Ultimate Summer Reading List

written by Entropy | June 21, 2014

It’s officially the first day of summer. So time to start that summer reading. Not sure where to start? We’ve got your summer reading list covered.

I’m OK, I’m Pig!
by Kim Hyesoon (Translated by Don Mee Choi)
Bloodaxe Books
Miraculous weaponry! Miraculous translations! This kind of undomesticated engagement and lawlessness and risk and defiance and somatic exorbitance posits a world and a relation to the world where everything excluded is included – the animal and the vegetal, the molten and the mineral, the gaseous and the liquid, not to mention shame, disgust, failure, terror, raunch… Kim Hyesoon’s new book is armament and salve, shield and medicinal chant. It’s here to protect us’ – CHRISTIAN HAWKEY

The Feel Trio
by Fred Moten
Letter Machine Editions
The Feel Trio is Cecil Taylor, Tony Oxley and William Parker. Or is it that The Feel Trio are Cecil Taylor, Tony Oxley and William Parker? See, that’s the amazing problem and chance, right there! In the wake and air and light of The Feel Trio, what it bears and what propels them, which is everything in particular, The Feel Trio tries to put some things together. Alabama runs through those things like nobody’s business. I kept trying to visit the uncounted space James Brown forms around the one.
The TV Sutras
by Dodie Bellamy
Ugly Duckling Presse
In The TV Sutras she is in top form, hilarious and enlightening as an anarchist bodhisattva moonlighting as a performance artist. I gorge on Bellamy’s genius. —WAYNE KOESTENBAUM

UnAmerica
by Momus
Penny-Ante Editions
A delirious cousin to Kathy Acker’s Pussy, King of the Pirates and reminiscent of Philip K. Dick’s Valis and Voyage of the Dawn Treader by C.S. Lewis, Momus’ new novel UnAmerica remolds a classic, charmingly naive sixth century Christian tale—The Voyage of Saint Brendan—for the twenty-first century. Reworking the Irish monastic Wonder Voyage formula, Momus adds anachronistic brio and slapstick humor to the genre’s wooden-faced didacticism.

NOT NOTHING
by Ray Johnson
Siglio Press
Make room for Ray Johnson, whose place in history has been only vaguely defined. Johnson’s beguiling, challenging art has an exquisite clarity and emotional intensity that makes it much more than simply a remarkable mirror of its time, although it is that, too. — ROBERTA SMITH
**Wet Land**  
by Lucas de Lima  
*Action Books*  
Lucas de Lima’s stunning book affected me so profoundly at all the stages of reading it, encountering it—before it was a book and afterwards, when it was. In the work of this extraordinary writer, the fragment is not an activity of form. It’s an activity of evisceration. – BHANU KAPIL

**Sorrowtoothpaste Mirrorcream**  
by Kim Hyesoon (Translated by Don Mee Choi)  
*Action Books*  
Her poems are not ironic. They are direct, deliberately grotesque, theatrical, unsettling, excessive, visceral and somatic. This is feminist surrealism loaded with shifting, playful linguistics that both defile and defy traditional roles for women. – PAM BROWN

**Backup Singers**  
by Sommer Browning  
*Birds, LLC.*  
With BACKUP SINGERS Browning follows up her sold out debut, *Either Way I’m Celebrating*, with an even rawer and starker, and again darkly humorous navigation of friendship, marriage, and motherhood. The result is a more overtly political assessment of the absurd deficit between what we’re confronted with and what we’re equipped with to deal with those confrontations: “It’s a girl, / and the wires she needs // open her hands / before they're fists.”
**Works**
by Edouard Levé (Translated by Jan Steyn)
Dalkey Archive
This is fiction, but it is fiction of a sort that raises some very serious questions about the possibility of cordoning off actual realities from imagined ones (...) Dizzying and disturbing in a way that is quite unlike anything else i have ever read.
— THE MILLIONS

**The Fun We’ve Had**
by Michael J Seidlinger
Lazy Fascist Press
Michael Seidlinger is a homegrown Calvino, a humanist, and wise and darkly whimsical. His invisible cities are the spires of the sea where we all sail our coffins in search of our stories.” — STEVE ERICKSON

**The Pedestrians**
by Rachel Zucker
Wave Books
[Zucker’s] best writing is nothing if not uncomfortable. If you know that discomfort already, you might see yourself in the best parts of Zucker’s poems. — STEPHEN BURT
American Canyon
by Amarnath Ravva
Kaya Press
“A mesmerizing and elegiac meditation on identity, nationality, and desire. Ravva coils narratives of India and the American West in on each other, telling a family history that is both fragmented and tender. A phenomenal debut.” –COLIN DICKEY

