

# Unveiling Migration and Education in Marina Budhos's Fiction



# Unveiling Migration and Education in Marina Budhos's Fiction:

*Narratives of Mobility*

By

Narmadha R. and M. Anjum Khan

**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



Unveiling Migration and Education in Marina Budhos's Fiction:  
Narratives of Mobility

By Narmadha R. and M. Anjum Khan

This book first published 2024

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2024 by Narmadha R. and M. Anjum Khan

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-5248-9

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-5248-7

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	vii
Preface .....	ix
List of Abbreviations .....	xv
Chapter 1 .....	1
Influential Echoes: Marina Budhos and Immigrant Voices	
Chapter 2 .....	23
The Weight of Two Worlds	
Chapter 3 .....	51
Beyond Dollars: The Price of Education for Immigrant Children	
Chapter 4 .....	77
Conclusion	
Bibliography .....	95



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As we stand here, humbled by the completion of this book, we find ourselves overwhelmed with gratitude for the remarkable journey that brought us to this point. At the heart of this achievement lies the unwavering support and encouragement of Avinashilingam University. This venerable institution has not only been our academic home but also the guiding force behind our passion for knowledge and research.

To Avinashilingam University, we extend our deepest appreciation for fostering an environment that fosters intellectual curiosity and provides unparalleled opportunities for growth. The world-class faculty, state-of-the-art facilities, and rich resources offered by the university have been pivotal in shaping the content and depth of this book.

A special note of thanks goes to the dedicated librarians of Avinashilingam University, whose relentless efforts in acquiring, organizing, and preserving an extensive collection of literature have been invaluable to our research. Their assistance in locating pertinent sources has been nothing short of extraordinary.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to Ramakrishna College for Arts and Science, which has also contributed to our educational journey. Though our time there was brief, the experiences and insights gained during our tenure have played a part in shaping our perspectives.

Beyond the realm of academia, we owe immeasurable thanks to our families, whose unwavering support and love have been our anchor throughout this endeavour. They have been the guiding light in our lives, encouraging us through challenges and rejoicing in our accomplishments.

Finally, we acknowledge each other as co-authors, our synergy resulting in a harmonious collaboration. The shared vision and commitment we brought to this project have been instrumental in its realization.

In conclusion, this book stands as a tribute to the combined efforts of Avinashilingam University and the many individuals who have touched our lives along this transformative journey. Their contributions, whether great or small, have shaped this work into what it is today. May their influence continue to inspire and impact our future endeavours.

With heartfelt thanks,

Ms. Narmadha R

Dr. M. Anjum Khan



## PREFACE

In recent years, the study of immigration has undergone substantial growth, and scholarly works have increasingly delved into the multifaceted impacts that migration has on individuals and communities. These valuable insights have helped us gain a deeper understanding of the diverse experiences of migrants and their families, exploring their hopes, dreams, struggles, and aspirations as they navigate the complexities of a new life in a foreign land.

Despite the progress made in this field, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the intersectionality of immigration, particularly its relevance to the contemporary theme of education for immigrant children. Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categories, such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, and more, and how they overlap and intersect to create unique experiences and challenges for individuals who occupy multiple marginalized identities. In the context of immigrant communities, intersectionality becomes crucial as these families often face a complex web of barriers that are shaped not just by their immigrant status but also by other social dimensions they embody.

While psychoanalytic approaches have offered valuable insights into the psychological processes that immigrants may undergo during their journey and settlement, less attention has been directed towards comprehending the simultaneous impact of multiple oppressive dimensions faced by these communities. The experiences of immigrant children, in particular, have received limited exploration through an intersectional lens, despite the fact that they are uniquely situated at the crossroads of multiple identity markers and systems of privilege and discrimination.

The concept of intersectionality, introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw, recognizes the interconnectedness of various oppressive factors like race, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. This approach helps us understand how individuals face unique challenges and opportunities in shaping their identities in the pre- and post-migration contexts. By

exploring intersectionality, we can gain a deeper understanding of the interpersonal and intrapsychic experiences of immigrants and their children, particularly as they navigate issues of stigma, discrimination, and inequality in their new homes.

