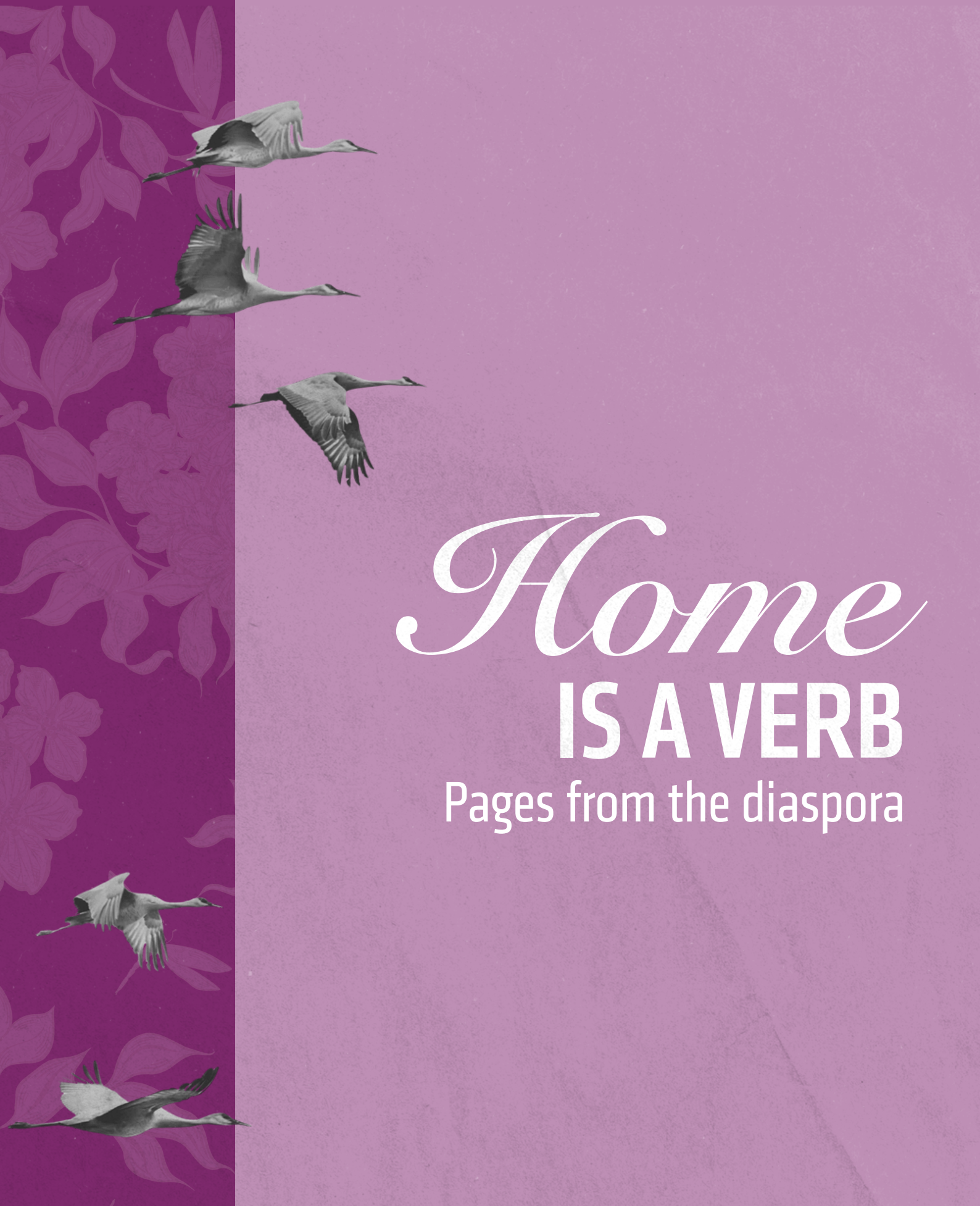




Home IS A VERB

Pages from the diaspora



European Union
Global Diaspora Facility

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ICMPD

International Centre for
Migration Policy Development

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Foreword

The intersection of literature and diaspora sits at the crossroads of identity, memory, migration, language loss and cultural translation. These themes have long shaped migrant writing, narratives of exile and trauma and postcolonial critique, particularly within South Asian, Caribbean and African literary traditions.

In recent years, this field has expanded beyond canonical literary forms into more immediate and accessible modes of expression. Digital diaspora storytelling, blogs and youth participatory platforms are reshaping how migration is written, shared and understood. These forms make migrant experiences more visible and allow them to unfold in real time. Against this backdrop, diaspora literature offers an increasingly rich and diverse landscape of reading. It provides literary depth as well as deeply relatable narratives that speak across frontiers, generations and languages.

This collection emerged from a conversation with Nicole, EUDiF's youth diaspora intern, whose anthropological perspective on migration and belonging sparked a deeper curiosity. At its heart, this initiative rests on a simple idea: literature does not only describe migration; it helps us think feel, and understand what it means to belong across multiple worlds. Often, diaspora writers document the migration journey through their own lens, transforming lived challenges into spaces for healing, language preservation and explorations of dual and multiple cultural identities. In this sense, I believe that home is increasingly becoming a 'verb' rather than a place.

My sincere thanks go to Nicole for embracing this idea and for curating recommendations drawn from EUDiF team, youth and diaspora members, and our shared conversations. I hope these readings offer both insight and reflection. Happy readings!

Diana HINCUI
Senior project manager
EU Global Diaspora Facility

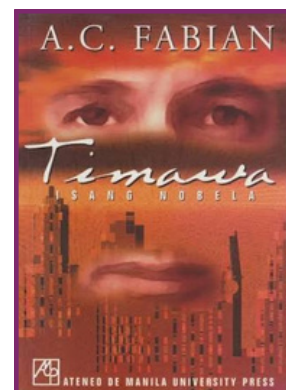


Reading migration: context and reflection

by Nicole ULANDAY

When a word becomes a world

The first novel I read, when I was in third grade, was a Filipino novel entitled *Timawa* by Agustin Calarde Fabian. It was thanks to my eldest sister who spent the first sixteen years of her life far from us because she had to live under the care of our grandmother where she was sustained by our aunt, then a migrant domestic worker in the Middle East. Without her, my sister would not have been able to afford this book. *Timawa* was a story of a Filipino migrant, Andres, in the United States.



What really made me read *Timawa* at such an age when most children around me were still reading illustrated storybooks was its title. *Timawa* is a word in Filipino whose definition shifts across the Philippine archipelago. As I spent my early years living in Nueva Ecija in Central Luzon Philippines where people speak a Tagalog dialect, the word has a connotation. And it is derogatory, scandalous even.

