

The New York Times

Book Review

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**100
NOTABLE
BOOKS
OF 2025**



Cynthia Erivo

‘I realize this may sound crazy, but I really love to read when I’m getting tattooed,’ says the ‘Wicked’ star, who just published ‘Simply More: A Book for Anyone Who Has Been Told They’re Too Much.’

What kind of reader were you as a child?

I was quite a quick reader and could fly through a book. As I have gotten older, my reading speed has slowed down a bit, as has the time I have to pause and find a quiet moment to read. But it’s still one of my favorite things to do.

How have your reading tastes changed over time?

For starters, I can read whatever I want now, which wasn’t the case when I was a kid. I have started to really enjoy stories that allow for a deeper character arc, but I also love fairy tales and dragon stories, much like I did as a child.

Describe your ideal reading experience (when, where, what, how).

I realize this may sound crazy, but I really

love to read when I’m getting tattooed. It’s a rare opportunity where I have to be still for a certain amount of time, and I love to dive into a book and let my mind wander.

I also like reading when I’m traveling from place to place, especially if it’s a long travel time. You can also find me reading on set in between takes. Overall, I really enjoy reading whenever I have the chance, and that could be anywhere.

What book has had the greatest impact on you?

To date, it has to be Cicely Tyson’s autobiography, “Just as I Am.” I’m really connected with that one and I think it’s had a lasting impression on me. The vulnerability and truth of the title “Just as I Am” is something that I try to bring to my own life. I feel most comfortable and confident when I am true to myself and people can take it or leave it. Her autobiography was a great reminder of that — to be unapologetically you.

What’s the last great book you read?

“Pachinko” — I can’t recommend this book highly enough. It is for anyone who enjoys stories about family, love and sacrifice. Immigrant stories should be highlighted and talked about. I gravitate toward these stories as a reader, and also as an actress and producer.

Which genres do you especially enjoy reading? And which do you avoid?

I tend to avoid horror, although I do occasionally like a Stephen King novel because his stories are psychological and mystical. I love reading autobiographies and fantasies. Anything that takes me on a journey where my brain has to work to understand the characters, motivation, context. Stories that I admire or learn

from are my favorite. But really no genre is off limits for me.

Which subjects do you wish more authors would write about?

I don’t think there are many fiction books about polyamorous relationships. And if there are, they are often written about as if they are salacious. So I think I would like to see more of those stories, where they are talked about in the mundane instead of a scandal.

When narrating the audiobook for “Elphie,” the “Wicked” prequel, did you learn anything new about Elphaba?

Even though I thought I knew a great deal about Elphaba already, what surprised me was just how truly complicated her family dynamics and the relationships she had outside of the family were, before getting to school. Elphie has suffered such great loss, which only makes my empathy for the character grow.

Narrating the audiobook also gave me more insight into how intelligent she was growing up. And how little anyone invested in her before outside influences were able to help. This can lead to loneliness and misunderstanding, which are evident in the “Wicked” movies and in the audiobook as well.

You’re organizing a literary dinner party. Which three writers, dead or alive, do you invite?

Oh, this is a tough one. For today, I’m going to say Toni Morrison, Bram Stoker and Ta-Nehisi Coates. What a party that would be, right? I can only imagine the conversations. It would be a great night. □

Email interview conducted and edited by Scott Heller. An expanded version is available at [nytimes.com/books](https://www.nytimes.com/books).

100 NOTABLE

FICTION & POETRY

POETRY

NIGHT WATCH

By Kevin Young

This exacting new collection makes an implicit case that the poet's job is to strip away layers of distortion to reveal narratives that have been hidden, ignored or erased.

STARTLEMENT

By Ada Limón

With a voice that is charming and warmly personal, Limón offers work across a gratifying variety of forms. Her best poems are garrulous, funny and heart-on-sleeve even when being a little wicked.

HISTORICAL FICTION

BUCKEYE

By Patrick Ryan

The old-fashioned sweep of Ryan's doorstep novel, about two families in small-town Ohio, feels intrinsically American in the way of a Thornton Wilder play or an Andrew Wyeth painting.

THE HOUNDING

By Xenobe Purvis

In this wildly inventive riff on the Gothic form, an 18th-century English village is scandalized by a rumor that the five Mansfield sisters are transforming into a pack of dogs at night.

HOW TO DODGE A CANNON-

BALL

By Dennard Dayle

This bold, original, laugh-out-loud funny Civil War satire follows a hapless teenage flag-bearer just trying to stay alive. "Dayle's deft portrayal of American anti-Blackness, class exploitation and cultural uncertainty feels both accurate to the novel's 19th-century setting and, soberingly, very contemporary," our reviewer wrote.

ISOLA

By Allegra Goodman

Goodman's novel traces the fate of a 16th-century French noblewoman, Marguerite de la Rocque de Roberval, who was marooned on a remote island for loving the wrong man. Marguerite recounts her travails in an even, cordial tone, imposing order on a life she did not design.

THE RAREST FRUIT

By Gaëlle Bélem

This gorgeous novel, translated by Hildegard Serle, tells the story of the enslaved boy who, in 1841, figured out how to hand-pollinate vanilla orchids.

THE REMEMBERED SOLDIER

By Anjet Daanje

In this provocative novel, translated by David McKay, a Dutch soldier — an amnesiac veteran of World War I — is living in an asylum when he is released to a strange woman claiming to be his wife.

VENETIAN VESPER

By John Banville

Set in Venice in the winter of 1900, this is a British striver's account of

his ill-fated marriage to an American heiress. The novel bristles with dramatic fodder — family tensions, a vast fortune, a beautiful expat.

