

Upcoming book

July 2020

Transparent City

Ondjaki (Angola), translated 2018

Ondjaki shares intertwining stories set in his hometown, Luanda, the Angolan capital, in this darkly pretty novel that begins and ends with a fire that devastates the city and is peppered with poetry and asides. A disappearing man “hopelessly in love with another time” laments the relationship he used to have with his city; a seashell seller falls in love; a mailman tries to acquire a moped; a young boy searches for his missing mother; a journalist attempts to assassinate the president; a shyster starts an artistic movement; a visiting scientist becomes enthralled by an albino cockroach. These disparate stories are woven into a beautiful narrative that touches on government corruption, the privatization of water, the dangers of extracting oil for wealth, and the bastardization of religion for profit.. The novel reads like a love song to a tortured, desperately messed-up city that is undergoing remarkable transformations.

Potential books

1. So Long A Letter

Mariama Bâ (Senegal), 1979

So Long a Letter (French: *Une si longue lettre*) is a semi-autobiographical epistolary novel originally written in French by the Senegalese writer Mariama Bâ. Its theme is the condition of women in Western African society. *So Long a Letter*, Mariama Bâ's first novel, is literally written as a long letter. As the novel begins, Ramatoulaye Fall is beginning a letter to her lifelong friend Aissatou Bâ. The occasion for writing is Ramatoulaye's recent widowhood. As she gives her friend the details of her husband's death, she recounts the major events in their lives. The novel is often used in literature classes focusing on women's roles in post-colonial Africa. It won the first Noma Prize for Publishing in Africa in 1980.

2. The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives

Lola Shoneyin (Nigeria), 2010

To the dismay of her ambitious mother, Bolanle marries into a polygamous family, where she is the fourth wife of a rich, rotund patriarch, Baba Segi. She is a graduate and therefore a great prize, but even graduates must produce children and her husband's persistent bellyache is a sign that things are not as they should be. Bolanle is too educated for the 'white garment comen' Baba Segi would usually go to for fertility advice, so he takes her to hospital to discover the cause of her barrenness. Weaving the voices of Baba Segi and his four competing wives into a portrait of a clamorous household of twelve, Lola Shoneyin evokes an extraordinary Nigerian family in splashes of vibrant colour.

3. Stay With Me

Ayòbámi Adébáyò (Nigeria), 2017

Ilesa, Nigeria. Ever since they first met and fell in love at university, Yejide and Akin have agreed: polygamy is not for them. But four years into their marriage—after consulting fertility doctors and healers, and trying strange teas and unlikely cures—Yejide is still not pregnant. She assumes she still has time—until her in-laws arrive on her doorstep with a young woman they introduce as Akin's second wife. Furious, shocked, and livid with jealousy, Yejide knows the only way to save her marriage is to get pregnant. Which, finally, she does—but at a cost far greater than she could have dared to imagine. The unforgettable story of a marriage as seen through the eyes of both husband and wife, *Stay With Me* asks how much we can sacrifice for the sake of family.

4. Segu

Maryse Condé (set in West Africa, author from French Guadeloupe), 1987

The year is 1797, and the kingdom of Segu is flourishing, fed by the wealth of its noblemen and the power of its warriors. The people of Segu, the Bambara, are guided by their griots and priests; their lives are ruled by the elements. But even their soothsayers can only hint at the changes to come, for the battle of the soul of Africa has begun. From the east comes a new religion, Islam, and from the West, the slave trade. Segu follows the life of Dousika Traore, the king's most trusted advisor, and his four sons, whose fates embody the forces tearing at the fabric of the nation. There is Tiekoro, who renounces his people's religion and embraces Islam; Siga, who defends tradition, but becomes a merchant; Naba, who is kidnapped by slave traders; and Malobali, who becomes a mercenary and halfhearted Christian. Based on actual events, Segu transports the reader to a fascinating time in history, capturing the earthy spirituality, religious fervor, and violent nature of a people and a growing nation trying to cope with jihads, national rivalries, racism, amid the vagaries of commerce.

5. The Map of Love

Ahdaf Soueif (Egypt), 2000

Booker Prize Finalist

Here is an extraordinary cross-cultural love story that unfurls across Egypt, England, and the United States over the course of a century. Isabel Parkman, a divorced American journalist, has fallen in love with a gifted and difficult Egyptian-American conductor. Shadowing her romance is the courtship of her great-grandparents Anna and Sharif nearly one hundred years before. In 1900 the recently widowed Anna Winterbourne left England for Egypt, an outpost of the Empire roiling with political sentiment. She soon found herself enraptured by the real Egypt and in love with Sharif Pasha al-Baroudi, an Egyptian nationalist. When Isabel, in an attempt to discover the truth behind her heritage, reenacts Anna's excursion to Egypt, the story of her great-grandparents unravels before her, revealing startling parallels for her own life. Combining the romance and intricate narrative of a nineteenth-century novel with a very modern sense of culture and politics—both sexual and international—Ahdaf Soueif has created a thoroughly seductive and mesmerizing tale.

6. Tropical Fish

Doreen Baingana (Uganda), 2006

In her fiction debut, Doreen Baingana follows a Ugandan girl as she navigates the uncertain terrain of adolescence. Set mostly in pastoral Entebbe with stops in the cities Kampala and Los Angeles, *Tropical Fish* depicts the reality of life for Christine Mugisha and her family after Idi Amin's dictatorship. Three of the eight chapters are told from the point of view of Christine's two older sisters, Patti, a born-again Christian who finds herself starving at her boarding school, and Rosa, a free spirit who tries to "magically" seduce one of her teachers. But the star of *Tropical Fish* is Christine, whom we accompany from her first wobbly steps in high heels, to her encounters with the first-world conveniences and alienation of America, to her return home to Uganda. As the Mugishas cope with Uganda's collapsing infrastructure, they also contend with the universal themes of family cohesion, sex and relationships, disease, betrayal, and spirituality. Anyone dipping into Baingana's incandescent, widely acclaimed novel will enjoy their immersion in the world of this talented newcomer.

7. Behold the Dreamers

Imbolo Mbue (Cameroon), 2017

Jende Jonga, a Cameroonian immigrant living in Harlem, has come to the United States to provide a better life for himself, his wife, Neni, and their six-year-old son. In the fall of 2007, Jende can hardly believe his luck when he lands a job as a chauffeur for Clark Edwards, a senior executive at Lehman Brothers. Clark demands punctuality, discretion, and loyalty—and Jende is eager to please. Clark's wife, Cindy, even offers

Neni temporary work at the Edwardses' summer home in the Hamptons. With these opportunities, Jende and Neni can at last gain a foothold in America and imagine a brighter future. However, the world of great power and privilege conceals troubling secrets, and soon Jende and Neni notice cracks in their employers' façades. When the financial world is rocked by the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the Jongas are desperate to keep Jende's job—even as their marriage threatens to fall apart. As all four lives are dramatically upended, Jende and Neni are forced to make an impossible choice.

