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| Lancaster University |
| Diversity and Inclusion Reading Resource List |
| - English Literature and Creative Writing |

A Collaborative Project, ed by Sam Naseem

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Resource List

## About this List

As part of the ongoing efforts of ‘Decolonizing Higher Education’ and in association with ELCW’S EDI Committee here at Lancaster University, we have put together a new, wide-reaching yet non-exhaustive reading and resource list of ‘creative fiction’; this includes literary works such as poetry, fiction, graphic novels, memoirs and more. The suggested texts have been selected as works that illuminate the ongoing legacies and contemporary dimensions of colonial histories, as well as structures of white hegemony and racialization. Many also attend to intersectional structures of power and privilege, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class. While recommendations have been specifically categorized, many tackle a range of intersectional issues from various perspectives.

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# Migration and Globalization

Hari Kunzru, *Transmission*, (2004) -while exploring themes of neo-colonialism, globalization and technology, this novel follows the struggles of Indian computer programme Arjun, in his pursuit of the American Dream, after releasing a virus and causing global havoc.

Hisham Matar, *The Return: Fathers, Son’s and the Land in Between*, (2016)- memoir by Libyan author Hisham Matar, following a journey of discovery, mystery, and belonging.

Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient,* (1992) - a novel of four damaged, intersecting lives in an Italian villa at the end of World War II. By Booker prize winner, Sri-Lankan-born Canadian Writer Michael Ondaatje.

Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006)- a story of joy and despair, set in a crumbling and isolated house at the foot of Mount Kanchenjunga in the Himalayas, where characters face numerous choices and challenges, as the colonial and modern world collide

Laila Lalami, *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, (2005)- connected stories of four Moroccan immigrants and their travels form North Africa to Europe, as well as the lives they lead before the troubling journey.

Layla AlAmmar, *Silence is a Sense,* (2021) -a beautiful and thought-provoking novel about a refugee’s escape from civil war in Syria. As trauma renders her silent, the unnamed narrator gradually expands the perimeters of her world, writing the reality of her experience in a column for a magazine. Written by a Lancaster Alumna

Mohsin Hamad, *Exit West* (2017)- a story of two lovestruck runaways fleeing war in an unknown Muslim State.

# Middle East and North Africa (MENA)/ The Arab Peninsula

Assia Djebar, Fantasia: *An Algerian Cavalcade* (1985) - Algeria’s best-known literary author, elected to the Académie Française, in the first, masterful instalment of a group of auto fictional works, dealing with colonialism, bilingualism, and matrilineal inheritance.

Abdellah Taia, *Arab Melancholy,* trans by Frank Stock (2008)- short, autobiographical novel which explores the identity of an openly gay Arab man living between cultures.

Abdul Rahman Munif*, Cities of Salt,* trans by Peter Theroux (1987)-considered a work of ‘petrofiction’, following local inhabitants of an unnamed Arab region in the 20th century.

Adania Shibli, *Minor Detail,* (2017) -Two tales of two individual lives: a novel presenting an assault on life and memory in Syria, and a journey of discovery.

Anton Shammas, *Arabesques* trans by Vivian Eden (1986), - a novel first written in Hebrew by Arab writer Shammas, this text speaks to the history, memory and identity of Palestinian Christians.

Etel Adnan, *Sitt Marie Rose* (1977/1978) - painter and author Adnan produces a harrowing account of civil breakdown in the early stages of the Lebanese war (1975-1990), dissecting a combustible collage of Syrian labour, Palestinian refugees, Christian militia, and a female schoolteacher who dares to cross the divided city.

Jokha Alharthi, *Celestial Bodies,* trans. Marilyn Booth (2010/2018) – winner of the International Man Booker Prize, a story of Oman through time and from its margins.

Naguib Mahfouz*, The Cairo Trilogy* (originally published serially in the mid-50s) - the classic work of anticolonialism and Arab modernity by the Nobel Laureate.

Najwa Bin Shatwan, *The Slave Yards*, (2020) - a beautiful and powerful story, following a journey of self-discovery and heritage of Atiqa, the daughter of a slave woman and her white master, in 19th century Benghazi.

Samar Yazbek, *The Crossing: My journey to the shattered heart of Syria (2012)* – a series of journalistic forays into Syria in the early stages of the revolution and its brutal repression, by a fine novelist and journalist (see also Planet of Clay, trans. Leri Price)

Saud Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk* (2012/2015) - winner of the prestigious International Prize for Arabic Fiction, the novel is notable for its engagement both with transnational labour and with the statelessness of the ‘bidoon’ in the Gulf

Tahar Ben Jelloun*, The Sand Child*, trans by Alan Sheridan (1985)- in a critique of Arab social customs and Islamic law in Morocco, Hajji Ahmed raises his daughter as a male under the name Mohammed Ahmed, after already fathering 7 females. The events of Ahmed’s life, and her sexual evolution as a woman named Zahra, are told to listener’s gathered in a market square in Marrakesh.

