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1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019

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June 25, 2018

Dear Editor/Producer,

We are so pleased to share Amitava Kumar's *IMMIGRANT, MONTANA* (Knopf, on-sale 7/31) with you, which is already being widely praised:

"An unusual, brave twist on the migrant's tale." —Kiran Desai, author of the Man Booker Prize-winning *The Inheritance of Loss*

"Few novels have captured the mental texture of immigration so accurately." —Karan Mahajan, author of *The Association of Small Bombs*

"A beguiling meditation on memory and migration, sex and politics, ideas and art, and race and ambiguity." —Viet Thanh Nguyen, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Sympathizer*

"[A] droll and exhilarating second novel... an inventive delight." — Publishers Weekly (starred review)

"An evocation of the confusions of global disconnection... . A whip-smart... exploration of home—or lack thereof." — Kirkus Reviews

Kumar—himself an immigrant, born in India, who wrote the *New Yorker* piece "Being an Indian in Trump's America" last year—has penned a literary immigrant tale with a provocative modern edge, one that fuses story and reportage, anecdote and annotation, and picture and text. The result is an insightful and moving novel that explores cultural misunderstanding—and is an impassioned investigation of love.

Amitava is available for interviews; please contact us if you would like to speak with him.

With all best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erinn Hartman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Erinn Hartman
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Tour Dates and Cities for Amitava Kumar
Author of *IMMIGRANT, MONTANA*

Tuesday, July 31:

BROOKLYN, NY

7:00 p.m.-- **Greenlight Bookstore, 686 Fulton St., Brooklyn, NY 11717.**
In-conversation with Jennifer Egan.

Wednesday, August 1

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY

6:00p.m.-- **Northshire Bookstore Saratoga, 424 Broadway, Saratoga
Springs, NY 12866.**

Thursday, August 2

BOSTON, MA

7:00p.m.-- **Harvard Bookstore, 1256 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge,
MA 02138.**

Friday, August 10

WASHINGTON, D.C.

7:00p.m.-- **Politics and Prose at Union Market, 1270 5th St. NE,
Washington, DC. 20002. In-conversation with Madhulika
Sikka.**

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

★ Immigrant, Montana

Amitava Kumar. Knopf, \$25.95 (320p) ISBN 978-0-525-52075-7

The plot of Kumar's droll and exhilarating second novel (following *Nobody Does the Right Thing*) may feel familiar at first, but this coming-of-age-in-the-city story is bolstered by the author's captivating prose, which keeps it consistently surprising and hilarious. Indian immigrant Kailash arrives in New York in 1990 wide-eyed but also wry, self-aware, and intellectually thirsty. Kailash lives uptown and attends college, and soon has his first sexual experience, with the socially conscious Jennifer, a coworker at the bookstore where he works, who brings him hummus and takes him ice skating. After he and Jennifer break up, he begins to date the mischievous Nina, followed by a series of other young women; the novel's seven parts are titled after Kailash's romantic partners, his formal education intertwined with his personal education. Nina takes Kailash to Montana, where his memories of lovemaking are tangled with snippets of Victor Hugo, Wittgenstein, and the history of British colonialism in India. After several peregrinations, explorations, and women, Kailash lands back in Manhattan with a similarly academically curious woman named Cai Yan, who is also from India. Ultimately, his journey is more intellectual than physical, and the book includes a plethora of lively literary and cultural references in footnotes, sidebars, and illustrations. This novel is an inventive delight, perfectly pitched to omnivorous readers. 50,000-copy announced first printing. (July)

IMMIGRANT,

MONTANA

A NOVEL

AMITAVA KUMAR

5.14.18

The Return of the Real

MAX NELSON

IMMIGRANT, MONTANA

BY AMITAVA KUMAR NEW YORK: KNOPF. 320 PAGES. \$26.

At some point after 1986, when he arrived in the United States, Amitava Kumar discovered what he later called an anxiety endemic to the “expatriate Indian.” He sensed that the longer he stayed in his new country, the more he risked “losing touch with the society he took as his subject.” He used that fear, in many darting, subtle essays and several books, to urge himself toward a style that was scrupulously faithful to what he saw and heard. “The mannered delivery of lines” in 1990s Hindi movies, the bodies of people poisoned by uranium in a small Jharkhand mining town, and the speech of New York City cab drivers circulate in his essays alongside hundreds of other indelible details. By the time his first novel, *Home Products*, was published in 2007, he wrote, “realism had become my religion.”