In Nueva Ecija, a *timawa* is destitute, *poorer than a church mouse* as the English idiom goes. But in Filipino, it has another layer: someone so impoverished as a dog scavenging and devouring incessantly.

Reading Fabian's account of Andres from his childhood in the Philippines to his migration to the United States and eventual return introduced me, perhaps prematurely, to the idea of the "American Dream." In the story, Andres works as a dishwasher and janitor by day while studying medicine at night, his life entangled with both American and Filipino companions.

Set before the Second World War, Andres seems to belong to the early wave of Filipino labour migrants to the United States, the precursors to what we now call as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), as described in [EUDiF's global mapping update](#), and the ancestors of the Filipino-American diaspora.

"A timawa is a poor, lowly person. He is usually the one who serves a wealthy neighbor, and may be a servant whose wages are only food just to get fed. But, above all, he is also the person who has been freed from enslavement because of his own efforts."

Liwayway Arceo, introduction in the novel entitled The Timawa and A.C. Fabian: The teacher in his students' eyes (my translation)

After reading this book, my understanding of *timawa* changed. It no longer referred to its definition back in Nueva Ecija as it became connected with the uneven structures that compel people to leave, their mobility and endurance. Looking back, I can trace my interest in migrant lives and diasporic worlds to this encounter: a migrant story made accessible through a migrant's remittance.

This duality of migration as both lived reality and narrated experience has led me to reflect on the many ways migration continues to shape, and be shaped by, stories. Sometimes, all it takes is a book to kickstart that understanding.

On the many ways of telling

But books are only one way these stories travel.

Have you ever come across a blog where a writer documents her life abroad? You may have also encountered EUDiF's *Culture in motion zine* which assembles the hats diasporas wear across cultures starting with the *memory keeper* that collects and shares stories. This echoes Mathur's (2024) point that memory is central to shaping diasporic identity, and that literature allows diasporic individuals to preserve cultural memory and transmit it to future generations.

Each of these and many other forms such as novels, anthologies, blogs, songs, essays offer a distinct lens on migration. Novels like *Timawa* often trace long arcs of departure and return, placing individual lives within broader historical currents. Anthologies, often consisting of short stories and poems, do the same but in shorter form, gathering these lives side by side. Blogs capture the ongoing and unfinished nature of diasporic life. Songs carry migration and in rhythm and melody: you feel it first before you can name it. Essays, on the other hand, foreground lived experience, making visible the emotional and material textures of migration. Meanwhile, curated publications and zines bring these voices into conversations.

What emerges from this multiplicity is not a single narrative, but a constellation of stories.

"Just as there is no singular migrant experience, there are myriad ways of writing about migration."

Dohra Ahmad, Introduction, *The penguin book of migration literature*

Reading across diaspora

This publication seeks to hold space for that constellation. Mathur (2024) defines diaspora literature as the "literary works produced by writers who live outside their native countries or who write about diasporic experiences". With this in mind, this passion project of mine, and at the same time my internship project, puts this forward as the definition behind the curated list of literary pieces you are about to discover. You will encounter different forms of writing that reflect the many ways migration and diaspora life are told.

At EUDiF, we have engaged with several initiatives where diaspora writers and storytelling practices reveal the richness of this space, helping to promote cultural identity, heritage, and shared values. For example, EUDiF visited the Salon International de l'Édition et du Livre, where the *Council of Moroccan Community Abroad (CCME)* plays an active role in promoting diaspora writers and highlighting their literary and cultural contributions. Similarly, initiatives such as Writers Beyond Borders by Association Tamarieli have created spaces for readings and encounters with diaspora communities, where stories and lived experiences are shared and brought into dialogue through public events and conversations.

In returning to *Timawa*, I am reminded that my first encounter with migration was not through theory, but through narrative, a story made possible by the very processes it sought to describe. Today, whether encountered in a printed novel, a blog post or a digital screen, these stories continue to travel, much like the people who tell them.

Where *literature* meets *migration*

Welcome to EUDiF's Diaspora Book Nook!

We are delighted to share your digital library card. Keep it as a reminder that stories travel, memories connect us and home can be found in the pages we read. Whether you print it or save it digitally, return to it each time you discover a new book, song or story.

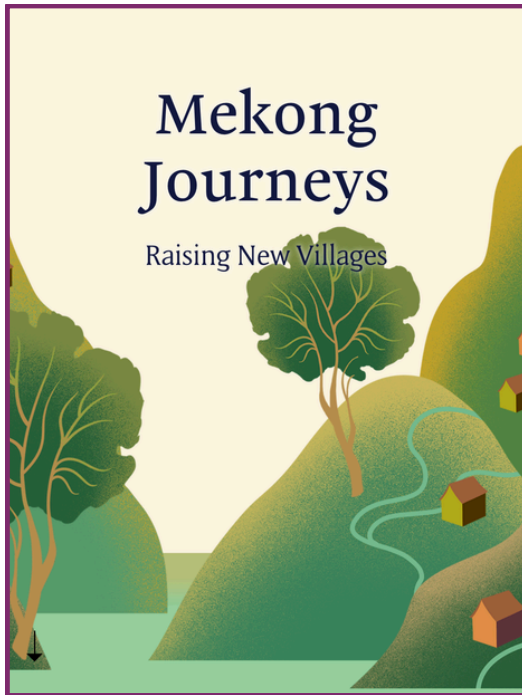
This diaspora book nook is born from the love for literature and the subject of migration. We have carefully curated this list with contributions from EUDiF's team and alumni.

We hope these books, songs and blogs accompany you on your own journey of discovery. Happy reading!

LIBRARY CARD	
NAME:	
AUTHOR	TITLE
EUDiF	



Home is *remembering*



Mekong journeys: Raising new villages

Blog

A collection of ten Southeast Asian diaspora members' journeys (defined as the "Villager" in this blog project) when they fled from their home countries during the Communist insurgency in the Mekong region, particularly in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, and later rebuilt their "home" and community in Minnesota, USA. Each of their lived experiences is told in the form of interactive map, photographs and timeline, aiming to preserve the oral histories and inform the current and future generation of Southeast Asian diasporas about their backgrounds and identities.

“These curated stories beautifully show how diasporas preserve, rebuild and pass on their identities and memory of “home” through different means that are connected to their past. What connects them is their determination to (re)connect their communities to their diasporic roots while navigating lives in their new “home”.

