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- News | Stories
Newsfeatures | Stories
Page One | Stories
Sunday | Stories
Business | Stories
Sports | Stories
Op Ed | Stories
Lifestyle | Stories
Entertainment | Stories
Food | Stories
Books | Stories
Travel | Stories
Corrections/Kills
Advisories

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Poker | Sanchez
more...

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Upcoming
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By Topic
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more...

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Illustrations
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Select a budget: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 Go

BC-MCT-BOOK-BJT — book editors (1200 words)

McClatchy-Tribune News Service
Book Budget for Wednesday, April 28, 2010
Updated at 11:30 a.m. EDT (1530 UTC).
Adds BOOK-20QUESTIONS:MCT

TOP STORIES

Two writers draw from their experiences in a town that is constantly in transition

BOOK-ELMONTE:LA—Aside from their proximity in age, and the fulsome praise they got for their debut novels, Salvador Plascencia and Michael Jaime-Becerra would appear to have little in common as writers.

Plascencia's "The People of Paper," which was published in 2005 by McSweeney's Books, is a fiendishly inventive meta-fiction that has drawn comparisons to the house-of-mirrors stories of John Barth and Italo Calvino, the self-reflexive screenplays of Charlie Kaufman and the gasp-inducing travelogues of the 16th century Spanish explorer Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca.

Jaime-Becerra's recently published "This Time Tomorrow" (Thomas Dunne: 304 pp., \$24.99) orbits in a different aesthetic solar system. It's the naturalistic, deeply empathetic tale of a forklift driver, Gilbert Gaeta, and his quest to fulfill his modest vision of the American immigrant dream, with his girlfriend, Joyce, and willful 13-year-old daughter Ana in tow.

Yet despite their pronounced stylistic differences, a common landscape links Plascencia, 33, and Jaime-Becerra, 36.

That landscape is El Monte, once a dusty Spanish colonial crossroads and now a bustling bedroom community about a dozen miles east of downtown Los Angeles.

The El Monte that haunts the fiction of Jaime-Becerra and Plascencia, who both grew up there, is a multilayered city of 120,000 that can feel like a patch of rural Jalisco or Guerrero, Mexico, grafted onto the L.A. megalopolis.

1650 by Reed Johnson. MOVED

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What are your rules for reading?

BOOK-READINGRULES:TB—Spring is the season of renewal, the time for fresh starts and bold manifestos. That makes it the ideal moment to reorganize the bookshelves. But by what criteria? Subject? Genre? Author?

Date of publication? Size? Spine color?

Dorothy Parker suffered no such agony of indecision. The poet and short-story writer divided her books into two categories: "Good" and "Crap."

When I first read that anecdote in a Parker biography, I was aghast. No conscientious reader, I thought, would cull so crudely.

Why, what about nuance? Shades of gray?

The more I read, however, the more Parker's ruthlessness makes a perverse sort of sense to me. These days, I find my assessment of most books arrives in a flash: Yea or nay. Delight or disgust. Thumbs up or down.

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AUTHORS, BEST-SELLERS

'Mrs. Bridge' author Evan S. Connell looks back on the writing life

BOOK-CONNELL:KC—Evan S. Connell spoke with The Kansas City Star recently by phone from his home in Santa Fe, N.M. The Q&A has been edited for length and clarity.

Q. Last year marked the 50th anniversary of "Mrs. Bridge." Have your feelings about the novel changed over the years?

A. It was the 50th year, and I can't believe it. If I look at "Mrs. Bridge" now, I find sentences I would have revised or eliminated. Occasionally, I think of something that belongs in the book that I didn't think of at the time, but I think it reads pretty well.

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Author Debbie Macomber on books and knitting

BOOK-MACOMBER:SA—With 13 series and 140 million books in print worldwide, Debbie Macomber is one of the leading voices in women's fiction. And an expert knitter.

Knitting is a driving force in her eight-title "Blossom Street" series. The new entry is "Hannah's List" (Mira, \$24.95, 416 pages), about a widower who finds a letter from his late wife, encouraging him to remarry.

Tied to Macomber's current book tour is a special project for charity. The project, called Knit 1, Bless 2, is a Mother's Day initiative asking readers to knit or crochet clothes and blankets for three charities that will distribute them to infants and children in need.

450 by Allen Pierleoni. MOVED

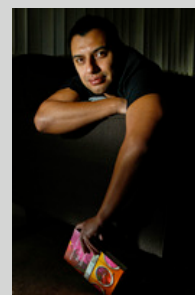
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20 questions for ... food writer Kim Severson

BOOK-20QUESTIONS:MCT—Kim Severson has been a food writer for The New York Times since 2004. Previously, she was a food writer and editor at the San Francisco Chronicle, where she won national awards for news and feature writing, including the Casey Medal for Meritorious Journalism in 2002. "Spoon Fed: How Eight Cooks Saved My Life" (April) is her memoir recounting the tough life lessons she learned from a generation of female cooks including Marion Cunningham, Alice Waters, Ruth Reichl, Rachael Ray and Marcella Hazan.

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Michael Jaime-Becerra

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more...

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- Television
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Her ideal guests at the Ritz, she tells 20 Questions, would be Gertrude Stein, Eleanor Roosevelt and Lucille Ball.
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 BOOK-BEST:MCT—Best-selling books from Publishers Weekly. 500. (Moving Thursday afternoon)

NON-FICTION REVIEWS

Two authors look at words as a weapon of conflict, after-conflict

[BOOK-CONFLICTS-REVIEW:LA](#)—“A Wall in Palestine” by Rene Backmann, translated from the French by A. Kaiser; and “Rebel Land: Unraveling the Riddle of History in a Turkish Town” by Christopher de Bellaigue.
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Historian navigates anarchy’s hot spots

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‘Bedwetter’ lays bare cleverness, warm heart

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Try to imagine New York without Brooklyn

[BOOK-LOSTSTATES-REVIEW:WA](#)—“Lost States: True stories of Texlahoma, Transylvania, and Other States That Never Made It” by Michael J. Trinklein.
 450 by Tish Wells. [MOVED](#)
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FICTION REVIEWS

In the end, a most American of odysseys

[BOOK-PARROTOLIVIER-REVIEW:LA](#)—“Parrot & Olivier in America: A Novel” by Peter Carey.
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Police mystery transcends the routine

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 300 by Oline H. Cogdill. [MOVED](#)
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ROUND-UPS

Brief reviews of new titles

[BOOK-DISCOVERIES:LA](#)—“The Secret Miracle,” “In the Shadow of the Cypress,” “The Hand That First Held Mine.”
 700 by Susan Salter Reynolds. [MOVED](#)
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 750 by Erica Marcus. [MOVED](#)
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