic naked body in the mirror, and feels a surge of joy to be such an honest and satisfying moment of redemption. this dying place brings him to life, and eventually, for the first time in his life, he finds joy and peace. and he finds it in himself, not in the circumstances around him.

it snuck up on me. i didn't realize until it was too late how hard i had fallen for this lot. ...more flag 333 likes · like · see review view all 28 comments oct 06, 2013 jim fonseca rated it it was amazing shelves: nature, environmental-novel, love-story, american-authors, canada [edited for typos, pictures added 4/11/22]

a love story of a single father, a newspaper reporter, who returns to newfoundland to live in an ancestral home and meets a local woman. everyone in the present is haunted in some way by the victims in the past claimed by nature, usually by the sea.

the plot revolves around ordinary characters --- ordinary, quirky newbies, that is. they are overweight or pock-marked or not quite attractive, in that left-behind kind of way, and they are all damaged in some [edited for typos, pictures added 4/11/22]

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the plot revolves around ordinary characters --- ordinary, quirky newbies, that is. they are overweight or pock-marked or not quite attractive, in that left-behind kind of way, and they are all damaged in some way, usually by the loss of loved ones to nature.

but the characters are small specks against the giant backdrop of rock, sea and storms. i'll call this an "environmental novel" of newfoundland. man and woman against nature. we think of an island as the intersection of land and water - two systems - but it's really the intersection of three earth systems - land, water and atmosphere.

here we see mother nature in all her glory inflicting herself on the puny inhabitants of this rock coast. wind, rain, waves, snow, storms, ice, seafoam, icebergs are really the main characters.

shipping news is the antithesis of the beach book. this is one for a good winter read by the fireplace or under the electric blanket.

photos of newfoundland: top from cbc on facebook middle from expedia.com bottom from newfoundlandlabrador.com ...more flag 184 likes · like · see review view all 25 comments mar 15, 2019 kevin kuhn rated it it was amazing · review of another edition "the shipping news" is e. annie proulx's second novel, published back in 1993. the book won the pulitzer prize and the national book award. she has a unique voice and her command of language is impressive. the strength of this book is her prose and strong sense of place. she writes in short staccato sentences, sometimes even using incomplete phrases, but with such inventive and fitting language. she seems to have a vast vocabulary but uses rare words sparingly. her unpretentious talent is more f

"the shipping news" is e. annie proulx's second novel, published back in 1993. the book won the pulitzer prize and the national book award. she has a unique voice and her command of language is impressive. the strength of this book is her prose and strong sense of place. she writes in short staccato sentences, sometimes even using incomplete phrases, but with such inventive and fitting language. she seems to have a vast vocabulary but uses rare words sparingly. her unpretentious talent is more from finding creative uses of everyday words. this talent is fitting for a story that largely takes place in a sparse, inhospitable place, with simple characters and results in real depth underneath these humble characters and locals.

the story follows quoyle, a hulk of a man, who's life begins with dysfunction and tragedy. he is a man adrift in upstate new york, deadened from abuse and ill treatment. the only positive thing he receives from his early life and broken marriage to an unfaithful and dreadful wife, is two daughters. an aunt, angis hamm, convinces quoyle to return to his ancestral home in newfoundland where he finds work on the local newspaper. this is where the story really finds solid ground with proulx deftly describing the local culture, language, and harsh climate of newfoundland.

if there is a weakness in this book, it's that the striking language, and intriguing side observations tended to distract me from the story line. there were moments where i became lost in the story and needing to backtrack or accept that i was lost for a bit, until i found enough clues to navigate back to familiar waters. while several key characters were fully formed, many of the secondary characters were one dimensional and never took shape in my mind. however, the strength of the prose and the rich setting were enough to keep me engaged throughout the entire story. there was just enough struggle and heartbreak to drive the story and we see real change in quoyle.

i finished "the shipping news" feeling that proulx is a better writer than character builder and story teller. but i still believe she's a talent and this is an important work. there is such great connection between her language skills and the setting and people of this book. the desolate location, angry ocean, and gritty town feel like the best, most recognizable character in the book, if that makes sense. worthy of its acclaim and awards, i give it four and a half stars, rounded to five. an artistic tale of small triumphs and personal growth perched in the richly layered backdrop of a seaside northern town. ...more flag 176 likes · like · see review view all 23 comments feb 26, 2019 jaline rated it it was amazing · review of another edition shelves: 2019-completed, x-favourites during the years that i was the manager of a business, i had the wonderful good fortune to have on staff many people originally from newfoundland. one aspect that i found fascinating is the similarities between that relatively small 'rock' and my holiday in southwest england many years ago. in england, i noticed that accents and the way certain things were said changed about every five miles. the same is true with newfoundland. definitions and phrases are different depending on where people live during the years that i was the manager of a business, i had the wonderful good fortune to have on staff many people originally from newfoundland. one aspect that i found fascinating is the similarities between that relatively small 'rock' and my holiday in southwest england many years ago. in england, i noticed that accents and the way certain things were said changed about every five miles. the same is true with newfoundland. definitions and phrases are different depending on where people lived. the most interesting part is that even though they would use different terms for the same things, they could still understand each other! well, it's all english after all.

this story follows a family from new york to newfoundland where quoyle's family is from originally. his aunt travels with the family and is looking forward to a new start with quoyle and his two daughters in the place she had left behind nearly 50 years before.

the writing is very different and interesting.

while they are in their small town in new york, the sentences are terse, choppy – very few articles and no conjunctions. tight, compressed sentences that reflected their tight, compressed existence.

when they arrive at their destination, everything changes – the sentences gradually grow and expand. there are poetic turns of phrase mingled with the mangled english of the newfoundlanders. quoyale, a would-be journalist starts to turn out interesting articles for the newspaper whose owner still goes out fishing whenever he can.

i was enthralled with the people i met while reading and when this family saga ended - of loves lost and found; of careers begun, stalled, and begun again; of friendships and warmth and caring; of dark times and sad times and cruel times and joyful times – when it all came to an end, i felt i would give anything for a few more (like 10 or 20) chapters, even though the ending is perfect.

this novel won several prizes, including both the national book award and the pulitzer prize. it is always a pleasure to me when a book i enjoy so much is given accolades and recognition, and this one is a perfect example.

...more flag 155 likes · like · see review view all 83 comments may 10, 2021 candi rated it liked it · review of another edition shelves: contemporary-literary, book-i-own, pulitzers, canada-canadian this was one of the first twenty books i added to my to-read shelf here on goodreads nearly eight years ago. along the way, i somehow acquired not just one but two copies of this pulitzer prize winning novel. either my memory of what i own failed me, or i really wanted to read this. in any case, it was high time i grabbed one of those copies from my bookshelf! besides, it's so well loved, i was sure to be wild about it as well. i'm sorry to say that something went wrong here, friends. while i did this was one of the first twenty books i added to my to-read shelf here on goodreads nearly eight years ago. along the way, i somehow acquired not just one but two copies of this pulitzer prize winning novel. either my memory of what i own failed me, or i really wanted to read this. in any case, it was high time i grabbed one of those copies from my bookshelf! besides, it's so well loved, i was sure to be wild about it as well. i'm sorry to say that something went wrong here, friends. while i did respect proulx's work, i'm not able to write a gushing review of it! i'm kind of stumped to explain exactly what happened.

*"here is an account of a few years in the life of quoyale, born in brooklyn and raised in a shuffle of dreary upstate towns."*

i'm all for the everyman or everywoman story. these are the kind of characters who appear to live rather ordinary lives; nothing flashy about these people. kent haruf and elizabeth strout write some of the best, in my opinion. john williams's *stoner* comes to mind immediately as well. there's a quality to their writing that makes me feel as if there is indeed something remarkable about these quiet folks after all. their humanity shines through. i just didn't feel it here, and i'm having difficulty pointing out why. perhaps it's all due to the writing style? much of this novel is written in fragmented, choppy sentences - the sort your former high school english teacher would have gleefully marked up with the dreaded red pen in hand. not that i mind this unconventional approach as a rule. i felt it lacked a kind of warmth here that would have been the perfect counterbalance to the stormy, frigid atmosphere of the newfoundland setting.