Nicha PHANNAJIT, EUDiF alumna

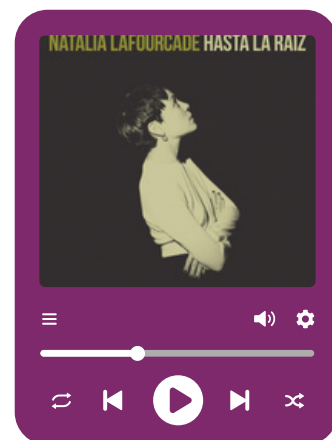


SONG MATCH

Hasta la raíz by Natalia Lafourcade

In her Latin Grammy-winning album *Hasta la Raíz*, the Mexican singer-songwriter honors her homeland by reflecting on the various elements that shape a person's life. She explores themes such as family, friendships, personal experiences and the significance of staying connected to one's roots.

Recommended by: Nalé BARBIERI PEDERIVA,
Communications officer



Home is *speaking*



On earth we're briefly gorgeous by Ocean Vuong

Novel

A son composes a letter to his mother, who cannot read or speak English, unveiling their Vietnamese family history and sharing aspects of his life she was unaware of. As Little Dog, now in his late twenties, narrates the letter, it illuminates the intricate love they share while exploring themes of race, class and masculinity. The narrative addresses issues of addiction, violence, and trauma, all while underscoring the significance of compassion and the art of storytelling in the face of silence. It captures not only the power of sharing one's own narrative but also the profound impact of unacknowledged voices.

“What I find interesting about this book is that the author is writing to his mom, who doesn't speak English. Though she'll never understand how he truly feels, he can be honest about his life without fear of judgment. Recounting these memories helps him come to terms with his past and understand his identity with every word that flows from his pen.

Zéline DENNIS, Diaspora youth intern

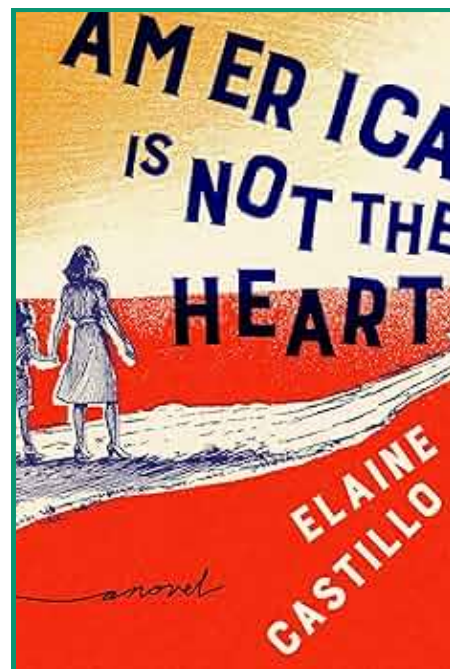


America is not the heart by Elaine Castillo

Novel

Hero, short for Geronima, is a Filipina immigrant who arrives in the Bay Area in the USA in the early '90s, fleeing political unrest to start over with her uncle's family. She helps raise her young cousin Roni and grows close to other local Filipino-Americans. Part family saga, part meditation on the Philippines' violent '80s and '90s history, the novel uncovers the buried pain beneath immigrant family life and the pull of the American dream. Its blend of English, Pangasinan, Tagalog and Ilocano feels effortless throughout, especially in how young Roni glides between English and Pangasinan without a second thought.

Recommended by: Nicole ULANDAY, Diaspora youth intern



Home is *crossing*



Small boat by Vincent Delecroix translated by Helen Stevenson

Novel

A tragic incident unfolded when a migrant-carrying inflatable dinghy capsized in the Channel, resulting in 27 deaths. The migrants, mistakenly directed by French authorities to seek help from the British, faced delayed rescue efforts. The narrator, a French marine rescue operator, who handled the distress calls finds herself accused of negligence. She questions her culpability, pondering if she should bear more blame than the sea, war or the crises at the root of such tragedies.

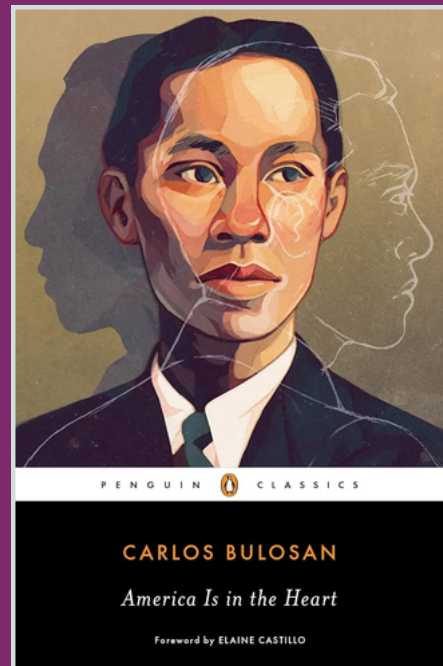
Recommended by: Nicole ULANDAY, Diaspora youth intern

America is in the heart by Carlos Bulosan

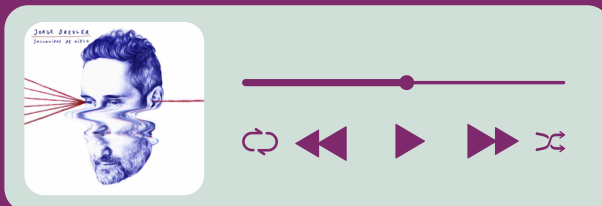
Novel

Centered on crossing as a migrant, the book shows that migration is not just a physical journey but also an emotional and social passage: Allos crosses borders, labor regimes, and identities, moving from rural hardship into the brutal realities of migrant work in Alaska and on the U.S. West Coast. Through that journey, Bulosan presents crossing as both loss and survival, an act of leaving family and homeland behind while slowly building solidarity, political consciousness and a fragile sense of belonging.

Recommended by: Nicole ULANDAY, Diaspora youth intern



SONG MATCH

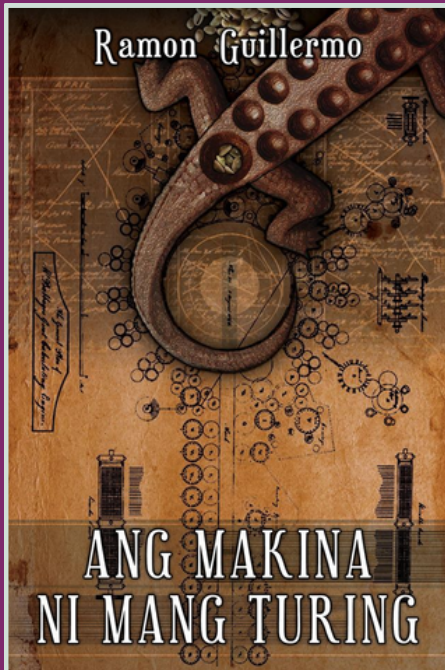


Movimiento by Jorge Drexler

This song connects us to our shared human nature of constant movement, highlighting that if we are not immigrants, we are descendants of immigrants.