# South Asia (SW and SE)

Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace*, (2000)- historical fiction novel taking place across Burma, Benghal, Indi and Malaya, depicting the choas faced by multiple families over the span of the 20th century.

Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (1997) - an intense and lyrical exploration of trauma at the intersection of gender, class, caste, and colonial legacy.

Indra Sinha, *Animals People,* (2007)- In the wake of the 1984 Bhopal Disaster, the narration follows in the footstep of a 19-year-old orphan known only as ‘Animal’, who is forced to walk on all fours due to his twisted spine. Exploring themes of identity, westernization, love and poverty.

Minoli Salgado, *A Little Dust on the Eyes,* (2014)- A story of dislocation, memory and tragedy, jumping between the English seaside and costal communities in southern Sri Lanka.

Nguyen Phan Que Mai, *The Mountains Sing* (2020) - taboo-breaking history of modern Vietnam, told through its women. Written by a Lancaster alumna.

Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* (1980) - repeated Booker winner and perhaps the best-known postcolonial novel and allegory of Indian Independence in English (see also: Shame, set in Pakistan)

Sara Suleri Goodyear, *Meatless Days,* (1989)- a memoir of life in Pakistan, covering the violence of the nation’s Independance .

Tanika Gupta, *Lions and Tigers,* (2017) -Epic exploring the Indian Independence Movement on stage.

# Sub-Saharan Africa

Abdulrazak Gurnah, *Paradise* (1994) – a Kim saga through East Africa by the Nobel Laureate, in which a young girl is given away by her father to settle a debt.

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* (1958) -Seminal text By Nigerian author, poet, and literary critic.

J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (1999) - Booker-prize winning dissection of a changing South Africa in the aftermath of apartheid.

Jennifer Makumbi, *The First Woman,* (2020) – Winner of the Jhalak Prize 2021 and written by a Lancaster alumna. This evocative and personal, feminist novel, tells the story of Kiroba’s journey of self-discovery and growth in Uganda.

Mariama Bâ, *So Long a Letter (1979)*- semi-autobiographical novel, originally written in French, concerning the condition and day-to-day life of women in West African society.

Ngugi wa Thiong’O, *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) – from the first East African writer to be published in English, but later renounced writing in English, along with Christianity and previous name, James Ngugi. These historical novel centres the struggle for Independence of colonized nations.

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions,* (1988)- explores the frameworks of colonialism and patriarchy in colonial Rhodesia during the 1960s (with two late sequels, The Book of Not, and This Mournable Body).

# Caribbean

Derek Walcott, *Omeros,* (1990)-a poem exploring the colonial history of the island and its natural landscape, as well as the contemporary commodification of the island, interwoven Walcott’s quest to make sense of his own story.

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* – An essay split into four sections, filled with insight into the effects of colonialism in Antigua.

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea,* (1966) -considered the postcolonial and feminist prequel to Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre, this novel by Dominican-British author J Rhys is told from the perspective of Mr Rochester’s wife, Creole heiress Antionette Cosway.

Marlon James, *The Book of Night Women,* (2009)-a story of conspiracy, identity and heartbreak, as a plot of revolt by female slaves on a Jamaican sugar plantation is troubled by the birth of Lilith, and the dark power she possesses.

Monique Roffey, *The Mermaid of Black Conch* (2020) - crowdfunded novel by Trinidad-born Lancaster alumna becomes a huge international hit.

# Latin America/ Latinx

Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*, trans by Benjamin Moser (1977)- immersive and thought-provoking novella, narrated by a man named Rodrigo. Through the story of the central character Macabéa, Lispector presents the complexities and realities of life in the slums of Rio de Janeiro.

Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitud*e- a novel of magic realism that follows a multi-generation story of the Buendía family. A literary classic.

Silvia Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic,* (2020)-This contemporary novel has been described as ‘a refreshing deployment of the Gothic mode to creepily examine colonisation, its expressions and its systemic legacies’.

Sylvia Iparraguirre, *Tierra del Fuego,* (1998)- a tale of exploitation, culture and psychology, concerning natives and explorers of the eponymous region in South America.

