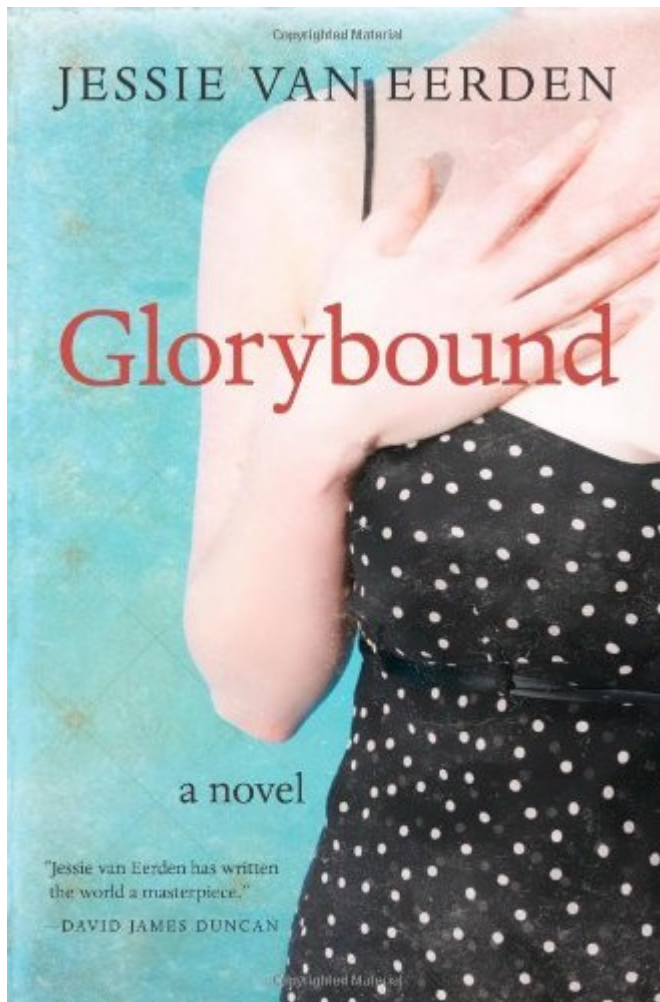


What I am and am not reading this summer

By [Amy Frykholm](#)

