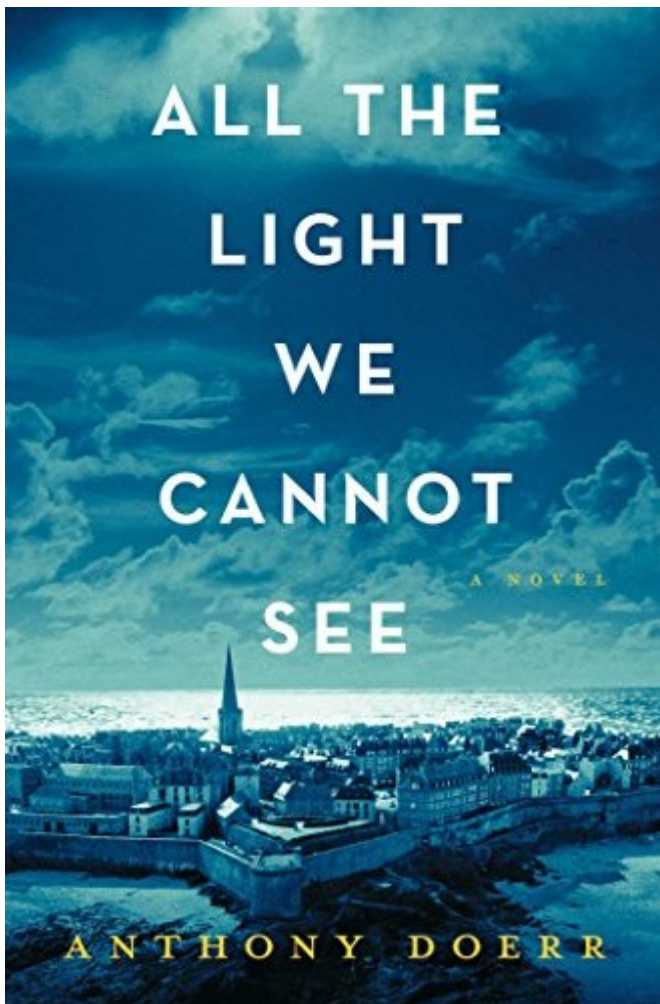


Brian Doyle's Christmas picks

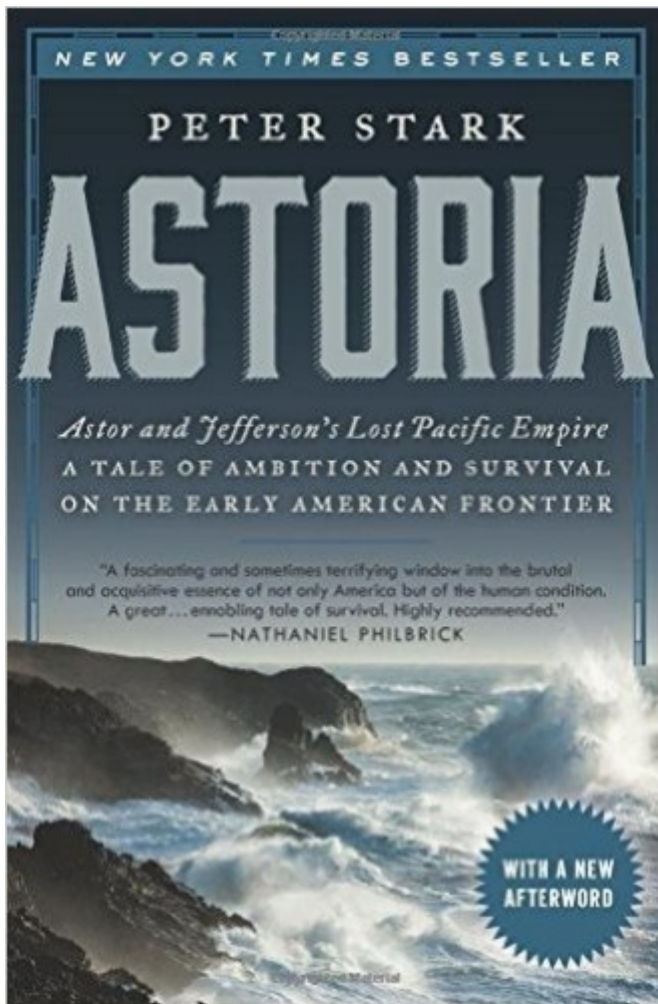
selected by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [December 9, 2015](#) issue