8. Welcome to Lagos

Chibundu Onuzo (Nigeria), 2017

When army officer Chike Ameobi is ordered to kill innocent civilians, he knows that it is time to leave. As he travels towards Lagos, he becomes the leader of a new platoon, a band of runaways who share his desire for a better life. Their arrival in the city coincides with the eruption of a political scandal. The education minister, Chief Sandayo, has disappeared and is suspected of stealing millions of dollars from government funds. After an unexpected encounter with the Chief, Chike and his companions must make a choice. Ahmed Bakare, editor of the failing Nigerian Journal, is desperate for information. But perhaps the situation is more complex than it appears. As moving as it is mesmerising, *Welcome to Lagos* is a novel about the power of our dreams for the future and the place of morality in a sometimes hostile world.

9. Freshwater

Akwaeke Emezi (Nigeria), 2018

Ada has always been unusual. As an infant in southern Nigeria, she is a source of deep concern to her family. Her parents successfully prayed her into existence, but something must have gone awry, as the young Ada becomes a troubled child, prone to violent fits of anger and grief. But Ada turns out to be more than just volatile. Born "with one foot on the other side," she begins to develop separate selves. When Ada travels to America for college, a traumatic event crystallizes the selves into something more powerful. As Ada fades into the background of her own mind and these alters—now protective, now hedonistic—move into control, Ada's life spirals in a dangerous direction. Written with stylistic brilliance and based in the author's realities, this raw and extraordinary debut explores the metaphysics of identity and being, plunging the reader into the mysteries of self. Unsettling, heart-wrenching, dark, and powerful, *Freshwater* dazzles with ferocious energy and serpentine grace, heralding the arrival of a fierce new literary voice.

10. Beyond the Rice Fields

Naivo (Madagascar), 2017

Fara and her father's slave, Tsito, have been close since her father bought the boy after his forest village was destroyed. Now in Sahaso, amongst the cattle and rice fields, everything is new for Tsito, and Fara at last has a companion. But as Tsito looks forward to the bright promise of freedom and Fara, backward to a dark, long-denied family history, a rift opens between them just as British Christian missionaries and French industrialists arrive and violence erupts across the country. Love and innocence fall away, and Tsito and Fara's world becomes enveloped by tyranny, superstition, and fear. With captivating lyricism, propulsive urgency, and two unforgettable characters at the story's core, *Naivo* unflinchingly delves into the brutal history of nineteenth-century Madagascar. *Beyond the Rice Fields* is a tour de force that has much to teach us about human bondage and the stories we tell to face—and hide from—ourselves, each other, our pasts, and our destinies.

11. Elsewhere, Home

Leila Aboulela (Sudan), 2018 – short stories

From one of our finest contemporary writers whose work has been praised by J.M. Coetzee, Ali Smith and Aminatta Forna, Leila Aboulela's *Elsewhere, Home* offers us a rich tableau of life as an immigrant abroad. A young woman's encounter with a former classmate elicits painful reminders of her former life in Khartoum. A wealthy Sudanese student in Aberdeen begins an unlikely friendship with a Scottish man. A woman

experiences an evolving relationship to her favourite writer, whose portrait of their shared culture both reflects and conflicts with her own sense of identity. Shuttling between the dusty, sun-baked streets of Khartoum and the university halls and cramped apartments of Aberdeen and London, *Elsewhere, Home* explores, with subtlety and restraint, the profound feelings of yearning, loss and alienation that come with leaving one's homeland in pursuit of a different life.

12. *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*

Ayesha Harruna Attah (Ghana), 2018

Based on true events, a story of courage, forgiveness, love, and freedom in precolonial Ghana, told through the eyes of two women born to vastly different fates. Aminah lives an idyllic life until she is brutally separated from her home and forced on a journey that transforms her from a daydreamer into a resilient woman. Wurche, the willful daughter of a chief, is desperate to play an important role in her father's court. These two women's lives converge as infighting among Wurche's people threatens the region, during the height of the slave trade at the end of the nineteenth century. Through the experiences of Aminah and Wurche, *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* offers a remarkable view of slavery and how the scramble for Africa affected the lives of everyday people.

13. *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree*

Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani (Nigeria), 2018

Based on interviews with young women who were kidnapped by Boko Haram, this poignant novel by Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani tells the timely story of one girl who was taken from her home in Nigeria and her harrowing fight for survival. A new pair of shoes, a university degree, a husband—these are the things that a girl dreams of in a Nigerian village. And with a government scholarship right around the corner, everyone can see that these dreams aren't too far out of reach. But the girl's dreams turn to nightmares when her village is attacked by Boko Haram, a terrorist group, in the middle of the night. Kidnapped, she is taken with other girls and women into the forest where she is forced to follow her captors' radical beliefs and watch as her best friend slowly accepts everything she's been told. Still, the girl defends her existence. As impossible as escape may seem, her life—her future—is hers to fight for.

14. *The Last Train to Zona Verde*

Paul Theroux, 2013 (set in southwest Africa, author from US)

Heading north from Cape Town, through South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Angola, Paul Theroux makes a final journey along Africa's western edge. The end of the line is the Congo but Theroux discovers that his trip's pleasures are tempered by a growing sense that the Africa which so long ago helped form him has vanished, along with the hopes of many of its people. Yet after 2,500 miles Theroux finds that though this will be his ultimate African adventure there are still surprises to be found by the traveller prepared to step off the beaten track.

15. *How to Read the Air*

Dinaw Mengistu (Ethiopia), 2010

From the acclaimed author of *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears* comes a heartbreaking literary masterwork about love, family, and the power of imagination. Following the death of his father Yosef, Jonas Woldemariam feels compelled to make sense of the volatile generational and cultural ties that have forged him. Leaving behind his marriage and job in New York, he sets out to retrace his mother and father's honeymoon as young Ethiopian immigrants and weave together a family history that will take him from the war-torn country of his parents' youth to a brighter vision of his life in America today. In so doing, he crafts a story- real or invented-that holds the possibility of reconciliation and redemption.