*"at last the end of the world, a wild place that seemed poised on the lip of the abyss. no human sign, nothing, no ship, no plane, no animal, no bird, no bobbing trap marker nor buoy. as though he stood alone on the planet. the immensity of sky roared at him and instinctively he raised his hands to keep it off. translucent thirty-foot combers the color of bottles crashed onto stone, coursed bubbles into a churning lake of milk shot with cream."*

the setting is what truly stole the show for me entirely – that and the description of the old homestead, going back generations through the quoyales, a family with a rather colorful, infamous history. newfoundland is on my long list of places to visit someday. proulx's powerful descriptions went a long way in putting some stunning images in my mind's eye. i wish that more of the plot had transpired at the old house. it was to this home that the protagonist, quoyale, had fled with his two little girls and an aunt after misadventure and catastrophe struck. there was a delicious sense of foreboding whenever the house was described – i love it when a place becomes nearly like a living and breathing entity. my wish was not to be fully granted, however. a bit of a disappointment, i admit. i would have happily spent many more days beneath that nightmarish roof. i wanted more of this:

*"the house was heavy around him, the pressure of the past filling the rooms like odorless gas. the sea breathed in the distance... but the house was wrong... dragged by human labor across miles of ice, the outcasts straining against the ropes and shouting curses at the godly mob. winched onto the rock. groaning. a bound prisoner straining to get free. the humming of the taut cables. that vibration passed into the tether, made it secrete alive... he was inside a tethered animal, dumb but feeling. swallowed by the shouting past."*

there's a motley crew of characters besides the quoyale family. they were well described, but i can't say i ever latched onto a single one of them. there are some unhappy and tragic pasts that are revealed. i swear i'm not completely heartless, but these failed to move me! i was fully inspired by at least three more novels before this one. let's just say that anais barbeau-lavalette, jeanette winterson and annie ernaux are at least partly to blame for my lackluster response to *the shipping news*. my apologies to annie proulx who through no fault of her own failed to seduce me as these three women writers did. i know i'm in the unpopular minority with my three star rating, but i've always said i believe in second chances. i have a collection of her short stories waiting for another day.

*"all the complex wires of life were stripped out and he could see the structure of life. nothing but rock and sea, the tiny figures of humans and animals against them for a brief time."*

...more flag 162 likes · like · see review view all 107 comments nov 01, 2013 fabian rated it it was amazing like with almost every other pulitzer darling, we accompany the protagonist for the entire ride, & this one is exceptionally literary in that brave, everyman-type way. this: the prototype for the ever ambitious, ever elusive great (semi)american novel in which the elements of clever prose, revamped/revisited personal histories, of second chances and redemption, are outstandingly clear and pitched at full blast. many novels read like this, and usually the one in that particular year earns itself magnanimous acclaim. yes, it tries to do everything right. but why is this not a contemporary classic (ahem, "middlesex")? because, after all, as the drama becomes more elevated, the protagonist becomes somewhat... uninteresting. as the atmosphere becomes a desolate (desperate?) return to simplicity, the token characters pile on--the thesis being that with more people around the sadness which is omnipresent is diminished. the only way to succeed in life is to partake in it. bottom line.

no, this one is not without its problems--this is not graham greene, it is not toni morrison, it is not geoffrey eugenides, after all. alas, it suffers from similar ailments shared by other pulitzer winners: it is, at times, a tad too superficial ("a visit from the goon squad"); somewhat dull-ish, small, insignificantish ("breathing lessons"); dense ("american pastoral") or even a little too long, overdone (sorry--"loneseome dove"). & it is thoroughly enjoyable, too. (which is never a detractor from the overall experience.)

p.s. several surprises await (in the last 12 pages) those readers who manage to reach the end. so... get there, people. ...more flag 134 likes · like · see review view all 9 comments nov 08, 2007 jocelyn rated it did not like it my initial review of this book was simply "bullllshiiit", but, um, perhaps more explanation is deserved. after a handful of people whose taste i respect raved about this book, i was looking forward to it, and got to page 180 or so before finally admitting "this feels like a chore" and giving it away (and i \*rarely\* leave books unfinished).

what got to me about this book was mainly proulx's style was too...forced. nothing that occurred felt real or believed by the author herself (and it's not that i demand "realism"; one hundred years of solitude is one of my favorites). it's that i felt like i could see the mechanisms behind all of her "tricks"...the anecdotes that characters told felt like ideas proulx kept on a notepad before compiling them together for this novel. it read like the final project from a brilliant student finishing a course on creative writing.

i'm not saying proulx isn't a good \*writer\*...but i don't see her as a storyteller. ...more flag 118 likes · like · see review view all 42 comments dec 08, 2019 michael finocchiaro rated it it was amazing · review of another edition shelves: novels, american-20th-c, john\_dos\_passos\_prize, national-book-award, fiction, pulitzer-winning-fiction, pulitzer-fiction the shipping news is a wonderful read. we are introduced to quoyale and follow him from his life and failed marriage in mockingburg (!), new york through to his move and settling into newfoundland with his two daughters, bunny and sunshine. there is a nearly dostoyevski-level of tragedy underpinning the story - sexual assault, perversion, violence - which litters the road quoyale travels down.

there are a few innovative aspects to the text itself, the names and the grammar. annie proulx comes up w the shipping news is a wonderful read. we are introduced to quoyale and follow him from his life and failed marriage in mockingburg (!), new york through to his move and settling into newfoundland with his two daughters, bunny and sunshine. there is a nearly dostoyevski-level of tragedy underpinning the story - sexual assault, perversion, violence - which litters the road quoyale travels down.

there are a few innovative aspects to the text itself, the names and the grammar. annie proulx comes up with some of the most original names i have ever seen (tert card! bunny! partridge!) and this helps make the text more memorable and fun. the staccato sentence structure where she often drops the subject is a clever way of dropping us into a pseudo-interior dialog inside quoyale's head. these two features give a unique dynamic to proulx's writing.

at the beginning of the story, quoyale reminded me of ignatius j. reilly from a confederacy of dunces, both physically and in terms of his lack of career, but fortunately for quoyale, he quickly latches onto a friend, partridge, and a career in journalism despite a rocky start. **"quoyale didn't recognize news, had no aptitude for detail. he was afraid of all but twelve or fifteen verbs. had a fatal flair for the false passive."** (p. 8).

like ignatius or even augie march (the adventures of augie march to a degree, quoyale is desperately trying to move beyond his limitations: **"in a profession that tutored**

**its practitioners in the baseness of human nature, that revealed the corroded nature of civilization, quoyle constructed a personal illusion of orderly progress. in atmospheres of disintegration and smoking jealousy he imagined rational compromise.** (p. 10). fortunately for him, he is able to surmount the early catastrophe with petal and reconnect with his somewhat damaged, but still malleable kids and becomes a charming father figure. (yes, i am skipping some detail here in an effort to avoid spoilers.)

in his migration to the cold, windy north, he brings his aunt (herself full of incredible surprises) who imparts wisdom in little chunks: **"as you get older you find out the place where you started out pulls at you stronger and stronger...probably some atavistic drive to finish up where you started."** (p. 30). she is going back, with great courage, to a place where she personally suffered but where she will build herself up again despite her own setbacks.

i wanted to mention that another characteristic of this book that makes it exceptional is the care the author takes to give a credible and poignant backstory to nearly all of the characters. none are mere cardboard cutouts of people. even the crazy cousin has a moment of lucidity at the end. i found this to really bring me and bind me to the story.

there is a lot of comedy in the novel - on arriving in killick-claw, newfoundland, the scene in the tickle (!) motel, bar & restaurant was particularly hilarious off of route 999 (about as far from anywhere as you can imagine!): **"quoyle was the first to take a shower. discoloured water spouted from a broken tile, seeped under the door and into the carpet. the sprinkler system dribbled as long as the cold faucet was open. his clothes slipped off the toilet and lay in the flood, for the door hooks were torn away. a bible on a chain near the toilet, loose pages ready to fall. it was not until the next evening that he discovered that he had gone about all day with a page from levticus stuck to his back."** (p. 55)

quoyle goes to work for the local paper, the *gammy bird* and his male colleagues are all adorably bizarre. nutbeem, tert, and billy plus his boss jack - all described with care and humor. the book gets its title from quoyle's column, the shipping news, where he is to gather information on comings and goings from the port and which overtime he truly excels at while he gets used to the natural beauty (and unnatural human debris) of the area. cleaning up around his house: **"when he came upon a torn plastic bag he filled it with debris. tin cans, baby-food jars, a supermarket meat tray, torn paper cajoling the jobless reader...plastic line, the unfurled cardboard tube from a roll of toilet paper. pink tampon inserts. behind him a profound sigh, the sigh of someone beyond hope or exasperation. quoyle turned. a hundred feet away, a glistening back. the minke whale rose, glided under the milky surface. he stared at the water. again it appeared, sighed, slipped under. roiling fog arms flew fifty feet above the sea."** (p. 110). her descriptions of nature are occasionally breathtaking like this one.

