

Author Talk
The Publican's Daughter
by
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Kingston Room, Brighton Library 2 June 2022

Powerpoint Presentation

SLIDE 1 BOOK IMAGE

Introduction: thank you, and acknowledgement of country

Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for being here today.

I acknowledge that we meet on the land of the Kaurna people, Traditional Owners of the Adelaide Plains. I honour and respect their Elders, past, present, and emerging.

Let me start by thanking Holdfast Bay Libraries in Glenelg and Brighton for giving me this opportunity to talk to you today, especially Christine Kennedy, for supporting me as she has done with promoting my first novel in this way.

34 secs

GO TO SLIDE 2

SLIDE 2 MULBERRY TREE

Why I Write

My parents were publicans and we moved often. Books became my refuge, characters my companions. Sitting high in a mulberry-tree in our back yard one day at the age of 12 or so, I resolved to become a writer. I wanted to tell stories. But, as it happened, the universe decreed that I needed to live a life first!

As a little girl, I loved English author Enid Blyton. For all the faults she is now seen to have (elitist, sexist, racist and xenophobic), she encouraged me — a girl — to be adventurous. *The Famous Five* and *Secret Seven* always spoke to me. I'd therefore like to start with a poem I wrote several years ago that sort of locates me historically but also simultaneously offers the background to my book's timeline, compared to today with Instagram, iPads and aspirational shows like *The Voice*.

1 min

GO TO SLIDE THREE

SLIDE 3 - ENID BLYTON

Little girls For Enid Blyton

Little girls yearn, dream
and moon around
aching
to become a pianist, a
composer like Chopin
a ballerina in Swan Lake
dancing to acclaim
in tutu and *en pointe* or
for the fame and glitter
of a Hollywood star.

They practise hard
seeking smiles in the eyes of
an adult world
that too often
snickers and mocks. Or,
there is simply no-one
to care.

Lonely little girls turn to books
where they discover
magical worlds
mysterious paths
and multiple marvellous friends.

One little girl read for years
becoming a woman
doing her bit
raising children, burying parents
then, one day
she started to write.

Words kept tumbling out
as though they would never stop:
she wrote away the yearning
lost hopes and failed dreams
of all little girls
who grow up
unloved.

My protagonist, **Katherine Forster**, no longer moons around. It is 1962, she is 19 and looking for a husband, but, as this poetic brushstroke of a backstory might indicate, she is naïve, the more so as a city girl in the great Australian outback to which she brings a unique perspective.

1.30secs

GO TO SLIDE 4

SLIDE 4 — GIDGEE TREE

Story Outline

Katherine Forster wants to find a husband. She decides to join her publican parents when they buy the only hotel in an outback railway town in the far north of SA where rumour has it; men outnumber women, ten to one. But nothing is as she hopes.

Katherine falls in love with the bush but fears for her sanity as she is drawn into a vortex of family dysfunction, hard men, garrulous older women, frontier violence and rape. Aboriginal friends provide succour, but she must choose a way forward when tragedy strikes.

Title Change & Cover

The original title of my book was *On Gidgee Plains*. Most of you will know that the gidgee tree (*Acacia cambagei*) featured on the cover is commonly known as the stinking wattle (the leaves, bark and litter smell like boiled cabbage, gas or sewerage). The gidgee tree is symbolic of things being crook, as my father used to say, in Tallarook (or, in the novel, the fictional town of Wonnalinga, in the far north of SA.) and I've kept it on the cover.

Just as *On Gidgee Plains* was being readied for publication in early 2020, my publisher went out of business. In 2021, after a new contract offer took too long to materialise, I changed the title to *The Publican's Daughter* and published under my own imprint, Wattletaes Publishing, in keeping with my Wattletaes website.

As a title, *The Publican's Daughter* may lead people to think it is my story. But, while I draw on my experience as a publican's daughter and anthropologist to lend authenticity, the story is decidedly fiction, with intertwined themes of family dysfunction, gender and race. As Kathie Letts the author said on Tv the other day, I excavate from my life.

2 mins

GO TO SLIDE 5

SLIDE 5 — POEMS IN THE STORY'S SPIRIT

I want to read a couple of small poems before going on, they carry the spirit, I think of the story.

The Desert Lies

Mottled red and purple
your vast stony plains
tell ancient tales
revealed from deep
by sun, wind and time.