Recommended by: Nalé BARBIERI PEDERIVA,
Communications officer

Home is *crossing*



Ang makina ni Mang Turing (Mr. Turing's machine) by Ramon Guillermo

Novel

An unnamed young Filipino *ilustrado*, having just finished his law degree in Madrid, extends his stay in Europe by one more month, drifting from Leipzig to Hamburg while trying to finish a historical novel about the Dagohoy Rebellion (1744–1829) in the Philippines. In Hamburg, this crossing takes an unexpected turn: he meets a Malay family, whose father Waruno is a master of *sungka*, and the two men fall into daily games together representing a small, cross-diaspora ritual of exchange between two colonised Southeast Asian cultures meeting far from home. As their friendship deepens, the narrator becomes curious about a package he has been asked to carry back to Manila which is a mysterious machine once owned by Mang Turing, a man his family knew in his youth, who died abroad in Spain. As the narrator prepares

to make his final crossing home, the machine, and the game of *sungka* itself, becomes a way of thinking through Philippine history as a series of missed and seized moments, using the board game's back-and-forth motion of captured and released pieces as a metaphor for colonisation, resistance and return.

“*Ang Makina ni Mang Turing is, without exaggeration, probably the best novel I have ever read.*

This novel brilliantly draws a connection between taking action and the game of sungka. It explains that the term sungka is derived from the Arabic word naqala, which means "to move." In Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia and the Philippines, where this game is prevalent, it involves significant movement between different "houses." This mirrors the journey of the character in the story, who ultimately leaves us uncertain about whether he ever makes it home, as the narrative concludes before he reaches Manila, leaving us in suspense about his survival.

What makes this novel truly remarkable is that if the reader is familiar with playing sungka, the calculations presented within the book will cleverly unveil the name of the protagonist.

Nicole ULANDAY, Diaspora youth intern



→ sungka board

Home is *living between*



La valija de Lionel by Hernán Casciari

Narrative essay

This essay explores the Argentine migrants in Barcelona who followed Lionel Messi's rise as if it were their own story. Through the image of the "suitcase," it reflects on migration, nostalgia, language and identity, showing Messi as a symbol of keeping Argentine speech and culture alive while living abroad.

“ I think this story captures beautifully how we as diaspora maintain, with a varying degree of effort, multiple identities and homes with us. It is a constant dance between fully integrating into your host country and maintaining things that you brought in your metaphorical suitcase. Through Messi's story, Casciari explores how the suitcase can be kept open so as to come back to your country of origin, but also not to forget what you brought. I particularly love the descriptions of how impactful tiny habits can be for diasporas to maintain some part of their identity, such as learning how to boil a can of condensed milk to make dulce de leche or watch Messi play in Barcelona in the 2010s.

Nalé BARBIERI PEDERIVA, Communications officer



Migrant vote by Teresa Buczkowska

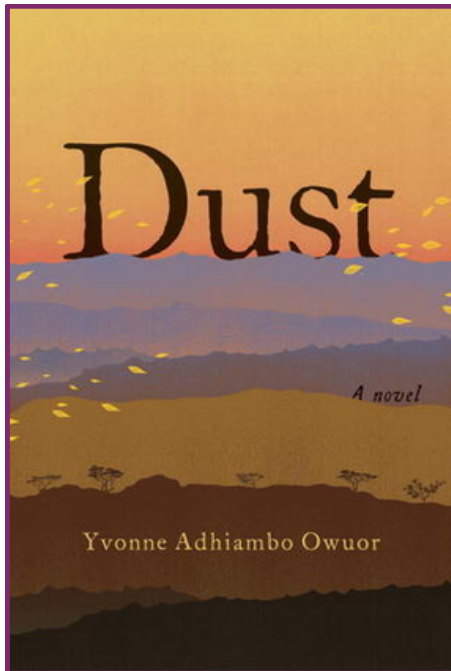
Blog

An independent blog/newsletter focused on migrant political participation, civic engagement and diaspora voices. It explores how migrants and diasporas engage with democratic systems in both countries of residence and origin. It features personal stories and lived experiences, highlighting how migrants navigate identity, belonging and participation.



Recommended by: Diana HINCU, Senior project manager

Home is *living between*



Dust by Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor

Novel

This novel follows Ajany, an artist living abroad in Brazil, who returns to her family's home in remote northern Kenya after her brother's death. Her homecoming unsettles a household already shaped by displacement: her father carries the weight of Kenya's turbulent past, and the family is soon joined by an Englishman retracing his own father's disappearance, drawing Kenya and Britain's intertwined history into the present. Through Ajany's passage between the life she built elsewhere and the place she left behind, the story reflects migration as an ongoing act of living between places, generations, and versions of home.

“For me, *Dust* is a reminder that home is shaped as much by memory as it is by place. The novel shows how returning can bring both healing and difficult truths, and that understanding where we come from is often part of understanding ourselves.

Mary OTIENO, Diaspora youth intern

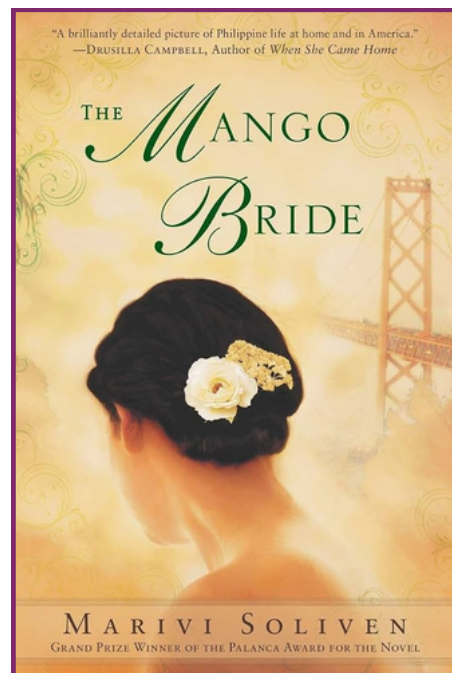


The mango bride by Marivi Soliven Blanco

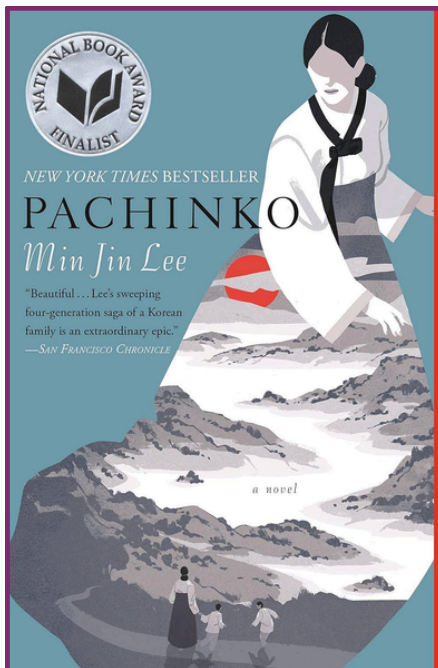
Novel

This novel follows two Filipino women whose paths lead them, by very different routes, to the same immigrant community in Oakland, California. Amparo Guerrero, from a wealthy Manila family, is sent abroad after a personal scandal disrupts her privileged life, while Beverly Obejas, from a much poorer background, travels to the United States as a mail-order bride in search of greater stability and opportunity. As their stories converge, the novel reflects on how migration can arise from vastly different circumstances and social positions, and how the search for a new life abroad can bring people together across lines of class and background.