in an important passage, quoyle's colleague billy gives him a metaphor for the schema for a man's life: **"ar, that? let's see. used to say there were four women in every man's heart. the maid in the meadow, the demon lover, the stouthearted woman, the tall and quiet woman."** (p. 182). while i have a hard time relating that to my own experience, it definitely correlates directly to quoyle. the tall and quiet woman is clearly the wonderful wavey (!) and the story of she and quoyle is another wonderful highlight to this charming book.

each chapter begins with a quote, most often from a book of knots - the rope and knots being metaphors that are used throughout the novel. i really liked the last sentence of the story as well which uses this wonderful metaphor: **"water may be older than light, diamonds crack in hot goat's blood, mountaintops give off cold fire, forests appear in mid-ocean, it may happen that a crab is caught with the shadow of a hand on its back, that the wind might be imprisoned in a bit of knotted string. and it may be that love sometimes occurs without pain or misery."** (p. 355).

overall, this book was absolutely deserving of its pulitzer prize and made me want to read more work by this gifted author who, incidentally, was not published until she was in her 50s giving the present reviewer hope as yet! and i know i have to still see the movie with kevin spacey. ...more flag 114 likes · like · see review view all 21 comments may 24, 2008 annet rated it it was amazing shelves: favorites, have-to-read-again, literature-pure, beautiful-poetic, wilderness-books-can-usa, wow-impressive, classics so far this is a great read, this book is a little gem. had to get used to the language and the different way of storytelling, but this story, i love it so far!

finished it today and what a great book to start 2010 with. i loved it!loved the story, the characters, the description of the surroundings and the community, the way it is written, loved everything about it. it could have gone on forever for me. this is a feel good story, at least that's how i felt it. it was on my night desk next to th so far this is a great read, this book is a little gem. had to get used to the language and the different way of storytelling, but this story, i love it so far!

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and i can only tie my shoes. on a good day.

i don't remember nautical terms. they are lost on me. always have been. if the ship goes down, it's going down with me.

but i know knots. a knot at the base of my throat, an edgy knot taking over my stomach, a knot where my colon used to be.

and, reading this unnerving masterpiece, you feel the knots. because disaster looms in every page of this beauty. disaster. a little like life, but worse. life in newfoundland.

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horrible, near-grotesque people. people you would never want to know, or date. food i would never touch, outside of starvation.

and outstanding writing, as in stands out from anything i've ever read in my life. luminous, poetic, inspired writing. as good as morrison or faulkner, but funny, too. i shook my head in awe, shook my head on every page, as i swallowed around the knots in my neck.

this novel left me shipwrecked. ...more flag 106 likes · like · see review view all 34 comments may 29, 2008 julie rated it it was ok you know you're in trouble when you pan a pulitzer prize winner, but pan i must. this book bored me to tears. perpetual motion and its status as "currently reading" on goodreads together got me through it. i didn't care what happened to whom or how it would end, i just wanted it over. amazing the things that passed for excitement and were given excessive air time in this novel: an incredibly detailed rendition of the kids' christmas pageant; knitting; the uneventful daily commute and various mos you know you're in trouble when you pan a pulitzer prize winner, but pan i must. this book bored me to tears. perpetual motion and its status as "currently reading" on goodreads together got me through it. i didn't care what happened to whom or how it would end, i just wanted it over. amazing the things that passed for excitement and were given excessive air time in this novel: an incredibly detailed rendition of the kids' christmas pageant; knitting; the uneventful daily commute and various mostly silent car rides. enough to make you want to shout fire! and see if any of these characters does anything but look around slowly, gather up his belongings--carefully--and think about that phone call he wasn't now going to get to make about that boat motor. sheesh! then when something interesting was happening, or happened before but was just coming up in conversation, nothing much is made of it! it's all brushed under the rug as not being worthy of the words it would have taken to adequately describe. i don't give a rat's a\$\$ about the detailed description of the animal paintings on the children's cocoa mugs, but i would have liked to have heard how, exactly, mrs. yark managed to rescue them from the total destruction of her house and her entire town.

and the names--nearly every one of them strange, and (to me) irksome. i couldn't decide through the entire book how to pronounce quoyle--with a hard c or with a kw. wavey reminded me of wavy gravy. petal. marty for a girl. beety. last names (often used alone) were bizarre as well. nutbeem. pretty. quoyle (double whammy, first and last). buggit.

one review called the book "atmospheric." i'll give it that, if by atmospheric they mean more "cold pea soup, no crackers" than "middle earth with orlando bloom." another (this one on the back of the book), "a lyric page-turner." whaaaa?

enough, glad its done; it drove me nuts. good thing proulx's brokeback mountain is a short story, because i still do want to read that. ...more flag 86 likes · like · see review view all 12 comments dec 01, 2012 arah-lynda rated it it was amazing · review of another edition recommended to arah-lynda by: steve aka sckenda shelves: prize-winners, top, killer-prose, i-said quoyle a coil of rope

a flemish flake is a spiral coil of one layer only.

it is made on deck, so that it may be walked on, if necessary.

the ashley book of knots

much like that coil of rope, our protagonist, quoyle, has also been stepped on all his life. *a great damp loaf of a body. at six he weighed eighty pounds. at sixteen he was buried under a casement of flesh. head shaped like a crenshaw, no neck, reddish hair rucked back. features as bunched as kissed fingertips. eyes the color of plastic. th* quoyle

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*kissed fingertips. eyes the color of plastic. the monstrous chin, a freakish shelf, jutting from the lower face.* he stumbles into the newspaper business through a friend he meets one night in a laundromat in mockingburg, new york. he is not very good at it. he also meets petal bear, a small woman he yearns for, they share a month of happiness, followed by six years of misery, two children and a multitude of scars, seared into his flesh from her indiscreet, two timing ways. petal bear does not value quoyale or his children. alone, without work, without a wife, on the heels of his father's death, he decides to gather his children and follow his aunt agnis to his ancestral home on newfoundland's stark and majestic coast.

it is there, working for the gammy bird, a small newspaper, covering the shipping news, that quoyale battles his inner demons and struggles to build a new life for himself and his daughters. but quoyale is a man defeated, a man with no love of self. he even considers himself as a headline for one of his stories. **stupid man does wrong thing once more.** i wanted so badly for quoyale to find some gumption, to love himself just a little. when an oil tanker docks a killick-claw, quoyale writes an article about it. before release, the entire tone of his article is rewritten by the managing editor, only this time quoyale is incensed. *"this is a column", bellowed quoyale. "you can't change somebody's column, for christ's sake, because you don't like it! jack asked me to write a column about boats and shipping. that means my opinion and description as i see it. this" – he shook the paper against the slab cheeks – "isn't what i wrote, isn't my opinion, isn't what i see."* at last! i was so overcome with sheer joy that i leapt out of my deckchair, threw my arms in the air and let loose a resounding "yes"! (okay so my neighbours may think i am a little hinky)

this is a great story, with a cast of truly colourful characters but if you will bear with me for just a moment, i would like to talk about what this book, wrong or right, said to me.

you cannot leave your past behind, no matter where you travel, there too, it is.

everyone is worthy, not all heroes are tall, dark, handsome, beautiful, sexy, confident or comfortable in their own skin.

you cannot run, but you can dig deep and you can find a new hope, a new joy in life.

family is defined not only by blood but also by bond, by those who are there, in the dark and the light.

these homes of love we build, house many rooms, sanded and painted in the shades and colours of our life, furnished with those moments that, however inconsequential they may seem to others, have in fact, defined us.

cover beauty is coveted and exploited: provides keys to all the right doors, but it is our inner selves, our own moral code that is the true compass to the coveted life of beauty, peace, happiness and love.

i am not going to lie. i love the fact that this story unfolds on the stark and beautiful, majestic coast of newfoundland, a province in the land i call my own.

very rarely do i change a rating on a book once i have set it, but in this case, how can i not. trust me, this story is worthy of every one of those five stars.

finally i would like to thank steve who wrote an incredible, heartfelt review of this work that put it on my radar.