Your red wrinkled sandhills
expunge lizard tracks,
snake trails, traces of life
with every breeze
as though pristine.

But, under sky's blue intensity
and scorching eye of sun
your shiny stones and shimmering sands
hide grotesque massacres, killings
and extinctions —
an innocent palimpsest.

Laughing Magpies

Inspired by sculpture (Bronze/Australian timber stump) by Bill Steele – Strathalbyn Railway Museum

There they are, on a log,
laughing in black bronze.
At first, I mistook them for crows —
where's the white, I thought.
But, the fun is frozen there, in this cheeky
pair
of finely tinkered magpies —
wrought from tin and copper.

The birds fly me to an open space —
no — a red earth flat with an old grey log
beside a billabong under a eucalypt
white with corellas looking down
to see what the fuss is about.
Not a warble in sight,
my maggies chatter and squawk
watching two naked girls
slide giggling down the bank
till their skin is mustard with mud
and goosebumped in the icy water.
The corellas lift off, a screeching cloud
in search of new horizons
and the girls and the magpies
laugh and laugh and laugh.

2 mins

GO TO SLIDE SIX

SLIDE 6 — ORIGINS OF TPD STORY

My idea for *The Publican's Daughter* emerged from rage. Rage at the sexual predation and violence that trapped or harmed young women in my day, including me. I finished the manuscript well before the #metoo movement and I'm in awe of the courage shown by today's young women who speak out about these issues. And, I hope it fits into that atmosphere as a speaking out.

I am also in awe from my work as an anthropologist of the courage of First Nations people who have survived so much. When I first started to write, I realised that I could not tell a story set in the outback without incorporating aspects of that history into the whole. To do so would indeed be white-washing frontier history.

Here are two readings touching on those themes.

Reading 1 — Katherine in a Pickle

You might recognise in this snippet an incident reminiscent of a recent event in Canberra. Katherine's unenlightened parents are Lillian, an alcoholic and Dudley, a gambler. Jimmy is Dudley's young offsider.

'I'm beginning to think you made all that up, that stuff about the claypan,' Jimmy said. I reckon you asked for it.'

'Asked for what?' Dudley heard the last remark as he, too, came into the bar.

Katherine froze, looking on in horror as Jimmy turned to her father.

'Your daughter slept with (the pastoralist) William Ringer at the claypan.' Jimmy's words rushed from his mouth, loud and hard with hurt and hate.

Dudley turned to his daughter in disbelief.

Lillian joined them from the kitchen, drawn to the bar by Jimmy's outburst. 'Have you been sleeping with William Ringer as well?'

'As well as who?' Dudley's mouth was agape.

'Well, since you ask, our daughter has been sleeping with your precious Jimmy here.' Lillian turned to Katherine. 'But, what's this about William Ringer?'

Katherine burst into tears, wanting to confide in her mother, to tell her the truth that she'd been too scared to disclose at the time. 'Yes', Katherine

answered her mother's implicit question. 'Yes, I had a few drinks, but so what. He did it while I was asleep, Mum. Dad, he did it while I was asleep.'

Dudley and Lillian united in horror, too overwhelmed to hear Katherine's plea. People did silly things when they were drunk that they'd try to wriggle out of later. Drunks and gamblers had taught them that much over the years. And they lie. Why would their daughter be any different? It made no sense that Katherine was drunk enough to sleep through an ordeal like that, oblivious to it yet know she was raped. Dudley yelled at his daughter. How on earth do you think you'll ever find a husband if you carry on like that?

Reading 2 – The American

Gregory Sharmer is a long-term resident in The First and Last Hotel who Dudley invites to dinner in the kitchen with the family to check him out as a potential husband for Katherine. This is the dinner conversation.

'What do anthropologists actually do? How on earth do you study people?' Dudley chuckled at his own rhetorical question. 'Come to think of it, people spill their guts to me when they're drunk, but I guess that's different.'

'That's a tough one, Dudley. How long have you got?' Sharmer smiled, intending to disarm, but Katherine did not miss the patronising glint in his American eyes. She looked down at her plate and cut into her roast beef, allowing a flush of shame to subside.

Jimmy and Lillian perked up at Dudley's questioning, curious to hear what the American had to say. Lillian was trying to get the measure of this man whose eyes had danced all over her and Katherine since the day he arrived.

