

House of Books || Recommended Reading for *Atmospheric*

[The Complete Stories - Leonora Carrington](#)

Artist. Writer. Surrealist. Leonora Carrington was a mind of her time for all time, and how lucky we are to have her short stories collected all in one place. As Sheila Heti wrote, Carrington's works are, "optimistic and nihilistic, beautiful and grotesque, tender and cruel." The easy movement across this tension, inhabiting worlds that sit at the intersection of ours and a dream (sometimes terrible, sometimes wonderful) is as near a literary match for Gill's landscapes as you could hope.

[Memento Mori - Muriel Spark](#)

Spark has a wit that sits on the end of a fuse - something electric, something deceptively delicate. Though outwardly concerned with a group of septuagenarians and above who are each called with the same message (*remember, you must die*), Spark imbues her Hitchcockian mystery with a sharp socioeconomic critique and the fundamental question: how do we behave in the face of our own mortality?

[The Last Days of William Shakespeare](#) - Vlady Kociancich

Set in an unnamed Latin American country in an unloved National Theatre during a period of, "National Reconstruction of Culture," Kociancich's pointed & pained reflection on her own Argentina finds colonialism & cultural isolationism in conflict, asking the question *what do we do with the Canon we've inherited?* Dedicated to the victims of stupidity in power everywhere, a book disappointingly relevant.

[The Odyssey, trans. Emily Wilson](#)

Wilson's *The Odyssey* is the first to be translated by a woman into English, and her project - five years' worth of concentrated work - takes aim at both the conscious and unconscious biases present in the unfortunately literal fraternity of translators - from men in antiquity to Robert Fagles' widely used 1996 edition. Wilson, as in Gill's *Atmospheric*, reveals what can be revealed & what can be gained by translating the Classics (particularly one so foundational) through a woman's lens. (Wilson's translation of *The Illiad* is forthcoming this September.)

Ali Smith - Seasonal Quartet [or else, just [Autumn](#)]

Regarded as the truly first post-Brexit novel but, more importantly, truly Ali Smith, the Seasonal Quartet begins in Autumn, in a 2016 where a young adjunct laments her aging friend and the state of a world in which homes are tagged, "immigrants go home." Read all four in order or each as the mood strikes - Smith is a technician with heart to spare, fascinated by our relationship with history (and those old souls which hold it) as well as the ways in which a maligned reading of it leads to, well,

the worst of times. Mothers, daughters, and moving on feature prominently, and the taste for the Absurd make all feel right at home in Gill's *Atmospheric* world.

[The Memory Police - Yoko Ogawa](#)

As tender as it is terrifying, Ogawa crafts a dystopian world where everything - feathers, beads, people - is subject to erasure by the titular Memory Police. A young writer hopes to save her editor by hiding him as her mother hid a precious collection of now-erased items. In conversation with *Atmospheric*, both Gill & Ogawa ask what we make of the past and the role of art (and artists) to both preserve and orient our inheritance to the future. And if you look closely, you'll find unbridled hope in both.

[Les Feux - Marguerite Yourcenar](#)

Tortured, rapturous, and ever-situated in a present-mindedness that marries historiography with memoir, Yourcenar is in true form in these loosely-connected interpretations of Classical figures (from Phaedra to Sappho). Here, again, another example of framing one's world through the lens of inherited stories (even if dripping in its sentiment where Gill's work remains beguilingly distanced.)

[Girl, Woman, Other - Bernardine Evaristo](#)

How to translate generations, generational inheritance? Evaristo's novel is more than - something choral, something comic, something sociological and entirely humanist. As Gill explores heirlooms both personal and more broadly political & cultural, Evaristo's expansive work traces relationships across time & space, examining the ripple effects of history - both local and global - in the most personal settings, offering us, ultimately, new ways to see through and beyond chronology. *Girl, Woman, Other* is essential reading.

[The Greek Trilogy of Luis Alfaro - Luis Alfaro](#)

Alfaro's trilogy drops the likes of Medea and Elektra into a familiar Los Angeles, rewriting Greek tragedy for Chicanx and Latinx communities in America. Here, we have example of how the ancient might be reframed and repurposed for contemporary retellings. Another case for the place of the Classics within communities left historically unrepresented therein; another case for their interrogation & reinterpretation by those voices.

[Seduced by Story: The Use and Abuse of Story - Peter Brooks](#)

Gill's series is uprooted from time or chronology, disrupting our ability to construct a linear narrative (beginning, middle, end), instead dropping us into a world without shadows, where past is always present is always future. Here, Brooks, following up on his *Reading for the Plot*, asks us to look closer at the ways in which we've allowed, "story," to dominate our lives - from politics to car shopping - reminding us that the beginning, middle, and end can do as much to manipulate as they can to entertain.

[Annie Allen](#) - Gwendolyn Brooks

Even Brooks had her reservations about her Pulitzer Prize-winning collection, but her mid-work reinterpretation of *The Aeneid* stands the test of time even if only in the grandeur of its ambition and clarity of purpose. Here, a young Black woman is rendered across a heroic poem. Would Virgil have spent his concern on the coming-of-age in the violence of American racism, and would he have let his young protagonist develop her own brand of hope in a world continually marred by casual terror? Who cares? Brooks has done it (and then some), proving the purpose behind any exercise in placing on the Classical pedestal those who've been historically kicked off.