FLAMETTI, OR THE DANDYISM OF THE POOR
by Hugo Ball (Translated by Catherine Schelbert)
Wakefield Press
The idea of the Cabaret Voltaire grew out of literary thoughts as well as the slum atmosphere of the music-hall performers, the singers, the magicians, fire-eaters, and others portrayed by Ball in his novel Flametti. –RICHARD HUELSENBECK

my god is this a man
by Laura Sims
Fence Books
The poems in Sims’ third collection engage the escarpment of the page itself: walled-off phrases set against spare lines on largely empty pages, a protographical representation of thought itself. The result are poems of psychic fragmentation: relationship as crime-scene, the folk ballad re-writ for our new cult of mass-shootings, “the quiet and unmeaning” of a natural world wrought horrific...
The Meatgirl Whatever
by Kristin Hatch
Fence Books
The poems in Kristin Hatch’s debut collection ooze with the viscus of shattered reality. Bodily, almost animalistic, they flirt with apocalypse, accumulate like diary entries from a madman’s kitchen where knife blades hover near the jugular.”

PATTER
by Douglas Kearney
Red Hen Books
For a couple struggling with infertility, conception is a war against their bodies. Blood and death attend. But when the war is won, and life stares, hungry, in the parents’ faces, where does that violence, anxiety, and shame go? The poems in Patter re-imagine miscarriages as minstrel shows, magic tricks, and comic strips; set Darth Vader against Oedipus’s dad in competition for “Father of the Year;” and interrogate the poet’s family’s stint on reality TV.

Nochita
by Dia Felix
City Lights
In Nochita, Dia Felix builds an extraordinarily rich and inventive language to carry the kaleidoscopic point of view of her young protagonist. What a pleasure to open a book and find such exuberant and committed artistry. A stunning debut. —JANET FITCH
Running through Beijing
by Xu Zechen
Two Lines Press
“Running through Beijing is clean and fast, deeply felt and very smart: a profoundly engaging story about a certain kind of honor, and a certain kind of thief, and a life that feels hidden in plain sight.” — ROY KESEY

Guantanamo
by Frank Smith (Translated by Vanessa Place)
Les Figues Press
A mutant offspring of Kafka, Lyotard, and William Carlos Williams, Frank Smith’s volume haunts the precincts of a world-class ethical blight. Poignant, disturbing, and skillfully translated by a leading voice in contemporary thought, Guantanamo remains the name of pernicious irresolution and offshore strike back. —AVITAL RONELL

The Ants
by Sawako Nakayasu
Les Figues Press
We have plenty to learn from the numerous ants. Sawako Nakayasu—writer, antologist, Baudelaire’s sister—turns daily life inside out and upside down then puts it into perfect little boxes. Here we follow the lines of black legged, syntactical units—the words—as they cross and they tickle the heart of the matter with us. —JOHN GRANGER
The Compleat Purge  
by Trisha Low  
Kenning Editions
Trisha Low is just another feminist, confessional writer trying to find a good way to deal with all her literary dads. She siphons the remix culture of social media into the binge and purge cycle of an engrossing read, with the emphasis on gross. She reads the diaries of teenage girls, their blog comments and love letters; she dresses like one in performance then throws up fake blood on herself. She once surveyed the reactions of Catholic fathers to scripted confessionals she made regarding rough sex with men, secretly recorded the conversations, and transcribed the tapes.

The Fish and the Not Fish  
by Peter Markus  
Dzanc Books
The world of the child is a world where things aren’t what they always seem to be. In The Fish and the Not Fish, Peter Markus brings us back inside that not-so-simple space and its slippery way of seeing and saying, a place that is primal and mythic in its remaking.

Gephyromania  
by TC Tolbert  
Ahsahta Press
Gephyromania teaches us that to unmake a body, language, and thereby a world is as meaningful (perhaps more so) than building—and that unmaking is, oxymoronically, a form of creation. This collection presses hard and urgently against the throat of mainstream western notions of what it means to inhabit a gendered body. A truly necessary book!  
—DAWN LUNDY MARTIN
My Struggle, Volumes I – III
by Karl Ove Knausgaard
Archipelago Books
What’s notable is Karl Ove’s ability, rare these days, to be fully present in and mindful of his own existence. Every detail is put down without apparent vanity or decoration, as if the writing and the living are happening simultaneously. There shouldn’t be anything remarkable about any of it except for the fact that it immerses you totally. You live his life with him. — ZADIE SMITH

The Albertine Workout
by Anne Carson
New Directions
The Albertine Workout contains fifty-nine paragraphs, with appendices, summarizing Anne Carson’s research on Albertine, the principal love interest of Marcel in Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu.