'We don't need all the details,' Dudley spoke up. The layman's overview is good enough. You know, I've always said, if you educate a fool, you get a bigger fool. Every academic I've known argued up and down and around a topic without ever getting to the point.'

'Anthropology is the study of human diversity', Sharmer began. 'We look at material culture — you know, the stuff of museums and galleries — as well as the economic, political, religious and aesthetic aspects of the lives of groups of people. The sort of anthropology I do has a somewhat philosophical bent, but we live among our people, so it is grounded in fieldwork. That's why I'm here. To record the Aborigines' daily lives, see how they interact with each other and document their kinship system, beliefs and practices. We call that ethnography.'

The higher aim is to contribute to the sum of human knowledge about natives before their primitive ways of life die out.'

Katherine almost laughed out loud at the man's pomposity. She wasn't sure whether Sharmer ignored Dudley's bait or didn't understand it. 'Do you just follow people around with a notepad all day or what?'

'Nope. I use a tape recorder as well. And a camera of course.' Gregory failed to hear the scorn in Katherine's voice.

As Sharmer continued talking, Katherine felt her own perspective shift. If only for a moment, she could see her parents through his eyes. She then told him his work sounded like prying and asked why he didn't look at how Aborigines and whites interact rather than treat Aborigines like a species apart.

6 mins

GO TO SLIDE 7

SLIDE 7 – KATHRYN'S INTERVIEW

About Writing Sex

In her review published in April's Yankalilla Times, poet and scholar Dr Kathryn Pentecost asks specifically whether I had any qualms about writing frank sex scenes in the novel. This is how I replied —

Not at all. The sex scenes have no erotic intent. To do that successfully is an exquisite art. We only have to think of Tobsha Lerner's classic, *Quiver* (1996). The sex in *The Publican's Daughter*, by contrast, is clumsy, failed, and often awkward or naïve, very much how it was for many girls on the other side of the fence in my day.

One male reader literally asked me why I didn't show how Katherine responded to the sex. Other people avoid the mention of sex as though I'm too old to write about it.

And, as a culture, we are accustomed to sex scenes that show a woman's arousal or satisfaction. It's on the page and in the movies. What I have done — and it was unconscious at the time until I prepared to talk to Peter Goers on ABC Radio's Evenings on May 10, through Katherine's eyes, I actually show men in lust instead. And it's a very different view, if you look that way, with the gaze reversed.

[2 mins](#)

GO TO SLIDE 8

SLIDE 8 – PLANNING**Planning**

Another thing Kathryn asked was how I plan. Her question was, are you a plotter or a pantser. This slide — derived initially from a wonderfully helpful book called *The Weekend Novelist* (1994) by Robert J Ray and Brey Norris — sets out a basic plan for my current work, which I'll talk about shortly.

For now, just notice how simple the structure is with events marked out on an upward diagonal timeline on an A4 landscape page divided into three parts (Acts) with significant events spaced along the line, starting at the bottom (the beginning) and rising to the top (the outcome/end). The vertical lines above or below the main line, are mood lines for readers. Highs and lows, so to speak.

This structure is basic and it is all I do to get started. So, I'm more of a pantser in that sense but I have a strong sense of the story before I start. It's the 'how' that is worked out along the way. There are apps to help with interweaving stories and story arcs with complicated character relationships and timelines.

1.10

GO TO SLIDE 9**SLIDE 9 - SCRIVENER****Applications**

I use Scrivener from Literature and Latte and Aeon Timeline for flexibility and greater detail. These two apps synchronise if you set them up correctly. I use Scrivener for my first draft because you can move everything around so easily and for keeping all my research in one place. But I always come back to my little plan to make sure I'm on track.

10 secs

GO TO SLIDE 10**PAUSE FOR QUESTIONS**

SLIDE 10 – WHERE I WRITE

A Bit about Characters

Characters for me carry the story but the thing about them is that they don't always behave. That's why planning for me is just a lightweight timber frame that allows characters to develop, grow or reveal themselves from within. For me, a book is internally structured more by characters in action than a fixed trajectory or timeline.

It is part of my writing process to start with the surface of things, things I know, imagine or can talk about. But as I write, different words or situations link to a deeper part of me—a flicker of memory of sensations, emotion or even an image—and I suspect this happens with my characters.