# NZ and Pacific

Janet Frame, *An Autobiography* (reissued as An Angel at My Table) - 3-volume autobiography by a leading (late) New Zealand author. The story of a pakeha (white) New Zealander, this nevertheless illuminates forms of (classed, gendered, mental health) marginality as well as the grappling of a settler population with postcolonial 'peripherality'.

Keri Hulme, *The Bone People* (1983) - winner of the Booker Prize in 1985, an eccentric, memorable, tragic but ultimately redemptive classic by a bicultural author. See also (with shared CW domestic and sexual violence): Alan Duff.

Patricia Grace, *Potiki* (1987) - early novel by leading Māori author who has centred colonial dispossession and the modern reclamation of land rights. See also: Witi Ihimaera.

Sia Figiel, They Who Do Not Grieve (2003) - cross-generational poetic narrative transmitted by women between Samoa and New Zealand. See also: Albert Wendt.

# Windrush Literature

Andrea Levi, *Small Island,* (2004)- Composed of four narrative voices, this tale is one of optimism, courage, inequality, and hardship for immigrants in post-WWII Britain.

James Berry, *Windrush Songs* (2007)- echoing the journeys and experiences of slavery, this collection gives voice to those who ventured on some of the first ships from the Caribbean to post-war Britain.

Louise Hare, *This Lovely City* (2020)- a murder mystery set in the late 1940’s in Britain, depicting young love and prejudice.

Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners,* (1956)- novel by Trinidadian author, following a group of poor, working class black men of the ` Windrush generation.

Stuart Hall with Bill Schwarz, *Familiar Strange,* (2017)-hybrid of memoir and meditation, ‘a spirited voyage around the complexities of race, colour and class' - Colin Grant, The Guardian. This tale follows, to the core, the feeling of being neither Jamaican nor British.

# Trans-Atlantic Slavery and 19th Century Empire

Alex Haley, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976)- classic novel which tells the story of Kunta Kinte, a slave transported to North America.

Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, written by herself (1861)- edited and published by L. Maria Child, this book serves as a document for Javobs life as a slave, all that she endured, and her journey to freedom for herself and her children.

Honorée Fannone Jeffers –The Love Songs of W.E.B. Du Bois, (2021)– This novel explores the legacies of slavery across multiple generations of one American family, spanning the colonial slave trade through to the present day. It explores identity and the uncovering of a history of slavery and resistance.

Toni Morrison*, Beloved* (1988) - the twentieth-century US novel; a powerful, beautiful working through of transatlantic slavery and its personal, intergenerational, and national legacies (see also Morrison, Playing in the Dark)

Toni Morrison, *A Mercy,* (2008)- Taking place in the late 17th century, this novel tells the story of a European farmer, his purchased wife, and household of white, African and Native American Slaves, exploring relationships, loss, and colonialism.

Yaa Gyasi, *Home Going (2016)-* historical fiction novel which follows the lives of two Asante sister; one sold to slavery, and one a slave trader’s wife.

# Women’s Writing

Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals,* (1980)-A powerful and poetic nonfiction text, which follows Lorde’s struggles with breast cancer, relating her illness to her advocacy and identity as a black, lesbian feminist.

Bernardine Evaristo, *Lara* (1997)-semi-autobiographical verse-novel, navigating generations of ancestral hardship and identity, by the eponymous protagonist; a mixed-race girl raised in Woolwich.

Dima Alzayat, *Alligator and Other Stories* (2021) - a collection of the Syrian American experience, with a powerful central collage story, by a Lancaster alumna.

Frances Cha, *If I Had Your Face,* (2020)- set in South Korea, this bold story with multiple POV explores complex social hierarchies and unrelenting beauty standards.

Hoda Barakat, *Voices of the Lost,* trans by Marilyn Booth (2019)- a chain of letters explores the experiences of five asylum seekers. Winner of the 2019 International prize for Arab Fiction.

Malika Moustadraf, *Something Strange, Like Hunger*, trans. Alice Guthrie (2022) - posthumous short story collection tackling with ferocity and humour, and life in poverty on the margins in contemporary Morocco.

Nawal El Sadaawi, *Daughter of Isis* (1999) -autobiography of Egyptian physician, feminist, activist and award-winning writer.

Sahar Khalifeh, *Passage to the Plaza,* trans. Sawad Hussein (2020) - belated translation of this Palestinian classic about the first intifada, as told through the eyes of women.

# Britishness

Arinzé Kene, *Good Dog,* (2017)- Arinze Kene’s Good Dog is seemingly a lyrical, comedic slice of life in a diverse London community; in its central dog parable, the play explores factors of institutional racism and inequality.

