

The Bookstores of New York

I'm telling you now
about the beautiful bookstores of New York—
The Gotham, the Phoenix, Brentano's, Weisers,
Orientalia., Eighth Street Bookshop, Bilbo and Tannen,
Pageant, the Strand.

Up and down 4th Avenue
between 9th and 14th in the 1950s
were ten or twenty great used book stores,
and also on Broadway along the same stretch—
Sam Weiser's up there by 14th Street
and The Phoenix over on Cornelia Street too
Orientalia on West 10th Street
with a big thrilling shelf of Egyptian archaeology

There's nothing so fine as to sit in the basement
of Hill & Wang holding an old book of verse from 1829
and the first edition Henry James on an oaken shelf

The joy of loafing in a bookstore
Tarrying with tomes Getting random insights
Finding a book you've been looking for
Starting out a whole new area of research
The smell of the book dust in the Americana section
of a 4th Ave store was as the lint of Isis

4 Continents, Stechart & Hafner, Wittenborn, China Publications,
East Side... The names are gone, the buildings torn down
but I remember the bookstores of New York
filling our milk crate book cases with useful tomes

Miriam and I after class at NYU in '58 hanging out for hours
at the Pageant, Bilbo & Tannen, 8th Street, the Phoenix
& I read years later that Jack Kerouac in the 1940s
built his own milk crate Book Boat with tomes
from along 4th Avenue!

All hail the Bookstore Lint of Isis!

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