Recommended by: Nicole ULANDAY, Diaspora youth intern



Home is *living between*



Pachinko by Min Jin Lee

Novel

The novel follows a Korean family across four generations after they emigrate to Japan, and its central tension is the Zainichi Korean experience: never fully accepted as Japanese, no longer quite Korean either, with each generation negotiating that in-between status differently as history (Japanese colonial rule, the Second World War, postwar Japan) presses in around them. It begins with Sunja, a young woman whose pregnancy by a man who cannot marry her sets the family's migration into motion, and follows her descendants as they build lives in discriminatory, often precarious circumstances, working in markets, running pachinko parlors, and passing as Japanese when survival requires it.

“I loved *Pachinko* for its deeply human characters, especially the women, and the way it explores identity across four generations of one family. The novel captures how the experience of migration evolves - from those who leave their homeland, to their children and grandchildren who inherit both its burdens and resilience. While it's not an easy story, it feels authentic. Migration is rarely simple, and neither are the questions of belonging, identity, sacrifice, and the life-changing decisions people make in search of a better future.”

Liza BEZVERSHENKO, Junior project officer

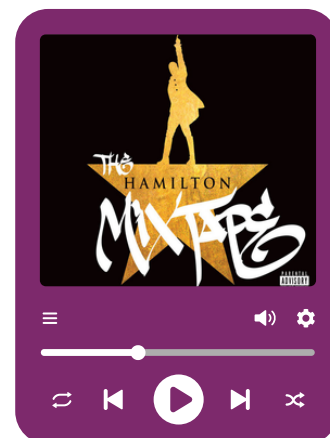


SONG MATCH

Immigrants (We get the job done)

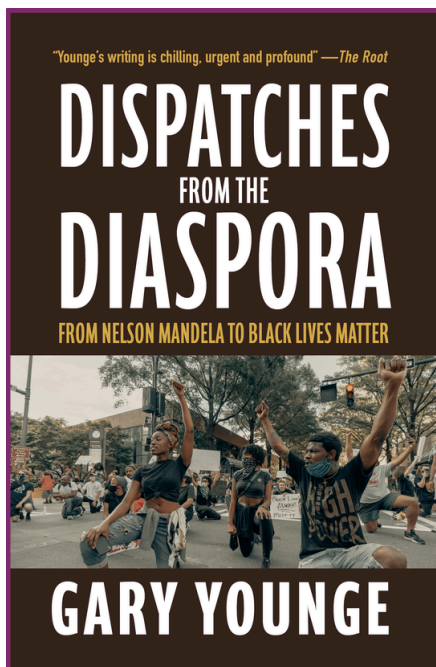
A track from The Hamilton Mixtape, performed by K'Naan, Snow Tha Product, Riz MC and Residente where each artist shares a personal account of migration, describing the circumstances that led their families to leave their countries of origin and the contributions they and other immigrants have made to their new communities through their labor. The song presents migration as a shared human experience marked by resilience and hard work, offering a perspective that highlights the economic and social role immigrants play in the societies that receive them.

Recommended by: Mary OTIENO, Diaspora youth intern



Home is *reading*

GLOBAL



Dispatches from the diaspora: From Nelson Mandela to black lives matter by Gary Younge

A collection of journalist Gary Younge's articles from nearly 30 years chronicling society's transformations and interviewing some of its most iconic characters. Younge gives the reader access to "the front line of the Black diaspora", from following Mandela on the campaign trail, to drinking whisky with Maya Angelou in her limo, as well as insights from his own life and experiences living as a Black man in the UK and US. It also brings together reporting on race, racism and Black political struggle across the Atlantic, linking major historical moments like apartheid's end, Hurricane Katrina, Obama's election and the rise of Black Lives Matter.

“It is a very different experience to read a collection of a columnist's work than reading it on a weekly basis. The latter allows you to get to know the writer gradually and be curious what they will bring next, whilst the collection is a very immersive way of looking at the last three decades through the eyes of someone who lived it in the moment. "Dispatches from the diaspora" is riveting for the period it covers and the deftness with which Younge writes about identity, culture and politics and connects the past to present day. It is essential reading particularly for those like me who grew up in Britain, which, as Younge writes, "has studiously eschewed an honest, accurate reckoning with what it has done, where it has been, and what that means for what it is and where we are."

Charlotte GRIFFITHS, Public partnerships lead

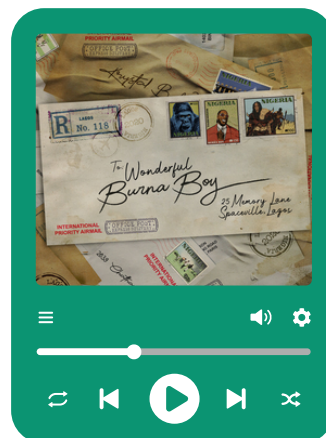


SONG MATCH

Wonderful by Burna Boy

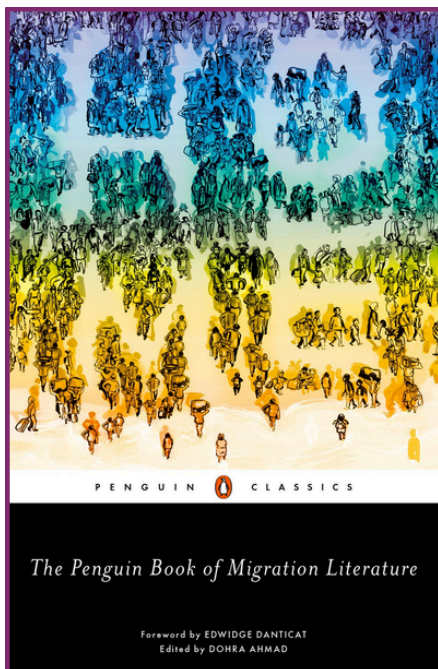
From his album *Twice as Tall*, this is about touring the world, crossing borders and embracing different cultures, while insisting that Africa, and specifically home, is still the center he always returns to, which captures the tension of moving globally yet remaining rooted locally.

