

When Home Won't Let You Stay

Migration through Contemporary Art

Literature About Migration

Novels, Poetry, Memoirs, and Biographies

- Sulaiman Addonia, *Silence Is My Mother Tongue: A Novel* (Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2020).

From the publisher:

Sulaiman Addonia details the textures and rhythms of everyday life in a refugee camp, and questions what it means to be an individual when one has lost all that makes a home or a future. Intimate and subversive, *Silence Is My Mother Tongue* dissects the ways society wages war on women and explores the stories we must tell to survive in a broken, inhospitable environment.

- Ayad Akhtar, *Homeland Elegies* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2020).

From the publisher:

An American son and his immigrant father search for belonging and reconciliation in the age of Trump. A deeply personal novel of identity and belonging in a nation coming apart at the seams, "Homeland elegies" blends fact and fiction to tell an epic story of belonging and dispossession in the world that 9/11 made. Part family drama, part satire, part picaresque, at its heart it is the story of a father and son, and the country they call home.

- Julia Alvarez, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1991).

From the publisher:

In the 1960s, political tension forces the García family away from Santo Domingo and towards the Bronx. The sisters all hit their strides in America, adapting and thriving despite cultural differences, language barriers, and prejudice. But Mami and Papi are more traditional, and they have far more difficulty adjusting to their new country. Making matters worse, the girls—frequently embarrassed by their parents—find ways to rebel against them.

- Francisco Cantú, *The Line Becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2018).

From the publisher:

For Francisco Cantú, the border is in the blood: his mother, a park ranger and daughter of a Mexican immigrant, raised him in the scrublands of the Southwest. Driven to understand the hard realities of the landscape he loves, Cantú joins the Border Patrol. He and his partners learn to track other humans under blistering sun and through frigid nights. They haul in the dead and deliver to detention those they find alive. Plagued by a growing awareness of his complicity in a dehumanizing enterprise, he abandons the Patrol for civilian life. But when an immigrant friend travels to Mexico to visit his dying mother and does not return, Cantú discovers that the border has migrated with him, and now he must know the full extent of the violence it wreaks, on both sides of the line.

- Chris Cleave, *Little Bee* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2012).

From the publisher:

A devastating novel about a refugee girl from Nigeria who flees to safety at the home of a posh London couple she'd met years ago. Beautiful and brutal.

- Alephonsion Deng, Benson Deng, and Benjamin Ajak with Judy A. Bernstein, *They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky: The True Story of Three Lost Boys from Sudan*, 10th anniversary edition (New York: PublicAffairs, 2015).

From the publisher:

A brutal true story told by three "lost boys" who escaped Sudan via a refugee camp and immigrated to the United States. The writers were children themselves when the events of the book began, and reading it will be an unforgettable experience for mature teens as well as adults.

- Dave Eggers, *What Is the What: The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng* (San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2006).

From the publisher:

A biographical novel traces the story of Valentino Achak Deng, who as a boy of seven was separated from his family when his village in southern Sudan was attacked by government helicopters and became one of the estimated 17,000 "lost boys of Sudan" before relocating from a Kenyan refugee camp to Atlanta in 2001.

- Melissa Fleming and Brandon Stanton, *A Hope More Powerful Than the Sea: The Journey of Doaa al Zamel* (London: Fleet, 2018).

From the publisher:

Fleming, the chief spokesperson for the UN High Commission for Refugees, wrote this incredibly compelling true story of Doaa Zamel, a Syrian refugee who survived the September 2014 shipwreck in the Mediterranean Sea.

- Malaka Gharib, *I Was Their American Dream: A Graphic Memoir* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 2019).

From the publisher:

I Was Their American Dream is at once a coming-of-age story and a reminder of the thousands of immigrants who come to America in search for a better life for themselves and their children. The daughter of parents with unfulfilled dreams themselves, Malaka navigated her childhood chasing her parents' ideals, learning to code-switch between her family's Filipino and Egyptian customs, adapting to white culture to fit in, crushing on skater boys, and trying to understand the tension between holding onto cultural values and trying to be an all-American kid. Malaka Gharib's triumphant graphic memoir brings to life her teenage antics and illuminates earnest questions about identity and culture, while providing thoughtful insight into the lives of modern immigrants and the generation of millennial children they raised. Malaka's story is a heartfelt tribute to the American immigrants who have invested their future in the promise of the American dream.

- Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West: A Novel* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2018).