...more flag 85 likes · like · see review view all 42 comments aug 07, 2013 cecily rated it really liked it · review of another edition shelves: miscellaneous-fiction, language-related, usa-and-canada, landscape-location-protagonist this is my first proulx, so i didn't know if the unusual writing style is typical, or specially chosen for this particular story. i hope it's the latter, as it works very well.

update: i've now read the collection, **close range: brokeback mountain and other stories**, which i reviewed here. those stories use similar language, but somewhat toned down.

it covers a couple of years (plus some backstory) in the life of thirty-something quoyale: a big, lonely, awkward and unattractive man, always having or this is my first proulx, so i didn't know if the unusual writing style is typical, or specially chosen for this particular story. i hope it's the latter, as it works very well.

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it covers a couple of years (plus some backstory) in the life of thirty-something quoyale: a big, lonely, awkward and unattractive man, always having or doing the wrong thing. he is a not very successful journalist in new york, who ends up moving, with his young daughters (bunny and sunshine) and aunt, to a small, somewhat inbred, community in newfoundland where the aunt and his late father grew up. somehow proulx keeps the reader on the fence: he isn't especially lovable, and yet he elicits more sympathy than mockery in this reader.

i think one weakness is that the mother of the girls is too horrible, and the manner of her departure from their lives stretched my credulity somewhat.

language

the narrative style is the first thing to hit. it is very distinctive, continues throughout the book, and could be infuriating, though i didn't find it so. it is telegraphic and observational, reflecting quoyale's job. there are staccato sentence fragments, and some overworked analogies, some of which are wonderfully vivid, and a few of which are laughably awful. grammar sticklers may struggle to enjoy this book, but it's their loss - context is all, and in this context, i think it works.

if i were as clever and witty as some of my gr friends (you know who you are), i would have written this review in the style of the book.

anyway, some typical examples:

this is the entire opening paragraph of a chapter:

"the aunt in her woolen coat when quoyale came into the motel room. tin profile with a glass eye. a bundle on the floor under the window. wrapped in a bed sheet, tied with net twine."

another whole paragraph:

"near the window a man listened to a radio. his buttery hair swept behind ears. eyes pinched close, a mustache. a packet of imported dates on his desk. he stood up to shake quoyale's hand. gangled. plaid bow tie and ratty pullover. the british accent strained through his splayed nose."

analogies:

\* "eyes the color of plastic"

\* "the sullen bay rubbed with thumbs of fog"

\* "on the horizon icebergs like white prisons. the immense blue fabric of the sea, rumpled and creased."

\* "parenthesis around her mouth set like clamps. impossible to know if she was listening to tubbeem or flying over the himalayas"

\* "in a way he could not explain she seized his attention; because she seemed sprung from wet stones, the stench of fish and tide."

\* "eyes like a thorn bush, stabbing everything at once"

\* the ghost of his wife, "petal's essence riding under his skin like an injected vaccine against the plague of love"

\* "fingernails like the bowls of souvenir spoons." (that's the whole sentence.)

the town and community

aspects of the town and its characters remind me of david lynch's 1980s tv series "twin peaks": strange characters, often with impairments of mind, body or emotions, slightly strange names, odd superstitions, and dark secrets (murder, incest, rape, insurance fraud).

the town of killick claw isn't prosperous, and the environment is still harsh, but it's better than when the aunt grew up there: "the forces of fate weakened by unemployment insurance, a flaring hope in offshore oil money."

*the gammy bird* is the local paper, and it's like no other: lots of adverts (many of them fake), deliberate typos and malapropisms, libelous gossip (including a regular catalogue of sex abuse cases!), shipping news and "we run a front-page photo of a car wreck every week, whether we have a wreck or not". poor quoyale is bemused and has the uneasy and familiar feeling "of standing on a playground watching others play games whose rules he didn't know".

themes

knots are the most obvious one. each chapter opens with a quotation pertinent to what it contains, and many are from ashley book of knots, which proulx found second-hand, and gave her the inspiration and structure she sought. knots feature in the plot metaphorically (in terms of being bound or adrift), in a more literal and superstitious sense. rope can be wound and knotted to make good a wound or separation. we also learn that quoyale's name means "coil of rope", and i suppose he is pretty tightly coiled for the first half of the book.

shipping is obvious, too, not just from the title, but because quoyale ends up writing the eponymous shipping news in the local paper, in a community where everyone needs a boat. most of the introductory quotes that are not from ashley book of knots are from a mariner's dictionary. i confess there were times when the quantity and level of detail slightly exceeded my interest, but i'm glad i stuck with it.

the book is riddled with pain, rejection, estrangement and mentions of abusive relationships (never graphic); many are haunted by ghosts of past events and relationships gone wrong. but although it is sometimes bleak, it is rarely depressing, and sometimes it's funny. even close and fond relationships often have an element of awkwardness and distance; for instance, quoyale always refers to "the aunt", rather than "my aunt". even after living with her for a while, "it came to him he knew nearly nothing of the aunt's life. and hadn't missed the knowledge."

ultimately, it's at least as much about (re)birth and healing as death and doom. one character slowly realises it may be possible to recover from a broken relationship: "was love then like a bag of assorted sweets passed around from which one might choose more than once?"

other miscellaneous quotations

\* "a failure of normal appearance" - if you can't even achieve that, what hope is there?

\* "believed in silent suffering, didn't see that it goaded"

\* in a shop, "the man's fingers dropped cold dimes"

\* "fog shuddered against their faces"

\* "the house was garlanded with wind"

\* in such a harsh environment, "the wood, hardened by time and corroding weather, clenched the nails fast"

\* "a few torn pieces of early morning cloud the shape and color of salmon fillets" (i think i'd prefer that one without the fish)

\* "the woman in the perpetual freeze of sorrow, afloat on the rise and fall of tattered billows"

\* a babysitter "doing overtime in a trance of electronic color and simulated life, smoking cigarettes and not wondering. the floor around her strewn with hairless dolls."

from the ashley book of knots:

"to prevent slipping, a knot depends on friction, and to provide friction there must be pressure of some sort." ...more flag 84 likes · like · see review view all 39 comments aug 06, 2019 paul bryant rated it it was ok shelves: novels, abandoned probably not a good idea for me since reading convoluted descriptions of the weather is never going to

be one of my favourite forms of entertainment and long languid non-stories involving lotsa far-fetched sitcommy eccentric types with daft names all being telegraphed to my brain in a staccato style studded with many outre dialect words that aren't in big dictionaries so i guess musta bin quarried out of the dictionary of newfoundland english by g m story et al (847 pages, revised edition published 1990) are when i'm brutally honest the thing i would tiptoe barefoot over broken glass to avoid, mostly. i kept leaving this paperback outside, but it didn't rain. ...more flag 83 likes · like · see review view all 12 comments aug 04, 2017 steven godin rated it it was ok · review of another edition shelves: america-canada, fiction thankfully negative reviews are somewhat of a rare commodity for me. in the case of the shipping news, it's difficult to find any positives, simply down to proulx's writing style which i never could grasp hold of, along with dialogue that annoyed the hell out of me. the star of the show if there was to be one, is newfoundland itself, the characters i struggled to feel anything for, even in the more moving moments, i am still left though with a mixed reaction. i wondered what proulx had against r

down on his luck journalist quoyale, with young daughters bunny and sunshine in tow, heads to newfoundland to hopefully reignite his floundering life, leaving new york, and a dead wife behind he travels to stay with his aunt agnis in a run down ancestral home right by the sea, it's remote, it's bleak, it's cold. he would take a job writing of the shipping news across the water for a paper called...wait for it...the gammy bird. the other characters in the book also have odd names, there's wavey prowse, tert card, beaufield nutbeem, diddy shovel and alvin yark, 10/10 for imagination. becoming acquainted with the locals, quoyale suttters along in life whilst trying to adapt to his surroundings, all the while weary of his daughters, and the affect it had on their own upbringing.

proulx does do a wonderful job when describing newfoundland, this was just about as good as it got for me, and after a promising opening setting the scene, i actually was looking forward in a positive light. however, the prose style is a big sticking point, and the pacing didn't suit me either, which, quite frankly was all over the place. to it's credit, it certainly wasn't dull, the characterisation was pretty good, but apart from quoyale, aunt, and daughters, i didn't like spending time with any others, had i lived in a trailer, wore a budweiser cap, and went boating i may have done. someone mentioned to me they would rather read of newfoundland than go there. i disagree, would gladly get out my winter warmers and stand on the rocks starting into the fog, than read this again. as for a pulitzer prize, the competition was either weak or non-existent.

not all bad, just not my cup of tea. 2/5. ...more flag 80 likes · like · see review view all 9 comments jan 03, 2008 sheba rated it it was amazing ah the shipping news. i remember my heart dropping when i read this book the first time. i thought, "if this is what people are writing, i am no writer."

this book is revolutionary in it's use of language. she punctuates inventively and her punctuation "style" gives her sentences a strange movement. the book moves, it actually moves, as you read it.