The process is similar to driving around where I may head to one place but notice or experience something that holds a memory that transports me instantly back to an earlier part of life that feels formed at that moment. A lot of my blog posts talk about that. Characters grow in action.

Reading 3 Meet Paddy

'Hello, missy.' Old Paddy's weathered face peered through the (laundry) window.

Katherine jumped. Although the old fellow often stopped to say hello when she was doing a big wash, he always materialised barefoot and without a sound in the red dust.

'Good weather, eh?'

Katherine was shy with Paddy because she could not always understand what he said. Not that he mumbled, but he did seem to talk downwards, as though he let words fall from his body into the atmosphere. His voice was soft. He didn't throw it as Katherine's teachers taught her to in elocution class. She wondered whether people still put their children through the rigours of speech training. It had served some purpose, she supposed, yet Katherine could not understand why it had been so important to learn how to repeat by rote strings of words written by strangers; dead ones at that. She wandered lonely as a cloud. Or was it 'he'? She couldn't remember. What on earth did that mean? One poem in elocution class about an ancient mariner and an albatross had

fascinated her. She had learned it by heart. No, there was another called The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T.S. Eliot. That made her think of black cats slinking around buildings.

The poem wasn't about a cat at all, but elocution taught her to walk with her back ramrod-straight, balancing three hard-backed books on her head. She used to wonder whether their shape and weight outweighed the value of their contents. Her teacher insisted that good posture was the foundation of proper diction and, by extension, good character.

'You got a smoke?' Paddy waited, a wry but patient look on his face. Katherine took in his faded khaki work pants, gathered lopsidedly at a skinny waist by a long leather belt too wide for his emaciated body. It was far too long, dangling as it did past the end of his fly. The trousers must have once belonged to someone with thicker thighs, too. Paddy's fresh-washed but unironed shirt was also loose but buttoned tight at the wrists. Curly white hair peeked through his stiff open collar.

Katherine extended her packet of cork-tipped Craven "A", apologising for wet fingers. Paddy tucked one cigarette into his pocket and another behind his ear and murmured something about God looking after her as he went upon his way. Katherine hoped to talk sensibly to Paddy one day about something that mattered, but she couldn't think what.

Characters find their own way

Two things to say here. Firstly, this piece is overtly describing Paddy, but it really is more about showing the main character naivete.

Early in the narrative, young Katherine suffered excruciating embarrassment whenever she walks past a group of Aboriginal women who regularly meet under a tree next to the pub. Paddy brought this group into the story in ways I could not have imagined when I started with that scene.

Paddy is not simply an old Aboriginal man botting a cigarette as in the snippet above, an image that, alone, risks buying into stereotypes; he is a respected Elder in the area. They become friends and, when Katherine gets into trouble, Paddy is there for her, subtly guiding.

She learns from Paddy who is knowledgeable and keenly interested in politics and what is happening, not only in his country but in the Northern Territory and elsewhere. As trust grows, he introduces Katherine to his sister, Evelyn, also an

Elder, and his daughter Grace. Paddy's family is pivotal to the story. Paddy's character grew to suit events as they unfolded.

Reading 4 — Pearl

Then there's Pearl, whose husband works on the railways. Pearl and Barney Napper collected the Forster family from the airport when they arrived.

Katherine could not stand her at first. This is a snippet from an early scene in the Ladies Lounge.

Pearl plopped down next to Katherine with a heavy sigh. She lit a cigarette then returned to shouting over the hubbub in the room.

'Listen, everyone, let's hear what you think about this one's marriage prospects. Should this blondie here set her cap at William Ringer?' Pearl loved an audience and played up to the other women, turning Katherine's head around by the chin with thumb and forefinger, 'pretty face, too, and blue eyes.'

Katherine's heart pounded. The woman barely stopped short of opening her mouth to show her teeth, like an animal or a slave.

Pearl later befriends Katherine's mother and becomes central to the relationship between Katherine and her mother, and with her Aboriginal friends. Although she started as a cutout railwayman's wife, Pearl reveals herself as a profoundly kind character because, as we learn, she has suffered greatly. This was unplanned but grew organically as the story found direction from events affecting the protagonist.

A note on including First Nations characters and stories.

I need to say a word here about writing anything to do with First Nation's people. As an anthropologist I have long known that it's best to talk to someone before you write, but certainly it's mandatory that you find the right person or people to read and okay your material.