The same could be said of Kailash, the narrator of Kumar’s second novel. Like Kumar, Kailash grew up in Patna, went to college in Delhi, and soon after emigrated—in his case, for a graduate program at Columbia. Many years later, he is narrating his early days in the US—his love affairs, his friendships, his studies—in mordant and alert prose. “As an American,” he writes about a woman in New York,

she considered it her duty to inform me about facts native to the land. For instance, the precise size in miles, length and breadth of the locust swarm that arrived in Texas in 1875. Eighteen hundred miles long and 110 miles wide. The locusts ate everything in their path, not just vegetation but also harnesses off horses or the clothing hanging from laundry lines.

Kailash gets much of his energy as a narrator from the facts that fill his well-stocked mind. He tells us about, among much else, the life of his mentor, Ehsaan Ali (a lightly fictionalized version of the postcolonial theorist Eqbal Ahmad), who fled India for Pakistan during Partition and years later got embroiled in a plot to kidnap Henry Kissinger; the films of Satyajit Ray; the letters between a jailed anti-war priest and the nun he loved (renamed here, but clearly modeled on Philip Berrigan and Elizabeth McAlister); and the American writer Agnes Smedley’s turbulent romance with Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, a revolutionary Indian nationalist. This material reaches us through Kailash’s narration, images interspersed amid the text, and footnotes, in which he reports on the development of the novel we’re reading, which before it became *Immigrant, Montana* he considered calling *The History of Pleasure*.

It would have been a fitting title. Much of the book, which bears as an epigraph Boris Pilnyak’s quip that “the Revolution smells of sexual organs,” tracks the young Kailash’s efforts to unburden himself of his innocence. He befriends Jennifer, his older supervisor at the bookstore where he does his work-study. She inducts him into intimacy and leaves him, in his words, when she realizes “I didn’t love her in a deep or lasting way.” Nina, a fellow grad student, sets off “a fury of desire” in him that takes a long flirtation to fulfill. He lets her down too. “Try to find someone who loves you, and love her back,” she tells him. He tries with Cai Yan,

another classmate, who washes her hands of him after he tries to cheat on her while she’s abroad.

A recurring device in *Immigrant, Montana* is that Kailash has “a constant conversation in my head with a judge who was asking me questions.” The judge is always white. In the first of these “defensive soliloquies,” Kailash defends his desire to express less-than-noble thoughts:

I have chosen to speak in personal terms, the most intimate terms, Your Honor, because it seems to me that it is this crucial part of humanity that is denied to the immigrant. You look at a dark immigrant in that long line at JFK... and you wonder whether he can speak English. It is far from your thoughts and your assumptions to ask whether he has ever spoken soft phrases filled with yearning or what hot, dirty words he utters in his wife’s ear.

For Kumar, Kailash’s love life is a chance to play with “thoughts and assumptions” like these. But this tone is hard to sustain for a writer as attuned as Kumar is to the dynamics of power in relationships; it keeps darkening as particular stresses emerge. “It seemed that Jennifer had made a discovery about me,” Kailash reflects, “a discovery that I wasn’t privy to.” Nina and Cai Yan also hover just past the boundary of what he can describe, and it’s a frustration in this otherwise rich, searching book that, because its perspective stays so close to his, these women seem more thinly imagined than he. They morph and shrink under his projections: “I had fallen in love with her, and with her prose. Her perfume and her lips too. No, with her prose and her lipstick.”

A recurring device in *Immigrant, Montana* is that Kailash has “a constant conversation in my head with a judge who was asking me questions.” The judge is always white.

Each time one of them leaves, it deepens the book’s pervasive sense of contact longed for and lost. Kailash is narrating from some decades after the fact, but “sudden dreams” of Nina still come to him. In 2008, he finds himself retracing a trip they took through Yellowstone. He ends up in the small Montana town that gives the novel its title, a desolate place overrun with grasshoppers. For years, he tells us, the thought of this place had brought together his “two most deeply felt needs”: “The desire for love and the hankering for home.” The glut fact of its emptiness prevents him from extracting any comfort from the town’s name or the details that swirl around it in his mind. Coming from a character who has, in his own way, made a religion out of realism and staked his style on making facts suggest more than their bare selves, it brings the book to something like a crisis of faith. “There was nothing here for me,” he remembers thinking. □

Max Nelson is on the editorial staff of the *New York Review of Books*.