Recommended by: Mary OTIENO, Diaspora youth intern



Home is *reading*

GLOBAL



The penguin book of migration literature

Anthology

The first global anthology of migration literature features works by Mohsin Hamid, Zadie Smith, Marjane Satrapi, Salman Rushdie and Warsan Shire, with a foreword by Edwidge Danticat. It includes thirty carefully selected poems, short stories and excerpts spanning 300 years and 25 countries, bringing together luminaries, emerging writers and others widely followed in their home countries but less recognized in the Anglophone world. Organised in four parts—*Departures, Arrivals, Generations, and Returns*—it conveys the intricacy of global migration patterns, the diversity of immigrant experiences and the commonalities among these experiences.

Recommended by:
Nicole ULANDAY, Diaspora youth intern

WESTERN AFRICA

Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi

Novel

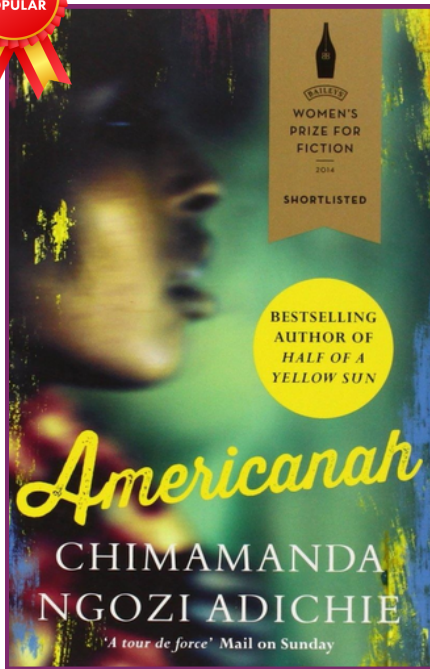
This book traces two half-sisters born in 18th-century Ghana, Effia and Esi, who never know of one another: one married into wealth atop Cape Coast Castle, the other imprisoned in its dungeons before being sold into slavery. From this single split, the novel follows their two bloodlines across seven generations and roughly 250 years, alternating between descendants who remain in Ghana through colonization and war, and descendants enduring slavery, its aftermath, and the Great Migration in America, until the two lines finally converge again at the very end.

Recommended by:
Diana HINCU, Senior project manager



Home is *reading*

WESTERN AFRICA



Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Novel

A novel that follows the lives of Ifemelu and Obinze, two young Nigerians whose lives are shaped by migration, separation and difficulties of living as an undocumented migrant. Years later, both return to Nigeria and confront questions about belonging, identity and home



What touched me most is the way the novel captures how migration reshapes a person's sense of self and how living between two worlds transforms one's journey. Through themes of migration, race, identity and belonging, the writer explores complex experiences with the exceptional skill of a storyteller.



Diana HINCÚ, Senior project manager

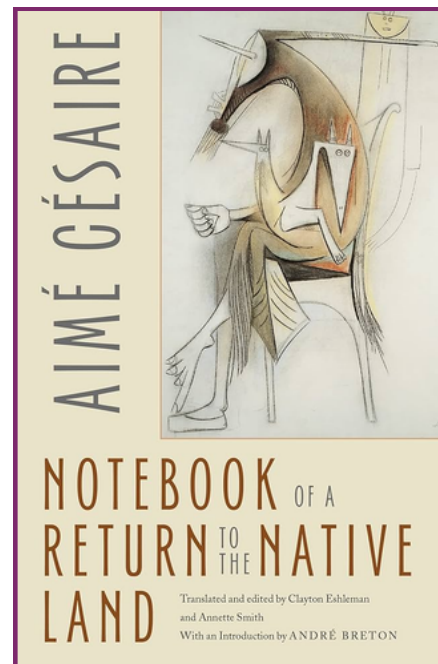
LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

Notebook of a return to my native land by Aimé Césaire translated by Clayton Eshleman

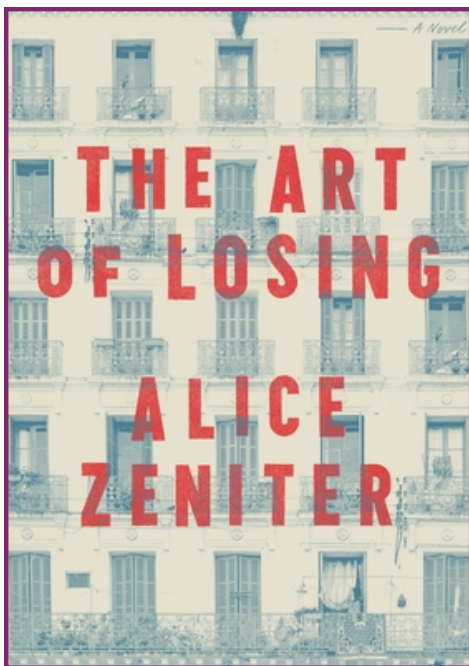
Novel

This book is a fractured lyrical meditation on returning to Martinique after time in France, examining the psychological effects of colonial displacement and envisioning a collective identity rooted in Black solidarity. Unlike typical homecoming narratives, this return lacks nostalgia and celebrates the transformed nature of home due to colonialism, leading to an ethical and political awakening. The book extends beyond Martinique, encompassing the Black diaspora united by a shared history of dispossession and resistance.

Recommended by:
Rodrice KINGUE, EUDiF alumnus



Home is *reading*



NORTHERN AFRICA

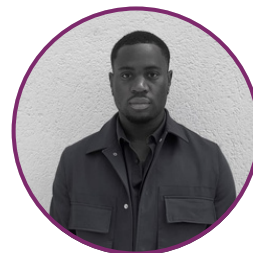
The art of losing by Alice Zeniter translated by Frank Wynne

Novel

The book follows Naïma's multi-generational family saga, exploring the lasting impact of the Algerian War of Independence on three generations. Spanning Algeria and France over seventy years, it examines the personal costs of colonialism, displacement, and identity. The trauma of colonialism persists beyond the conflict, affecting Naïma's generation despite her not experiencing it directly. Highlighting the plight of the harkis, Algerians who fought for France, the story illustrates the moral dilemmas created by colonialism that compromise community and identity.

“This book reminds me that home is not a physical place, it is a sentiment. You can occupy the same space for decades and not be considered at home; you can be a product from a geographical area yet not feel at home there. Home is something you find in your heart before anywhere else. And it may be a struggle sometimes but - as we naturally long for it - it is our responsibility to find/build/honor it everyday.