One of the crucial dimensions that intersectionality brings to the forefront is the gender viewpoint in migration studies. Traditionally, the experiences of women immigrants were overshadowed by a focus on male economic migrants. However, intersectionality has allowed us to recognize and address the distinct challenges faced by women immigrants, amplifying their voices in the discourse. Additionally, this approach enables scholars to examine issues like Islamophobia and the racialization of religious identities, symbols, and clothing in the context of discrimination against Muslim immigrants.

The focal point of this study is Marina Budhos's novels, *Tell Us We Are Home* and *Ask Me No Questions*, which provide a powerful narrative about the experiences of immigrant children in the United States. These novels offer a lens through which we can explore the obstacles faced by documented and undocumented immigrant children in their pursuit of education and growth. By analysing Budhos's works through an intersectional perspective, this research aims to uncover the complex web of challenges arising from racism, sexism, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression that these children encounter.

The ultimate goal of this study is to contribute to the development of strategies and policies that better support and empower immigrant children in their educational journey. By understanding the intersectionality of their experiences, we can identify culturally-responsive solutions to address the unique challenges they face. This research endeavours to create a platform for advocating for equitable access to education and opportunities for all children, regardless of their immigration status.

To achieve this, the study will employ a qualitative phenomenological approach, analysing the portrayal of immigrant children in the United States through a literary lens. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach that draws from various fields such as literature, history, culture studies,

society, law, political sciences, religion, and education, the research aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the immigrant experience in the US.

The chapters of this study are structured to explore the multifaceted dimensions of the challenges faced by immigrant children. Chapter 1 serves as the foundation of the study, laying the groundwork for the subsequent chapters. In this introductory section, the research begins by presenting an overview of immigration data, providing relevant statistics and trends that contextualize the current situation of immigrant children in the United States. By doing so, the study aims to offer a comprehensive view of the scale and scope of the challenges faced by this vulnerable population.

Furthermore, Chapter 1 explores the literary perspective of immigrant novels. By examining relevant works, the study seeks to draw insights into the lived experiences of immigrant children as portrayed in literature, enabling a more empathetic and nuanced analysis of their struggles. This exploration of literary sources helps bridge the gap between academic research and the human stories behind it.

Within the same chapter, the research delves into the literary contributions of Marina Budhos, an acclaimed author known for her focus on immigrant narratives. By introducing Budhos and her writing style, the study establishes a connection between the literary world and the real-life experiences of immigrant children. This approach adds depth and authenticity to the analysis, making it more relatable and relevant to the readers.

Chapter 2 takes a deep dive into the socio-cultural, political, and historical barriers that immigrant children encounter within their families and broader society. The research probes into the complex interplay of cultural identity, generational differences, and the challenges of assimilation that immigrant children grapple with daily. By investigating the social dynamics at play, the study aims to unveil the various obstacles that hinder the smooth integration of immigrant children into their new surroundings.

Furthermore, Chapter 2 scrutinizes the political landscape and how immigration policies and debates impact the lives of these children. The

study analyses how policy decisions and public perceptions can create additional challenges and stressors for immigrant children and their families, contributing to feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability.

Additionally, this chapter delves into the historical context of immigration in the United States, highlighting the long-standing patterns and experiences of immigrant communities. By examining historical factors, the research aims to draw connections between past and present challenges faced by immigrant children, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of their circumstances.

Chapter 3 focuses on the challenges specific to the educational system in the United States and how it affects immigrant children. The study addresses issues such as academic failure, which may result from language barriers, cultural differences, or inadequate support systems. Moreover, the research investigates the prevalence of bullying among immigrant children and its impact on their academic performance and overall well-being.

Furthermore, this chapter delves into the psychological traumas that immigrant children may endure due to the stresses of acculturation, discrimination, and the pressure to succeed in their new environment. By exploring the psychological aspect, the research aims to bring attention to the mental health needs of these children, which are often overlooked in the broader discourse on immigration.

Finally, Chapter 4 synthesizes the main findings from the preceding chapters, creating a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by immigrant children. The study draws connections between the different dimensions explored throughout the research, offering a holistic view of their experiences.

In the concluding remarks, this chapter reflects on the significance of the research and its potential implications for policy, education, and social support systems. The study also identifies potential gaps and areas for further research, paving the way for future studies to deepen our understanding of immigrant children's lives and how to best support their well-being and integration into society.

