

**LLC Historical Novel Book Club**  
**Coordinators: Dennis Flavin and Bob Martin**

**Revised Syllabus for 2022-2023**

(Descriptions of novels are taken from Amazon.com. with minor edits)

Historical Book Club Schedule - 2022 to 2023					
Revised					
Locale	Period	Class	Book	Author	Pages
North Africa	15th cent	October 3, 2022	Leo Africanus	Amin Maalouf	360
England	18th cent	November 28, 2022	Moll Flanders	Daniel Defoe	246
USA	19th cent	January 30, 2023	Warlock	Oakley Hall	488
England	16th cent	February 27, 2023	Dissolution	C. J. Sansom	466
Kenya	20th cent	March 27, 2023	Desertion	Abdulrazak Gurnah	272
Byzantium	6th cent	April 24, 2023	Fortune's Child	James Conroyd Martin	400
Dominican Republic	20th cent	May 22, 2023	The Feast of the Goat	Mario Vargas Llosa	416
France	20th cent	June 26, 2023	The Flanders Road	Claude Simon	208
Ethiopia	20th cent	July 31, 2023	The Shadow King	Maaza Mengiste	448
Norway	14th cent	August 28, 2023	The Wreath	Sigrid Undset	336

## September

***Leo Africanus* (1986) 360 pp**  
 by Amin Maalouf

"I, Hasan the son of Muhammad the weigh-master, I, Jean-Leon de Medici, circumcised at the hand of a barber and baptized at the hand of a pope, I am now called the African, but I am not from Africa, nor from Europe, nor from Arabia. I am also called the Granadan, the Fassi, the Zayyati, but I come from no country, from no city, no tribe. I am the son of the road, my country is the caravan, my life the most unexpected of voyages."

Thus wrote the fictional Leo Africanus, in his fortieth year, in this imaginary autobiography of the famous *actual* geographer, adventurer, and scholar Hasan al-Wazzan, who was born in Granada in 1488.

His family fled the Inquisition and took him to North Africa. Hasan became an itinerant merchant, and made many journeys to the East.

He was captured by a Sicilian pirate and taken back to Rome as a gift to Pope Leo X, who baptized him Johannes Leo. He wrote the first trilingual dictionary (Latin, Arabic and Hebrew), as well as his celebrated *Description of Africa*, for which he is still remembered as Leo Africanus

## November 28

*Moll Flanders* (1722) 246 pp  
by Daniel Defoe

First published in 1722, Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* is the classic and tragic morality tale of its title character. Based in part on the true story of a female criminal that Defoe met in Newgate Prison, Moll Flanders is the daughter of a convict and is driven by a singular ambition, to raise her station in life, by any means necessary. Her tale encompasses marriages, divorces, transportation to the American colonies and ultimate triumph.

## January 30

*Warlock* (1958) 488 pp  
by Oakley Hall

"Tombstone, Arizona, during the 1880's is, in ways, our national Camelot: a never-never land where American virtues are embodied in the Earps, and the opposite evils in the Clanton gang; where the confrontation at the OK Corral takes on some of the dry purity of the Arthurian joust.

"Oakley Hall, in his very fine novel *Warlock* has restored to the myth of Tombstone its full, mortal, blooded humanity. Before the agonized epic of *Warlock* is over with—the rebellion of the proto-Wobblies working in the mines, the struggling for political control of the area, the gunfighting, mob violence, the personal crises of those in power—the collective awareness that is *Warlock* must face its own inescapable Horror: that what is called society, with its law and order, is as frail, as precarious, as flesh and can be snuffed out and assimilated back into the desert as easily as a corpse can." —Thomas Pynchon

## **February 27**

***Dissolution* (2004) 466 pp**

**By C. J. Sansom**

**Dissolution is an utterly riveting portrayal of Tudor England. The year is 1537, and the country is divided between those faithful to the Catholic Church and those loyal to the king and the newly established Church of England. When a royal commissioner is brutally murdered in a monastery on the south coast of England, Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's feared vicar general, summons fellow reformer Matthew Shardlake to lead the inquiry.... not to be missed by fans of *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*.**

