On Sal Mal Lane Ru Freeman

Well over a million people of Sri Lankan origin live outside South Asia. The Encyclopedia of the Sri Lanka Diaspora is the first comprehensive study of the lives, culture, beliefs and attitudes of immigrants and refugees from this island. The volume is a joint publication between the Institute of South Asian Studies, NUS, and Editions Didier Millet. It focuses on the relationship between culture and economy in the Sri Lanka diaspora in the context of globalisation, increased transnational culture flows and new communication technologies. In addition to the geographic mapping of the Sri Lanka diaspora in the various continents, thematic chapters include topics on “long distance nationalism”, citizenship, Sinhala, Tamil and Burgher disapora identities, religion and the spread of Buddhism, as well as the Sri Lankan cultural impact on other nations.

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Where do you go when you can't go home? On the eve of her daughter Alia's wedding, Salma reads the girl's future in a cup of coffee dregs. She sees an unsettled life for Alia and her children; she also sees travel, and luck. While she chooses to keep her predictions to herself that day, they will all soon come to pass when the family is uprooted in the wake of the Six-Day War of 1967. Salma is forced to leave her home in Nablus; Alia's brother gets pulled into a politically militarised world he can't escape; and Alia and her gentle-spirited husband move to Kuwait City, where they reluctantly build a life with their three children. When Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait in 1990, Alia and her family once again lose their home, their land, and their story as they know it, scattering to Beirut, Paris, Boston, and beyond. Soon Alia's children begin families of their own, once again navigating the burdens (and blessings) of assimilation. Spanning fifty years, Salt Houses is a devastating and lyrical debut about one family in the wake of war, about needing to remember, and learning to forget.
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Winner of the Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing "Guest workers of the United Arab Emirates embody multiple worlds and identities and long for home in a fantastical debut work of fiction, winner of the inaugural Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing…. The author's crisp, imaginative prose packs a punch, and his whimsical depiction of characters who oscillate between two lands on either side of the Arabian Sea unspools the kind of immigrant narratives that are rarely told. An enchanting, unparalleled anthem of displacement and repatriation." —Kirkus Reviews, starred review In the United Arab Emirates, foreign nationals constitute over 80 percent of the population. Brought in to construct and serve the towering monuments to wealth that punctuate the skylines of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, this labor force is not given the option of citizenship. Some ride their luck to good fortune. Others suffer different fates. Until now, the humanitarian crisis of the so-called “guest workers” of the Gulf has barely been addressed in fiction. With his stunning, mind-altering debut novel Temporary People, Deepak Unnikrishnan delves into their histories, myths, struggles, and triumphs. Combining the linguistic invention of Salman Rushdie and the satirical vision of George Saunders, Unnikrishnan presents twenty-eight linked stories that careen from construction workers who shapeshift into luggage and escape a labor camp, to a woman who stitches back together the bodies of those who’ve fallen from buildings in progress, to a man who grows ideal workers designed to live twelve years and then perish—until they don’t, and found a rebel community in the desert. With this polyphony of voices, Unnikrishnan maps a new, unruly global English and gives personhood back to the anonymous workers of the Gulf. "Guest workers of the United Arab Emirates embody multiple worlds and identities and long for home in a fantastical debut work of fiction, winner of the inaugural Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing…. The author's crisp, imaginative prose packs a punch, and his whimsical depiction of characters who oscillate between two lands on either side of the Arabian Sea unspools the kind of immigrant narratives that are rarely told. An enchanting, unparalleled anthem of displacement and repatriation." —Kirkus Reviews, Starred Review "Inventive, vigorously empathetic, and brimming with a sparkling, mordant humor, Deepak Unnikrishnan has written a book of Ovidian metamorphoses for our precarious time. These absurdist fables, fluent in the language of exile, immigration, and bureaucracy, will remind you of the raw pleasure of storytelling and the unsettling nearness of the future." —Alexandra Kleeman, author of You Too Can Have a Body Like Mine “Inaugural winner of the Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing, this debut novel employs its own brand of magical realism to propel readers into an understanding and appreciation of the experience of foreign workers in the Arab Gulf States (and beyond). Through a series of almost 30 loosely linked sections, grouped into three parts, we are thrust into a narrative alternating between visceral realism and fantastic satire.... The alternation between satirical fantasy, depicting such things as intelligent cockroaches and evil elevators, and poignant realism, with regards to necessarily illicit sexuality, forms a contrast that gives rise to a broad critique of the plight of those known euphemistically as ‘guest workers.’ VERDICT: This first novel challenges readers with a singular inventiveness expressed through a lyrical use of language and a laserlike focus that is at once charming and terrifying. Highly recommended.” —Henry Bankhead, Library Journal, Starred Review “Unnikrishnan’s debut novel shines a light on a little known world with compassion and keen insight. The Temporary People are invisible people—but Unnikrishnan brings them to us with compassion, intelligence, and heart. This is why novels matter.” —Susan Hans O’Connor, Penguin Bookshop (Sewickley, PA) “Deepak Unnikrishnan uses linguistic pyrotechnics to tell the story of forced transience in the Arabian Peninsula, where citizenship can never be earned no matter the commitment of blood, sweat, years of life, or brains. The accoutrements of migration—languages, body parts, passports, losses, wounds, communities of strangers—are packed and carried along with ordinary luggage, blurring the real and the unreal with exquisite skill. Unnikrishnan sets before us a feast of absurdity that captures the cruel realities around the borders we cross either by choice or by force. In doing so he has found what most writers miss: the sweet spot between simmering rage at a set of circumstances, and the circumstances themselves.” —Ru Freeman, author of On Sal Mal Lane “Deepak writes brilliant stories with a fresh, passionate energy. Every page feels as if it must have been written, as if the author had no choice. He writes about exile, immigration, deportation, security checks, rage, patience, about the homelessness of living in a foreign land, about historical events so strange that, under his hand, the events become tales, and he writes tales so precisely that they read like history. Important work. Work of the future. This man will not be stopped.” —Deb Olin Unferth, author of Revolution “From the strange Kafka-esque scenarios to the wholly original language, this book is amazing on so many different levels. Unlike anything I've ever read, Temporary People is a powerful work of short stories about foreign nationals who populate the new economy in the United Arab Emirates. With inventive language and darkly satirical plot lines, Unnikrishnan provides an important view of relentless nature of a global economy and its brutal consequences for human lives. Prepare to be wowed by the immensely talented new voice.” —Hilary Gustafson, Literati Bookstore (Ann Arbor, MI) “Absolutely preposterous! As a debut, author Unnikrishnan shares stories of laborers, brought to the United Arab Emirates to do menial and everyday jobs. These people have no rights, no fallback if they have problems or health issues in that land. The laborers in Temporary People are sewn back together when they fall, are abandoned in the desert if they become inconvenient, and are even grown from seeds. As a collection of short stories, this is fantastical, imaginative, funny, and even more so, scary, powerful, and ferocious.” —Becky Milner, Vintage Books (Vancouver WA)

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