16. Leaving Before the Rains Come

Alexandra Fuller (set in Zimbabwe, author from UK but raised in Zimbabwe), 2016

Looking to rebuild after a painful divorce, Alexandra Fuller turns to her African past for clues to living a life fully and without fear. A child of the Rhodesian wars and of two deeply complicated parents, Alexandra Fuller is no stranger to pain. But the disintegration of Fuller's own marriage leaves her shattered. Looking to pick up the pieces of her life, she confronts tough questions about her past, about the American man she married, and about the family she left behind in Africa. Fuller soon realizes that what is missing from her life is something that was always there: the brash and uncompromising ways of her father. "Tim Fuller of No Fixed Abode"—familiar to readers from Alexandra Fuller's New York Times–bestselling memoir *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*—was a man who regretted nothing and wanted less, even after fighting harder and losing more than most men could bear. *Leaving Before the Rains Come* showcases Fuller at the peak of her abilities, threading panoramic vistas with her deepest revelations as a fully grown woman and mother. Fuller reveals how—after spending a lifetime fearfully waiting for someone to show up and save her—she discovered that, in the end, we all simply have to save ourselves. An unforgettable book, *Leaving Before the Rains Come* is a story of sorrow grounded in the tragic grandeur and rueful joy only to be found in Fuller's Africa.

17. Such a Lonely Lovely Road

Kagiso Lesego Molohe (South Africa), 2018

Coming out in South Africa ... At what cost? All his life Kabelo Mosala has been the perfect child to his doting absent parents, who show him off every chance they get. Both his parents and his small community look forward to him coming back after medical school and joining his father's practice. They also plan to give him the perfect township wedding. But Kabelo's one wish has always been to get as far away from the township as he possibly can and never come back. A few weeks before he leaves for university, however, he forms a close bond with Sediba, one of his childhood friends, confirming his long-held suspicion that he is gay. Their relationship is thrown into turmoil by social pressures and conflicting desires, and it starts to look as if they can't be together. But against all odds the two young men make their way back to each other, risking scorn from the community that raised them. In her characteristic, beautifully modulated voice, with razor-sharp clarity, Kagiso Lesego Molohe tackles an urgent issue in her country of birth.

18. The Wife's Tale

Aida Edemariam (Ethiopia), 2018

A Finalist for The Governor General's Award for Nonfiction in Canada

In this indelible memoir that recalls the life of her remarkable ninety-five-year old grandmother, Guardian journalist Aida Edemariam tells the story of modern Ethiopia—a nation that would undergo a tumultuous transformation from feudalism to monarchy to Marxist revolution to democracy, over the course of one century. Born in the northern Ethiopian city of Gondar in about 1916, Yetemegnu was married and had given birth before she turned fifteen. As the daughter of a socially prominent man, she also offered her husband, a poor yet gifted student, the opportunity to become an important religious leader. Over the next decades Yetemegnu would endure extraordinary trials: the death of some of her children; her husband's imprisonment; and the detention of one of her sons. She witnessed the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia and the subsequent resistance, suffered Allied bombardment and exile from her city; lived through a bloody revolution and the nationalization of her land. She gained audiences with Emperor Haile Selassie I to argue for justice for her husband, for revenge, and for her children's security, and fought court battles to defend her assets against powerful men. But sustained, in part, by her fierce belief in the Virgin Mary and in Orthodox Christianity, Yetemegnu survived. She even learned to read, in her sixties, and eventually made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Told in Yetemegnu's enthralling voice and filled with a vivid cast of characters—emperors and empresses, priests and scholars, monks and nuns, archbishops and slaves, Marxist revolutionaries and wartime double agents—*The Wife's Tale* introduces a woman both imperious and vulnerable; a mother, widow, and businesswoman whose deep faith and numerous travails never quashed

her love of laughter, mischief and dancing; a fighter whose life was shaped by direct contact with the volatile events that transformed her nation. An intimate memoir that offers a panoramic view of Ethiopia's recent history, *The Wife's Tale* takes us deep into the landscape, rituals, social classes, and culture of this ancient, often mischaracterized, richly complex, and unforgettable land—and into the heart of one indomitable woman.

19. *These Bones Will Rise Again*

Panashe Chigumadzi (Zimbabwe), 2018 – nonfiction

History, all too often really is “his story”: the past of a country centred on men, the role of women erased, forgotten, buried under a rubble of insignificance. This book attempts to correct that. It has been over a year since the fall of the House of Mugabe, a monumental event in the history of Zimbabwe. Amid all the headlines and analysis about the “coup that was not a coup”, it is important to remember that there was a Zimbabwe before Mugabe and there is one after him. There is the story of Zimbabwe which goes beyond men, political figures and the colonialists. In *These Bones Will Rise Again*, Chigumadzi skilfully brings together the stories of Zimbabwe's anti-colonial heroine Mbuya Nehanda, her own grandmother Mbuya Chigumadzi, and the collective power of a nation in its multiple fights for liberation. With this book, the author claims the right that many women have been denied since the beginning of time: the right to tell her story.

20. *Digital Democracy, Analogue Politics*

Nanjala Nyabola (Kenya), 2018 – nonfiction

Nanjala Nyabola has always been a force to be reckoned with, confirmed once again by the brilliance of this book that explores the impact of technology and internet on life and politics in Kenya. There is little doubt that, in many parts of the world, social media has had a huge influence on politics, activism and the way in which we communicate with each other. These digital platforms have opened up a space for marginalised voices, new narratives, and the demand for accountability. This is certainly the case of Kenya. Do these spaces exist in a vacuum? Are they a utopia wholly divorced from offline realities? Does technological freedom equate to more democracy? Nyabola delves deeper into this. The power of Kenyans on Twitter suggests that yes, social media can be a force for good. But juxtaposed against the rise of “fake news”, the role of companies like Cambridge Analytica, and the harassment of women online, it is clear that these issues demand a far more nuanced look than the over-simplified perspective offered by the West. For anyone interested in Kenya, technology and the power of social media, *Digital Democracy, Analogue Politics* is compulsory reading. An added bonus comes in the way of Nyabola's style of writing; effortless, provocative and unapologetic.

21. *Small Country*

Gael Faye (Burundi), 2018

France-based Burundian artist Gael Faye ohas met success since stepping into literature from hip hop. His novel *Small Country*, first published in French in 2016 as *Petit Pays*, came out in English in June from Penguin Random House and Hogarth, translated by Sarah Ardizzone, and has been one of the gems of 2018. Starting in 1992 in Burundi, the novel captures the genocide and civil war that befell Burundi and Rwanda. Longlisted for the 2019 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction and the 2019 Aspen Words Literary Prize, *Small Country* was selected by Time for its “Best Summer Books of 2018” and by Esquire for its “Best Books of 2018.”