In Review



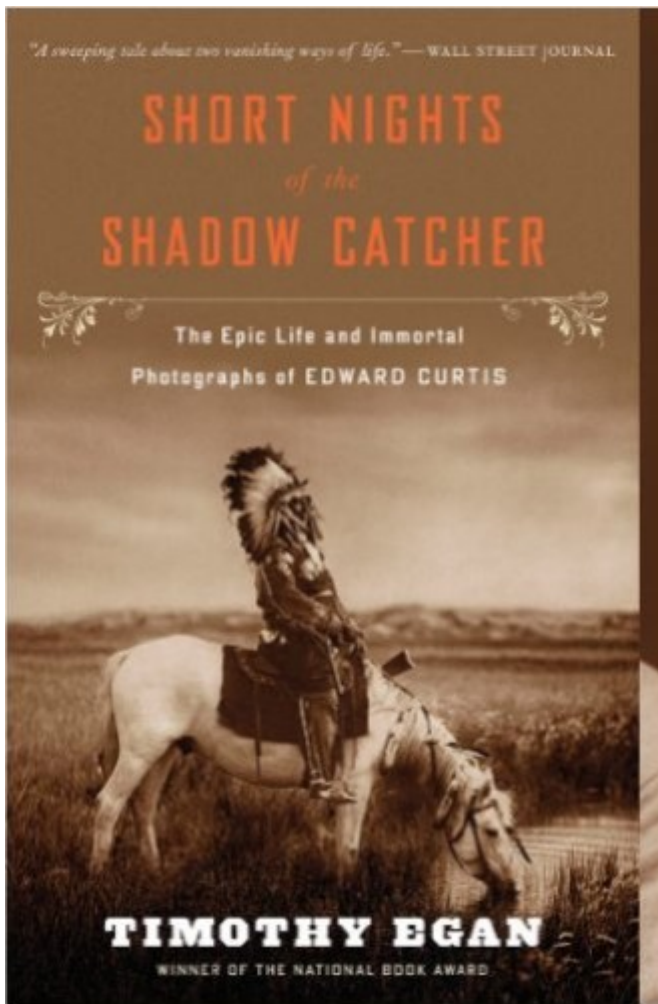
All the Light We Cannot See

by Anthony Doerr
Scribner



Astoria

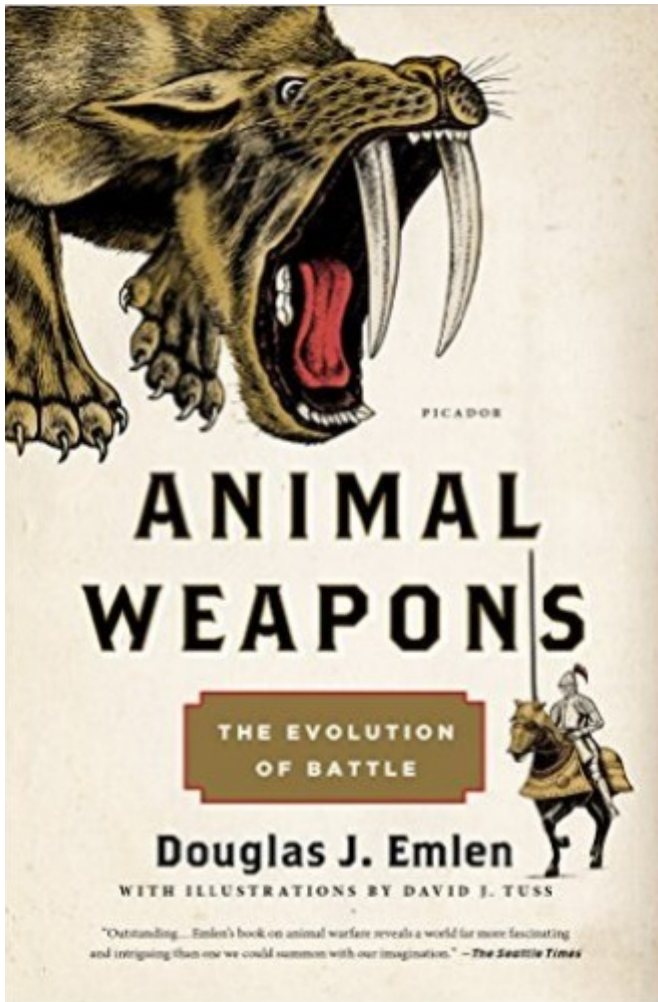
by Peter Stark