LITERARY FICTION

THE COLONY

By Annika Norlin

In a bucolic forest in Sweden, a small band of misfits forms a commune that may be a utopia or may be a nightmare, depending on your perspective. The story, seamlessly translated by Alice E. Olsson, raises open-ended questions about the boundaries between the individual and the greater good.

THE DIRECTOR

By Daniel Kehlmann

Movie stars and Nazis are irresistible ingredients in any book. Kehlmann's smartly entertaining new novel about the great Austrian filmmaker G.W. Pabst offers both, detailing their intimate, often symbiotic ties. "The Director" is a marvelous performance — not only supple, horrifying and mordantly droll, but fluidly translated by Ross Benjamin and absolutely convincing.

THE FEELING OF IRON

By Giaime Alonge

This stunning novel, translated by Clarissa Botsford, follows two Holocaust survivors on a quest for revenge over decades and continents. "In its scope and beauty, 'The Feeling of Iron' recalls great 19th-century novels like Tolstoy's 'War and Peace,'" our reviewer wrote.

FLESH

By David Szalay

A lonely young man, Istvan, grows up in a Hungarian housing project and gets swept along on a journey to the upper echelons of British society. Szalay lets us feel Istvan's longing for meaning, for experience, for belonging, as he moves from humble beginnings to heady heights and back again.

A GUARDIAN AND A THIEF

By Megha Majumdar

Set in near-future Kolkata, Majumdar's novel follows Boomba, a thief desperate to help his family, and Ma, who is set to join her husband in the United States until her travel documents are stolen. Majumdar creates a compassionate portrait of desperation, fear and the combined selflessness and selfishness of parenthood.

HEART THE LOVER

By Lily King

The reverberations of a college love triangle ripple through King's new novel, which features a female writer and the pair of male best friends she meets in her 17th-century lit class.

KILLING STELLA

By Marlen Haushofer

In this short, searing novel, published in Austria in 1958 and now translated into English by Shaun Whiteside, a woman nervously recounts how a teenager named Stella came to live with her family and wound up meeting a tragic end.

THE LONELINESS OF SONIA AND SUNNY

By Kiran Desai

In this rich, bustling, old-fashioned epic, a young couple pushed toward marriage by their Indian families navigate competing forces of tradition and modernity, love and duty, East and West.

LONELY CROWDS

By Stephanie Wambugu

The novel traces the intense bond between two young women as they come of age, first amid the confines of their New England upbringing and then as artists in 1990s New York City.

MAGGIE; OR, A MAN AND A WOMAN WALK INTO A BAR

By Katie Yee

Yee's delightful and quirky novel takes place during a pause — between divorce and marriage, sickness and health, the unknown and the status quo.

ON THE CALCULATION OF VOLUME: Book III

By Solvej Balle

This third volume of seven, translated by Sophia Hersi Smith and Jennifer Russell, is a meditation on time that takes place on an endless Nov. 18, giving the time-loop narrative new and stunning proportions.

PERFECTION

By Vincenzo Latronico

As a portrait of the cool kids who flocked to Berlin during Angela Merkel's second term, the book — beautifully translated by Sophie Hughes — amounts to a biting and incisive satire.

PLAYWORLD

By Adam Ross

Ross's novel, set in New York City in the early 1980s, follows the

BOOKS OF 2025

travails of a successful child actor caught in the throes of a complicated relationship with a married woman. The novel is detailed, digressive, densely populated and capable of tracking the most minute shifts in emotional weather.

SHADOW TICKET By Thomas Pynchon

Remember Pynchon's genre parodies, his outrageous names, his ornate zingers, his lollygagging but frequently hilarious descriptions? It's all here in this supercharged noir — a Chandleresque, Depression-era yarn involving a missing heiress and a disaster-prone private eye.

THE SISTERS By Jonas Hassen Khemiri

This big, impressive novel revolves around a trio of magnetic Swedish women, the Mikkola sisters, whose lives are recounted by their childhood acquaintance Jonas.

THE SLIP By Lucas Schaefer

After arriving in Austin in the summer of 1998, a troubled teenage boy connects with a swaggering Haitian boxer, falls for a Russian phone sex operator and then vanishes. A decade later, new clues emerge in the mystery of his disappearance.

THE SOUTH By Tash Aw

Set over the course of one languid summer, this sensual novel follows the intertwining dramas of a Malaysian family grappling with personal secrets at their remote, run-down farm.

STONE YARD DEVOTIONAL By Charlotte Wood

This exquisite novel centers on a 60-something woman who leaves her husband and career to live in a convent in rural Australia. Despite a series of disrupting incidents, the narrator finds in this retreat the time and space to ruminate on forgiveness, regret and how to live and die, if not virtuously, then as harmlessly as possible.

THESE SUMMER STORMS By Sarah MacLean

Alice Storm has been estranged from her family for years, but she reluctantly returns home after the death of her billionaire father. What begins as a funeral morphs into a "Westing Game"-esque series of challenges stipulated in her father's will.

TO SMITHEREENS By Rosalyn Drexler

Originally published in 1972, Drexler's brilliantly offbeat novel depicts two seemingly unrelated subcultures in the New York City of that era — the art world and women's wrestling — by way of a self-serious art writer and the young woman he encourages to take up professional wrestling.

THE TOKYO SUITE By Giovana Madaloso

This Brazilian novel, translated by Bruna Dantas Lobato, explores the country's contemporary class divisions via the twinned stories of a high-powered TV executive and the caretaker of her child.

TRIP By Amie Barrodale

This transcendent first novel is



about a mother and son adrift — in the afterlife and in the South Atlantic, respectively. (She dies in Nepal at a conference about death; he's stranded on a sailboat.)