22. *An Orchestra of Minorities*

Chigozie Obioma (Nigeria), 2019

A heart-breaking story about a Nigerian poultry farmer who sacrifices everything to win the woman he loves, by Man Booker Finalist and author of *The Fishermen*, Chigozie Obioma. Set on the outskirts of Umuahia, Nigeria and narrated by a chi, or guardian spirit, *An Orchestra Of Minorities* tells the story of

Chinonso, a young poultry farmer whose soul is ignited when he sees a woman attempting to jump from a highway bridge. Horrified by her recklessness, Chinonso joins her on the roadside and hurls two of his prized chickens into the water below to express the severity of such a fall. The woman, Ndali, is stopped her in her tracks. Bonded by this night on the bridge, Chinonso and Ndali fall in love. But Ndali is from a wealthy family and struggles to imagine a future near a chicken coop. When her family objects to the union because he is uneducated, Chinonso sells most of his possessions to attend a college in Cyprus. But when he arrives he discovers there is no place at the school for him, and that he has been utterly duped by the young Nigerian who has made the arrangements.. Penniless, homeless, and furious at a world which continues to relegate him to the sidelines, Chinonso gets further away from his dream, from Ndali and the farm he called home. Spanning continents, traversing the earth and cosmic spaces, and told by a narrator who has lived for hundreds of years, the novel is a contemporary twist of Homer's *Odyssey*. Written in the mythic style of the Igbo literary tradition, Chigozie Obioma weaves a heart-wrenching epic about destiny and determination.

23. The Old Drift

Namwali Serpell (Zambia), 2019

1904. On the banks of the Zambezi River, a few miles from the majestic Victoria Falls, there is a colonial settlement called The Old Drift. In a smoky room at the hotel across the river, an Old Drifter named Percy M. Clark, foggy with fever, makes a mistake that entangles the fates of an Italian hotelier and an African busboy. This sets off a cycle of unwitting retribution between three Zambian families (black, white, brown) as they collide and converge over the course of the century, into the present and beyond. As the generations pass, their lives—their triumphs, errors, losses and hopes—emerge through a panorama of history, fairytale, romance and science fiction. From a woman covered with hair and another plagued with endless tears, to forbidden love affairs and fiery political ones, to homegrown technological marvels like Afronauts, microdrones and viral vaccines, this gripping, unforgettable novel is a testament to our yearning to create and cross borders, and a meditation on the slow, grand passage of time.

24. Manchester Happened

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi (Uganda), 2019

Upon finishing Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's debut novel *Kintu*, many a reader sat in impatience waiting for news of her next book. Finally, it has arrived and once more, the UK-based Ugandan writer has delivered a masterpiece. This collection of short stories will resonate with those that have left home to seek opportunities abroad, dealt with UK immigration, left behind sunny climes for dark and cold mornings, grappled with the realities of racism. Above all, it will resonate with those who know intimately that the space between "here and back home" is more than just distance. As Makumbi writes at one point: "Inside we were dying, I threw away all that Uganda had taught me social and culturally and allowed Britain to realign me."

25. The Blessed Girl

Angela Makholwa (South Africa), 2019

Meet 24-year-old Bontle Towe, of exceptional beauty, luscious lips (her own words), two businesses, a penthouse in Johannesburg, a convertible, designer items and a "PhD in Mencology". In this fast-paced book, Angela Makholwa explores the concept of sugar daddies or "Blessers". There are many laugh-out-loud moments as Bontle juggles her three sugar daddies alongside her "do-gooder" ex-husband while living the high life. Yet delve deeper and we see she is a troubled character. This is where Makholwa triumphs, for what seems like a fun and frothy read on the surface unveils the sinister realities that are part of the "Blesser" phenomenon.

26. The Cape Cod Bicycle War

Billy Kahora (Kenya), 2019

Described by Namwali Serpell as 'a wondrous collection which immerses us in a millennial Kenya we've never seen in fiction before,' this collection of eleven short stories brings together stories that have already received critical acclaim, including *The Gorilla's Apprentice* (shortlisted for The Caine Prize for African Writing in 2012) with previously unpublished stories set across Kenya, South Africa and the US. Billy Kahora's short fiction and creative non-fiction has appeared in *Chimurenga*, *McSweeney's*, *Granta Online*, *Internazionale* and *Vanity Fair* and *Kwani*. He has written a non-fiction novella titled *The True Story Of David Munyakei*, the screenplay for *Soul Boy* and co-wrote *Nairobi Half Life* which won the Kalasha awards. He worked for nearly a decade for Kenya's leading literary publisher Kwani Trust, editing seven issues of the *Kwani?* journal. He is currently a Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Bristol and pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing at University of Manchester.

27. Thirteen Months of Sunrise

Rania Mamoun (Sudan), 2019

In this selection of ten short stories, Rania Mamoun powerfully captures landscapes, feelings, touch, taste and even facial expressions; a range of voices and writing styles that centre her Sudanese people. Although her work has been translated from Arabic to English, you get the sense that no emotion or feeling has been lost. Such is the power of her work. The book's hallmark is its evocative dialogue: "He found in me someone who understood him, and I found in him a window into Ethiopia, and oh how I loved it. The Blue Nile, which passes through Khartoum, originates at Lake Tana in Ethiopia. That's what makes our bond so strong, I thought: we were nursed from the same source." As the world witnesses the people of Sudan create history, this is a timely read.

28. House of Stone

Novuyo Rosa Tshuma (Zimbabwe), 2019

Some of the best writers of our time have hailed from Zimbabwe. Novuyo Rosa Tshuma is another name to add to that list. She has written the story of Zimbabwe, its traumatic past mirroring that of the strange yet fascinating narrator Zamani. Zamani conceived during the Gukurahundi massacres in the 1980s. He fills the space left by the missing son of his landlords and, in so doing, unearths their personal histories. Through these stories the reader is given an insight into Zimbabwe's past and how things have come to be today. This is a harrowing book. It reminds us of the writer's role in ensuring history is not erased.

29. My Sister the Serial Killer

Onyinkan Braithwaite (Nigeria), 2019

The first line of this hugely entertaining book will have you hooked: "Ayoola is beautiful, carefree and exciting, she also has this tendency to... murder her boyfriends." This is not a crime novel, neither is it a mystery. The real story which forms its centre is the relationship between sisters and the wider family. Set in Lagos, this is a dark, compelling and humorous must-read.

30. The Dragonfly Sea

Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor (Kenya), 2019

Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's debut novel *Dust* took the literary world by storm. Now her second promises same. In this book, Owuor explores the history of China-Africa relations which developed through voyages to lands around the Indian Ocean. Munira and her daughter Ayanna live on Pate, an island off the coast of Kenya. Ayanna is a free spirit, elements of her almost celestial, particularly when she finds herself at one with the sea. This is as much a story about Ayanna's journey as it is about the challenges facing the world today. Anyone familiar with Kenya will appreciate the references made to the "War on Terror" and the impact it has on certain communities. Threaded throughout the book are multiple languages, a mix of cultures, characters of great depth and themes ranging from the spiritual to the political and beyond.