From the publisher:

In a country teetering on the brink of civil war, two young people meet—sensual, fiercely independent Nadia and gentle, restrained Saeed. They embark on a furtive love affair, and are soon cloistered in a premature intimacy by the unrest roiling their city. When it explodes, turning familiar streets into a patchwork of checkpoints and bomb blasts, they begin to hear whispers about doors—doors that can whisk people far away, if perilously and for a price. As the violence escalates, Nadia and Saeed decide that they no longer have a choice. Leaving their homeland and their old lives behind, they find a door and step through. . . .

Exit West follows these remarkable characters as they emerge into an alien and uncertain future, struggling to hold on to each other, to their past, to the very sense of who they are. Profoundly intimate and powerfully inventive, it tells an unforgettable story of love, loyalty, and courage that is both completely of our time and for all time.

- Lauren Heidbrink, *Migranthood: Youth in a New Era of Deportation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).

From the publisher:

Migranthood chronicles deportation from the perspectives of Indigenous youth who migrate unaccompanied from Guatemala to Mexico and the United States.

- Cristina Henriquez, *Book of Unknown Americans*, first Vintage Contemporaries edition (New York: Vintage Books, 2015).

From the publisher:

Arturo and Alma Rivera have lived their whole lives in Mexico. One day, their beautiful fifteen-year-old daughter, Maribel, sustains a terrible injury, one that casts doubt on whether she'll ever be the same. And so, leaving all they have behind, the Riveras come to America with a single dream: that in this country of great opportunity and resources, Maribel can get better.

When Mayor Toro, whose family is from Panama, sees Maribel in a Dollar Tree store, it is love at first sight. It's also the beginning of a friendship between the Rivera and Toro families, whose web of guilt and love and responsibility is at this novel's core.

Woven into their stories are the testimonials of men and women who have come to the United States from all over Latin America. Their journeys and their voices will inspire you, surprise you, and break your heart.

Suspenseful, wry and immediate, rich in spirit and humanity, *The Book of Unknown Americans* is a work of rare force and originality that offers a resonant new definition of what it means to be an American.

- Castillo M. Hernandez, *Children of the Land* (New York: Harper, 2020).

From the publisher:

With beauty, grace, and honesty, Castillo recounts his and his family's encounters with a system that treats them as criminals for seeking safe, ordinary lives. He writes of the Sunday afternoon when he opened the door to an ICE officer who had one hand on his holster, of the hours he spent making a fake social security card so that he could work to support his family, of his father's deportation and the decade that he spent waiting to return to his wife and children only to be denied reentry.

- Sirwan Kajjo, *Nothing but Soot: A Novel* (Middletown, DE: CreateSpace, 2015).

From the publisher:

Kawa is a twentysomething Kurdish man whose quest for a permanent home never ends. He leaves his native Syria as a teenager and lives in Lebanon for a while. He then moves to the United States where he settles permanently. This coming-of-age novel narrates Kawa's story as he goes through several stages of identity crisis, while living in his new homeland. The novel tackles issues such as sexuality, love, religion, and ethnic politics in a diverse Middle East.

- Dina Nayeri, *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You* (New York: Catapult, 2019).

From the publisher:

Aged eight, Dina Nayeri fled Iran along with her mother and brother and lived in the crumbling shell of an Italian hotel-turned-refugee camp. Eventually she was granted asylum in America. She settled in Oklahoma, then made her way to Princeton University. In this book, Nayeri weaves together her own vivid story with the stories of other refugees and asylum seekers in recent years, bringing us inside their daily lives and taking us through the different stages of their journeys, from escape to asylum to resettlement. In these pages, a couple fall in love over the phone, and women gather to prepare the noodles that remind them of home. A closeted queer man tries to make his case truthfully as he seeks asylum, and a translator attempts to help new arrivals present their stories to officials.

Nayeri confronts notions like “the swarm,” and, on the other hand, “good” immigrants. She calls attention to the harmful way in which Western governments privilege certain dangers over others. With surprising and provocative questions, *The Ungrateful Refugee* challenges us to rethink how we talk about the refugee crisis.

- Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Refugees* (New York: Grove, 2017).

From the publisher:

A collection of stories, written over a twenty-year period, examines the Vietnamese experience in America as well as questions of home, family, and identity.

- Nikesh Shukla and Chimene Suleyman, eds., *The Good Immigrant: 26 Writers Reflect on America* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2019).

From the publisher:

Presents essays by first- and second-generation immigrant writers on the realities of immigration, multiculturalism, and marginalization in an increasingly divided America.