WE DO NOT PART By Han Kang

In the Nobel laureate's shim-

mering new novel, translated by E. Yaewon and Paige Aniyah Morris, an ailing writer revisits a violent chapter in South Korean history: Between 1947 and 1954 on Jeju, an island off the coast, at least 30,000 people were killed in mostly government-perpetrated atrocities. "We Do Not Part" is a chilling reminder of the terrible invisibility of people and events that are removed from us in space and time," our reviewer wrote.

WHAT WE CAN KNOW By Ian McEwan

In 2119, a professor becomes obsessed with a literary mystery: a famous poem — recited at a dinner party in 2014 — that has been lost. In a tale spanning a full century, the professor chases down the poem's origin, the dark secret that cast it into obscurity and the slippery nature of knowledge itself.

ROMANCE

AUGUST LANE By Regina Black

The story of August and Luke, high school sweethearts and country music collaborators picking up the pieces after a decade of heartbreak, is unapologetically dark yet passionate.

A GENTLEMAN'S GENTLEMAN

By TJ Alexander

In order to keep his fortune, Christopher Winterthorpe must find himself a wife. The complication? He is trans, something he has kept secret from London society.

A WITCH'S GUIDE TO MAGICAL INNKEEPING By Sangu Mandanna

Sera Swan was the most formidable magical prodigy in Britain until she drained her powers resurrecting her great-aunt. Fifteen years later, she discovers a spell that could restore her abilities and enlists a handsome magical historian to help her crack it.

THRILLERS

DEATH TAKES ME

By Cristina Rivera Garza

This novel, translated by Robin Myers and Sarah Booker, is a detective story with some of the standard fare of the mystery: bodies, clues, suspects. But it adds a feminist twist to the gruesome killing spree at its center.

THE DOORMAN

By Chris Pavone

While a mystery hums beneath the New York narrative — we know from the early pages that somebody won't make it out alive — "The Doorman" is better read as a state-of-the-city novel, a kaleidoscopic portrait of the city at a singularly strange moment.

THE GOOD LIAR

By Denise Mina

Mina threads questions of class, privilege and establishment conspiracy into a riveting tale that opens as a distinguished forensic scientist delivers a speech about an infamous double murder she helped solve.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

100 NOTABLE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

HEARTWOOD

By Amity Gaige

When a hiker named Valerie goes missing on the Appalachian Trail, two other women — a veteran game warden and a lonely but lively former scientist stuck in a retirement community — must crack the case.

HOLLOW SPACES

By Victor Suthamnanont

Thirty years after John Lo, the lone Asian American partner at his firm, was acquitted of his girlfriend's murder, his children decide to investigate the crime. Horror

ANGEL DOWN

By Daniel Kraus

In France, during World War I, five American soldiers are sent on a mission into No Man's Land to investigate the source of a mysterious shrieking sound. But rather than finding a wounded comrade, they discover a literal fallen angel.

BAT EATER AND OTHER NAMES FOR CORA ZENG

By Kylie Lee Baker

This ingenious combination of folklore horror, buddy comedy and social commentary follows a young woman who cleans crime scenes in New York City during the pandemic.

THE BUFFALO HUNTER HUNTER

By Stephen Graham Jones

Jones's past fiction has mashed up horror genres with pointed explorations of Native American experience, and his new novel

follows suit — via a Blackfeet man who becomes a vampire.

KING SORROW

By Joe Hill

A college student named Arthur, blackmailed by two drug dealers into stealing valuable books from the library where he works, jokingly decides to summon a dragon.

VICTORIAN PSYCHO

By Virginia Feito

Feito's deliciously macabre novel, about a murderous 19th-century governess, announces its narrator's grisly intentions from the start: "In three months everyone in this house will be dead," she says a few pages in.

FANTASY

BURY OUR BONES IN THE MIDNIGHT SOIL

By V.E. Schwab

Schwab delivers a time-sweeping, character-juggling, lesbian vampire mystery that moves between 1532 Spain, 1827 London and 2019 Boston. "It goes down as easy as that happy-hour cocktail that, surprisingly, knocks you flat," our reviewer wrote.

KATABASIS

By R.F. Kuang

In this weird, bold novel, two graduate students at Cambridge form an unsteady alliance to rescue their esteemed Magick professor, who happens to be in hell.

SILVER ELITE

By Dani Francis

This dystopian romantasy novel follows a resistance fighter with psychic powers who is forced to join an elite military unit, where she is trained to hunt down people with abilities like hers.

SUNRISE ON THE REAPING

By Suzanne Collins

Collins returns to the world of "The Hunger Games" with this brutal and heart-wrenching prequel about Haymitch Abernathy — the jaded but fiercely devoted mentor who coached the teenage revolutionary Katniss Everdeen in the original trilogy.

NONFICTION

ARTS & CULTURE

ALL CONSUMING

By Ruby Tandoh

In entertaining essays, Tandoh — the baking star turned firebrand food philosopher — examines our decadent recipe economy.

GIRL ON GIRL

By Sophie Gilbert

Gilbert comprehensively examines turn-of-the-millennium mainstream, cool-kid trends and ephemera, to show how they were largely molded by those in power to sell the lie that self-objectification is empowerment.

JOHN & PAUL

By Ian Leslie

This tribute to John Lennon and Paul McCartney explores the way two extraordinarily gifted young men combined their gifts while

inspiring, challenging and teaching each other.

WHAT IS QUEER FOOD?