31. Travellers

Helon Habila (Nigeria), 2019

Barely a day goes by without headlines and media reports about refugees and the “migrant crisis”. Much of the coverage has dehumanised the people given these labels. They are a problem to be solved, or simply a statistic. Thus award-winning writer Helon Habila’s latest novel is pertinent right now. His nameless Nigerian narrator has moved to Berlin with his American wife. This was to be a “break from our breaking-apart life”. In Berlin, his path crosses with fellow Africans: Mark, a film student from Malawi; Karim, the man on the train, who had no choice but to leave Somalia in order to save his daughter from being forced into marriage; Manu, a Libyan surgeon, waiting for his wife and daughter to arrive, hoping they haven’t been lost in the perilous journey across the sea. In *Travellers*, Helon Habila has outdone himself, giving his characters the dignity which the media often fails to.

32. German Calendar, No December

Sylvia Ofili (Nigeria), 2019

This coming-of-age tale charts the journey of Olivia, a ten-year old German-Nigerian. She moves from the town of Warri to boarding school in Lagos to university in Germany. Along the way, she grapples with race, identity and the continuous search for belonging. With illustrations by Birgit Wehye, this is a delightful book, leaving one eager to know if there will be more of the same.

33. Be(com)ing Nigerian

Elnathan John (Nigeria), 2019

Anyone familiar with Elnathan John’s work will know he is the king of satire. If you were expecting an entertaining, provocative and engrossing read, then you are in for a treat. *Be(com)ing Nigerian* provides an insight into the realities of life in Nigerian politics, religion, civil society, diaspora, the media. No one is spared when it comes to John’s cheeky digs.

34. A Strangers Pose

Emmanuel Iduma (Nigeria), 2019

A travelogue, a journey, a memoir, a piece of art. Conversations with strangers, images taken by some of the greatest photographers on the continent and elegant lyricism all form part of this beautiful book. Forever in the background are the realities of crossing the borders created by the colonialists and navigating the spaces, cultures and languages which span the continent. This is a travelogue, without the colonial gaze.

35. New Daughters of Africa

Margaret Busby (editor, Ghana), 2019

It has been a long time since a book created the kind of buzz and excitement which has surrounded *New Daughters of Africa: An International Anthology of Writing by Women of African Descent*. 25 years since her revolutionary first anthology, *Daughters of Africa*, Margaret Busby’s latest volume is a collection of stories, essays, speeches, poetry and memoirs by over 200 renowned women writers. Busby has described the array of contributors as “an amazing party guest list”. With the likes of Warsan Shire, Nawal El Saadawi, Diane Abbot, Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie and Maaza Mengiste, one can see why. Reserve a special place for this one on your bookshelf, it’s a must-have.

36. The Shadow King

Maaza Mengiste (Ethiopia), 2019

ETHIOPIA. 1935. With the threat of Mussolini’s army looming, recently orphaned Hirut struggles to adapt to her new life as a maid. Her new employer, Kidane, an officer in Emperor Haile Selassie’s army, rushes to mobilise his strongest men before the Italians invade. Hirut and the other women long to do more than

care for the wounded and bury the dead. When Emperor Haile Selassie goes into exile and Ethiopia quickly loses hope, it is Hirut who offers a plan to maintain morale. She helps disguise a gentle peasant as the emperor and soon becomes his guard, inspiring other women to take up arms. But how could she have predicted her own personal war, still to come, as a prisoner of one of Italy's most vicious officers? *The Shadow King* is a gorgeously crafted and unputdownable exploration of female power, and what it means to be a woman at war.

37. *I'm Telling the Truth, but I'm Lying*

Bassey Ikpi (Nigeria / USA), 2019

In *I'm Telling the Truth, but I'm Lying* Bassey Ikpi explores her life—as a Nigerian-American immigrant, a black woman, a slam poet, a mother, a daughter, an artist—through the lens of her mental health and diagnosis of bipolar II and anxiety. Her remarkable memoir in essays implodes our preconceptions of the mind and normalcy as Bassey bares her own truths and lies for us all to behold with radical honesty and brutal intimacy. From her early childhood in Nigeria through her adolescence in Oklahoma, Bassey Ikpi lived with a tumult of emotions, cycling between extreme euphoria and deep depression—sometimes within the course of a single day. By the time she was in her early twenties, Bassey was a spoken word artist and traveling with HBO's Def Poetry Jam, channeling her life into art. But beneath the façade of the confident performer, Bassey's mental health was in a precipitous decline, culminating in a breakdown that resulted in hospitalization and a diagnosis of Bipolar II. In *I'm Telling the Truth, But I'm Lying*, Bassey Ikpi breaks open our understanding of mental health by giving us intimate access to her own. Exploring shame, confusion, medication, and family in the process, Bassey looks at how mental health impacts every aspect of our lives—how we appear to others, and more importantly to ourselves—and challenges our preconception about what it means to be "normal." Viscerally raw and honest, the result is an exploration of the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of who we are—and the ways, as honest as we try to be, each of these stories can also be a lie.

38. *Mount Pleasant*

Patrice Nganang (Cameroon), 2011

In Cameroon in 1931, Sara is taken from her family and brought to Mount Pleasant as a gift for Sultan Njoya, the Bamum leader cast into exile by French colonialists. Just nine years old and on the verge of becoming one of the sultan's hundreds of wives, Sara's story takes an unexpected turn when she is recognized by Bertha, the slave in charge of training Njoya's brides, as Nebu, the son she lost tragically years before. In Sara's new life as a boy she bears witness to the world of Sultan Njoya—a magical yet declining place of artistic and intellectual minds—and hears the story of the sultan's last days in the Palace of All Dreams and of the sad fate of Nebu, the greatest artist their culture had seen. Seven decades later, a student returns home to Cameroon to research the place it once was, and she finds Sara, silent for decades, ready to tell her story. In her serpentine tale, a lost kingdom lives again in the compromised intersection between flawed memory, tangled fiction, and faintly discernible truth. In this telling, history is invented anew and transformed—a man awakens from a coma to find the animal kingdom dancing a waltz; a spirit haunts a cocoa plantation; and a sculptor re-creates his lost love in a work of art that challenges the boundary between truth and the ideal. The award-winning novelist Patrice Nganang's lyrical and majestic *Mount Pleasant* is a resurrection of the world of early-twentieth-century Cameroon and an elegy for the men and women swept up in the forces of colonization.