In *The Publican's Daughter*, I don't mention any Indigenous stories not already on the public record. My characters are not identifiable as such because they, like the setting are fictional. Despite years of working with Aboriginal people across Australia, I still sought advice from Arts SA as to who I should speak to, to have the story vetted. **7 min GO TO SLIDE 11**

SLIDE 11– CURRENT PROJECTS

High Rise Society

Growing up in pubs surrounded by people, being an anthropologist studying them in culture and society lead naturally to poetry and fiction. The human condition fascinates me. I rarely understand people, but even as a little girl, at the footy with my father, I spent my time watching them. I'm a natural people watcher.

The book I'm working on now is called *High Rise Society*, set in twin high rise public housing towers in Prahran in Melbourne. It's about the residents' interactions and a social critique of what it means to live in such a place. When I saw *Chai Time in Cinnamon Gardens* by Shankari Chandran in Matilda's bookshop in Stirling the other day, I bought it straight away because of its setting which is a nursing home for elderly Sri Lankans in Sydney. (It is also about Sri Lanka where I did my PhD research so it has a place in my heart and I know the posh and beautiful streets of Cinnamon Gardens over there.)

Years ago, I was profoundly impressed by a book called *The Death of Vishnu* by Manil Suri (2001) about a peon called Vishnu who dwells in the stairwell of an apartment building while the families he serves argue over how he might be helped and who has responsibility when he dies. As you can imagine, it is a social critique of Indian society.

The commonality here is the nature of settings, a nursing home, an apartment building and high-rise public housing towers provide a prism through which to critique society. We might see them as outside society, but they are really a microcosm (a bit like the recent TV program called *Life on ABC*). So, residential collectives fascinate me. Don't forget, I grew up in pubs and, my first book is set in one.

The plan I showed earlier is the original outline for this story. My 60-year-old protagonist, **Ruby Marie Wilson**, is homeless in Melbourne after fleeing domestic violence in Darwin until she gets a unit in the high rise building in the photo. Her story is about starting again late in life and yearning for a place to belong, and the collective setting allows me to bring in all sorts of interesting characters.

Ruby's high-rise unit is close to Chapel Street in Prahran and surrounded by parks (Princes Gardens, Victoria Park, Alma Park and Fawkner Park opposite the Alfred Hospital) where public housing residents and the wealthy walk their dogs (which abound in the story).

As an aside, my grandmother used to take me shopping on Chapel Street when I was a child, and mum left me alone in a pub one day; she forgot me! Our ideas can come from anywhere! Life is never very far away from our experience and our imaginings are built upon that.

As Ruby becomes entangled in high rise society, she notices trees rustling and singing to her, and soon, she hears them call but has to learn to listen before she can understand. A special friend called Old Man Eucalypt steps in. This is an ancient and wise tree which helps her on her way and the inspiration for this comes from an Aboriginal Elder called Bill Neidji and here is a snippet of his story...

5 mins

GO TO SLIDE 12

SLIDE 12 – READ BILL NEIDJI

Bill Neidjie was a traditional (Kakadu) Gagadju Elder. His words are recorded for posterity in at least two books including Taylor Keith ed. *Bill Neidjie, Story about Feeling*, Magabala Books, WA 2007 quoted here.

*That tree e listen to you, what you!
E got no finger, e can't speak
But that leaf e pumping his.
Way e grow in the night while you sleeping...
You dream something
That tree and grass same thing...
E grow with your body your feeling.
When you sleep, good sleep in the night, I ask you
"Good Sleep?"
"Yes"*

*Well tree e same way, e worked with you.
When you feeling tree e work with you tree.
You cut 'im little bit, you got water coming out.
That's his blood, same as your blood. So e alive.*

Bill Neidji (aka Kakadu Man)

1 min

GO TO SLIDE 13

SLIDE 13 — POETRY

As with novel-writing, I didn't start writing poetry until after I retired. I joined a group called Ochre Coast Poets in Seaford and, later, the well-known Adelaide group, Friendly Street Poets, which has now been running for about 45 or 46 years; quite an achievement.

When I moved into retirement living in Glenelg, I started a critique group called TramsEnd Poets which has been going for six years now. We meet monthly at the Glenelg Library.

This slide shows my three chapbooks. I brought a few copies today if anyone is interested in them. I'm hoping to publish a poetry collection maybe later this year.