By John Birdsall

From the restaurant world to the recipes of Alice B. Toklas and beyond, Birdsall presents a soup-to-nuts portrait of the link between queerness and food that's as much cultural criticism as delicious celebration.



BIOGRAPHIES & MEMOIRS

AWAKE

By Jen Hatmaker

A queen bee among online evangelicals — a writer, podcaster and pastor's wife happily raising five children — Hatmaker turned over in bed one night and heard her husband voice-texting another woman. This nervy memoir traces her life after their split.

BALDWIN

By Nicholas Boggs

This tender, stunning biography traces how James Baldwin's relationships affected his writing, and immerses the reader in Baldwin's chaos, talent and aching heart.

BOOK OF LIVES

By Margaret Atwood

From the Quebec wilderness to the peaks of literary fame, Atwood — the author of "The Handmaid's Tale" and "The Blind Assassin" — has changed the culture through her keen imagination. Now she turns the lens on herself.

THE BROKEN KING

By Michael Thomas

Thomas's bracing memoir considers the lives of several men in his family as well as his own battles with trauma and mental illness, to cover a range of Black experience in America.

BUCKLEY

By Sam Tanenhaus

William F. Buckley — the aristocratic founder of the conservative magazine National Review

BOOKS OF 2025

—emerges from this immersive portrait by a former editor of the Book Review as the right's “first intellectual entertainer.”

CARELESS PEOPLE

By Sarah Wynn-Williams

This insider account by a former Facebook employee shows a company run by self-absorbed leaders who chafed at responsibility even as it became a vector for disinformation and cozied up to authoritarians.

CLAIRE MCCARDELL

By Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson

The designer Claire McCardell is often credited as the inventor of American sportswear — wrap dresses, pocketed skirts, zippers women could do up themselves. In Dickinson's hands, her life represents the fight for women's identity and the birth of an industry.

CRUMB

By Dan Nadel

R. Crumb's underground comics, exemplified by characters like Fritz the Cat and Mr. Natural, helped shape the counterculture of the 1960s on. Nadel's sleek and judicious new book is a definitive biography.

DARK RENAISSANCE

By Stephen Greenblatt

In this thrilling tale, Greenblatt — the Pulitzer-winning Harvard scholar known for bringing 16th-century England to life — turns to Christopher Marlowe, the shoemaker's son who secured his fame with provocative plays like “Doctor Faustus.”

I SEEK A KIND PERSON

By Julian Borger

Borger was a child when his father — an Austrian Jew who had fled to Wales in 1938, at age 11 — died by suicide. Decades later he discovered that his father's freedom had been facilitated by a heartbreaking personal ad, one of dozens that frantic parents in Nazi Europe had placed to find foster homes for their children. This haunting book tells their stories.

MARK TWAIN

By Ron Chernow

Samuel Clemens was a lot of things before he became the peerless writer known as Mark Twain: typesetter, riverboat pilot, journalist, Confederate militiaman, miner, businessman and more. Chernow presents all his complications and flaws.

A MARRIAGE AT SEA

By Sophie Elmhirst

In 1972, a young British couple decided to ditch their jobs, sell their house and sail the world. All went well until a whale capsized their boat, at which point their story became one of miraculous survival and a relationship under unimaginable pressure.

MEMORIAL DAYS

By Geraldine Brooks

The Pulitzer-winning author of “Horse” and other novels here recalls her loving marriage to the journalist Tony Horwitz and the stunned grief that led her to retreat to an island off Australia after his sudden death at age 60.

MOTHER MARY COMES TO ME

By Arundhati Roy

To the long roll call of difficult mothers in literature, add Mary Roy — Mrs. Roy to you, and, most tellingly, to her own daughter. That daughter is Arundhati Roy, a Booker winner who recalls here the volatile, exacting woman who raised her.

RAISING HARE

By Chloe Dalton

During the pandemic, Dalton stumbled across an abandoned newborn hare in the English countryside near her home and decided to raise it herself. Her sweet memoir describes how her furry new housemate changed her outlook on life.

THE SPINACH KING

By John Seabrook

In this keen, sophisticated memoir the author, a longtime New Yorker writer, recounts how his grandfather's spinach farm became an industrial behemoth, and exposes the misdeeds behind the prosperous facade.

THINGS IN NATURE MERELY GROW

By Yiyun Li

Li offers an elegant rumination on the suicide of her son James at 19, in 2024 — six years after the suicide of his older brother, Vincent, then 16. This disturbing, inconsolable memoir is fiercely determined not to look away.

THE TRAGEDY OF TRUE CRIME

By John J. Lennon

Incarcerated at Sing Sing for crimes including drug dealing and murder, Lennon has built a distinguished career as a jailhouse

journalist. He unfolds his story with those of fellow inmates to highlight the dangers and absurdities of prison life.

WILD THING

By Sue Prideaux

Paul Gauguin's boldly colored, formally inventive artwork inspired painters from van Gogh to Picasso and beyond. Prideaux draws on recently discovered materials to dispel myths about a man whose life was as inventive as his art.



CURRENT EVENTS

ABUNDANCE

By Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson

“Each individual decision is rational,” Klein and Thompson write of government regulation. “The collective consequences are maddening.” In this polemic, the two journalists — Klein hosts a podcast for The Times; Thompson is a former Atlantic reporter — imagine liberalism absent red tape.

APPLE IN CHINA

By Patrick McGee

This comprehensive account makes a devastating case that Apple's decision to manufacture about 90 percent of its products in China has created an existential vulnerability not just for Apple but for America.

BEING JEWISH AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF GAZA

By Peter Beinart

For years, Beinart has been an influential Jewish voice for Palestine

even as he attends a predominantly Zionist Orthodox synagogue. In this concise exploration of Israeli politics and Jewish tradition, he addresses a progressive friend with whom he fell out after Oct. 7.