- Tommy Orange, *There There* (Toronto: Emblem Editions, 2019).

From the publisher:

A novel that grapples with the complex history and identity of Native Americans follows twelve characters, each of whom has private reasons for traveling to the Big Oakland Powwow.

- Rosayra Pablo Cruz and Julie Schweitert Collazo, *The Book of Rosy: A Mother's Story of Separation at the Border* (New York: HarperOne, 2020).

From the publisher:

From a mother whose children were taken from her at the U.S. border by the American government in 2018 and another mother who helped reunite the family, a crucial, searing story about the immigration odyssey, family separation and reunification, and the power of individuals to band together to overcome even the most cruel and unjust circumstances.

- Ben Rawlence, *City of Thorns: Nine Lives in the World's Largest Refugee Camp* (New York: Picador, 2017).

From the publisher:

One reviewer called this work of nonfiction, which chronicles the massive Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, "a book that just might change the world or, at the very least, awaken readers to one criminally forgotten corner of it."

- Tom Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017).

From the publisher:

The Founding Fathers tried to protect us from the threat they knew, the tyranny that overcame ancient democracy. Today, our political order faces new threats, not unlike the totalitarianism of the twentieth century. We are no wiser than the Europeans who saw democracy yield to fascism, Nazism, or communism. Our one advantage is that we might learn from their experience.

- Marivi Soliven, *The Mango Bride* (New York: New American Library, 2013).

From the publisher:

Banished by her wealthy Filipino family in Manila, Amparo Guerrero travels to Oakland, California, to forge a new life. Although her mother labels her life in exile a diminished one, Amparo believes her struggles are a small price to pay for freedom.

- Lysley Tenorio, *Son of Good Fortune: A Novel* (New York: HarperCollins, 2020).

From the publisher:

From award-winning author Lysley Tenorio, comes a big-hearted debut novel following an undocumented Filipino son as he navigates his relationship with his mother, an uncertain future, and the place he calls home

- Luis Albert Urrea, *The House of Broken Angels* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2018).

From the publisher:

In his final days, beloved and ailing patriarch Miguel Angel de La Cruz, affectionately called Big Angel, has summoned his entire clan for one last legendary birthday party. But as the party approaches, his mother, nearly one hundred, dies, transforming the weekend into a farewell doubleheader. Among the guests is Big Angel's half brother, known as Little Angel, who must reckon with the truth that although he shares a father with his siblings, he has not, as a half gringo, shared a life.

- Jose Antonio Vargas, *Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen* (New York: Dey Street Books, 2018).

From the publisher:

Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas, called “the most famous undocumented immigrant in America,” tackles one of the defining issues of our time in this explosive and deeply personal call to arms.

- Ping Wang, *My Name Is Immigrant* (New York: Hanging Loose, 2020).

From the publisher:

Internationally acclaimed writer and poet Wang Ping's timely new book of poetry, *My Name Is Immigrant* is a song for the plight and pride of immigrants around the globe, including the U.S., China, Syria, Honduras, Guatemala, Nepal, Tibet and other places. 'Shortly after arriving in the U.S.,' writes Wang, 'I walked into the wrong class, which turned out to be a creative writing workshop taught by a poet. I decided to stay in the course and wrote my first poem there. It was about my experience in New York as an immigrant. It got published, then selected by the Best American Poetry. I went on to write more immigrant stories about people from around the world, as I discovered we are one giant village of immigration, and as the topic has grown in importance.'

- C. Pam Zhang, *How Much of These Hills Is Gold: A Novel* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2020).

From the publisher:

An electric debut novel set against the twilight of the American gold rush, two siblings are on the run in an unforgiving landscape--trying not just to survive but to find a home.

Ba dies in the night; Ma is already gone. Newly orphaned children of immigrants, Lucy and Sam are suddenly alone in a land that refutes their existence. Fleeing the threats of their western mining town, they set off to bury their father in the only way that will set them free from their past. Along the way, they encounter giant buffalo bones, tiger paw prints, and the specters of a ravaged landscape as well as family secrets, sibling rivalry, and glimpses of a different kind of future.

Both epic and intimate, blending Chinese symbolism and reimagined history with fiercely original language and storytelling, *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* is a haunting adventure story, an unforgettable sibling story, and the announcement of a stunning new voice in literature. On a broad level, it explores race in an expanding country and the question of where immigrants are allowed to belong. But page by page, it's about the memories that bind and divide families, and the yearning for home.