By embarking on this exploration of Marina Budhos's novels and their intersectional implications, this study hopes to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about education and immigrant experiences in the United States. It is our belief that through understanding and addressing these challenges, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and just society for all.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMNQ     Ask Me No Questions

TUWH     Tell Us We're Home





# CHAPTER 1

## INFLUENTIAL ECHOES: MARINA BUDHOS AND IMMIGRANT VOICES

“The greatest nations are defined by how they treat their weakest inhabitants.”  
—Jorge Ramos

### **Introduction**

Literature, as a powerful form of art, serves as a mirror that reflects the essence of society in its truest form. While many may perceive literature as a means of entertainment or a source of aesthetic pleasure, its purpose goes far beyond mere amusement. At its core, literature allows individuals to transcend time and space, providing them with the opportunity to gain profound insights into life from diverse perspectives.

One of the remarkable aspects of literature is its ability to offer a window into different cultures, histories, and human experiences. Through recorded histories and various literary genres such as poetry, drama, fiction, and non-fiction, readers can immerse themselves in the richness of other societies, understanding their values, traditions, struggles, and triumphs. Literature becomes a bridge that connects people across geographical and temporal boundaries, fostering empathy and appreciation for the complexity of the human condition.

Moreover, literature plays a crucial role as a medium for the promulgation of ideologies. Writers often use their craft to express their views, opinions, and beliefs, sparking dialogue and debate within society. Whether it is advocating for social justice, critiquing oppressive systems, or championing individual freedoms, literature can be a catalyst for social change and transformation.

In this sense, literature is not just an expression of society, but it can actively shape and influence it. It has the power to challenge norms, question established paradigms, and inspire individuals to envision a better world. Literature, therefore, becomes an instrument of cultural and intellectual evolution, pushing societies towards progress and enlightenment.

Beyond its role as a catalyst for change, literature also serves as a therapeutic outlet for both authors and readers. Writing can be a cathartic process, allowing authors to process their emotions, experiences, and inner thoughts. At the same time, readers often find solace and understanding in literature, as they connect with characters and narratives that resonate with their own life experiences. This therapeutic aspect of literature provides comfort and support, offering a sense of belonging and validation to those who find solace in its pages.

Additionally, literature plays the vital role of recognition, giving voice to marginalized communities and individuals whose stories may have been overlooked or silenced. It empowers them by acknowledging their existence and experiences, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and representative narrative of humanity.

Furthermore, literature has an inherent educative quality, acting as a teacher that imparts knowledge and wisdom. It fosters critical thinking, empathy, and emotional intelligence, helping readers expand their understanding of the world and the human condition. Whether through classic literature that delves into timeless themes or contemporary works that grapple with current issues, literature serves as an intellectual guide that encourages continuous learning and growth.

Ultimately, the value of literature lies in the depth and breadth of the life it portrays. The more it reflects the complexities, struggles, and triumphs of the human experience, the more it resonates with readers and holds a lasting impact. Literature's ability to illuminate the various facets of society, provoke thought, and evoke emotions solidifies its status as an indispensable art form that enriches our lives and the world we inhabit.

The terms 'immigration' and 'diaspora' encompass the dynamic process of people relocating from one place to another in pursuit of various

opportunities. Immigration typically involves individuals or groups moving to a new country with the intention of settling there permanently or for an extended period, seeking better economic prospects, education, or a higher quality of life. Diaspora, on the other hand, refers to the dispersion of a community or group of people from their original homeland to other parts of the world.

Within the context of immigration literature, specific terms like ‘refugees,’ ‘migrants,’ and ‘asylum seekers’ are often utilized to describe different categories of individuals who are on the move or have crossed international borders.

Refugees are a group of people who are forced to flee their home countries due to violence, persecution, or fear of harm. They are compelled to seek safety and protection in another country. The reasons for their displacement can vary widely and may include armed conflicts, political instability, religious or ethnic persecution, or human rights abuses. Refugees are distinct from other migrants as their movement is primarily driven by the urgent need for safety and survival.

Asylum seekers, on the other hand, are individuals who have left their home countries and are seeking international protection as refugees in a different country. They often present themselves at the border or immigration authorities, requesting asylum based on a credible fear of persecution in their home country. Asylum seekers are in the process of seeking refugee status, and their claims are evaluated by the host country’s authorities to determine if they meet the criteria for refugee status.