EMPIRE OF AI

By Karen Hao

This portrait of the OpenAI founder Sam Altman ranges beyond the usual Silicon Valley profile via detours to Kenya, Colombia and Chile, where poorly paid workers filter hate speech and data centers require vast amounts of water.

ONE DAY, EVERYONE WILL HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AGAINST THIS

By Omar El Akkad

This agonized book about the devastation of Gaza asks American readers to think of Palestinian victims not as “them” but as “us.” Part memoir and part polemic, it offers an eloquent cry against our tolerance for calamity.

THERE IS NO PLACE FOR US

By Brian Goldstone

Goldstone details how five Atlanta families found themselves in the direst of straits: Working a lot and earning very little, they ended up effectively homeless — sleeping in cars, crashing with relatives or paying for a squalid room in an extended-stay hotel, desperate but statistically invisible.



HISTORY

THE AGE OF CHOICE

By Sophia Rosenfeld

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

100 NOTABLE BOOKS OF 2025

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

For centuries, obedience was celebrated as a virtue. Rosenfeld, a historian, offers a compelling account of how that changed, in democratic societies, to make choice the hallmark of a life worth living.

BLACK MOSES By Caleb Gayle

A contributing writer for The Times Magazine revisits the gripping story of Edward McCabe, who in the years after Reconstruction tried to create an all-Black state in the newly opened territory of Oklahoma.

BORN IN FLAMES By Bench Ansfield

This elegant book shows how the fires that ravaged the Bronx and other communities of color in the 1970s were largely set by landlords: Racist housing and insurance practices made it more profitable to burn buildings than to rent them.

CAPITALISM By Sven Beckert

Ranging across centuries and continents, Beckert's monumental history traces the life of the global economic system to its uncertain beginnings, finding not just one cradle of capitalism but many.

THE CONTAINMENT By Michelle Adams

Adams, a law professor at the University of Michigan, powerfully recounts the failed 1970s effort to integrate Detroit's schools through busing rules, struck down by the Supreme Court, and examines the case's ongoing relevance.

DAUGHTERS OF THE BAMBOO GROVE

By Barbara Demick

Demick traces the divergent paths of twin girls born under China's one-child rule: One, sent to live with relatives in hopes she'd evade detection, was kidnapped by a "family planning" agency and adopted by Americans unaware of her origins.

THE FATE OF THE DAY By Rick Atkinson

There is no better writer of narrative history than the Pulitzer-winning Atkinson. This book — the second in his planned trilogy about the American Revolution — offers an exceptional chronicle of the middle years of that multifront war.

A FLOWER TRAVELED IN MY BLOOD

By Haley Cohen Gilliland

Among the thousands of Argentines "disappeared" in the late 1970s and early '80s were pregnant women killed as soon as they gave birth. This gutting history follows the determined Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo whose demand for information, and for their grandchildren, was unflagging.

THE GODS OF NEW YORK By Jonathan Mahler

This rollicking chronicle of New York at the end of the 1980s, by a staff writer for The Times Magazine, tells a story of glamorous rebirth as the metropolis emerged from economic crisis to become the capital of global finance and the playground of larger-than-life characters.

KING OF KINGS

By Scott Anderson

In this authoritative retelling by a veteran foreign correspondent, the 1979 Iranian Revolution was the instigating event in a seismic geopolitical realignment that U.S. foreign policy largely mishandled.

MOTHER EMANUEL

By Kevin Sack

With vivid prose and palpable emotional engagement, this book (by a former reporter for The New York Times) tells the story of Emanuel A.M.E. in Charleston, S.C., "the most historic Black church in the South's most historic city," now best known for the barbaric 2015 killing of nine congregants by a white supremacist.

MOTHERLAND

By Julia Ioffe

Ioffe was born in the Soviet Union, where working women and feminist social policies were long the norm. Weaving family history into the larger story of the country's striving for equality, she offers a fresh take on Russia's turbulent 20th century.

1929

By Andrew Ross Sorkin

For this novelistic account of the 1929 stock market crash, Sorkin — a New York Times reporter — combed through sources including never-before-seen minutes of meetings at the Federal Reserve. His portrait of history's most spectacular financial collapse highlights the often tragic miscalculations of those swept up in it.

THE PEEPSHOW

By Kate Summerscale

This stranger-than-fiction case unpacks a series of sensational murders that rocked 1950s London after four bodies were discovered in a North Kensington apartment. Summerscale brings a novelist's eye and a sociologist's understanding to a trove of thrilling material.

SHATTERED DREAMS, INFINITE HOPE

By Brandon M. Terry

The civil rights movement has been enshrined in U.S. history as a model of transformative social action. Terry, a Harvard scholar, rejects both romanticized versions of the past and pessimistic accounts of the present to offer a nuanced theory of the movement.

WE THE PEOPLE

By Jill Lepore

Ever wondered why amending the Constitution is so hard? So have the thousands of people who have tried and mostly failed. Lepore, a Harvard historian and New Yorker staff writer, tells the story of the centuries-long fight to remake American law in colorful detail.

THE ZORG

By Siddharth Kara

In 1781, the crew of a British slave ship threw scores of enslaved people overboard to collect insurance premiums. The horrifying case captured international attention and, Kara argues, helped galvanize the abolition of the British slave trade.

SCIENCE

THE ARROGANT APE

By Christine Webb

Webb, a primatologist, belongs to a growing set of scientists who posit that animals have minds, feelings, intentions and consciousness. She argues against human exceptionalism and shows how data suggesting human superiority has been systematically rigged in our favor.