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Ai Weiwei
Edited by Larry Warsh
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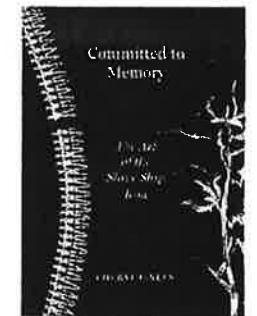
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Summer Books

Summer Reading: This Season's Ultimate Fiction List

by JULIA VITALE KEZIAH WEIR
MAY 22, 2018 4:30 PM

"A dazzling debut by an essential new talent."
—GEORGE SAUNDERS

**WE
BEGIN
OUR
ASCENT**
A Novel
**JOE
MUNGO
REED**



IMMIGRANT,
REVER,
MONTANA

A NOVEL

AMITAVA KUMAR

"A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION." —GEORGE SAUNDERS—

**A TERRIBLE
COUNTRY**
KEITH GESSEN
A NOVEL



**ANY
MAN**
A NOVEL
**AMBER
TAMBLYN**

From debut authors R. O. Kwon and Fatima Farheen Mirza to veterans Rachel Cusk and Amitava Kumar, 13 novels and short-story collections you won't want to miss.



Immigrant, Montana

By Amitava Kumar

Taking on dual narratives of love and the immigrant experience, Amitava Kumar's *Immigrant, Montana* (Knopf)—drawn heavily from the author's personal life—explores the experience of a young Indian man, new to the United States, who is searching for romance while trying to bridge cultural divides. Through the eyes of a protagonist who takes his move in stride, hoping to fit in and thrive in his new environment at a New York university, Kumar (*Lunch with a Bigot*) describes the joys and disappointments of being an outsider in a new place, which range from the cultural to the corporeal: “In America, land of the free and home of the brave, it was possible, figuratively speaking, to discuss genitalia in public.” (Amazon.com)

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THE
NEW YORKER

BEING INDIAN IN TRUMP'S AMERICA

By Amitava Kumar March 15, 2017



Sunayana Dumala at the funeral of her husband, Srinivas Kuchibhotla, an Indian engineer who was murdered last month as part of a hate crime in Kansas.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NOAH SEELAM / AFP / GETTY

On a September evening in 1987, Navroze Mody, a thirty-year-old Indian man living in Jersey City, went for drinks at the Gold Coast Café, in Hoboken. Later that night, after he left the bar, he was accosted on the street by a group of about a dozen youths and severely beaten. Mody died from his injuries four days later. There had been other attacks on Indians in the area at that time, several of them brutal, many of them carried out by a group that called itself the Dotbusters—the name a reference to the bindi worn by Hindu women on their foreheads. Earlier that year, a local newspaper had published a handwritten letter from the Dotbusters: “We will go to any

extreme to get Indians to move out of Jersey City. If I'm walking down the street and I see a Hindu and the setting is right, I will hit him or her."

When I first read about the attack on Mody, I had only recently arrived in the United States. I was a young graduate student at Syracuse University then, and although the news alarmed me I wasn't fearful. In those days, distances felt real: an event unfolding in a city more than two hundred miles away seemed remote, even in the imagination. I might have worried for my mother and sisters, who wore bindis, but they were safe, in India. Whatever was happening in Jersey City, in other words, couldn't affect the sense that I and my expat friends had of our role in this country. The desire for advancement often breeds an apolitical attitude among immigrants, a desire not to rock the boat, to be allowed to pass unnoticed. Since 1965, when Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act, abolishing the racist quotas of the nineteen-twenties, our compatriots had been bringing their professional skills to America. If we didn't hope to be welcomed, we at least expected to be benignly ignored.