The term ‘migrants’ is more general and encompasses a broader range of individuals who have left their native countries and are residing in another country. Unlike refugees and asylum seekers, migrants may not be fleeing persecution or violence. Instead, they may move for various reasons, including economic opportunities, family reunification, education, or personal preferences. There is no universally accepted definition of migrants, and the term can encompass both temporary and permanent residents in a foreign country.

In recent years, discussions surrounding immigration and its related terms have become increasingly complex and nuanced. The experiences of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants are shaped by a myriad of factors, including the policies of host countries, social attitudes, and economic conditions. Immigration literature often delves into the multifaceted realities faced by these individuals, highlighting the challenges, resilience, and contributions they bring to their new homes.

Understanding the distinctions between these terms is crucial for fostering informed discussions about migration and for recognizing the different legal and humanitarian considerations that apply to each group. It is through literature and other forms of storytelling that the narratives of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants are brought to light, facilitating empathy, understanding, and dialogue about the complexities of human movement and the pursuit of better lives across borders.

After undergoing nation-building, the United States has become the most robust and powerful nation in the world, known for its innovative dynamism to the extent that the word ‘America’ has become universally recognized. However, opinions regarding America vary greatly and change over time. America’s gaze is open and subject to debate, as Sanders argues, it is a ‘complex, evanescent, contradictory collection of ideas’.<sup>1</sup> Many believe that America is a land of opportunity where people can experience a high standard of living.

Immigration to America dates back to the 17th century, and since then, America has become a destination for millions of immigrants. Adults migrate for various reasons, including life transitions, higher education, job opportunities, or marriage. However, some adults are forced to migrate to escape poverty, war, climate change, or violence, as America is seen as the land of golden opportunity. Initially, there were no laws to restrict immigration to the United States, but gradually, immigration laws were put in place, causing many immigrants to become illegal. Moreover, some people migrate illegally, violating “federal immigration laws”, even if they

---

<sup>1</sup> Barry A. Sanders, *American Avatar the United States in the Global Imagination*, (Virginia, USA: Patomac Books Inc, 2011).

have friends or family members who have crossed the United States illegally.<sup>2</sup> Mexican immigrants, in particular, believe that they have the right to migrate to America without government permission.

According to the Pew Research Center, most unauthorized migrants enter America with visas that allow them to reside in America for a specific period. These immigrants often overstay their visas and are referred to as “overstayers”.<sup>3</sup> Another way people enter America is by using a border crossing card to enter through Mexico. Some enter illegally by hiding in vehicles or evading immigration inspectors, while others enter through the Arizona desert. The vast majority of immigrants are Mexican, Canadian, and Asian, resulting in 12 million unauthorized immigrants.

Thus, America becomes a country of multi-ethnic and multi-racial people, which has led to a cultural discourse aimed at understanding the various constructions of cultural identity. This discourse is used by ethnic writers from Asia, Africa, the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean, and other places to portray the experiences of their fellow immigrants in America. This has paved the way for a new literary genre called ‘American immigrant literature.’ In this genre, migrants write either about their own migration stories or those of others. It deals with the description of the migration experience, cultural and traditional differences, and the difficulties faced by immigrants in adopting America’s multiculturalism.

The American immigrant novel explores themes of assimilation and the relationship between immigrants and Native Americans. These novels often explore the generation gap between first- and second-generation immigrants. The genre also includes themes such as economic issues, education, prejudices, racism, violence, language barriers, and identity related to culture, ethnicity, and nation. The protagonists of these novels overcome these issues while also recalling happy memories of their

---

<sup>2</sup> Paul E. Green, “The Undocumented: Educating the Children of Migrant Workers in America,” *Bilingual Research Journal*, No. 1, (Apr. 2003): 51-71, Doi: 10.1080/15235882.2003.10162591.

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center, “Modes of Entry for the Unauthorized Migrant Population,” *Pew Research Center’s Hispanic Trends Project*, Accessed on 20 Jan. 2023. [www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2006/05/22/modes-of-entry-for-the-unauthorized-migrant-population/](http://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2006/05/22/modes-of-entry-for-the-unauthorized-migrant-population/).

homeland and their past lives there. Although the characters experience cultural complexity and discrimination, identity dominates the other themes. Migration is a topic that has been explored in classical literature, but this genre offers new perspectives, including the experiences of teenage migrants.