A Musical Hell
by Alejandra Pizarnik (Translated by Yvette Siegert)
New Directions
— The flower of distance is blooming. I want you to look through the window and tell me what you see: inconclusive gestures, illusory objects, failed shapes... Go to the window as if you’d been preparing for this your entire life.
Memento Mori
by Muriel Spark
New Directions
In late 1950s London, something uncanny besets a group of elderly friends: an insinuating voice on the telephone reminds each: Remember you must die. Their geriatric feathers are soon thoroughly ruffled, and many an old unsavory secret is dusted off.

Something Wrong With Her
by Cris Mazza
Jaded Ibis Press
“Stunningly honest and formally audacious… Mazza’s decision to let speak a “character” that other memoirists would have had remain silent indicates what a vital expansion Something Wrong with Her is for the field of memoir.” –The Brooklyn Rail

The Empathy Exams: Essays
by Leslie Jamison
Graywolf Press
Beginning with her experience as a medical actor, paid to act out symptoms for medical students to diagnose, Leslie Jamison’s visceral and revealing essays ask essential questions about our basic understanding of others: How should we care about one another? How can we feel another’s pain, especially when pain can be assumed, distorted, or performed? Is empathy a tool by which to test or even grade each other? By confronting pain—real and imagined, her own and others’—Jamison uncovers a personal and cultural urgency to feel.
**Bald New World**  
*by Peter Tieryas Liu*  
*Perfect Edge Books*  
*Bald New World* is a hypnotic, surreal, and insightful novel, blending *Blade Runner* and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* to create a dark, funny, and captivating story. One of the best books I’ve read this year. — RICHARD THOMAS

**Tweaky Village**  
*by Kevin Killian*  
*Wonder*  
The winner of the first Wonder Prize, Kevin Killian’s *Tweaky Village* is a book of poems from a dreamy Oz of delirium and nostalgia, memory and desire. Killian pays homage to the Iraq War dead, George Kuchar, old Hollywood, Kylie Minogue, friends, lovers and almost lovers: “Five years in / to a war that never ends, / I heard telephones, opera house, favorite melodies.” Voices from the past—Tim Dlugos, David Bowie, Abraham Lincoln—fade in and out like overheard conversation, half-remembered a dozen years later.

**The Inevitable June**  
*by Bob Schofield*  
*theNewerYork*  
This morning I’m stuffed in my bathtub excited for Bob Schofield’s, *Inevitable June*, because he is the future of American Surrealism. — TJ Lyons
ULTRAMEGAPRAIRIELAND
by Elisabeth Workman
Bloof Books
Once upon a time, ancient glaciers oozed light through the general living room of America, scraping the terrain into the sweeping prairies of the Midwest, a superlatively grassy expanse in which American bison cavorted with dangerous electric fish-goats and no one got hurt. That was a long time ago. Then one day we woke up and it was everywhere: ULTRAMEGAPRAIRIELAND.

Noir: A Love Story
by Edward J Rathke
Civil Coping Mechanisms
“I used to hate my real name. I used to hate it so much. I hated the way it looked on paper and I hated the way it sounded, rolling round my ear, those two stupid hard consonants just a few letters apart. I’ve made a thousand names for myself over the years and most of them nothing like mine. I lived in worlds that only existed inside my head and I made me new. For a long time I hated my face too and I avoided mirrors like they were plagued and I stopped remembering properly what I look like, and this problem persists.” – Edward J Rathke

Letters from a Seducer
by Hilda Hilst (Translated by John Keene)
Nightboat Books
The first English-language translation of the second volume in Hilda Hilst’s dynamic and unnerving erotic-pornographic trilogy.
by Hervé Guibert (Translated by Nathanaël)
Nightboat Books
The long-awaited English-language translation of Hervé Guibert’s arresting journals.

Green Lights
by Kyle Muntz
Civil Coping Mechanisms
Green Lights is a surreal fable set in a neighborhood that goes on forever, where the light is always changing color. It’s the story of two people in love, a friend with a problem, and an old man who eats children; but also one about perception, the gaps between universes, and the struggle to find happiness in a dangerous, sometimes incomprehensible world.

Beautiful Soul: An American Elegy
by Joshua Corey
Spuyten Duyvil
Joshua Corey’s Beautiful Soul offers a swirling, shadowy cosmos lit by intelligence, urgency, and heart. Its swirl is cinematic—“estranged and operatic”—but never at the expense of the body, be it the bitten nipple, or the “bloody middle” of history. I especially admire Corey’s conjuring of Ruth: fulcrum of readerly empathy, inheritor of mysterious and difficult histories, navigator of the present’s strata, honorary “new reader.” Go on her journey with her; “the book is waiting.” — MAGGIE NELSON