June 24, 2014

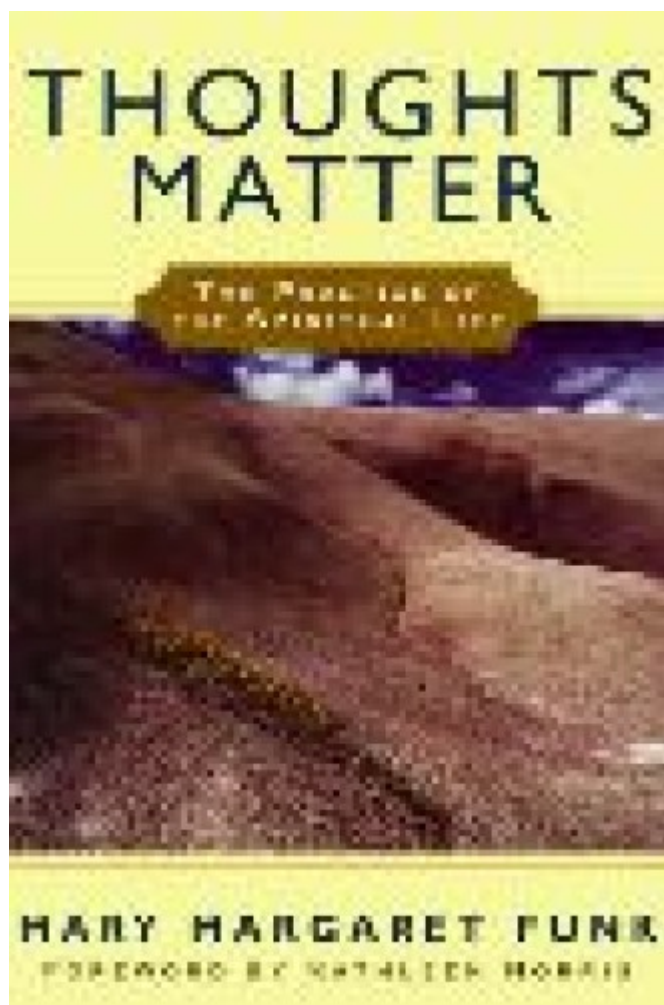
## In Review



## Glorybound

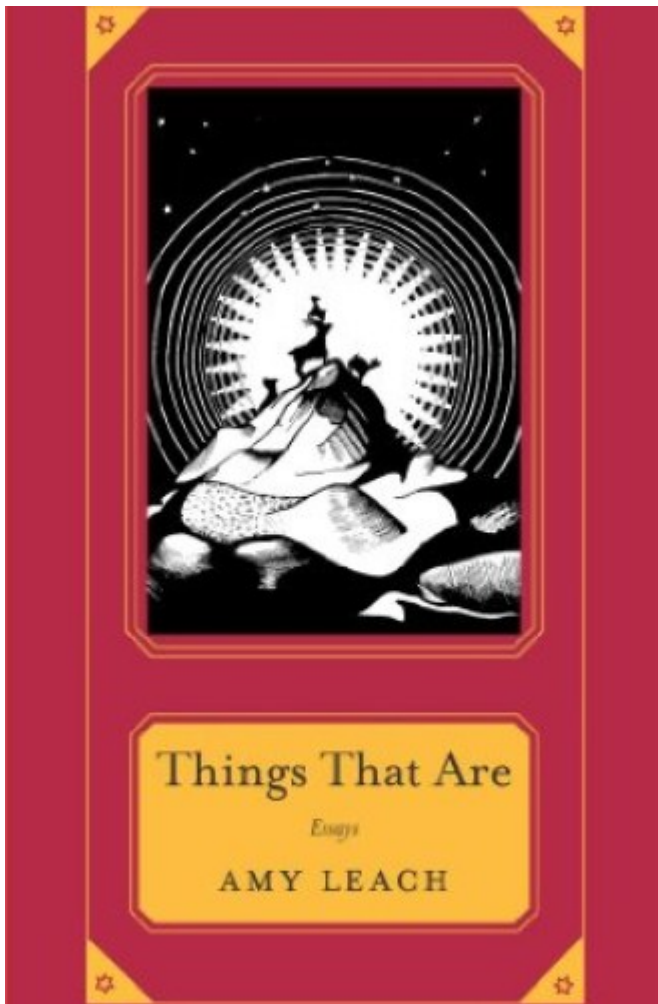
by Jessie van Eerden

WordFarm



## **Thoughts Matter: The Practice of the Spiritual Life**

Mary Margaret Funk, O.S.B.  
Continuum



## Things That Are

by Amy Leach  
Milkweed

Three things I am reading this summer:

***Glorybound*, by Jessie van Eerden.** I have never met a snake-handling, foot-washing West Virginian before, but everything in this delightful and complex portrait of a family in economically depressed coal country is utterly convincing.

*Glorybound* is a sensitively told love story in which the characters continually surprise. Two young women who believe they are prophets, their imprisoned father, a VISTA volunteer who arrives in their town to teach English, a visiting snake handler—at each turn they grow richer and stranger, but also more believable. Their religious beliefs are layered with human action and intuition.

I found myself believing deeply in the characters that van Eerden has created. I am going back to read it again just so I can spend more time with them.

***Thoughts Matter: The Practice of the Spiritual Life*, by Mary Margaret Funk.**

This book, published almost 20 years ago, is a thoughtful view of what the Orthodox call “the eight thoughts” and what western Christians have called the “seven deadly sins.” Funk explains in detail how each “thought” can become a damaging trajectory.

She won me over with her compassionate and gentle treatment of thoughts about food and sex. Now I trust her as she teaches me about anger and pride.

***Things that Are*, by Amy Leach.** This is a strange and wonderful book of essays that combine hints of Job and Milton with close observation of the natural world. Read it, laugh, and watch your mind perform new tricks. Here’s a taste from an essay called “Pea Madness”:

The young pea plant lives by diligent routine, forming two tiny equal leaves every four and a half days. If leaf-leaf on a Tuesday morning, then leaf-leaf on Saturday evening, and leaf-leaf on Thursday morning. Someone who helps peas—a friar or a bee—may look in on them, but young peas are as autonomous as mushrooms and responsible as clocks. But then, what had seemed a mushroomlike spirit of autonomy turns out to be just the delusive stability of shortness. Peas are clocky children who become spoony adults. Once they grow long-limbed, they start to teeter, because they possess more self than they can support. Then they grow madly wending tendrils, to sweep the air for lattices—just as teetery marionettes will grow marionette cords to sweep the air for marionetters. Yearning begets yearning: the pea plant years for a lattice, so it grows tendrils—then every tendril too yearns for a lattice.

Three things I am *not* reading this summer:

**The 15th-anniversary edition of *A Return to Modesty*.** [Enough already.](#)

**Anything on the *New York Times* bestseller list.** Summer provides an opportunity to get off the highway and onto back roads. I’ve decided to take a detour onto the side roads of uncelebrated and unexpected books.

**But I am also not going to read any self-published books.** I guess there is only so far off the main highway I am willing to go. I want the authors I read this summer to have been in deep dialogue with other strangers before I pick up the book. Forgive me, friends. I am a big fan of [old-fashioned gatekeepers](#).