Young adult fiction, also known as YA or YAF, is a category of fiction written for readers between the ages of 12 and 18. It is a relatively recent American genre invention that was pioneered by women in the 20th century, and its popularity has been undeniable in the last five years. According to Stanford Journalism, “YA revenues have grown nearly 40 percent, and over 30,000 YA books are published each year, with dystopia and science fiction leading the charge”.<sup>4</sup> There is no difference between young adult fiction and adult fiction in terms of common themes like romance, fantasy, and dystopia. However, YA fiction mainly focuses on the age and experience of the protagonist, featuring coming-of-age stories that depict the transformation of adolescents into adults. These stories typically involve personal growth, taking responsibility for one’s actions, and overcoming challenges.

When analysing YA fiction, the most common themes include friendship, romantic interest, family life, and high school experiences, including self-identity and individuality. However, mature themes like violence, homosexuality, and depression/suicide are also present in YA fiction, which can be challenging for some readers. Teenagers often go through inner turmoil due to unhealthy relationships with their family and society, experiencing emotional abuse, instability, shame, guilt, and disconnection. For teenage immigrants, these traumas are even more pronounced. Stressors can include financial issues, political oppression, threats, abandonment, interpersonal conflicts, exploitation, and fear of deportation.

Recurrent themes identified by scholars in migrant literature include citizenship, borders, gender, stereotypes, exile, biopolitics, otherness, inhabitability, bureaucracy, and abandonment. Migrant literature directly

---

<sup>4</sup> Stanford Journalism, “The Rise of Young Adult Fiction, Explained,” *Www.Youtube.Com*, uploaded on 6 Apr. 2021, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJK1pW-cWuE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJK1pW-cWuE).

represents the experiences of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. The invisibility of ethnic characters and their experiences in the cultural representation of the United States has long been a contentious issue.<sup>5</sup> Migrants often lack agency and are victims of history, as well as helpless participants in colonial discourse.

However, intellectual migrants did not stop at just experiencing struggles. They began to write about their experiences on paper, and as a result, literary figures such as Khaled Hosseini, Chinua Achebe, Jhumpa Lahiri, Azar Nafini, Vladimir Nabokov, and Christina Garcia gained universal attention by creating indelible masterpieces. This gave rise to a new type of literature on immigration, aimed at presenting different narratives of cultural, economic, political, and social aspects of an immigrant's life. To be considered as migrant literature, such works must possess specific characteristics.

### **American Immigrant Writers at a Glance**

Junot Diaz is a Dominican- American writer and creative writing professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He also worked as a fiction editor at Boston Review and serves on the board of advisers for Freedom University (a Georgia volunteer organization providing post-secondary instructions to undocumented immigrants). Diaz's works have the central theme of the immigrant experience, particularly the Latino immigrant experience. Born on 31 December 1968 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Diaz was the third child among seven siblings. In December 1974, at the age of six, Diaz immigrated with his family to Parlin, New Jersey. Growing up in New Jersey, Diaz struggled greatly with learning the English language.

Shortly after graduating, Diaz created the character "Yunior", a fictional character who served as a narrator for his several books. Diaz published his first book of a short story collection, *Drown*, in 1995, after obtaining his MFA from Cornell University. In 2008, Diaz received Pulitzer Prize

---

<sup>5</sup> Frances Verbruggen, *Representations of Immigrants in Young Adult Literature*, (1 Jan. 2000), Doi: 10.15760/etd.6536.

for Fiction for his novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*; in 2012, he received a MacArthur Fellowship “Genius Grant”. Diaz’s work has been renowned for its colloquial spin on a modern American voice- a blend of English and Spanish and poetry to create enormously pleasing human portraits. His other notable works include *This Is How You Lose Her and Other Stories*. This collection was enlisted for the 2012 national book award. His first children’s book, *Islandborn*, was published in 2018.

Elizabeth Acevedo is another Dominican-American poet and author. In September 2022, the Poetry Foundation named her the year’s Young People’s Poet Laureate. Acevedo is the only daughter of Dominican immigrants, raised in Harlem, New York. Initially loved to be a rapper, Acevedo realized that she really wanted to become a poet. With the influence of her English teacher Abby Lubin, she joined an after-school poetry club. She has published several poems, including her most famous one, “Spoken Word Poem”.