Hanif Kureishi, My Beautiful Laundrette (1985), -adapted to film and directed by Stephen Frear-taking place during the Margaret Thatcher's time as Prime minister, the screenplay explores the relationship between Pakistani and English communities, as Omar and Johnny become managers of a laundrette in South London.

Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire* (2017)- a reimagining of Sophocles' Greek tragedy Antigone. A modern retelling which unfolds among British Muslims.

Linton Kwesi Johnson – *Selected Poems* -Kwesi Johnson’s performance poetry explores the experiences of being African-Caribbean in Britain, particularly during the 1980s when institutional racism was dominant.

Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (2000)- award-winning novel, looking at British relationships with Immigrants, through the lives of two war time friends and their families.

# LGBTQ+

Brandon Taylor, *Real Life*, (2020)-debut novel of American writer, considered a ‘campus novel,’ of a gay black doctoral student in a predominantly white PhD programme.

Edouard Loise, *The End of Eddy*, trans by Michael Lucey (2017)- a memoir of social inequality, sexuality and violence, inspired by the authors own childhood.

Elias Jahshan (ed), *This Arab is Queer: An LGBTQ+ Anthology* (2022)-ground-breaking anthology of courageous memoirs.

Jamie O’Niel, *At Swim,* *Two Boys*, (2001)- Set in Ireland prior to the Easter Uprising, this novel explores queerness, poverty addiction and identity, written in a stream-of-consciousness style.

Saleem Haddad, *Guapa,* (2016) -Set over only 24 hours, Guapa follows Rasa, a gay man in an unnamed Arab country, caught between social and political upheaval, as well as personal torment.

Samar Yazbeck, *Cinnamon*, (2012)-exploring the private, inner world of women in Damascus. A journey of love and betrayal, through the relationship between a maid and her mistress.

Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy* (1994) - a beautiful coming of age story from Sri Lanka, that also rings the changes of a pending civil war.

Sarah McBride, *Tomorrow Will be Different* (2018) - Informative, heartbreaking, and profoundly empowering, Tomorrow Will Be Different is McBride’s story of love and loss and a powerful entry point into the LGBTQ community’s battle for equal rights and what it means to be openly transgender.

Torrey Peters, *Detransition, Baby* (2021) - a story of queer community, complicated relationships and creating the kind of world we want to live in.

Alice Oseman, *Loveless* (2020) - This is a wise, warm and witty story of identity and self-acceptance, especially perfect for those who are exploring their own attractions.

Alice Walker, *The Colour Purple* (1982) – National Book and Pulitzer prize winner, now a motion picture, The Colour Purple is masterpiece about the love between women, an LGBT classic, it's a must-read book in just about every way.

Sarah Costello & Kayla Kaszyca, *Sounds Fake but Okay* (2023) – an asexual aromantic perspective that invites readers to question everything they thought they knew about dating, love, sex and everything in between.

James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (1956)- a novel that has resonated with the queer community since it was first published decades ago; a young man finds himself caught between desire and morality in 1950s expat Paris.

# Trans+ Writing

(includes transgender and non-binary; using “Trans+” as umbrella term for non-cisgender identities)

Caitlín R. Kiernan, *Houses Under the Sea* (2018) – award-winning short story collection featuring uncanny, Weird, Lovecraftian horror, and queer characters.

Aiden Thomas, *Cemetery Boys* (2020) – YA urban fantasy novel about a trans Latinx boy who summons a ghost. Deals with transphobia, deadnaming, and insensitivities of family.

Elizabeth Train-Brown, *salmacis*: *becoming not quite a woman* (2022) – debut collection by Lancaster student, using Greek myth as metaphor to explore the universality of gender dysphoria.

Akwaeke Emezi, *Freshwater* (2018) – debut surrealist novel about the fractured self, exploring identity of a Nigerian woman who develops separate selves.

Vivek Shraya*, Death Threat* (2019) – graphic novel/epistolary novel bringing together the real death threats and transphobic hate mail sent to the author by a stranger.

# Disabled Writing

Leigh Bardugo, *Six of Crows* (2015) – YA fantasy featuring a main character with a physical disability; covers urban gothic, writing extended prose for young people, environment and space, fantasy world-building.

Alice Wong, *Year of the Tiger: An Activist’s Life* (2022) – genre-bending memoir by an activist living with Spinal Muscular Atrophy, blends essays, conversations, graphics, photos, and commissioned art.

Amanda Leduc, *The Centaur’s Wife* (2021) – fantasy fable-novel about a woman with legs damaged at birth, surviving at the end of the world. (Also wrote a collection of essays.

*Disfigured: On fairy tales, disability, and making space* (2020)

# Further References & Theoretical Approaches to Literature

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