A lot has happened in the long interregnum. Indian-Americans have the highest median income of any ethnic group in the United States. There is a greater visibility now of Indians on American streets, and also of Indian food and culture. I've seen the elephant-headed deity Ganesha displayed all over America, in art museums, restaurants, yoga centers, and shops, on T-shirts and tote bags. The bindi isn't the bull's-eye it once was. But the bigotry, as we have witnessed in 2017, has not gone away. In early February, an Indian man in Peyton, Colorado, awoke to find his house egged, smeared with dog feces, and vandalized with racist slogans. Two weeks later, at a bar in Olathe, Kansas, a U.S. Navy veteran named Adam Purinton allegedly opened fire on two Indian patrons. Srinivas Kuchibhotla, a thirty-two-year-old aviation engineer, was killed; his colleague Alok Madasani survived. Ten days later, a Sikh man was attacked outside his home in Kent, Washington, while washing his car. A white man wearing a mask told him to go back to his country, then shot him in the arm. Soon after that, as if to confirm that Indians across the country were now on notice, an unsettling video began to circulate online. Originally posted in August by a sixty-six-year-old computer programmer named Steve Pushor, it shows a crowded park in Columbus, Ohio. As the camera pans past immigrant parents playing with their children, Pushor says, in voice-over, "The Indian crowd has ravished the Midwest."

The racist's calling card is ignorance: he cannot discriminate (if that is the right word) between nationalities and religions, between Indians and Saudis and Egyptians, Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs. One of the first hate crimes to take place in the days following 9/11 was the murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh gas-station owner in Mesa, Arizona. The killer probably thought that Sodhi, with his turban and beard, was Muslim; he had told his friends that he was "going to go out and shoot some towelheads." This year's attacks bear some of the same hallmarks. Purinton reportedly shouted "Get out of my country!" before firing on the men from India, who he believed were from Iran. And last Friday a white man in Florida set fire to an Indian-owned convenience store because, he told police, it didn't carry his brand of orange juice and he wished to "run the Arabs out of our country." We, the mistaken people.

The incitement sixteen years ago was 9/11. Today it is Donald Trump. The President's nationalistic rhetoric and scapegoating of racial others, not to mention his habitual reliance on unverified information, have sown panic among immigrants. I've often asked myself lately whether I've been right to suspect that people were looking at me differently on the street, at airports, or in elevators. Whenever a stranger has been kind to me, I have almost wanted to weep in gratitude. Unlike when I first arrived here, distance no longer offers any reprieve from these feelings. The Internet delivers ugly fragments of report and rumor throughout the day, and with them a sense of nearly constant intimacy with violence.

Soon after Kuchibhotla's murder, a commentator in India pointed out a grave irony: in the run-up to the 2016 election, a number of right-leaning American Hindus supported Trump's candidacy, not only with donations but also with elaborate prayer ceremonies to propitiate the gods. The more conservative of these people—those who backed the rise of a hypernationalist Hindutva ideology in India through the nineties—have made common cause with American conservatives, who share their view of Islam as the enemy. Trump's fear-mongering found a ready echo in the ultra-right-Hindu heart. But to the homegrown racists emboldened by that same fear-mongering, the Hindu-G.O.P. alliance makes no difference. Purinton's question for Kuchibhotla and Madasani in the bar in Kansas was not whether they were Muslim but whether they were in the country illegally. (They weren't.) A week later, in a Facebook post, Kuchibhotla's widow framed the question as Purinton perhaps really meant it: "Do we belong here?" This week, a possible answer came from Sean Spicer, the White House

press secretary, when an Indian-American woman confronted him at an Apple store. “It’s such a great country that allows you to be here,” Spicer told her. His interlocutor was an American citizen, but that didn’t seem to register. (Not white, not quite.)

An Indian man in the Midwest once told me that, every time an American shakes his hand and says, “I love Indian food,” he wants to respond, “I thank you on behalf of Indian food.” He might just as well thank the American on behalf of—take your pick—spelling bees, lazy “Slumdog Millionaire” references, yoga and chai lattes, motels, software moguls, Bollywood-style weddings, doctors and taxi drivers, henna, Nobel laureates, comedians, the baffling wisdom of Deepak Chopra, and Mahatma Gandhi. But perhaps it’s time he reminded the American of something, too. The man who shot Gandhi, in 1948, was neither Muslim nor Sikh nor a foreigner. He was a disgruntled member of the majority, like Purinton, and had once belonged to India’s most nationalistic party—the same party that, just today, told Indians in the United States to stop worrying for their safety.

Amitava Kumar is a writer and journalist who teaches at Vassar College. His latest book, “Immigrant, Montana: A Novel,” is forthcoming from Knopf. Read more »

Video