Acevedo is also the author of three young adult novels, *Beastgirl and Other Origin Myths* (2016) was a finalist for YesYes Chapbook Prize. Her first novel, *The Poet X*, was published in 2018 and is a New York Times best-seller, national book award, and Carnegie medal winner. *With the Fire on High* is Acevedo’s third novel, released in May 2019. Her fourth, *Clap When You Land*, was published in May 2020 and it was a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honored Book. She also won the 2019 Michael L. Printz Award, the 2018 Pura Belpre Award, and the Boston Globe Hornbook Award Prize for Best Children’s Fiction of 2018. She lives in Washington, DC.

The next immigrant writer whose works have contributed to immigration literature is Jhumpa Lahiri. Lahiri was born in London to Indian immigrant parents and raised in the United States. She is a well-known American author for her short story collections, novels, and essays on Indian immigrants, examining her character’s dilemmas, anxieties, struggles, and details of immigrant behaviour and psychology. Her works focus on themes such as marital difficulties and the detachment between first- and second-generation immigrants in the United States.



Lahiri's debut book, *Interpreter of maladies* (1999), is a collection of short stories that won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction as well as the PEN/Hemingway award in 2000. Her first novel, *The Namesake* (2003), published in *The New Yorker*, was a finalist for Los Angeles Times Book Prize. It was also adapted into a major motion picture in 2007 with the same title. Lahiri's second short story collection, *Unaccustomed Earth* was published in 2008 and achieved number 1 on *The New York Times* best-seller list. Other important literary works include *The Lowland* (2013) and an Italian novel, *Dove mi Trovo* (2018). Currently, Lahiri is a professor of English and Director of creative writing at Barnard College of Columbia University.

Argentinean American young adult writer Maria E. Andreu's works have appeared in *Newsweek*, the *Newark Star-Ledger*, *Teen Vogue*, and the *Washington Post*. Her debut novel, *The Secret Side of Empty* (2014), won a National Indie Excellence Book Award. Her next novel, *Love in English* was published in the year 2021 and is merely based on her own experience after her family settled in the United States. Her upcoming novel is *Julieta and the Romeo*. She also contributed by featuring in anthologies like *Come On In*, *Examining Images Of Urban Life* and *Five Minutes at Hotel*.

Mexican- American writer and Professor Francisco Jimenez was born in Tlaquepaque, Mexico and raised in California. His family immigrated illegally to California to work as migrant farm workers, and as a child, Jimenez worked with his family in the field at the age of six. Currently, he works at Santa Clara University as a Fay Boyle professor in the department of modern languages and literature. He served as director of the ethnic studies program from 2000-05. In 1997, he published his first autobiographical novel, *The Circuit: stories from the life of a Migrant Child*. He has written three sequels for his first novel, *Breaking Through*, *Reaching Out* and *Taking Hold: From Migrant Childhood to Columbia University*. His four-book series has been included in the American library association booklist's 50 Best Young adult books of all time. He also received America's award for children's and young adult literature, the Boston global award for fiction, and the parents' choice award. His other works include *La Mariposa* (1998) and *Christmas Gift* (2000).

Viet Thanh Nguyen is a Vietnamese- American novelist and professor of English and American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California. Born in Vietnam, his family fled to the United States after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Initially, his family settled in Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, a camp that accommodated refugees from Vietnam, and later they moved to San Jose, California. Nguyen was interested in literature and graduated in literature and ethnic studies. He worked as a professor and began writing books on the Vietnamese American community. His debut novel, *The Sympathizer* (2015), won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. He has written several short fictions, including *The Refugees* (2017) and *Stranger Among Us: Stories of Cross-Cultural Collision and Connection* (2008).

Nguyen also works as an editor, in which he edited the book, *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, which includes essays by 17 fellow refugee writers from different countries. He co-edited *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field* (2014). His non-fiction books include *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*, the national book award finalist and *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America* (2002). His most recent work is *The Committed*, the sequel of *The Sympathizer*. He has co-authored the book *Chicken of the Sea* along with his six years old son, Ellison.

Iranian- American novelist, essayist and short story writer Dina Nayeri is a well-known author of novels *A Teaspoon of Earth and Sea* (2014) and *Refuge* (2017). Nayeri was born in Iran, and later they fled to Dubai and Rome as asylum seekers because the police of the Islamic republic threatened her mother with execution for converting to Christianity. Eventually, they settled in the United States, where Nayeri completed her education. Her other novels include *The Ungrateful Refugee* (2019) and *The Waiting Palace* (2020). Her second novel *Refuge* is a semi-autobiographical novel which talks about an Iranian woman who emigrated to the United States and her struggle as a refugee. Winner of the UNESCO City of literature Paul Engle prize, Dina Nayeri has also written short dramas produced by the English Touring Theatre and The Old Vic in London.