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there are moments of such pain like when quoyale lies still in his bed as petal bear fucks another man in their home--and it's not written in a way where you feel pity or anger; but you identify, i mean you get still like quoyale--or i did...

there is this triplet of sentences where quoyale realizes bunny may fall from the ladder she is beginning to climb and when i read it, i felt my stomach drop and had a quick intake of breath--but those sentences were non-dramatic, not written to scare or startle--it wasn't even the sentences that got me like that, it was like this weird pause orchestrated by creative punctuation.

oh i really can't explain it...i just think this book is one of the best books i have ever read and by the way, the movie sucked something rancid and you should never see it.. but read read read this book. ...more flag 77 likes · like · see review view all 5 comments feb 19, 2019 brian rated it really liked it · review of another edition shelves: fiction "the old life was too small to fit anymore."

i picked up "the shipping news" recently while i was staying in a house in nova scotia that could have easily been the setting for the novel. perhaps that aided in my enjoyment of the text? one thing it certainly did was reinforce for me how well the author (e. annie proulx) captured the setting and atmosphere of newfoundland. the sense of place in this novel is well done. you feel the environment and newfoundland in particular. a criticism of the text "the old life was too small to fit anymore."

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the story involves a thirty-six year old oaf from the (fictional) town of mockingburg, new york named quoyale, who in the first of several reader-alienating devices, does not have a given name. an all-night clerk at a convenience store, he's befriended by a newspaperman named partridge, who recommends quoyale for the staff of a community newspaper as a reporter. a disappointment to his pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps father and walked over by his abusive wife petal bear, quoyale's misfortunes continue when his terminally ill parents commit ritual suicide and petal is killed in a car accident, having sold their daughters bunny and sunshine to sex traffickers on her way out the door.

quoyale's only family (and the most realized character in the novel) is his paternal aunt agnis hamm, a yacht upholsterer who suggests her nephew and children need a fresh start. aunt agnis is nostalgic for the place she grew up and offers to relocate with them to quoyale's point in newfoundland, their ancestral home where a house has stood unoccupied in coastal wilderness for forty-four years. braving the wind and sleet and tire tracks standing in for a road, the quoyales find the house uninhabitable. they move to the nearest town of killick-claw, where partridge has recommended quoyale for a job on the community newspaper, the *gammy bird*.

*he had never seen so many ads. they went down both sides of the pages like descending stairs and the news was squeezed into the vase-shaped space between. crude ads with a few lines of type dead center. don't pay anything until january! no down payment! no interest! as though these exhortations were freshly coined phrases for vinyl siding, rubber stamps, life insurance, folk music festivals, bank services, rope ladders, cargo nets, marine hardware, ship's laundry services, davits, rock band entertainment at the snowball lounge, clocks, firewood, tax return services, floor jacks, cut flowers, truck mufflers, tombstones, boilers, brass tacks, curling irons, jogging pants, snowmobiles, party night at seal flipper lounge with arthur the accordion ace, used snowmobiles, fried chicken, a smelting derby, t-shirts, oil rig maintenance, gas barbecue grills, wieners, flights to goose bay, chinese restaurant specials, dry bulk transport services, a glass of wine with the pork chop special at the norse sunset lounge, retraining program for fishermen, vcr repairs, heavy equipment operating training, tires, rifles, love seats, frozen corn, jelly powder, dancing at uncle demmy's bar, kerosene lanterns, hull repairs, hatches, tea bags, beer, lumber planing, magnetic brooms, hearing aids.*

quoyale's boss is jack buggit, a fisherman who launched a newspaper when the government proved inept at retraining him for anything else. quoyale, whose journalism experience is limited to covering municipal news, is put on the car wreck beat, taking pictures and writing copy for the latest fatality, or using stock photos from past accidents if there hasn't been a new one. the fact that quoyale's wife was just killed in a car accident seems not to have made an impression on buggit, who also wants quoyale to cover the shipping news, checking in each week with the harbormaster diddy shovel on which ships are coming and going.

the *gammy bird* consists the managing editor tert card, an alcoholic who detests the weather and economic malaise of

newfoundland and fakes almost all the ads in an effort to make the paper look profitable. billy pretty is jack's second cousin, a bachelor who writes a salacious gossip column under the pseudonym junior sugg and offers to help quoyale learn how to navigate the waters. nutbeern is an english expat who covers the local sex abuse beat and reports foreign news he hears on the radio. living in the tickle motel, where an inoperable phone and a broken doorknob traps them inside the room their first morning there, quoyale gets a crash course in newfoundland living.

with land passage often more difficult than water, quoyale pays \$50 for a homemade speedboat, which becomes the laughingstock of killick-claw. pooling resources with aunt agnis, he begins repairing the house on quoyale point, but learns that winter will ultimately close the twenty-eight mile road to town and make travel impossible. the shipping news grows from a list to a column, which permits quoyale to express an opinion. agnis tries to match her nephew with one of her seamstresses, but he gravitates toward a young widow named wavey prowse whose spouse, he learns, was also a philanderer. he tries to survive in a land determined to kill anyone who crosses it.

*these waters, thought quoyale, haunted by lost ships, fishermen, explorers gurgled down into sea holes as black as a dog's throat. bawling into salt broth. vikings down the crackling winds, steering through fog by the polarized light of sun-stones. the inuit in skin boats, breathing, breathing, rhythmic suck of frigid air, iced paddles dipping, spray freezing, sleek back rising, jostle, the boat torn, spiraling down. millennial bergs from the glaciers, morbid, silent except for waves breaking on their flanks, the deceiving sound of shoreline where there was no shore. foghorns, smothered gun reports along the coast. ice welding land to sea. frost smoke. clouds mottled by reflections of water holes in the plains of ice. the glare of ice erasing dimension, distance, subjecting senses to mirage and illusion. a rare place.*

the pleasures of *the shipping news* can be found in annie proulx's descriptions. she's peerless when it comes to describing atmosphere, weather or landscapes and transporting the reader to the environment, or the moment, of the scene she's describing.

newfoundland comes to life as an alien world populated by frontiersmen victimized by drowning seas, car accidents or a downturn in the fishing industry. in a misstep, proulx also throws sexual abuse into the cauldron in a cavalier, almost jokey way, but the novel is at all times unique in its ability to carry the reader away to the far side of the world without judging it or making a mockery of the locals.