THE CALL OF THE HONEYGUIDE

By Rob Dunn

There was a time when humans and animals shared symbiotic relationships that Dunn, a science writer, terms "mutualisms." Here he draws on ancient history, sociology, ecology and evolutionary biology to make a lively case for living in harmony with nature.

SPORTS

EVERY DAY IS SUNDAY

By Ken Belson

Pro football is always in the news. According to Belson, a Times reporter, the credit belongs to a group of N.F.L. executives and team owners who turned the game into a high-scoring carnival of controlled violence perfectly suited to a media revolution.

THE LAST MANAGER

By John W. Miller

This vivid biography captures the banty, blustering genius of Earl Weaver, who as the Baltimore Orioles manager was famous for his hot temper, theatrical antics and impressively winning strategies. □

BECOMING SHAKESPEARE

By ED SIMON

THEN LONDON CONSTRUCTION workers were laying the foundations for an office tower in 1989, they discovered a curious thing a few feet into the thick, bluish, waterlogged clay — a preponderance of cracked hazelnut shells. Further excavations uncovered what was clear evidence of a largely forgotten theater, and it was established by archaeologists that there was such a bevy of buried shells because the food

THE DREAM FACTORY
London's First Playhouse and the Making of William Shakespeare
By Daniel Swift

Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 302 pp. \$30.

had been sold as a concession centuries ago. Not just hazelnuts, but oyster and crab shells as well, the more affordable former located near where the groundlings would have watched a play and the expensive latter beneath the tony section.

This was the site of the Elizabethan Rose Theater, where Christopher Marlowe's "Tamburlaine the Great" and "Doctor Faustus" most likely premiered four centuries before. Something as mundane as oysters and hazelnuts revealed a theater from the greatest age of English drama, what the scholar Daniel Swift describes in his brilliant new book, "The Dream Factory: London's First Playhouse and the Making of William Shakespeare," as effectively "the remnants of 16th-century popcorn."

Snacks like these were uncovered at excavations for the Curtain (built in 1577), the Globe (in 1599) and the primo-generator of them all, the visionary entrepreneur James Burbage's audaciously named "the Theater," from 1576. That last

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In the 1570s, preachers denounced theaters from a pulpit outside St. Paul's: "The cause of plagues are plays." At right, a piece of 16th-century pottery found at the site of the Theater.

institution is the subject of Swift's book, the first comprehensive popular account of the theater that effectively established the idea of commercial drama. Less about Shakespeare than it is about Burbage (and his sons, one of whom was the talented actor Richard, who first performed Hamlet, Lear and Othello), as well as the men who constructed, financed, operated and performed at the Theater, "The Dream Factory" turns accounts of landlords arguing about mortgages and carpenters assembling wooden columns into riveting reading.

As Swift notes about Shakespeare, "Money and the law and violence and struggle are not just subjects for his plays but were the conditions for their existence as he and others fought to keep the dream factory open." An estimably mate-

rial interpretation of literary history, this book places Shakespeare in a fascinating economic context, whereby the Theater is the workshop (or studio) where he learns his trade.

The result is a kind of shadow biography of Shakespeare from the bottom up, where the title "The Dream Factory" tellingly evokes the commercial aspirations of old Hollywood, the closest cultural corollary to the Elizabethan dramatic scene. The author of books about Shakespeare



historicism," in which the granular context of a given time period is considered when interpreting an author. Fittingly, "The Dream Factory" includes perceptive readings of "Romeo and Juliet" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

In understanding Shakespeare, especially his earliest plays staged at the Theater before the far more famous Globe, Swift examines men like James Burbage, as well as the investor John Brayne, the landlord Giles Allen, the comedian Richard Tarlton and even the carpenter Brian Ellam, alongside the city fathers and Protestant preachers who often denounced the performances. To that end, Swift combs through archives to find the traces of this long-ago world, and from the dross of real estate contracts and legal depositions he has written a transfixing portrait of the theater that made Shakespeare who he was.

"The Dream Factory" is an indispensable account of a chaotic and creative period in which feudalism was transitioning into capitalism, with the entertainment industry one of the salient harbingers of that shift. As the economist John Maynard Keynes argued about the Elizabethan era, "Never in the annals of the modern world has there existed so prolonged and so rich an opportunity for the businessman, the speculator and the profiteer." More than just a story of early modern capitalism, "The Dream Factory" is a portrait of Shakespeare as a specifically working-class writer. Shakespeare was the son of a glove maker, but he was not alone in modest origins: Marlowe's father was a cobbler, and Ben Jonson's stepfather was a bricklayer (in fact, Jonson mostly maintained his membership dues in that professional guild).

Literature wasn't just the result of inspired genius; it also required carpenters, weavers and bricklayers (not to mention concession sellers). However, "No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en," as Shakespeare writes in "The Taming of the Shrew," for the industry invented in the neighborhood of Southwark may have relied on grubby materials but traded in stories. Posterity has remembered Shakespeare as a sui generis entity not of his time but of all time, though Swift pays him the compliment of recognizing the Bard in exactly the way that he would have recognized himself — as a laborer. Even on Mount Parnassus, there are tasks to complete; even in the fairy world, there is work to be done. □

**AN INDISPENSABLE
ACCOUNT
OF A CHAOTIC
PERIOD.**

and Ezra Pound, Swift is also an associate professor of English at Northeastern University London. His scholarly predilections are clearly shaped by the method of literary analysis known as the "new

BAD REPUTATION

By DARRELL HARTMAN

BLOOD AND TREASURE alike poured out of the California gold rush, a jackpot moment when the dream of striking it rich was somewhat diminished by the imminent risk of being knifed, shot or smashed over the head with a whiskey bottle.