Abdi Nazemian is an Iranian-American young adult fiction author, screenwriter, and producer who is well known for his debut novel *The Walk-In Closet*, which won the Lambda Literary Award for Debut Fiction at the 27th Lambda Literary Awards in 2015. His other works include *The Authentics* (2017), *Like A Love Story* (2019), which was chosen by Time magazine as one of the hundred best young adult novels of all time, received a Stonewall Honor and a nomination for the Audie Awards, The Chandler Legacies, which is inspired by his time at boarding school.

Tahereh Mafi is an American author known for writing young adult fiction. She was also born to Iran immigrant parents in a small town in Connecticut and later moved to Northern California and then to Orange County. Her debut novel, *Shatter Me* was published in the year 2011. Following it, *Unravel Me* (2013), *Ignite Me* (2014), *Destroy Me* and *Fracture Me* have been published. Mafi also released *Furthermore* (2016), *Restore Me* (2018), *A Very Large Expanse of Sea* (2018), *Defy Me* (2019), and *Imagine Me* (2020).

Ibi Zoboi is a Haitian- American young adult writer known for her work *American Street* (2017), which was a National Book Award finalist for young adult literature in 2017. Born in Haiti, Zoboi immigrated to Brooklyn along with her mother at a young age. Before publishing her first novel, Zoboi wrote several short stories including *The Farming of Gods* (2012). Her debut novel *American Street* explores the theme of the immigrant experience of a Haitian American woman. Her other novels include *Pride* (2018), *My Life as an Ice Cream Sandwich* (2019), *Punching the Air* (2020), and *The People Remember* (2021).

Edwidge Danticat is another Haitian- American novelist and short story writer, best known for her novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), which went on to become an Oprah's Book club selection. She began writing at nine in Haiti, and later she migrated to New York with her father. She wrote about her immigration experience under the title *A New World Full of Strangers* for New Youth Connection. Her works focus on national identity, diasporic Politics and the mother-daughter relationship. Her other novels include *Krik? Krak!* (1996), *The Farming of Bones* (1998), *Behind the Mountains* (2002), *After the Dance* (2002), *The Dew Breaker* (2004),

*Anacaona: Golden Flower, Haiti, 1490* (2005), *Claire of the sea Light* (2013), *The Art of Death* (2017), *Everything Inside* (2019).

## Marina Budhos

Many writers who write about immigration have not received the attention they deserve, such as Bharati Mukherjee, Monica Ali, Khaled Hosseini, Meena Alexander, among others.<sup>6</sup> Marina Budhos is one of the authors who deserve attention and appreciation for her contribution to immigrant literature. Marina Tamer Budhos is an American author who was born in Queens, New York. Tracing her background, Budhos is the granddaughter of indentured workers from India who migrated to Guyana in the late 19th century.

Budhos is the daughter of an Indo-Guyanese father and a Jewish-American mother. In an interview with Sadanand regarding the release of her second novel, Budhos mentioned that her grandparents were Indians who settled in Guyana. Her father spent most of his childhood in Indian villages there.<sup>7</sup> After settling, her family converted to Christianity in order to improve their social standing during that time. Her father then came to America to pursue his education in international relations at NYU and remained there.

Marina Budhos was raised in Parkway Village, a community built for international, mixed, and ethnic families during the ferment of the civil rights and social changes era. She completed her education at Cornell and Brown University. Currently, Budhos lives with her husband, Marc Aronson, who is also an author and editor, and their two sons. She is a full-time associate professor at William Paterson University, where she teaches courses on creative writing and multicultural literature. Her specialties include Asian American literature, fiction, non-fiction, and young adult fiction.

---

<sup>6</sup> Mohammad A. Quayum, "Revisiting South Asian diaspora literature," *Asiatic: IJUM Journal of English Language and Literature*, No. 1, (June 2017): 1.

<sup>7</sup> Sadanand Dhume, "In Search Of Her Roots," *Rediff on the Net: An Interview with Marina Budhos*, Accessed on 25 Feb. [www.rediff.com/news/1999/may/14us4.htm](http://www.rediff.com/news/1999/may/14us4.htm).