Rodrice KINGUE, EUDiF alumnus



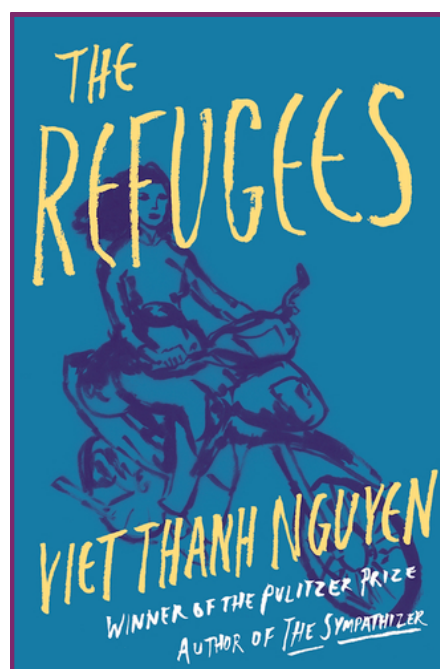
SOUTH-EASTERN ASIA

The refugees by Viet Thanh Nguyen

Anthology

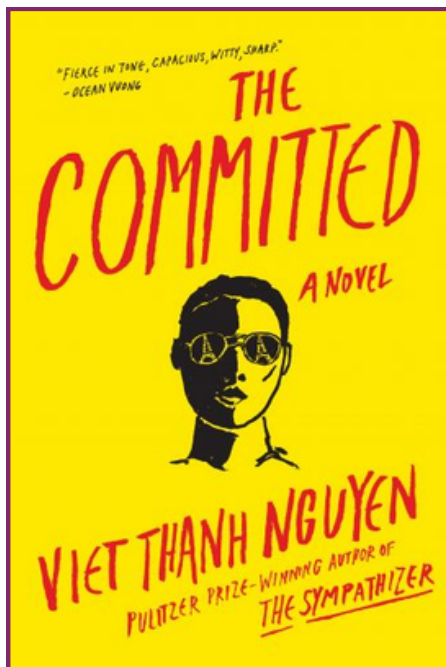
A collection of short stories about Vietnamese refugees and their children navigating life after war, exile and resettlement in the United States. The stories explore memory, trauma, family rupture and the uneasy process of building a new life while carrying the past with them. It also shows how displacement shapes identity, relationships and the ways people understand home.

Recommended by:
Nicole ULANDAY, Diaspora youth intern



Home is *reading*

SOUTH-EASTERN ASIA



Recommended by:
Nicole ULANDAY, Diaspora youth intern

The committed by Viet Thanh Nguyen

Novel

This book follows *The Sympathizer*'s unnamed narrator, now calling himself Vo Danh, as he arrives in early-1980s Paris a refugee, alongside his blood brother Bon. Migration has not resolved his lifelong doubleness so much as relocated it: he is an outsider twice over, marked as Vietnamese among the French and marked by his political past among fellow *émigrés*. Drawn into a circle of French-Vietnamese intellectuals navigating their own complicated relationship to homeland and empire, he's forced to ask what a refugee owes the identities and loyalties he has already betrayed once and whether reinvention in a new country is ever a true fresh start or just the same self, relocated.

EASTERN EUROPE

Dezrădăcinare (Uprooting) by Saşa Zare

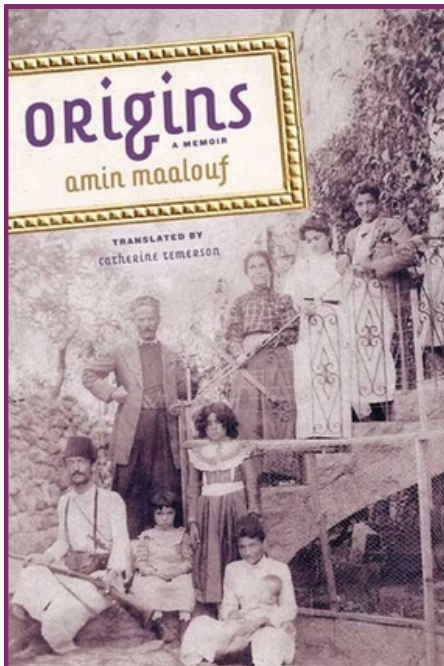
Novel

This novel explores migration not just as a move between Moldova and Romania, but as a deep fracture on a linguistic and emotional level. The protagonist struggles with belonging, feeling like an "impostor on both banks of the river": a stranger to the Romanian language in her new environment, yet alienated from her mother tongue at home. Despite the pain, the book is a manifesto of self-reconstruction through writing. The protagonist's identity is redefined beyond ethnic or national borders, rebuilt at the intersection of vulnerability, memory, and marginalized communities. Ultimately, this leads to a new freedom, where reclaiming one's voice becomes the only stable "home."



Recommended by:
Oleg CHIRITA, Head of programme,
Global initiatives

Home is *reading*



WESTERN ASIA

Origins by Amin Maalouf translated by Catherine Temerson

Memoir

This book explores the author's family branches by tracing their origins in the Lebanese mountains and following their journeys across the American continent from the United States to Cuba and Brazil. It perfectly illustrates his writing and themes prevalent in his work. The book spans several genres: part essay, personal origins story, investigation into roots and connections and historical novel.

“ It leaves the reader curious about investigation, interested in history and emotionally connected to identity, family and belonging. *Origins* shows how individual lives intertwine with larger migration histories, making it ideal for those interested in diaspora experiences across generations.

Hala TARABAY, Diaspora relations lead



SOUTHERN ASIA

The kite runner by Khaled Hosseini

Novel

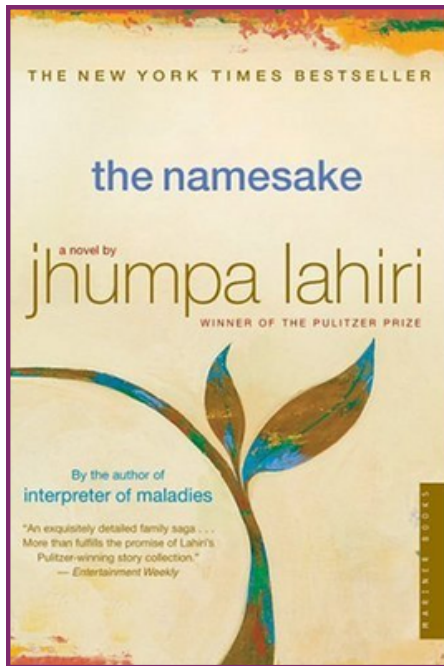
Amir grows up in Kabul, but a childhood betrayal he can never quite outrun follows him when he and his father flee Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion, rebuilding a new life among the Afghan diaspora in California. Years later, an unresolved debt to his past pulls him back across the ocean to a homeland transformed by war and Taliban rule, forcing him to reckon with what was left behind and what migration can and cannot let a person escape.