Most of the violence in and around the California mining camps was spontaneous, and most of the theft nonviolent. But the bandit gangs that terrorized El Dorado, depriving unwary prospectors of their precious nuggets and quite often their lives, were an unwelcome exception to this rule. And unlike later and more

BRING ME THE HEAD OF JOAQUIN MURRIETA

The Bandit Chief Who Terrorized California and Launched the Legend of Zorro

By John Boessenecker

Hanover Square. 496 pp. \$32.

beloved Old West outlaws, they targeted random individuals, not banks, trains or Wells Fargo stagecoaches. Hardly folklore material.

Joaquin Murrieta is different. That Mexican-born bandit cut a bloody path through the Sierra Nevada foothills with his gang of rowdy pistoleros in 1853, and for a handful of interesting reasons his legend has lived on in places as diverse as early-20th-century pulp fiction (as the putative basis for the aristocratic masked avenger Zorro) and the Chicano social-justice movements of the 1960s and '70s. In "Bring Me the Head of Joaquin Murrieta," the frontier historian John Boessenecker demonstrates just how far the reputation of "America's most renowned Latino outlaw" has strayed from fact.

DARRELL HARTMAN is the author of *Battle of Ink and Ice: A Sensational Story of News Barons, North Pole Explorers, and the Making of Modern Media.*

The popular image of Murrieta, a product of fanciful 19th-century artist renderings and adventure fiction, is a vivid one. He wore silver-buttoned *calzoneras* (split-leg trousers) and rode like the wind, his long black hair swirling. He moved so fast, draped in a thick serape, as to seem bullet-proof to hapless pursuers. He was charming and debonair; the vilest murders associated with him were actually the work of a sadistic henchman known as Three-Fingered Jack. There were even rumors that when Murrieta was killed, in 1853, by a posse of "California Rangers," he had been plotting to overthrow the new state's Anglo government.

Boessenecker, author of some dozen works of frontier history, vouches for Murrieta's snazzy pants and horsemanship but dismisses most of the rest. His gang "rarely numbered more than a dozen men at a time, and he certainly did not attempt to lead an insurrection in California." Three-Fingered Jack (a.k.a. Bernardino Garcia) was indeed a bloodthirsty goon, but Murrieta (who didn't even have black hair) did plenty of his own killing, too. And he did not taunt his pursuers with handwritten witticisms, because he was illiterate.

Little is known about Murrieta's early life. He arrived in the American Southwest in early 1849, at around age 20, and briefly settled in the mostly Mexican camp of Sonora, Calif. Boessenecker's fluent descriptions of this "collection of canvas tents and brush huts" along a tributary of the Tuolumne River help compensate for the dearth of information about what Murrieta did there.

A comparison of relevant crime statistics helps paint the picture, too. The annual homicide rate in present-day Chicago

is around 20 per 100,000 people. In 1850 alone, 19 murders were committed in Sonorian Camp — population, 5,000.

The Murrieta of legend was an honest man who turned to banditry after being violently assaulted repeatedly by gangs of white men, a sequence of provocations that included the assault of his bride, Rosa. Although Boessenecker doubts that any of these incidents occurred exactly as described, he is certain that Murrieta



Joaquin Murrieta's gang of rowdy pistoleros cut a bloody path through the Sierra Nevada foothills and into legend.

endured racist abuse from Anglos and "developed a profound hatred for them."

But although Murrieta's depredations against white men generated contemporary outrage, he also targeted fellow Mexicans and Californians of Mexican ancestry, and nearly half of his gang's murder victims were Chinese Americans, who rarely used guns or horses.

Murrieta's deadliest attack was the Feb. 21, 1853, massacre of eight Chinese miners at a ferry crossing on the Stanislaus River. His killing spree put such fear into the Chinese prospectors of Calaveras County that an undetermined num-

ber of them quit their claims and moved to cities.

Boessenecker, who is also a trial lawyer, draws heavily on the digitized newspaper archives unavailable to previous generations of scholars, allowing him to establish accurate timelines and make some other useful corrections to the record, but his 459-page account would have benefited from some judicious editing. It is thickly padded with verbose quoted passages and tales of other bandits with names like Mountain Jim, Dutch Fred and Salomon Pico — history as one damned thug after another, as Arnold Toynbee might have said it. The historical Murrieta, obscure enough to begin with, fades even deeper into the background.

Lost amid all the forensics and yarn-spinning is the question of why

THE BOOK EXPOSES THE GAP BETWEEN THE MYTH AND THE MAN.

he matters. Boessenecker ably exposes the enormous gap between the myth of Murrieta and the man. But the falsehoods surrounding outlaw folk heroes are often less interesting than the context in which they take hold and why.

Murrieta's rise to fame resembles that of Billy the Kid, whose enduring celebrity also grew out of a semi-fictional "biography" written by a down-on-his-luck newspaperman. I would have gladly traded three or four tales of angry lynch mobs for some of Boessenecker's insights on Old West mythmaking.