In an interview with *Pen Parentis*, Marina Budhos, who is a parent and a writer, talks about how her experience growing up in Parkway Village inspired her to write about young immigrants.<sup>8</sup> Despite being a full-time professor, serving on committees, advising MFA students, and raising her children, she managed to produce works. However, she describes her writing as fragile, given the challenges of dealing with family illness, death, and mourning. Her works focus on immigrant and undocumented teenagers, surveillance, mixed-race girls during school integration, and coming of age, often infused with philosophy and folklore. She has been a vocal advocate for asylum and sanctuary, as well as for shedding light on the actual and imagined lives of immigrants.

Budhos is an award-winning author of fiction and non-fiction, which she has written for both teenagers and adults. Her novels include *House of Waiting* (1995), *The Professor of Light* (1999), *Ask Me No Questions* (2006), *Tell Us We're Home* (2010), *Watched* (2016), *The Long Ride* (2019), and *We Are All We Have* (2022). Her non-fiction works include *Remix: Conversation with Immigrant Teenagers* (2007) and *Sugar Changed the World: a story of Magi, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science* (2010). Her recent work *Eyes of the World: Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, and the Invention of Modern Photojournalism* (2017) is a collaboration with her husband, Marc Aronson. She also contributed to the literature by writing short stories, articles, and essays that appeared in many publications.

Marina Budhos as an immigrant writer, in her first novel, *House of Waiting*, portrays “the experience of love, struggle and exile against the past to forge a new home”.<sup>9</sup> She makes an effort to address the issue of cultural diversity and the union of two people from various ethnic communities in American society. It is the tale of Sarah, a Jewish woman from New York, falling in love with Roland Singh, an Indo-Caribbean from Guyana. It describes their shared experience of a sense of loss and

---

<sup>8</sup> Jackie MCDUGALL, “Interview with Author Marina Budhos,” *Pen Parentis*, accessed on 20 Jan. 2023.

[www.penparentis.org/interview-with-author-marina-budhos/](http://www.penparentis.org/interview-with-author-marina-budhos/).

<sup>9</sup> Mansour Mohammed Ali Faraj, “Ask Me No Questions: A Facet of American Fascism,” *The Vision of America through the Eyes of Its Immigrants in Some Select Novels: A Comparative Study*, (Dec. 2015): 113-142.

exile: “living nowhere as an outsider,”<sup>10</sup> and it describes how Sarah managed her life after Roland left for his country.

The issues of immigrants of being “in-betweenness or dualities”, displacement and search for identity are also the main concern in *The Professor of Light*, a biography of Professor Warren Singh and his daughter Meggie, who are descended from Indian laborers who arrived in British Guiana. It describes their experiences of living in New York. The importance of the light that it casts as “a metaphor for identity: both as something fixed and as something fluid”.<sup>11</sup>

Marina Budhos’s novel, *Ask Me No Questions*, is a poignant and timely exploration of the experiences of two Bangladeshi immigrant teenagers in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Nadira and her older sister, Aisha, find themselves facing immense challenges when their father is arrested and detained at the US-Canadian border due to their undocumented status in the United States. The novel delves into the emotional and psychological struggles the sisters encounter as they try to navigate a life filled with uncertainty, fear, and the weight of family responsibilities.

In the face of adversity, Nadira becomes the pillar of strength for her family. Despite being burdened with the pressure of maintaining normalcy, she displays remarkable resilience and determination to hold her family together. As the elder sister Aisha withdraws emotionally and loses hope, Nadira takes on the role of caretaker and protector, shouldering the responsibility to keep her family intact during these tumultuous times. The novel beautifully captures the complexities of sisterhood and the bond between Nadira and Aisha as they navigate their shared journey as immigrants facing the aftermath of tragedy and loss.

In *Watched*, the companion book to “Ask Me No Questions,” Marina Budhos shifts the focus to a Bangladeshi teenage boy named Naeem. This novel explores the unsettling reality faced by many immigrants: growing up under surveillance. Naeem’s story provides a vivid and intimate portrayal of the challenges and fears experienced by individuals who are

---

<sup>10</sup> Marina Budhos, *House of Waiting*, (Global City Press: 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Budhos, “In Search of Her Roots”.