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D.E.S.S.E.R.T. Newsletter Summer 2014

Stephanie Nunley

Cleveland State University, s.nunley@csuohio.edu

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D.E.S.S.E.R.T*.

*DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH SUGGESTED SUMMER ENGAGED READING TITLES

JOHN GERLACH

Interim Chair, English Department

After I retired I began reading books I always had wanted to read, and once again this summer, when I get to retire again, I'm looking forward to reading more. Here are some of

my favorite items from that past period: I'd always wanted to read **Dante's Divine Comedy**, so I did, and since

I'd been learning Italian, I read bilingual editions, English one page, Italian on the other. It's not as hard as it sounds, and I recommend trying, even you don't know Italian. What you begin to pick up is the power of his rhyme, and the rhythm of the sentences—this is poetry with a kick.



Sometimes I read other heavy tomes, like at least two thirds of

Dr. Gerlach recommends reading *Dante's Divine Comedy* in Italian and English: "This is poetry with a kick."

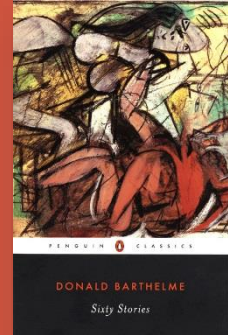
The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. It's a sort of Christian bashing, and I'm a Christian, but I have to say I ate it up anyway. Then I went into a Eudora Welty phase, read all of

her novels, and would recommend that to anyone.

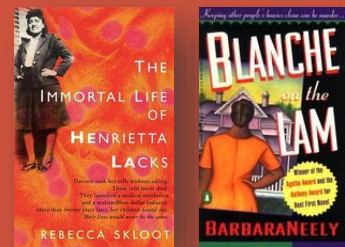
But for sheer fun, my favorite author during this phase was Wilkie Collins, who was a

contemporary, and even co-operator, with Charles Dickens. His best book, I think, is *The Moonstone*. I thought it was just one of the first murder mysteries, but it is much better than that. Collins was one of the first to use a sequence of narrators, and the real pleasure of the book is detecting how each is in effect an unreliable narrator. You can't trust any of them, but you enjoy them for their story-telling quirks and what you discover about them.

What's next this summer? I'm going to finish what I started before coming back to CSU: Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, in German and

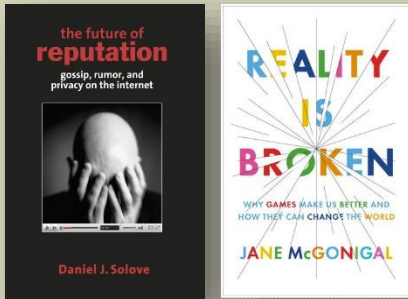


John Brentar recommends *Sixty Stories*, by Donald Barthelme



Adrienne Gosselin recommends *Blanche on the Lam*, by Barbara Neely & *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot

English. I love finding words I remember my grandmother using. She liked to pepper her English with German when she thought English was inadequate. So Mach Schnell and start reading anything you can find!



Donna H. Moore

recommends *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*, by Jane McGonigal & *The Futures of Reputation: Gossip, Rumor, and Privacy on the Internet*, by Daniel J. Solove

Adam Sonstegard

WHAT I'M READING THIS SUMMER:

The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, Edgar Allan Poe.

Why: because I'm teaching it soon: one of the trippiest travel narratives you'll ever read, which might make most readers glad Poe more often stuck to short fictions.

The Wide, Wide World, Susan Warner. Why: because, believe it or not, I'm teaching it, too: It was a weepy bestseller when the supposed greats we now study – Hawthorne, Melville, Poe – were trying to crack an audience at all. It will leave you amazed adult American women were following this child's misadventures so avidly.

A Visit from the Goon Squad, Jennifer Egan. Why: to round out a class on short story sequences: it lands half-way between a novel and a collection of short fiction and always keeps you guessing, including one story composed entirely of PowerPoint slides (!)