Murrieta's legend is inseparable from the racial tensions that led to California's 1855 passage of the Anti-Vagrancy Act, also known as the Greaser Act. That increasingly lopsided conflict is only sporadically acknowledged in this account, dulling its impact. One cannot understand, much less redefine, a larger-than-life figure without grappling with the question of why he got so big in the first place. □

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COMBINED PRINT AND E-BOOK BEST SELLERS

SALES PERIOD OF NOVEMBER 16-22

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	Fiction	WEEKS ON LIST
1		BRIMSTONE , by Callie Hart. (Forever) The second book in the Fae & Alchemy series. To save those close to them, Saeris and Fisher face a new set of dangers.	1
2		THE SEVEN RINGS , by Nora Roberts. (St. Martin's) The third book in the Lost Bride Trilogy. Sonya fights across two realms to take possession of a haunted manor.	1
3		RETURN OF THE SPIDER , by James Patterson. (Little, Brown) The 34th book in the Alex Cross series. An enemy's murder book suggests Cross may have made rookie mistakes years ago.	1
4	4	THE WIDOW , by John Grisham. (Doubleday) When Simon Latch, a lawyer in rural Virginia, is accused of murder, he goes in search of the real killer.	5
5	11	QUICKSILVER , by Callie Hart. (Forever) Saeris is transported to a dangerous land of ice and snow, where she must contend with a Fae warrior who has suspect agendas.	13
6	3	NASH FALLS , by David Baldacci. (Grand Central) A successful businessman's life is turned upside down when he is recruited by the F.B.I. to stop a large money laundering scheme.	2
7		THE COLOR OF HOPE , by Danielle Steel. (Delacorte) A widowed art gallery owner moves to the Basque countryside, where she transforms a chateau and develops a new relationship.	1
8	1	EXIT STRATEGY , by Lee Child and Andrew Child. (Bantam) The 30th book in the Jack Reacher series. Reacher's interest is piqued when he finds a handwritten note in his pocket.	2
9	8	THE SECRET OF SECRETS , by Dan Brown. (Doubleday) As he searches for the missing noetic scientist he has been seeing, Robert Langdon discovers something regarding a secret project.	11
10	9	THE CORRESPONDENT , by Virginia Evans. (Crown) Letters from someone she used to know push Sybil Van Antwerp toward revisiting her past and finding a way to forgive.	2
11		CLIVE CUSSLER: QUANTUM TEMPEST , by Mike Maden. (Putnam) The 19th book in the Oregon Files series. A tech-savvy crime boss creates an alliance between seven cartels.	1
12	7	ALCHEMISED , by SenLinYu. (Del Rey) After the war, an imprisoned alchemist is sent to a necromancer to recover her lost memories.	9
13		PROJECT HAIL MARY , by Andy Weir. (Ballantine) Ryland Grace awakes from a long sleep alone and far from home, and the fate of humanity rests on his shoulders.	24
14	14	THE HOUSEMAID , by Freida McFadden. (Grand Central) Troubles surface when a woman looking to make a fresh start takes a job in the home of the Winchesters.	106
15	12	MURDER AT HOLLY HOUSE , by Denzil Meyrick. (Poisoned Pen) When a dead stranger is found in a Yorkshire chimney around the holidays in 1952, Inspector Frank Grasyby gets assigned the case.	3

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	Nonfiction	WEEKS ON LIST
1	1	NOBODY'S GIRL , by Virginia Roberts Giuffre. (Knopf) The late activist and advocate for sex-trafficking survivors describes her time with Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell.	5
2	2	HOW TO TEST NEGATIVE FOR STUPID , by John Kennedy. (Broadside) The Republican senator from Louisiana shares stories about politics in Washington, D.C., and in his home state.	7
3	4	1929 , by Andrew Ross Sorkin. (Viking) The New York Times journalist and CNBC host looks at the fight between Washington and Wall Street that fueled a historic crash of the stock market.	6
4		THE GREATEST SENTENCE EVER WRITTEN , by Walter Isaacson. (Simon & Schuster) The historian and biographer examines the concepts of a statement found in the Declaration of Independence.	1
5	3	THE LOOK , by Michelle Obama with Meredith Koop. (Crown) A celebration of the former first lady's evolution in style, featuring more than 200 photographs.	3
6	5	THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION , by Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns. (Knopf) A companion to the PBS series that delves into various facets of the war and the founding of a new form of government.	2
7		A REVOLUTION OF COMMON SENSE , by Scott Jennings. (Morrow) The conservative commentator and strategist gives his take on President Trump's return to power. (†)	1
8		SIMPLY MORE , by Cynthia Erivo. (Flatiron) The multiple award-winning performer and producer shares insights into how she overcame obstacles to complete real and metaphorical marathons.	1
9		THE ANXIOUS GENERATION , by Jonathan Haidt. (Penguin Press) A co-author of "The Coddling of the American Mind" looks at the mental health impacts that a phone-based life has on children.	83
10		100 RULES FOR LIVING TO 100 , by Dick Van Dyke with Tal McThenia. (Grand Central) The multiple award-winning entertainer reflects upon how his positivity shaped his life and career.	1
11	7	THE GALES OF NOVEMBER , by John U. Bacon. (Liveright) An account of the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald, an American Great Lakes freighter, 50 years ago.	4
12	8	THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE , by Bessel van der Kolk. (Penguin) How trauma affects the body and mind, and innovative treatments for recovery.	270
13	12	107 DAYS , by Kamala Harris. (Simon & Schuster) The former vice president recounts her abbreviated campaign to become president in 2024.	9
14	9	HEART LIFE MUSIC , by Kenny Chesney with Holly Gleason. (Morrow) The country musician recounts events and encounters that shaped his life and career.	3
15	6	OUTLIVE , by Peter Attia with Bill Gifford. (Harmony) A look at recent scientific research on aging and longevity.	104

A dagger (†) indicates that some bookstores report receiving bulk orders. **ONLINE: E-BOOKS AND EXPANDED RANKINGS:** For more lists, more titles, more rankings and a full explanation of our methodology, visit www.nytimes.com/best-sellers.