39. *When The Plums Are Ripe*

Patrice Nganang (Cameroon), 2019

The second volume in a magisterial trilogy, the story of Cameroon caught between empires during World War II. In Cameroon, plum season is a highly anticipated time of year. But for the narrator of *When the Plums Are Ripe*, the poet Pouka, the season reminds him of the "time when our country had discovered the root not so much of its own violence as that of the world's own, and, in response, had thrown its sons who

at that time were called Senegalese infantrymen into the desert, just as in the evenings the sellers throw all their still-unsold plums into the embers.” In this novel of radiant lyricism, Patrice Nganang recounts the story of Cameroon’s forced entry into World War II, and in the process complicates our own understanding of that globe-spanning conflict. After the fall of France in 1940, Cameroon found itself caught between Vichy and the Free French at a time when growing nationalism advised allegiance to neither regime, and was ultimately dragged into fighting throughout North Africa on behalf of the Allies. Moving from Pouka’s story to the campaigns of the French general Leclerc and the battles of Kufra and Murzuk, Nganang questions the colonial record and recenters African perspectives at the heart of Cameroon’s national history, all the while writing with wit and panache. *When the Plums Are Ripe* is a brilliantly crafted, politically charged epic that challenges not only the legacies of colonialism but the intersections of language, authority, and history itself.

40. *A Particular Kind of Black Man*

Tope Folarin (Nigeria / USA), 2019

A stunning debut novel, from Rhodes Scholar and winner of the Caine Prize for African Writing, Tope Folarin about a Nigerian family living in Utah and their uncomfortable assimilation to American life. Living in small-town Utah has always been an uneasy fit for Tunde Akinola’s family, especially for his Nigeria-born parents. Though Tunde speaks English with a Midwestern accent, he can’t escape the children who rub his skin and ask why the black won’t come off. As he struggles to fit in and find his place in the world, he finds little solace from his parents who are grappling with their own issues. Tunde’s father, ever the optimist, works tirelessly chasing his American dream while his wife, lonely in Utah without family and friends, sinks deeper into schizophrenia. Then one otherwise-ordinary morning, Tunde’s mother wakes him with a hug, bundles him and his baby brother into the car, and takes them away from the only home they’ve ever known. But running away doesn’t bring her, or her children, any relief from the demons that plague her; once Tunde’s father tracks them down, she flees to Nigeria, and Tunde never feels at home again. He spends the rest of his childhood and young adulthood searching for connection—to the wary stepmother and stepbrothers he gains when his father remarries; to the Utah residents who mock his father’s accent; to evangelical religion; to his Texas middle school’s crowd of African-Americans; to the fraternity brothers of his historically black college. In so doing, he discovers something that sends him on a journey away from everything he has known. Sweeping, stirring, and perspective-shifting, *A Particular Kind of Black Man* is a beautiful and poignant exploration of the meaning of memory, manhood, home, and identity as seen through the eyes of a first-generation Nigerian-American.

41. *Bird Summons*

Leila Aboulela (Egypt), 2019

BIRD SUMMONS is a magic carpet ride into the forest of history and the lives of women. Salma, happily married, tries every day to fit into life in Britain. When her first love contacts her, she is tempted to risk it all and return to Egypt. Moni gave up a career in banking to care for her disabled son, but now her husband wants to move to Saudi Arabia - where she fears her son's condition will worsen. Iman feels burdened by her beauty. In her twenties and already in her third marriage, she is treated like a pet and longs for freedom. On a road trip to the Scottish Highlands, the women are visited by the Hoopoe, a sacred bird whose fables from Muslim and Celtic literature compel them to question the balance between faith and femininity, love, loyalty and sacrifice. Brilliantly imagined, intense and haunting, *Bird Summons* confirms Leila Aboulela's reputation as one of our finest contemporary writers.

42. *A Small Silence*

Jumoke Verissimo (Nigeria), 2019

Poet turned fiction writer, Jumoke Verissimo brings readers a delightfully quirky story. *A Small Silence* tells the story of Prof. who never turns on the light in his dusty Lagos apartment where he holds a nightly meeting with a female visitor he can’t see and who can’t see him. What a fabulous idea for a story!

43. Adèle
Leila Slimani (Morocco), 2019
After *The Perfect Nanny*, Franco-Moroccan writer Leila Slimani returns with another thriller exploring the dark side of domestic life through the experiences of women who resist cultural expectations. In this novel, the eponymous character weaves an elaborate web of deceit to conceal her life as serial adulterer.
44. Beneath the Tamarind Tree
Isha Sesay (Sierra Leone), 2019
A CNN correspondent at the time, Isha Sesay was on the frontlines of the media wave around the kidnap of school girls in Chibok, Nigeria. With this book, she revisits the event in order to unearth intimate stories about loss but also of courage.
45. Better Never Than Late
Chika Unigwe (Nigeria), 2019
Better Never Than Late is a collection of stories loosely connected by Prosperous and Agu, a couple whose home in Belgium is a gathering place for African visitors in their wanderings through Europe. Chika Unigwe captures the complexes of desire, loss, and longing that define the life of the immigrant.
46. Black Tax: Burden or Ubuntu?
Niq Mhlongo | Jonathan Ball (South Africa), 2019
Black Southern African families inspire this insightful collection exploring the intersection between domestic life and economic realities. Black tax is an economic system based on a culture of filial responsibility. The collection dissects this cultural phenomenon and its impact in south African life.
47. Broken Places and Outer Spaces
Nnedi Okorafor (Nigeria), 2019
After publishing 14 books in 14 years, Nnedi Okorafor takes the reader behind the scenes of her creative success to reveal the powerful experience of "breaking" and becoming. In her debut memoir and her 15th book, she talks about her paralysis, subsequent recovery, and the decision to become a writer. Inspiring!
48. Children of Virtue and Vengeance
Tomi Adeyemi (Nigeria), 2019
The second installment in Tomi Adeyemi's Orisha trilogy is a bold adventure spiked with political intrigue and feminist ideals. Magic is back in the land of Orisha, thanks to Zelig and Amari's fight against a villainous prince. Book two has the duo going head to head with the angry and bereaved king.
49. David Mogo, Godhunter
Suyi Davies Okungbowa (Nigeria), 2019
Writers like Suyi Davies Okungbowa are boldly experimenting with storytelling, and the results are often stunning. *David Mogo God Hunter* is a delightful, fast-paced story set in a fantastical world built around Yoruba deities.
50. Do Not Say It's Not Your Country
Nnamdi Oguike (Nigeria), 2019
Nnamdi Oguike channels Uwem Akpan's *Say You Are One of Them* in this ambitious collection of 10 stories set in various African countries. From a Madagascan slum story to a Sierra Leonian love story, the collection captures the myriad worlds that give the African continent its distinct cultural shape.