## **March 27**

***Desertion* (2005) 272 pp**

**by Abdulrazak Gurnah (2021 Nobel Prize Winner)**

**Early one morning in 1899, in a small town along the coast from Mombasa, Hassanali sets out for the mosque. But that morning he never gets there, for out of the desert stumbles an Englishman who collapses at his feet. That man is Martin Pearce - writer, traveller and something of an Orientalist. He is taken to recuperate at the house of a colonial official, Frederick Turner. When he visits Hassanali to thank him for his rescue, he meets his sister Rehana and is immediately fascinated by her beautiful eyes and her air of tragedy. In this crumbling town on the edge of civilised life, with the empire on the brink of a new century, a passionate love affair begins that brings two cultures together and that will reverberate through three generations and across continents. It carries its consequences to Zanzibar in the early 1950s, a country struggling with its complicated legacy of slavery and foreign rule.**

**April 24**

***Fortune's Child: A Novel of Empress Theodora* (2019) 400 pp  
by James Conroyd Martin**

**KIRKUS REVIEWS: "A meticulously researched historical account presented in the form of a thrilling political drama."**

**"A historical novel set in sixth-century Constantinople charts the extraordinary ascent of a woman from poverty to royal power.... The author vividly brings to life the cinematic story of Theodora's life, chronicling her rise, more halting than meteoric, to spectacular power. Martin's command of the historical period—not just the chief political events, but also the nuances of its cultural mores—is masterful.**

**May 22**

***The Feast of the Goat* (2000) 416 pp  
by Mario Vargas Llosa,**

**In this 'masterpiece of Latin American and world literature, and one of the finest political novels ever written' (Bookforum), Mario Vargas Llosa recounts the end of a regime and the birth of a terrible democracy, giving voice to the historical Trujillo and the victims, both innocent and complicit, drawn into his deadly orbit.**

**Haunted all her life by feelings of terror and emptiness, forty-nine-year-old Urania Cabral returns to her native Dominican Republic - and finds herself reliving the events of 1961, when the capital was still called Trujillo City and one old man terrorized a nation of three million. Rafael Trujillo, the depraved ailing dictator whom Dominicans call the Goat, controls his inner circle with a combination of violence and blackmail. In Trujillo's gaudy palace, treachery and cowardice have become a way of life. But Trujillo's grasp is slipping. There is a conspiracy against him, and a Machiavellian revolution already underway that will have bloody consequences of its own.**

## **June 26**

***The Flanders Road* (1960) 192 pp  
by Claude Simon**

**By the winner of the 1985 Nobel Prize in Literature, a riveting, stylistically audacious modernist epic about the French cavalry's bloody face-off against German Panzer tanks during WWII.**

**On a sunny day in May 1940, the French army sent out the cavalry against the invading German army's panzer tanks. Unsurprisingly, the French were routed. Twenty-six-year-old Claude Simon was among the French forces. As they retreated, he saw his captain shot off his horse by a German sniper.**

**This is the primal scene to which Simon returns repeatedly in his fiction and nowhere so powerfully as in his most famous novel *The Flanders Road*. Here Simon's own memories overlap with those of his central character, Georges, whose captain, a distant relative, dies a similar death.**

## **July 31**

***The Shadow King* (2020) 448 pp  
by Maaza Mengiste**

**Shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize, and named a best book of the year by the New York Times, NPR, Elle, Time, and more, *The Shadow King* is an “unforgettable epic from an immensely talented author who's unafraid to take risks” (Michael Schaub, NPR).**

**Set during Mussolini's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia, *The Shadow King* takes us back to the first real conflict of World War II, casting light on the women soldiers who were left out of the historical record. At its heart is orphaned maid Hirut, who finds herself tumbling into a new world of thefts and violations, of betrayals and overwhelming rage.**

**August 28**

***The Wreath* (1920) 336 pp  
Sigrid Undset**

***The Wreath* is the first volume of the trilogy *Kristin Lavransdatter*, a classic of Norwegian literature that takes place in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It tells the story of Kristin's early life. Raised in a loving and devoutly religious family, Kristin develops a sensitive but wilful character, defying her family in small and large ways. At an early age, she is exposed to various tragedies. After an attempted rape raises questions about her reputation, she is sent to Nonneseter Abbey, Oslo, a Benedictine nunnery, which proves to be a turning point in her life. Kristin does not long remain a nun, and therein lies the tale.**