

SIMPLE PLEASURES

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Of the books read this year, these eight left an indelible imprint on my psyche. Each selection holds a notable excerpt and my personal reflections, capturing why these books linger and shape my perspective. I invite you to enjoy, explore, and share your own discoveries—what books made their mark on you in 2024, shaping how you show up in the world? Let’s inspire one another as we turn the pages into the new year.



A Man of Two Faces: A Memoir, A History, A Memorial, by Viet Thanh Nguyen

Excerpt: “It is those who refuse to hear who dehumanize others by silencing when, by not hearing only what they want to hear. Questions are creative and dangerous. To ask a question is to be open to change.”

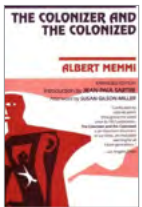
Commentary: This memoir is a moving tribute to Nguyen’s parents and a powerful reflection on how acculturation in the U.S.A. shaped his sense and understanding of his identity.



Right Kind of Wrong: The Science of Failing Well, by Amy C. Edmondson

Excerpt: “The overarching skill that ties the self-disciplines of failing well together is framing—or more precisely, reframing. Reframing, learning to pause long enough to challenge automatic associations.”

Commentary: I loved the second half of Edmondson’s book, *Practicing the Science of Failing Well*. It explores the nuances of failing well while acknowledging that failure isn’t an equal opportunity experience for everyone.



The Colonizer and the Colonized, Albert Memmi (Author), Jean-Paul Sartre (Introduction)

Excerpt: “The most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from history and from the community.”

Commentary: Written in 1957, Memmi’s work remains a powerful exploration of the lasting effects of colonization. Even today, some of us are still grappling with its implications for identity, history, and the increasing homogenization of our world.



Plantains and Our Becoming: Poems by Melania Luisa Marte

Shared poem for the collection:

This Love, A Tragedy
*there is a hypocrisy that shackles me
 one that keeps me up at night.
 it is as much my truth as it is my fear.
 this tragedy, old and lonesome.
 i want what does not want me.
 america could be mine.
 but what’s the use in loving.
 such as ungrateful lover?*

Commentary: I loved the depth and sensitivity of Marte’s poetry collection. The poems beautifully celebrate the humanity, joy, ancestry, and dreams of the people and their culture, all while addressing profound truths with grace and power.



Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison

Excerpt: “Our task is that of making ourselves individuals. The conscience of a race is the gift of its individuals who see, evaluate, record ... we create the race by creating ourselves and then to our great astonishment we will have created something far more important. We will have created a culture.”

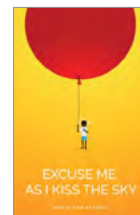
Commentary: This was a viscerally challenging read. Ellison masterfully captures the protagonist’s complex and bleak circumstances, making it a book I needed to read slowly. Spacing it out allowed me to absorb its intensity without feeling overwhelmed.



The Artist’s Way: 30th Anniversary Edition, by Julia Cameron

Excerpt: “Synchronicity, loosely defined as a fortuitous intermeshing of events... In my experience, the universe falls in with worthy plans and most especially with festive and expansive ones. I have seldom conceived a delicious plan without being given the means to accomplish it.”

Commentary: I read this book slowly and completed 90 percent of the exercises. Committing to twelve weeks (and beyond) of the Morning Pages practice has been revelatory, and I’m still enjoying the process.



Excuse Me As I Kiss The Sky (Button Poetry), by Rudy Francisco

Shared poem from the collection:

Commentary: I can’t get enough of Francisco’s poetry—poignant, insightful, and powerful. It’s so timely and resonates deeply.

A Prayer

May your blessing arrive early enough
 and catch your sadness off guard
 may tragedy be a step too slow
 may forgiveness show up at your door
 let every moment be a reminder that
 a sunrise is still beautiful
 and so are you

May joy appear in a flash flood
 and call depression a liar until it shrinks
 may regret loosen its grip
 until shame is a language your body has forgotten
 you are more than the sum of your mistakes
 no matter how bad a day is it’s allowed to start over
 this is a direct order to continue shining