51. **Don't Whisper Too Much**
Frieda Ekotto (Cameroon), 2019
Frieda Ekotto's fiction opens up new grounds in African queer writing. She was one of the first to write fiction with humanizing representations of the lives of francophone African women loving women. This translation of two of her novellas is a gift to Anglophone readers.
52. **Karmzah: The Unleashing**
Farida Bedwei (Ghana), 2019
Inspired by her experience as someone living with cerebral palsy, Farida Bedwei creates Karmzah, a superhero archeologist living with cerebral palsy. The comic book is a mythology-infused account of Karmzah, powered by flying crutches, bringing down criminal masterminds.
53. **Mask Off: Masculinity Redefined**
J J Bola (Congo)
With this book, British-Congolese writer JJ Bola establishes himself as a valiant feminist ally. Bola, who has done a lot of youth-centered community organizing, addresses young male audiences in this book. He argues for the reimaging of masculinity through the lens of feminist ideals.
54. **Minutes of Glory: And Other Stories**
Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya), 2019
This career-spanning short story collection is a treat. Readers get to experience the short-fiction side of Ngũgĩ's writing. The collection pulls readers into a dazzling world of thrilling stories, memorable characters, and page-turning intrigues.
55. **Necropolitics**
Achille Mbembe (Cameroon), 2019
Africa's most beloved philosopher muses on the fate of the planet and its political future. In the collection of 8 essays, Achille Mbembe raises uncomfortable questions about the current state of world affairs, drawing attention to the rise of racist discourse and global inequality.
56. **Not My Time To Die**
Yolande Mukagasana (Rwanda)
A nurse and mother of three, Mukagasana's life was perfect. She was even planning her wedding anniversary when the killings began, and life took a sinister turn. Her account of the Rwandan Genocide is an essential and honest account of the darkest days in one of Africa's most beloved nations.
57. **On Ajayi Crowther Street**
Elnathan John (Nigeria), 2019
Elnathan John knows how to articulate the absurd and the delightful quirk of everyday Nigerian life. With his first comic book, he transports the reader to Ajayi Crowther Street, a typical Lagos neighborhood where gossip, lies, secrets, big and little drama move life in unpredictable flows.
58. **Out of the Darkness, Shinning Light**
Petina Gappah (Zimbabwe), 2019
In her fourth novel, Petina Gappah takes a familiar story and makes it strange. The novel details the 285-day journey during which a fellowship of interesting characters carry Dr. David Livingstone's dead body to the Indian Ocean coast. Brace yourself for tons of LOL moments.

59. **Pet**
Akwaeke Emezi (Nigeria / Malaysia), 2019
Pet is Akwaeke Emezi's latest novel after the critically acclaimed *Freshwater*. It tells the thrilling story of Jam, a teenage transgender person, whose curiosity and acute sense of the impossible leads to a journey in search of the monsters haunting her seemingly calm and perfect world.
60. **Return to the Enchanted Island**
Johary Ravaloson (Madagascar)
Malagasy mythology inspires this coming-of-age tale about a young anti-hero and his struggle to fulfill the demands of a cultural legacy. Johary Ravaloson's book is the second Malagasy novel translated in English.
61. **The Freedom Artist**
Ben Okri (Nigeria), 2019
The Freedom Artist is Ben Okri's 23rd book and 11th novel! Critics are so in love with the book they think it might be his most important book since *The Famished Road*. It tells the story of a man who goes in search of a truth he hopes will unlock the mystery behind his lover's disappearance.
62. **The Half-God of Rainfall**
Inua Ellams (Nigeria), 2019
Inua Ellams unites Classical Greek and Yoruba mythologies in this genre-bending work exploring violence and female power. The story revolves around Demi, a boy with powers who has to come to terms with the possibilities and limitations of being a god among mortals.
63. **The Seven Necessary Sins for Women and Girls**
Mona Eltahawy (Egypt), 2019
A book that turns girls into "angry, ambitious, profane, violent, attention-seeking, lustful, and powerful" beings? Yes please! Eltahawy criticizes the culture of feminine respectability, arguing that girls should be taught to harness anger, desire, and joy. A powerful manifesto from one of Africa's beloved feminists.
64. **They Called Me Queer**
Windvogel and Koopman (Eds) | Kwela
When Cassava Republic introduced readers to lesbian experiences in Nigeria with *She Called Me Women*, it was the start of a new phase. One year later, Windvogel and Koopman releases this stellar and inspiring collection of personal stories by queer people of color in South Africa.
65. **This Hostel Life**
Melatu Uche Okorie | Virago
Melatu Uche Okorie's debut shows the diversity of African lives imagined in fiction. Inspired by her experiences as an asylum-seeker in Ireland, the Nigerian-Irish writer captures the lives of African immigrants in Ireland, their struggles but also the little joys and hopeful resistances that give their lives meaning.
66. **This is How We Disappear**
By Titilope Sonuga | Write Bloody North
Titilope Sonuga's poetry collection responds to the abduction of 276 girls by Boko Haram. How tragic is it that women disappear literally and metaphorically? Sonuga's writing is a heart-rending kind of beautiful. It channels a lot of pain but also grace and the joy of flight into visibility.

67. Triangulum

Masande Ntshanga | Two Dollar Radio

Masande Ntshanga's *Triangulum* is a suspenseful dose of futuristic, apocalyptic, and philosophical goodness. Set in 2040, the story is centered on a manuscript that foretells the end of the world. A retired professor and science fiction writer is called upon to look into these claims.

68. When the Plums Are Ripe

Patrick Nganang and Amy B. Reid (Trans) | Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Originally published in 2013, Nganang's 7th book is one of the most anticipated translations of the year. In his signature evocative prose, Nganang tells the story of poet-bureaucrat Pouka who is caught between the forces of French colonization and WWII. A historical drama, it brings 1940s Yaounde to life.

69. Tram 83

Fiston Mwanza Mujila, 2014

Translated from French, this award-winning debut novel is dark, comical, poignant and outrageous. On the surface, an entertaining read, it awakens within the reader questions about some of the more uncomfortable realities of modern Africa. Set in an unnamed city somewhere near the Democratic Republic of Congo, *Tram 83* is the story of hustler extraordinaire Requiem and writer and historian Lucien. Along with an array of other actors from tourists to businessmen and sex workers, they can be found at restaurant and bar Tram 83, a place of music, madness and dirty dealings. There, the vision of Patrice Lumumba is juxtaposed with the very different reality surrounding them. The book is consuming, fast, euphoric and captivating.