*tert card slammed through the door. "i'm shinnicked with cold," he shouted, blowing on his chapped hands, backing his great rear up to the gas heater, "this degree of cold so early in the season takes the heart out of you for the place. trying to drive along the cliffs this morning with the snow off the ice and the wipers froze up and the car slipping sideways i thought 'it's only november. how can this be?' started thinking about the traffic statistics. last january there was hundreds of motor vehicle accidents in newfoundland. death, personal injury, property damage. in just one month. that's how the need begins, on a cold day like this coming along the cliff. first it's just a little question to yourself. then you say something out loud. then you clip out the coupons in the travel magazines. the brochures come. you put them on the dashboard so you can look at a palm tree while you go over the edge. in february only one thing keeps you going--the air flight ticket to florida on your dresser. if you make it to march, boy, you'll make it to heaven. you get on that plan in risky bay, there's so much ice on the wings and the wind from hell you doubt the plane can make it, but it does, and when it glides and lands, when they throws open the door, my son, i want to tell you the smell of hot summer and suntan oil and exhaust fumes make you cry with pleasure. a sweet place they got down there with the oranges." he sucked in a breath, exhaled a snotty gust of sleek yellow water like a liqueur. addressed quoyale. "now, buddy, you got some kind of a car or boat wreck this week or not?"*

if *the shipping news* were narrative non-fiction or an article in the *new yorker*, it would be a five-star winner for me. almost every paragraph is beautifully written, but they didn't add up to compelling fiction. proulx's imagination falls short after the character of aunt agnis, who feels like she should be the protagonist. quoyale and waverly's relationship is given hardly any care or attention, while bunny and sunshine are also just there, adding nothing (the cute names of these characters adding to their artificiality). descriptions of newfoundland are the star attractions and i recommend the novel for those; story and characters small print on the back of the program. ...more flag 67 likes · like · see review view all 21 comments feb 16, 2022 baba rated it did not like it · review of another edition shelves:

contemporary journalist, writer and wordsmith american annie proulx won the **pulitzer prize for fiction and the national book award for fiction in 1994** with this critically acclaimed in literary circles second novel. it doesn't take a genius to spot my use of 'literary circles' as probably not being a compliment about this story of an awkward (physically and visually) cuckolded outlier having no other real option than picking up sticks and moving (with his daughters and an aunt) to his ancestral home in a remote part of newfoundland in canada, where he sort of, almost by accident finds himself. a book lauded for its prose, its portrayal of a quirky cast, and details of life in the past and present in this remote port community, all tinged with an underlying delicately dark humour. at least on this occasion, even though this was just too random, too uninteresting and too artificially constructed for me, i can see what others see in it. just a 3 out of 12, one star read for me though.

where this book went so wrong for me was having such an intriguing and eye opening start with the cuckolding of the main protagonist and his sad docile responses to the situations his wife put him into... and to go from that riveting scenario to tales of the awkward dude finding himself in the cold canadian outback in a quirky community felt like a cold bucket of water over my reading head!

**2022 read** ...more flag 63 likes · like · see review view 2 comments oct 27, 2012 deborah ideiosepius rated it did not like it recommended to deborah by: mattie shelves: travestys, fiction this was a review in progress, as i waded through the bog of this book;

1. (october 28) a deeply uninteresting, unlikeable boy grows up to be a deeply uninteresting, unlikable man. he marries a nasty piece of work (who is also deeply unlikable) and spits out two children that are exactly the children one goes out of one's way to avoid at shopping centres.

parents die, wife dies, aunt shows up out of nowhere and whisks the whole aimless uninteresting lot of them off to a dreary remote end-of-nowher this was a review in progress, as i waded through the bog of this book;

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parents die, wife dies, aunt shows up out of nowhere and whisks the whole aimless uninteresting lot of them off to a dreary remote end-of-nowhere town in newfoundland.

that is the plot as it stands so far. this book won awards. why is it that some committees feel that if it makes you miserable it must be good prose?

well, to be honest it is - good prose that is - the english is well constructed and the descriptive powers of the author are formidable. unfortunately this formidable prose is completely lacking in any mitigating humour that would save it from being heavy, dull and dreary to read.

it might be that some shade of humour and likability may edge it's way between the covers after the man starts the job after which the book is named. i am just not sure it is worth the slog as so far the only enjoyable part of the book has been the knot work quotes at the start of each chapter.

2. (november 7) there is room for all books in the world, it is good that we do not all read (or write, alike) this review is my opinion however and in my opinion overblown descriptiveness is a cheap and nasty way of convincing people that they are reading high quality literature when they are (usually) not. it is a specific style of writing that is only worthy of parodies such as cold comfort farm, which mocked the florid style very well indeed.

as an example of what i dislike about the over-florid style, the shipping news is made to measure. consider the following sentence; "... oilcloth the colour of insect wings" [pg 57]. do you feel that information as to the colour of the oilcloth has been imparted to you?

really?  
wings of which insect?  
fruit flies and mosquitoes? (transparent with lovely iridescence and dark veins), praying mantis? (usually, a delicate shade of green) cockroaches? (dark brown for the outer wing case and light brown for the inner wings in ninety percent of species).

or maybe a butterfly which is also an insect, a fact that cannot have escaped an author as addicted as annie is to using every english word in the dictionary whether or not it is relevant to the meaning she is trying to impart.

3. (january 5th 2013) finished. thank goodness! there should be a way to give negative stars.

4. december 2016  
it was certainly memorable. the painful, unpleasant memory has lingered over the years even though the memories of more enjoyable books have faded. so very memorable that i wince whenever i see the authors name printed and refuse to so much as pick up a book by her. ...more flag 51 likes · like · see review view all 35 comments may 07, 2020 théodore added it it happens in newfoundland, a place of water, moisture, and rottenness, of words that travel long distances, a place for people who know everything about boats, cliffs and icebergs. a place of death of sea.

quoyale promontory is the birthplace of quoyale's father, a diffuse character - where he retires with his two little girl. the promontory is named by a family that the locals know is cursed.

quoyale know this, and the hope that his life might be different - fades step by step. by the way it's built, quoyale is reminiscent of prince mishkin - " good " in the most essential sense of the word, foreign to any pettiness. just that dostoïevski's " idiot " had, unlike quoyale - a less struggling past.

is it possibly that a man abused and humiliated throughout his entirely life - can stay away from any cruelty ?  
the idea of the book is that there is always a

hope.

from a "bad" life and family - a "good" man can always appear.

each chapter is preceded by a small quote from ashley's " book of knots" , which aims at the meaning of the chapter.

the story is one of the fall, despair, and salvation of lost people, by other lost people. from the movements of the characters - to the way the narrative thread flows, everything is cohesive and plausible.

the reader never have the feeling of wasted time, on the contrary - he is left with an image of a well- directed film, with a provocative plot, and some tailor-made actors. ...more flag 44 likes · like · see review view all 18 comments jun 23, 2011 jan-maat added it · review of another edition shelves: usa, 20th-century, novel, canada nice novel in which it appears that to some extent you can overcome your past.

it&apos;s also a nicely constructed piece with this quiet core surrounded by these wild events (the apparent sale of the daughters, the past sexual abuse, the horrors of the ancient ancestors, the murder). however wild the events, crashing and buffeting against the rocky coast it is the quietness that predominates and wins out.

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it is the kind of novel that wins prizes, because it is healing book, the past here is full of horror but in the present all those horrors are firmly confronted, resolved, stitched up, frayed ends knotted, no loose ends left and the future the author assures us can be happy irrespective of sexuality, personal needs or even the economy.

the interesting idea i felt was the notion of place and person, every person has they place and out of their natural and proper environment they will fail like an oak in the sahara, even their physicality will come across and ridiculous and uncouth, however once in their correct ecological niche, the human person can flourish. and this book is the story of one man finding his place. the square peg sliding comfortably into the square slot. there is a charm in that though you could read it as a condemnation and belittling of the regional novel - 'hey look, this is where losers make sense!' a kind of elephant's graveyard for off beat literary characters. ...more flag 43 likes · like · see review view all 5 comments oct 11, 2012 maciek rated it really liked it · review of another edition shelves: own-in-paperback, national-book-award-for-fiction, owned-books, read-in-2012, pulitzer-prize-for-fiction, reviewed annie proulx exploded onto the literary scene with the publication of her second novel, *the shipping news*. it was 1993 and she was 58. no victim of sophomore jinx, *the shipping news* gave annie a double boost: it won both the national book award and the pulitzer prize for fiction - one of just six books picked by both juries, and has subsequently been adapted into a film.

born in brooklyn and raised in a mix of small upstate towns, quoyale is definitely not having the time of his life. socially ine annie proulx exploded onto the literary scene with the publication of her second novel, *the shipping news*. it was 1993 and she was 58. no victim of sophomore jinx, *the shipping news* gave annie a double boost: it won both the national book award and the pulitzer prize for fiction - one of just six books picked by both juries, and has subsequently been adapted into a film.

born in brooklyn and raised in a mix of small upstate towns, quoyale is definitely not having the time of his life. socially inept and not comfortable in his bricklike body, lonesome quoyale shuffles from occupation to occupation in upstate new york. marooned in the recession-struck town of mockinburg, quoyale tries his hand at journalism - and naively marries a good for nothing bimbo, who gives him two daughters but no love. petal bear - all characters in this novel have great names - is a vicious and hateful woman, who however never rises above the plot device necessary to move the story forward. and the story is grim enough - quoyale finds that his life is falling apart: he has no sense of purpose or belonging. he turns to his aunt, agnis hamm, for advice - and it is she who convinces him to leave his miserable life in new york behind, take his daughters and go with her to the home of their ancestors, named after them - to quoyale's point, in newfoundland. stuck between a rock and a hard place, quoyale chooses the rock - and so begins the story proper.