Recommended by:
Liza BEZVERSHENKO, Junior project officer



Home is *reading*

SOUTHERN ASIA



Recommended by:
Diana HINCU, Senior project manager

The namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri

Novel

Gogol Ganguli, born in Massachusetts to Bengali immigrant parents Ashoke and Ashima, carries Calcutta with him even as he builds a life in America. Named by family accident after the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol rather than a proper Bengali name, he spends his youth chafing against an identity that feels like neither true inheritance nor real choice, trying on different selves as he drifts from his parents' world. It's only through loss that he comes to understand his parents' migration not as a distant past he inherited, but as a lifelong act of translation he's been living out all along.

Exit west by Mohsin Hamid

Novel

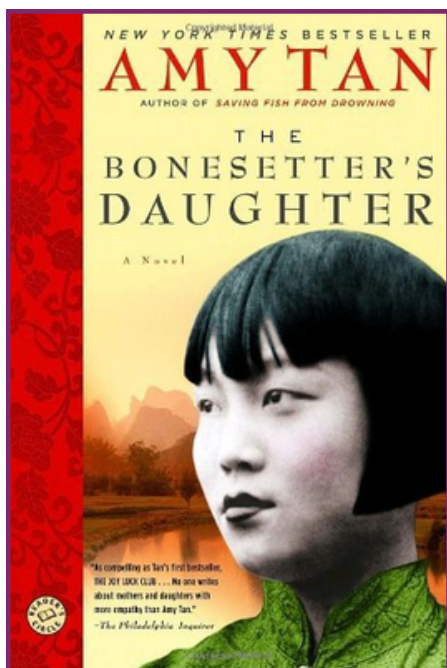
Saeed and Nadia, young lovers in a city on the edge of civil war, escape through a smuggler's door to other countries. They journey from a refugee camp in Greece to London, then San Francisco, facing multiple displacements. Their relationship and identity are challenged as they navigate these new surroundings. As they move, they drift apart, realizing that surviving the same journey doesn't guarantee a shared vision for their future.

Recommended by:
Diana HINCU, Senior project manager



Home is *reading*

EASTERN ASIA



The bonesetter's daughter by Amy Tan

Novel

This novel follows Ruth Young, a Chinese American writer, and her aging mother, LuLing, whose fading memory prompts the discovery of a long-hidden family history in pre-revolutionary China. As Ruth translates her mother's memoirs, she uncovers stories of loss, resilience and migration that transform her understanding of her family's past and of herself. The novel weaves together two generations and two countries to explore memory, identity and belonging.

“For me, this novel beautifully shows that home is not only a place we leave or return to, but something we inherit through stories, memories and relationships. It is a powerful reminder that understanding our family's past can become a way of rebuilding our own sense of identity across generations and borders.”

Agustín SEARLE VIAL, Project officer

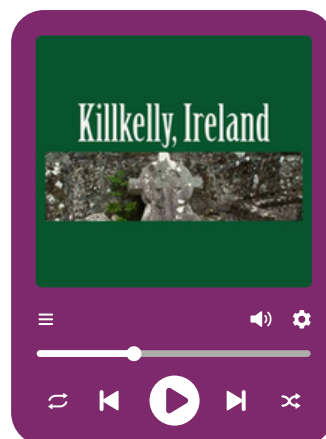


SONG MATCH

Kilkelly, Ireland by Peter Jones

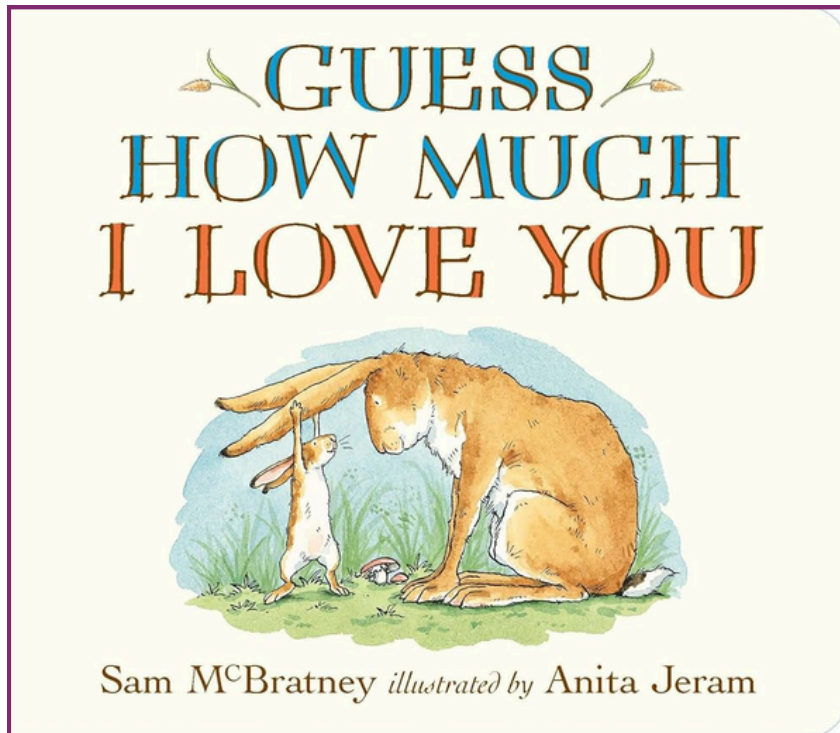
A 1983 ballad built from real letters his ancestor wrote to a son who had emigrated from County Mayo to America in 1855. Spanning several decades, the letters trace how migration reshapes a family from a distance, carrying home news of births, marriages, and harvests while the son builds a life abroad, and showing how the ties between those who leave and those who stay endure.

Recommended by: Nicole ULANDAY, Diaspora youth intern



Home is *reading*

FOR THE LITTLE ONES



Guess how much I love you by Sam McBratney.

This is a lovely picture book about Little Nutbrown Hare and Big Nutbrown Hare, who try to show each other how much they love one another. Through their sweet conversation, the book explores love, connection and the special bond between a child and a parent.

“ I recommend this book because it beautifully shows that a sense of belonging starts with love, care, and the feeling of being connected to someone. As a Turkish-origin family living in Belgium, with grandparents who migrated from Türkiye, questions of belonging and feeling at home have always been meaningful in our family story. Reading this book with my children reminds me that, beyond places and borders, the feeling of home is often created through relationships, love and the people who make us feel safe. I think this message is especially meaningful for children who grow up between different cultures.

Selcan KARABEKTAS, Project management assistant





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Ulanday, M. N. & Hincu, D. (2026) Home is a
verb: Pages from the diaspora, Brussels:
ICMPD.