Traitor to the Race, Dareick Scott. Why: an interracial gay male couple in the early 1990s navigate amorous and racial

loyalties and betrayals, richly informed by, of all things, a narration obsessed with reruns of Bewitched!

The Grandissimes, G. W. Cable. Why: the novel of miscegenation among early nineteenth-century New Orleans Creoles, because (of course) I've recently discovered it was sometimes published with groundbreaking illustrations, totally unnoticed so far, don't you know, by the critical community.

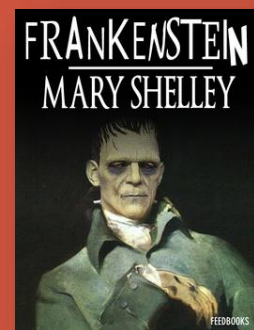
Melanie Gagich

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Dracula, Bram Stoker and *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley, because they are classics and awesome.

Middlesex, Jeffrey Eugenides, because this book addresses gender and sexuality in a smart and edgy way.

When You Are Engulfed in Flames, David Sedaris, because it is hilarious, witty, and dark, and gives students a glimpse into short stories and vignettes.



WHAT I'M READING THIS SUMMER:

Philipa Gregory, Barbara Kingsolver, Hilary Mantel, Alison Weir



Author's spotlight

Gabriel García Márquez

1927 - 2014

Both Melanie Gagich and Brian Lysle recommend

One Hundred Years of Solitude.

To quote from his April 17th obit in the New York Times, written by Jonathan Kandell, "The novelist William Kennedy hailed [*One Hundred Years*] as 'the first piece of literature since the Book of Genesis that should be required reading for the entire human race.'" While I'm not sure I agree about the Book of Genesis, I certainly concur about *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. I fondly remember it as being one of the very best things I read as an undergraduate—it was mind-expanding, wondrous, and riveting. — *Brian Lysle*

James Marino

RECOMMENDATION: *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, Jennifer Egan

WHY I'M RECOMMENDING IT: It's a wonderfully entertaining novel, but also

because it gives aspiring writers (and critics) a great

example of all the non-obvious ways that a book

holds together. It doesn't have a linear narrative, it

doesn't have an obvious single storyline, and it

doesn't have a single

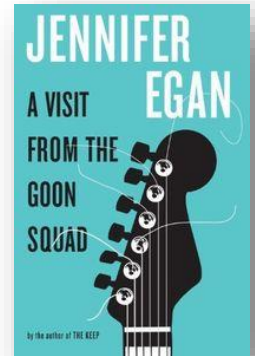
point-of-view character. But it

holds together better than most novels that tell a chronological story with one main character; the

whole thing is held together with repeated

motifs and images.

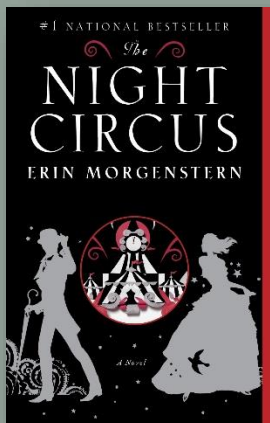
WHAT I'M READING THIS SUMMER: This summer I'm going to slow-read Shakespeare's



sonnets: one sonnet a day from May 1 until the end of October.

Julie Burrell

RECOMMENDATION: *The Night Circus*, Erin Morgenstern



WHY I'M RECOMMENDING IT: This debut novel centers on a mysterious circus that only comes out at night. It cast a spell over me for weeks. I recommend reading it outside, on a warm summer evening. As a theatre scholar, I also find it exciting because it was inspired by the breathtaking, immersive theatre experience, *Sleep No More* (currently running in New York).

WHAT I'M READING THIS SUMMER: I'll be listening to free audiobooks on lirbrivox.com (you can even become a reader on the site yourself!) starting with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.