newfoundland is a large island on the eastern coast of canada, known for its variable maritime weather which can surprise its population on any given day, forcing much of it to grow hard and fight their way through pounding waves and breaking storms. newfoundland was england's first possession in north america - it became a colony in the early 17th century and remained first a colony and later a dominion of the united kingdom until 1949, on which year it entered the canadian confederation and became the nation's tenth province. two referendums had to be organized - the first was proven inconclusive, and the second was won by only a slight majority of pro-confederation voters (52.3% to 47.7%). since joining the confederation newfoundlanders continue to see themselves as a unique group, and have maintained their own culture, cuisine and even a variety of english language.

for generations, cod fishery defined newfoundland: it was a source of cultural and social identity, as most families were either directly involved in fishery or indirectly connected to it, by earning their livelihood as fish transporters or sellers, worked at fish plants and other fishing related businesses. for centuries newfoundland fishermen used technology which allowed them to target specific species and ages of fish, map the area of fishing and limit the size of their catch. after confederation newfoundland fishermen were introduced to modern technology, such as the sonar and radar, which allowed them to fish deeper than ever and pursue fish on an unprecedented scale and compete with other nations that also fished in the region. however, these advances did irreversible damage to the stock of northern cod: by fishing on larger areas and deeper scale the cod were depleted at the scale which did not allow the surviving fish to replete the stock fished each year; trawlers also caught an enormous amount of other fish, which although not commercially viable was invaluable to the area's ecosystem and severely disturbed the predator-prey relations among the fish. a significant amount of capelin were caught, on which the cod preyed - further fueling the speed of extinction of the remaining cod stock. in the summer of 1992, the northern cod biomass - once the largest in the world - fell down to 1% of its previous level; in a dramatic attempt to save the cod the federal government declared a moratorium on cod fishery along the east coast, hoping that the cod population would recover and the fishing industry could be restored. it never did; the damage to newfoundland's ecosystem was ineradicable, and the cod has not returned to atlantic canada. cod fishery remains closed - it was the largest industrial closure in canadian history - and over 35,000 fishers and people involved in fishing related businesses found themselves suddenly unemployed. the population of the province decreased by about 60,000, as many families were forced to leave the rock which borne them and hope for a life elsewhere.

it is to this rock that quoyale comes with his children and aunt, to the post-confederation but also post-cod newfoundland, where those who remain try to survive. there he meets jack buggit, tert card, beaufield nutbeem and bayonet melville, and others cast away in the small newfoundland town of killick-claw, where quoyale lands a job for the local paper, *the gammy bird*. quoyale is to report car wrecks and the shipping news - arrivals and departures of ships into the harbor. clumsily at first but nonetheless carrying on, quoyale begins to find his own voice as a reporter, make friends and acquaintances in the tightly-knit community and begins to find himself in the harshness of newfoundland's weather, and begins to discover the past of his ancestors, themselves castaways from newfoundland to new york.

i have never been to newfoundland, but i felt as if the book transported me there. although annie proulx is an american, she moved to newfoundland for research and spent time among newfoundlanders, and wrote a book with a great sense of place (and its weather), populated with interesting and memorable people with great, quirky names. although the story is a classic one - broken man leaves former life and begins anew - she sells it with her ability to transport the reader to the places she describes, and slowly draws him into her world. newfoundland comes alive in *the shipping news*, with its fog and wind and blocks of ice clinking in the bay, the boats cradled by the waters at one time and violently thrown aside the next; smoke rising from the chimneys, people reading *the gammy bird* and quoyale's shipping news while sipping their warm drinks, each confronting their own problems, all united by the rock they live on, loving and hating its rough caress at the same time.

chapters are introduced with a description of a knot from *the ashley's book of knots*, serving as an illustration of the themes of the book - quoyale is a coil of rope; "a flemish flake is a spiral coil of one layer only. it is made on deck, so that it may be walked on if necessary." quoyale's first name is never given - he has been walked on all his life, and is like a coil of tangled rope. in mockinburg he had few friends, and nobody took time to get to know him; newfoundland is to literally be a place of his new self-discovery, but there everybody knows the quoyales; quoyale effectively becomes nothing more than an extension of his long dead family. throughout the book, quoyale has to untangle the knots made by others which tightened around him and made him a dangled mess and set free the person that he has inside of himself, and *the shipping news* is an admirable story of this one man's struggle to overcome personal defeat and his own shy pursuit of happiness on a harsh canadian island, where hope swirls in the air even amidst the winter storm. ...more flag 43 likes · like · see review view all 24 comments jul 01, 2007 eli rated it it was amazing this is one of the very best novels i&apos;ve had the chance to read. it&apos;s not just that the story is rich in and of itself - and it is - it&apos;s that the words themselves are so artfully assembled that they provide layers of undercurrents that add depth and emotion to the narrative. this book reads like a symphony, with many intertwined themes and narratives all woven together into a whole, unified picture.

proulx writes in choppy short sentecnes. it&apos;s akward and clumsy language viewed against the litte this is one of the very best novels i've had the chance to read. it's not just that the story is rich in and of itself - and it is - it's that the words themselves are so artfully assembled that they provide layers of undercurrents that add depth and emotion to the narrative. this book reads like a symphony, with many intertwined themes and narratives all woven together into a whole, unified picture.

proulx writes in choppy short sentecnes. it's akward and clumsy language viewed against the littered murky landscape of personal failure and mockingbird, ny, where the story starts. but when the story shifts location - in the first of several deeply satisfying views of fair-handed fate - the choppiness of the words begin to work in concert with the setting. words that sounded unnatural and coarse describing suburban life are perfect when describing the newfundland coast line and the direct, honest, self-possessed people who live there. as the characters grow and gain depth, the language fits them more and more clearly.

proulx describes a world that could hardly be more concrete and weaves in thrilling bits of magic. she doesn't water down an incredibly hard life but weaves in the certainty that it's a also a good life. in the end, she's created a

lovely, satisfying book without the slightest hint of syrup, contrivance or manipulation. lovely, lovely, lovely. i hated to see it end. ...more flag 41 likes · like · see review view 1 comment sep 17, 2017 em lost in books rated it liked it · review of another edition shelves: 3-star, br-with-smitha, 1990-99, 2017, awards picked this book for my award winners challenge and solely for this challenge i came to know about this book. i am glad that i put these challenges for me and because of them i am reading all these different books. some proved to be disaster, others just made me fall in love with themselves. this book is somewhere in between. neither i hated nor i loved it.

the shipping news revolve around quoyale who had a tough childhood and equally tough twenties. after the death of his wife he moved back to ne picked this book for my award winners challenge and solely for this challenge i came to know about this book. i am glad that i put these challenges for me and because of them i am reading all these different books. some proved to be disaster, others just made me fall in love with themselves. this book is somewhere in between. neither i hated nor i loved it.

the shipping news revolve around quoyale who had a tough childhood and equally tough twenties. after the death of his wife he moved back to newfoundland, canada, his original home. there he changed himself into a responsible father, and a person people look up to when they think that they are in need of help and this person will never disappoint them.

i really loved the transformation part. how quoyale started connecting with the people in this small coastal town. his friendship with dennis, friction and loyalty at his office with colleagues, all was described in a lively manner. beside that language was really beautiful.

but the two things that i didn't like about it and which also made me remove two stars from my rating 1) the parts about fishing and boating lessons and how one could be perfect in them, 2) the end was not what i expected. while first put me to sleep, in second i was most disappointed. it fell a little too short of my expectations.

i just fell in love with the writing so i am definitely reading another book by annie proulx. ...more flag 50 likes · like · see review view all 6 comments oct 08, 2019 blaine rated it it was ok shelves: from-library, pop-chart-lab-100-tbr, 2019 and it may be that love sometimes occurs without pain or misery.ugh. i spent far too long reading *the shipping news* to waste much time reviewing it. this book tells the tale of quoyale, a middle-aged man with a "great damp loaf of a body" who aspires to be merely pathetic. when his cheating wife is killed in a car accident, he moves with his two daughters and his aunt to their ancestral home in newfoundland. like forest gump, he somehow keeps failing upwards. slowly, he sucks a little less, and b and it may be that love sometimes occurs without pain or misery.ugh. i spent far too long reading *the shipping news* to waste much time reviewing it. this book tells the tale of quoyale, a middle-aged man with a "great damp loaf of a body" who aspires to be merely pathetic. when his cheating wife is killed in a car accident, he moves with his two daughters and his aunt to their ancestral home in newfoundland. like forest gump, he somehow keeps failing upwards. slowly, he sucks a little less, and by the end of the story he finds love.

is *the shipping news* populated with quirky characters? i guess, but not any i cared about even a little bit. the aunt is a lesbian, which might have passed as edgy in the mid-1990s but today was so obvious that it was hardly worth mentioning (especially as it added nothing to the plot). is there a plot? barely, pretty much just what i listed above, and it moves painfully slowly, glacier-like. is the writing great? ms. proulx uses lots of phrases and incomplete sentences. it creates an almost staccato effect that is certainly unusual and might be either brilliant or lazy, depending on your mood. the writing is the reason i added a second star to my rating; it certainly wasn't for the story.