HarperCollins



Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher

by Timothy Egan

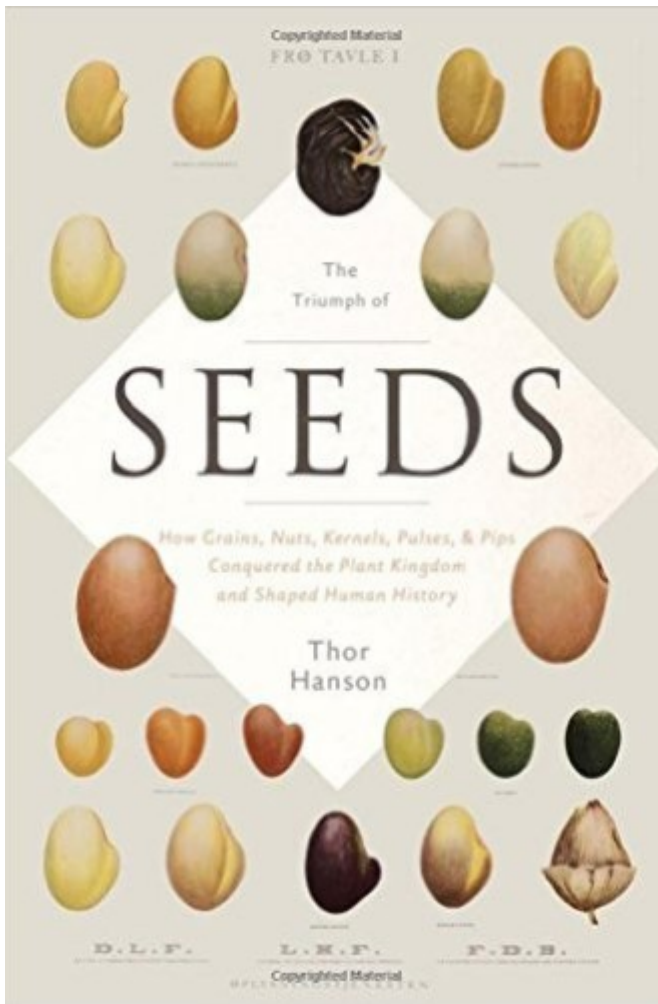
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt



Animal Weapons

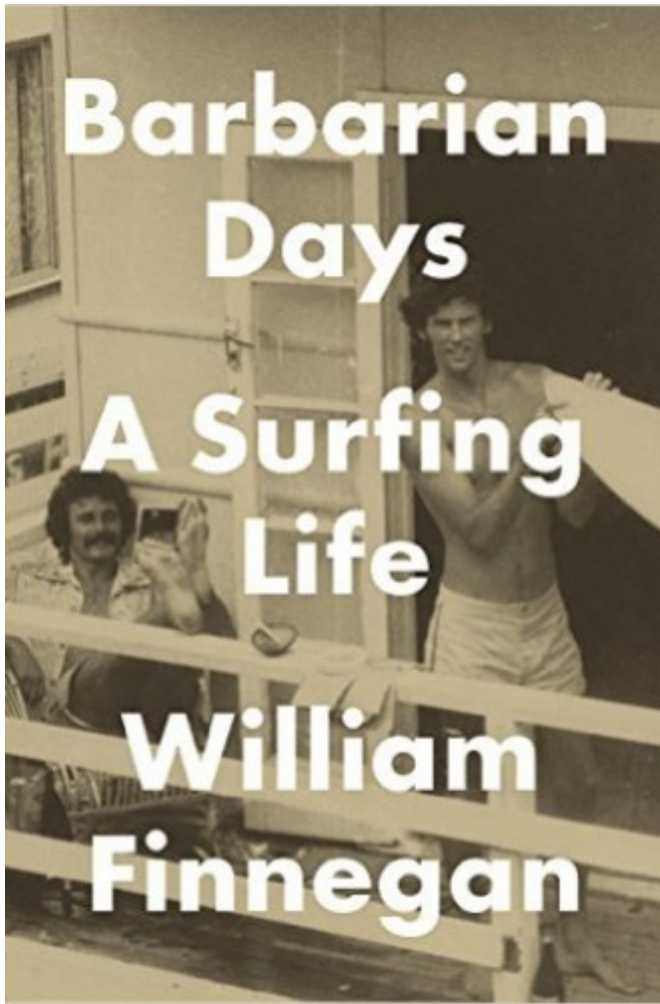
by Douglas J. Emlen

Henry Holt



The Triumph of Seeds

by Thor Hansen
Basic Books



Barbarian Days

by William Finnegan
Penguin



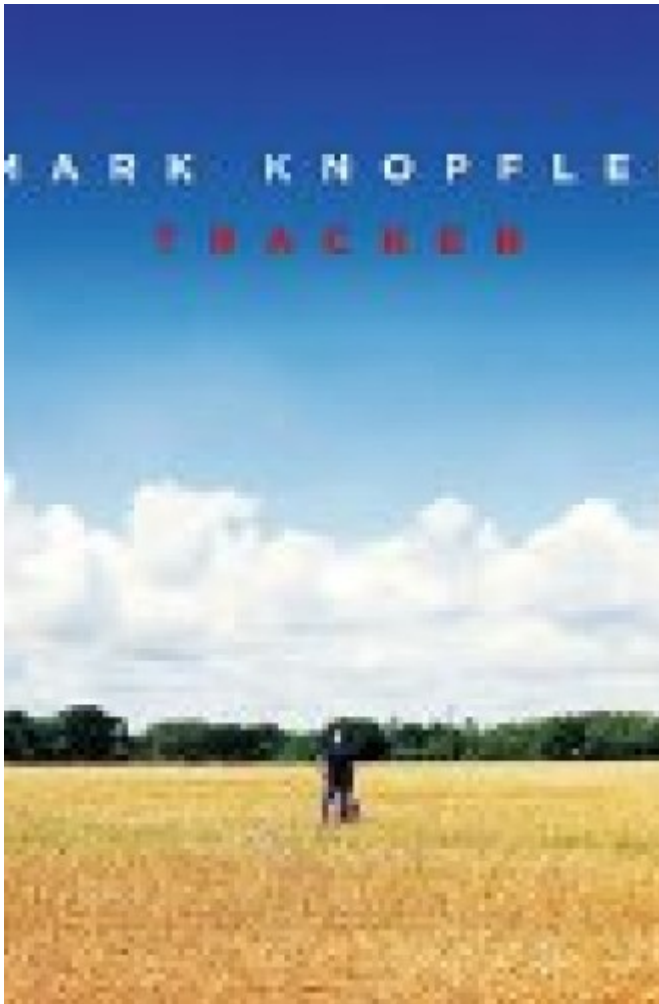
Interstellar

by Christopher Nolan
Warner Home Video



Let's Start Again

by Bap Kennedy
Proper American



Tracker

by Mark Knopfler
Verve

Novels that rattled and moved me in the last year or so include Anthony Doerr's terrific World War II novel *All the Light We Cannot See* (Scribner). It's the best novel I've read since *Gilead*. Like Marilynne Robinson, Doerr achieves a shimmering consistency of tone; it's one of those books that you finish and then shake your head in quiet awe.

The best nonfiction books I read were *Astoria* (HarperCollins), by Peter Stark, and *Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), by Seattle writer Tim Egan. Both are great examples of how to handle an enormous amount of fact and history by shaping it all as a riveting story. Stark writes about John Jacob Astor's attempt to corner the world fur market by founding what was to be the New York

City of the West; Egan writes about the remarkable life and work of Edward Curtis, the great photographer of the tribal peoples of America.

I was impressed by Douglas Emlen's *Animal Weapons* (Henry Holt) and Thor Hanson's *The Triumph of Seeds* (Basic Books), both beautifully written, lively, lucid science books; and by William Finnegan's magisterial *Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life* (Penguin), the greatest surfing book I've ever read, largely because it's about joy and pain and love and yearning, with some surfing details here and there.

The best movie I've seen recently is *Interstellar*. My wife and children and I still talk about its implications and intimations about the nature of time and space and memory. How rare and lovely is a film that you still talk about at dinner?

Musically—and here I speak with the passion of a maniacal music lover who adores all music except Wagner's—the best new work I've heard is Irish songwriter Bap Kennedy's record *Let's Start Again*, but pick up any of his six solo records—three of them done with Steve Earle, Van Morrison, and Mark Knopfler, respectively. This is lovely soulful country-tinged bluesy rock. And speaking of Mark Knopfler—he has a fine new record called *Tracker*.