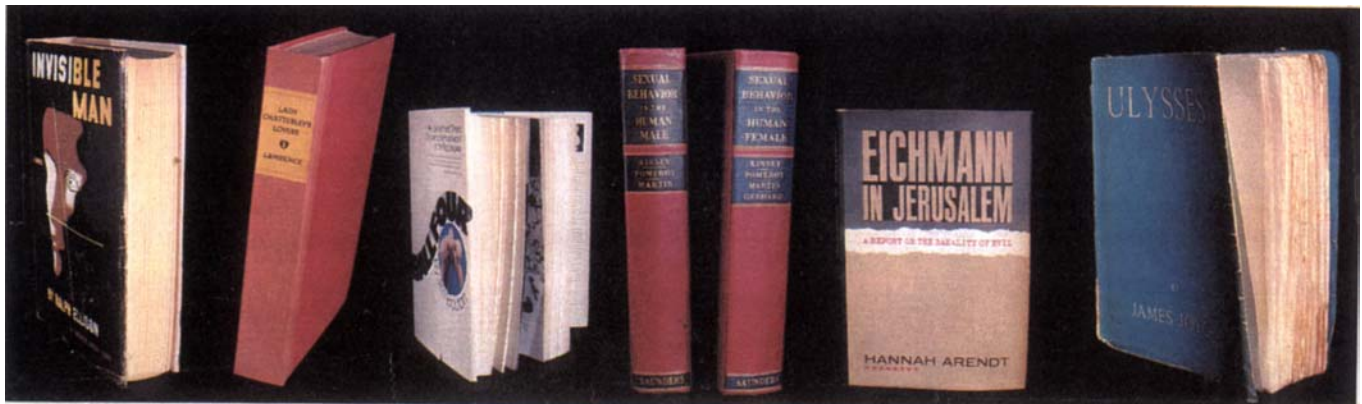


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DECEMBER 1999/
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The Books We Talked About Most

From *Ulysses* to *The Bell Curve*, the Titles that Piqued Our Century.



BALL FOUR (1970)

By Jim Bouton

The diary of a has-been pitcher trying to fight his way back into the major leagues, and the first modern sports book. Bouton's descriptions of day-to-day life on a ball club made impossible a certain kind of sports hero-worship. A hungover Mickey Mantle, for instance, trots off the field after a homer, looks up at the stands, and says, "Those people don't know how tough that really was."

While fans still rue Bouton's desecration of the national pastime, they keep buying his book – over 5 million copies sold. The big leagues have been less forgiving. Commissioner Bowie Kuhn once invited Bouton into his office and suggested that he'd made the book up. And Pete Rose would stand on the steps of the Cincinnati dugout yelling at Bouton, "Fuck you, Shakespeare!"