*the shipping news* somehow won both the 1993 national book award and the 1994 pulitzer prize for fiction. is it too late to demand a recount? ...more flag 38 likes · like · see review oct 24, 2013 duane rated it really liked it shelves: national-book-award, reviewed-books, rated-books, american-classics, guardian-1000, pulitzer-prize national book award--1993 pulitzer prize--1994

many of today's "modern writers" have styles so similar, or maybe a better way to say it, their lack of style makes it hard to distinguish their differences. but there are a few out there that have very distinct writing styles that set them apart, that give them a unique and recognizable identity. annie proulx is one of those. margaret atwood, dorothy allison, and markus zusak also come to mind for me.

i've often wondered about newfoundland, what it's national book award--1993 pulitzer prize--1994

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i've often wondered about newfoundland, what it's like, what the people are like, would i enjoy living there. through annie proulx words i feel like i have a sense for what it's like, right or wrong, i don't know. the setting and the characters became real to me while reading the shipping news. they have their troubles, present and past, in this bleak and often harsh environment, but they are likeable for the most part.

the quality of the writing made this an easy and enjoyable read for me. it's certainly deserving of it's awards and acclaim. ...more flag 36 likes · like · see review view all 11 comments jan 23, 2020 matthew quann rated it it was ok · review of another edition shelves: historical-fiction, pulitzers, 2020-pulitzer-challenge, literary-fiction, oh-canada i wanted to start off my pulitzer prize challenge--i'm trying to get in a winner once a month during 2020--with a book i'd been meaning to get to for some time. e. annie proulx's *the shipping news* is pretty well regarded, but also happens to be about my adopted home province. amidst a record-breaking and city-closing snow storm i read through the most of this ode to newfoundland culture and lifestyle. though i'd really hoped to like or even love this book, it failed to really grab me with its character-driven narrative.

that's in no small part to the gloomy and miserable life of quoyale. the poor dude just can't seem to catch a break, and though he eventually finds his place in his ancestral home, it's a bit of a boring journey to get there. i'm willing to concede that to a person unfamiliar with newfoundland this book could have a lot of charm: it's got reflections of people i've known even if some bits feel a bit outdated. i think proulx does the rock justice, but it just didn't end up being my cup of tea.

even though this fell flat for me, i can appreciate proulx's writing and her incorporation of newfoundland slang, places, and people. i liked some of the book's philosophy, but won't be flipping through the pages when i walk by it on the shelf. ah well, a bit of a shame that it didn't work for me, but there's lots of other pulitzer's in my future! [2.5 stars]

**this is the first book in my 2020 pultizer challenge!** ...more flag 35 likes · like · see review view all 3 comments oct 03, 2018 raul bimenyimana rated it really liked it shelves: women-writers annie proulx's style of writing calls to mind the old saying of new shoes and how they pinch the feet until the owner gets used to them, or is it the shoes that get used to the owner? in any case, proulx is an excellent writer, and this story required some patience on my part. at first it seemed as though just as i was getting into the story, it would make a jerk and toss me off my course until at some point the fragments seemed to align themselves and what was the final piece, was a beautiful mosaic, exquisitely rendered.

quoyale, the main character in this novel, is an outcast with what he calls generational ill luck. from childhood, he has been bullied and shut off by his family and those around him with the exception of his friend partridge. his wife petal hates him, abuses and misuses him while leaving all parental duties of their two daughters to him, he finds no fulfillment in his work and it is until tragedy strikes and an aunt arrives that quoyale is able to disentangle himself from a rather sad life leaving for a small community in newfoundland.

it is in this small tightknit community that quoyale finally, even though in his late thirties, blossoms. at first, quoyale is filled with such low self-esteem and great self-loathing that he invites more contempt than pity, even to the reader. he slowly comes to a point of self-realisation, surrounded by a community that offers friendship and love.

proulx depicts this small community with such brilliance. its traditions, landscape, economic state, weather, kindheartedness, cruelties all done with incredible compactness.

a wonderful story. i love a good tale about reinvention and starting over and i'd especially recommend this if you do too. ...more flag 33 likes · like · see review view all 13 comments apr 06, 2008 theduckthief rated it really liked it *at thirty-six, bereft, brimming with grief and thwarted love, quoyale steered away to newfoundland, the rock that had generated his ancestors, a place he had never been nor thought to go.*

quoyale lives the life of a sad cliché. his family doesn't like him, his wife has affairs and he's socially awkward. his only thought is for his children, bunny and sunshine. when a situation causes them to move from mockingburg, new york to newfoundland, canada, home of quoyale's ancestors, he finds himself in *ov at thirty-six, bereft, brimming with grief and thwarted love, quoyale steered away to newfoundland, the rock that had generated his ancestors, a place he had never been nor thought to go.*

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the descriptive detail in this book is fresh and full. "in the bay they saw a scallop dagger halfway to the narrows, a wake like the hem of a slip showing behind it." i feasted on this line because i loved it so much and you can look forward to this richness throughout the story.

proulx makes newfoundland come to life. this is likely due to the fact that she splits her time between there and wyoming. this may not be



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in the shipping news e. annie proulx departs from the darkly fated heroes of heart songs and postcards to explore the cracked-up contemporary american family. quoyle, a third-rate newspaper hack, with a "head shaped like a crenshaw, no neck, reddish hair ... features as bunched as kissed fingertips," is wrenched violently out of his workaday life when his two-timing wife meets her just deserts. an aunt convinces quoyle and his two emotionally disturbed daughters

to return with her to the starkly beautiful coastal landscape of their ancestral home in Newfoundland. here, on desolate quoyles point, in a house empty except for a few mementoes of the family's unsavory past, the battered members of three generations try to cobble up new lives. Newfoundland is a country of coast and cove where the mercury rarely rises above 70 degrees, the local culinary delicacy is cod cheeks, and it's easier to travel by boat and snowmobile than on anything with wheels. in this harsh place of cruel storms, a collapsing fishery, and chronic unemployment, the aunt sets up as a yacht upholsterer in nearby killick-claw, and quoyle finds a job reporting the shipping news for the local weekly, the gammy bird (a paper that specializes ... [more]in sexual-abuse stories and grisly photos of car accidents). as the long winter closes its jaws of ice, each of the quoyles confronts private demons, reels from catastrophe to minor triumph - in the company of the obsequious mavis bangs; diddy shovel the strongman; drowned herald prowse; cane-twirling beety; nutbeem, who steals foreign news from the radio; a demented cousin the aunt refuses to recognize; the much-zippered alvin yark; silent wavey; and old billy pretty, with his bag of secrets. by the time of the spring storms quoyle has learned how to gut cod, to escape from a pickle jar, and to tie a true lover's knot. by turns comic and dark, the shipping news is a celebration of the american genius for storytelling and of e. annie proulx's vigorous contribution to the art, and magic, of the contemporary novel

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quoyle is a hapless, hopeless hack journalist living and working in new york. when his no-good wife is killed in a spectacular road accident, quoyle heads for the land of his forefathers - the remotest corner of far-flung Newfoundland. with t?he aunt' and his delinquent daughters - bunny and sunshine - in tow, quoyle finds himself part of an unfolding, exhilarating atlantic drama

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