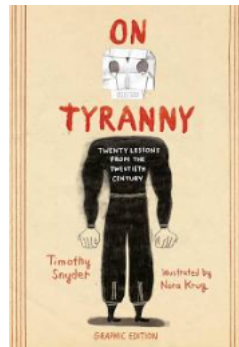
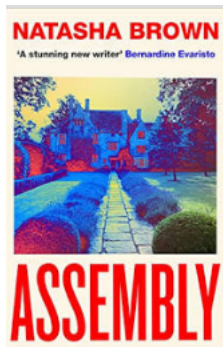


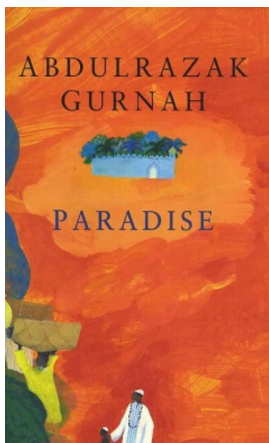
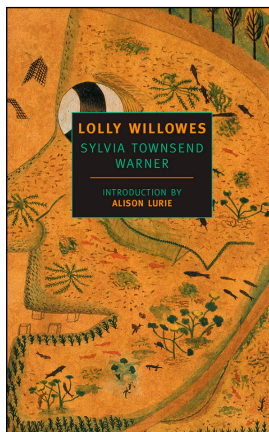
April 2022

Featured Recommendations from Dr. Emily Hyde



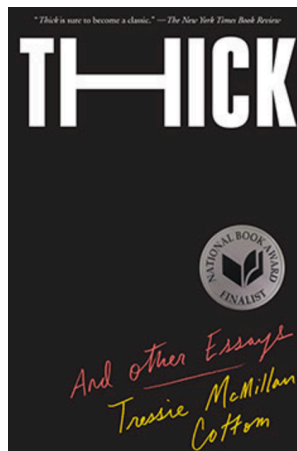
Bewilderment, by Richard Powers (2021)
Paradise, by Abdulrazak Gurnah (1994)
Black Paper, by Teju Cole (2021)
On Tyranny, by Timothy Snyder (2017)
Lote, by Shola von Reinhold (2021)
Women Talking, by Miriam Toews (2018)
A Tale for the Time Being,
by Ruth Ozeki (2013)

The Book of Form and Emptiness,
by Ruth Ozeki (2021)
Assembly, by Natasha Brown (2021)
Thick, by Tressie Mcmillan Cottom (2019)
What Are You Going Through,
by Sigrid Nunez (2020)
Felix Ever After, by Kacen Callender (2020)
Lolly Willowes,
by Sylvia Townsend Warner (1926)



Highly Recommended

▶ A 1926 novel about “an aging spinster’s struggle to break way from her controlling family,” a story told with “cool feminist intelligence” and “a dimension of the supernatural and strange” (that’s an understatement: she makes a pact with the devil and becomes a witch!).



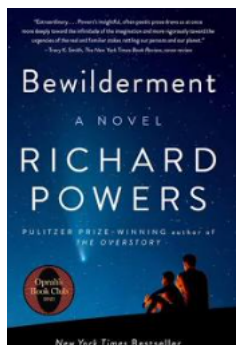
▶ “These essays show us the potency of actually existing black feminist analysis and expose the deep structures of racism and inequality that shape most black women’s lives. With biting humor and razor-sharp political clarity, *Thick* is a crucial contribution to contemporary black thought.”

—Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

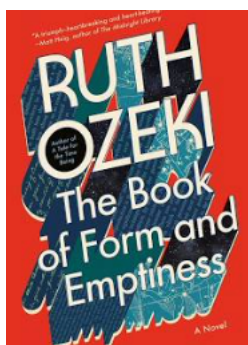
The essay “Dying to be Competent” is devastating, and check out Cottom’s terrific newsletter via the *The New York Times* (or just follow her on social media).

▶ This is by the Nobel Prize-winning British writer Abdulrazak Gurnah. It tells the story of a young boy in Tanzania at the turn of the 20th century. The Nobel Prize Committee said that Gurnah’s novels “recoil from stereotypical descriptions and open our gaze to a culturally diversified East Africa unfamiliar to many in other parts of the world.” It’s an incredible novel, especially the last few pages.

Recommended, but not quite as highly... 😞



▶ There were things I really liked about this novel—it’s set in the near future, and there’s a very cool account of an experimental neuroscience as a possibility for psychological healing. But, it’s just too depressing. About politics, the climate crisis, parenting—I can’t in good faith recommend this one! Read Powers’s earlier novel *The Overstory* instead. It’s all about trees.



▶ Ruth Ozeki is an absolutely terrific writer and a Zen Buddhist priest. Again, there were things I loved in this novel: there are talking objects, clutter, a character based on Marie Kondo (of *The Art of Tidying Up* fame) and a library plays a glorious role in the plot, too. But, like *Bewilderment*, it’s hard to love a book about contemporary life: either it cuts too close to the bone or it seems disconnected, a bit off. Bottom line: if a novelist calls the internet “the net,” as both Powers and Ozeki do, I’m going to struggle!

IN THE EDITING ROOM WITH RUTH OZEKI AND REBECCA EVANS

3.4.2022

However, if you’re interested in contemporary novelists and low-production-value media (which you might be, if you’re read this far!), check out the podcast [Novel Dialogue](#), where I, along with the eco-critic Rebecca Evans, interview Ruth Ozeki and learn all about her theory of the novel. Plus there are lots of other interesting conversations between contemporary novelists and literary critics in the three seasons of Novel Dialogue available. Enjoy!



HOSTED BY: EMILY HYDE



Other recommended sources for literary interviews, essays, and recommended reads: [Lit Hub Daily](#) and [Public Books](#).



LIT HUB DAILY

Lit Hub Daily: March 24, 2022

By Lit Hub Daily March 24, 2022

This season, we’re partnering with [Novel Dialogue](#), a podcast where a novelist and a literary critic talk about novels from every angle: how we read them, write them, publish them, and remember them.

On the latest episode, [Ruth Ozeki](#), whose most recent novel is *The Book of Form and Emptiness*, speaks with critic [Rebecca Evans](#) and guest host [Emily Hyde](#). This is a conversation about talking books, the randomness and serendipity of library shelves, and what novelists can learn in the editing room of a movie like *Mutant Hunt*.

Ozeki is an ordained Zen Buddhist priest, and her novels unfold as warm-hearted parables that have been stuffed full of the messiness of contemporary life. *The Book of Form and Emptiness* telescopes from global supply chains to the aisles of a Michaels craft store and from a pediatric psychiatry ward to the enchanted stacks of the public library. The exigencies of environmental storytelling arch over this conversation.

Evans asks Ozeki questions of craft (how to move a story through time, how to bring it to an end) that become questions of practice (how to listen to the objects stories tell, how to declutter your sock drawer). And we learn Ozeki’s theory of closure: her novels always pull together at the end so that readers are free to continue pondering the questions they raise.