The title, **Ol' Girl Can Drive**, borrows the words of a First Nation woman in Rum Jungle who praised me for what she called my respect for vehicle and country as I drove (I was in my late 50s at the time).

Soft Toys for Grown-ups recalls the time I walked Adelaide city in a daze after my mother died when I bought expensive Cashmere comfort in the Coogee shop years before Coogee went out of business.

Life Blinks honours how precious life is, and it suggests that we dare not blink lest we miss its wonder.

I'd like to read one poem from the first Chapbook as it harks back to my days working as an anthropologist in the Top End.

1 min

GO TO SLIDE 14

SLIDE 14 – OL' GIRL CAN DRIVE

Ol' Girl Can Drive

She sits beside me, silent. Intent.
A shock of white curls,
lined brown face,
dark eyes alive
to each furl and bend of grass
and ancient songlines
in water holes, cliffs and trees.

We drive far off-road,
no tracks, no talk. Hold tight,
the Cruiser swerves round boulders,
skirts tiny termite mounds
too sharp for tyres then
slides in the mud
of a paperbark swamp.
Back in the sun, a cacophony of green
glistens in the humid glare.

The crossing appears,
an 80-metre crocodile-swirl
of turbid water that licks at doors,
low range, low gear, slow, steady,
hearts pound, we rev
to scale the bank
straight up through slime
to a smile of applause on the other side.

A bush chorus begins
of chatter and barking dogs,
the clamour of children at play.
'This ol' girl can drive', she giggles
a riff of mirth
among sizzling sausages, birdsong and croaking frogs.

1.05

GO TO SLIDE 15

SLIDE 15 — WATTLETALES

After attending a couple of workshops about why an author should have one, I established Wattletales in 2018. It was my first attempt at a website. I write monthly blog posts about all sorts of things, mostly a variety of memoir. My first post, for example, I called Realising Dreams Late in Life but I have expanded my topics lately.

In mid-2020, Wattletales grew into something more when I asked a few friends to write something about their life and writing, poetry or creativity and the Guest Post idea was born. Since then, I've had some amazing people share their stories on Wattletales, which together create a mini social history of writers, poets and creatives in and around Adelaide. It brings me great joy.

I publish a lot of my poems on Wattletales, interwoven into stories. It intrigues me that as I write a story or post, poems that I wrote earlier suddenly find their natural homes.

I've put a few business cards on the book table for anyone interested in looking at Wattletales.

1 min

SLIDE 16 — THE LAUNCH

The Publican's Daughter was launched on 2 April at Elatte on Jetty Road next to the last tram stop. Over 50 people attended and it was a great event. The photo on the right shows our MC Nigel Ford, Jude Aquilina, who launched the book and Ivan Rehorek, also known as Avalanche, who played the sax for us. Nigel is the Convenor of Friendly Street Poets, and some of you may have even done workshops or been to readings by Jude who is a prize-winning poet of international renown.

I was especially pleased that Christine Kennedy was among my guests at the launch. In closing, I'd like to thank her again for everything she has done for me, including arranging this event today. Last year, Christine arranged for TramsEnd Poets to give a public poetry reading as a group in this room.

1 min

Thank you for coming/listening—Q and A

Books I'd recommend

Oh, Australian writers. I love David Malouf (his poetry is to die for) and Richard Flanagan (*The Narrow Road to the Deep North*). Another favourite is J M Coetzee, especially his *Disgrace* and *The Diary of A good Year*. Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, *Room for a Stranger*, Melanie Cheng. Alex Miller is a standout with, *Journey to the Stone Country*, *Autmun Lang* and *The Passage of Love*. Eva Hornung, *Dog Boy* brilliant and *Hannah Kent*, *Burial Rites*. I adore Peter Goldsworthy's short stories.

I adored immersing myself in *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth despite rumblings that he wrote for white people...I've read a few of Salman Rushdie's crazy books. What a clever man. I especially liked *East West* which was nine short pieces about what separates and sometimes unites East and West.

I am a Michael Ondaatje fan, especially his poetry. I'd also recommend *The Cairo Trilogy* by Naguib Mafhouz, Orhan Pamuk *My Name is Red* and Kahled Husseini of *The Kite Runner* fame. Back in teh day I loved Ben Okri too.

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