70. Born on a Tuesday

Elnathan John, 2015

This debut novel by everyone's favourite satirist Elnathan John centres on Dantala, a boy growing up in northern Nigeria where politics and religion shape everyday realities and are quite literally a matter of life and death. We follow a young man coming of age within a myriad of political rivalries, religious splits, violence and fundamentalism, going well beyond the media narrative about this part of the world. The story triumphs through its characters' quiet and endearing observations on everything from homosexuality to why Allah does what he does. *Born on a Tuesday* brings together a compelling plot, descriptive prose and humour while confronting the sometimes harrowing realities of people whose voices we usually barely hear.

71. Black Moses

Alain Mabanckou, 2015

At the centre of this novel by Alain Mabanckou, known for his razor sharp humour and subtle social commentary, is the 13-year-old Moses. He lives in an orphanage where cruelty, chaos and neglect are the norm as the director enforces a Marxist ideology which reflects the state of affairs in the rest of the Republic of Congo. Later, Moses and two friends find some stability under the wing of a madam called Maman Fiat 500. But when the brothel is shutdown, Moses (who harbours dreams of being a Robin Hood of sorts) is targeted and our hero begins to unravel. In many ways, Moses' journey is symbolic of that of post-colonial Congo, characters in his life representing the many powers that played their part in shaping a country weighed down by chaos and kleptocracy.

72. Ultimate Tragedy

Abdulai Sila, 2017

This book was originally published in Portuguese, in 1996 but only translated to English in 2017. It is considered to be one of the first works of fiction from Guinea Bissau to be translated into English. Set during the time of Portuguese rule, it follows the story of Ndani, a young woman rumoured to be cursed.

She leaves her village and takes up a job as a maid in the home of a wealthy white family in Bissau. Her experience in the household mirrors the brutality faced by the rest of the country at the hands of the colonialists. At every step of the way, Ndani's life is in some way shaped by the actions of the white men, eventually bringing heartbreak and tragedy. Sila is both captivating and unapologetic in his storytelling. I devoured this book in one go.

73. Hairdresser of Harare

Tendai Huchu, 2010

Set in Zimbabwe, single mother Vimbai is a sharp and sassy hair stylist, the star attraction at MaKhumalo's hair salon. But Vimbai's position comes under threat from new arrival Dumisami, a handsome young man who becomes a firm favourite with clients and bosses. A relationship is built, until a secret threatens to destroy it. Ever present are the realities of life under Robert Mugabe which are expertly weaved into the story. This is an entertaining comedy turned tragedy, which has you hooked until the very end.

74. House of Stone

Novuyo Rosa Tshuma, 2018

Tshuma's story is one of Zimbabwe, its traumatic past mirroring that of the strange yet fascinating narrator Zamani who was conceived during the Gukurahundi massacres in the 1980s. He fills the space left by the missing son of his landlords and, in so doing, unearths their personal histories. Through these stories the reader is given a harrowing insight into Zimbabwe's past and how things have come to be today.

75. My Sister the Serial Killer

Oyinkan Braithwaite, 2018

The first line of this hugely entertaining book will have you hooked: "Ayoola is beautiful, carefree and exciting, she also has this tendency to... murder her boyfriends." This is neither a crime novel nor a mystery. The real story which forms its centre is the relationship between sisters and their wider family. Set in Lagos, this is a dark, compelling and humorous must-read.

76. Orchard of Lost Souls

Nadifa Mohamed, 2013

In *The Orchard of Lost Souls*, Mohamed brings women's voices to the fore, that are often otherwise silenced by guns, violence and bloodshed. Set in Hargeisa, this is the story of widow Kaswar, soldier Filsan and abandoned child Deqo. The lives of these three intersect on the 18th anniversary of the revolution which brought a military dictator to power. Filsan dreams of Mogadishu, Deqo's destiny leads her to the kinds of places children should never see, and Kaswar teeters between leaving and staying as she drowns in grief. The story shows how ugly and brutal war is and how womanhood can be a heavy burden. This read is not easy but it is worthwhile.

77. The Book of Memory

Penina Gappah (Zimbabwe), 2009, reprint 2017

In *The Book of Memory*, an albino woman named Memory is languishing in a maximum security prison in Harare, Zimbabwe, where she has been tried and convicted of murder. As part of her appeal, her lawyer insists that she write down what happened; that is, the events that led to the killing of her adoptive father, Lloyd Hendricks. But who was Lloyd Hendricks? Why does Memory feel no remorse for his death? And did everything happen exactly as she remembers? Moving between the townships of the poor and the suburbs of the rich, and between past and present, the 2009 Guardian First Book Award-winning writer Penina Gappah weaves a compelling tale of love, obsession, the relentlessness of fate, and the treachery of memory.

78. The Polygamist

Sue Nyathi (Zimbabwe), 2012

The Polygamist weaves a tale about four women whose lives become intertwined as a result of their love for one man. Set in modern-day Zimbabwe, the story is narrated through the four female protagonists. Joyce is the legitimate first wife of Jonasi Gomora. She has four kids, a shiny black Mercedes Benz and a life every woman is envious of. Joyce believes she has the perfect marriage until Matipa rears her coiffed head. Matipa is an ambitious, educated high flyer with an eye for the good things in life. She does not want to sit around waiting for a guy to realise his potential, she wants instant gratification, which comes in the form of Jonasi. He personifies everything she wants in a man. And so her driving ambition is usurp Joyce's role as Jonasi's wife and lover. Essie is the girl next door from the poverty-stricken township where Jonasi grew up in. She lacks Joyce's sophistication and Matipa's intelligence, but she cared for Jonasi long before he became the man he is. So Essie plays the role of second fiddle knowing he'll always come back to her. Lindani is a beautiful young girl who has nothing going for her but her greatest assets: her beauty and her body. She hopes this lethal combination will be enough to ensnare the affections of a man who will marry her and leave her taken care of, no longer having to worry about how she'll keep a solid roof over her head. Then she meets Jonasi and thinks all her problems have been answered, not knowing they have only just begun.... Told in a gripping, accessible and somewhat shockingly frank style, Sue Nyathi takes readers on a journey beyond the bedroom door of a polygamous man and his four Mrs Rights. Yet lurking below the surface the question remains: is this kind of marriage practice really legitimate in a society plagued by HIV/Aids? Smart, sassy and sexy, The Polygamist shows that sometimes marriage isn't what you envisioned – rather than being a secure refuge it can be a battlefield!

79. Eddo's Souls

Stella Gaitano (South Sudan), English forthcoming in 2021

Eddo's Souls is a historical novel about a family's survival during the coups and counter-coups in the seventies and eighties of what is now South Sudan. It is the latest addition to Gaitano's literary corpus on the meaning of homeland for the South Sudanese. Stella Gaitano is unique in her decision to write in a combination of classical Arabic, colloquial Sudanese Arabic, and Juba Arabic even though South Sudan has embraced English as its official language.