



SHORT, VIGOROUS ROOTS

A Contemporary Flash Fiction Collection of Migrant Voices

Edited by Mark Budman and
Susan O'Neill

PUBLISHER | Ooligan Press

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COMPARATIVE TITLES

"Useful Phrases for Immigrants: Stories"

May-Lee Chai

"Everyday People: The Color of Life — a Short
Story Anthology"

Jennifer Baker

"A Map is Only One Story"

Nichole Chung & Mensah Demart

"Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives"

Viet Thanh Nguyen

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"That's me waving from the back of the boat as we
leave the shore that did not welcome and did not
expel. We expected nothing less. Watch me untangle
myself from the past twenty years as I unravel away
from the island. Have we said enough goodbyes?"

— Shaun Levin, *The Immigrant Leaves, Again*,
"Short, Vigorous Roots: A Contemporary Flash Fiction
Anthology of Migrant Voices"

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Collection of Migrant Voices

Edited by Mark Budman and Susan O'Neill



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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**BUDMAN AND O'NEILL OFFER SNAPSHOTS OF
RESILIENCE, SURVIVALAND TRUTH**

Publication date for Ooligan Press's upcoming flash fiction collection, "Short, Vigorous Roots," has been changed to March 1, 2022

[PORTLAND, Ore., January 5, 2022] — Co-editors Mark Budman and Susan O'Neill blur the line between imagination and reality, showcasing 40 poignant pieces by first- and second-generation immigrant authors in "Short, Vigorous Roots: A Contemporary Flash Fiction Collection of Migrant Voices," available in trade paperback and ebook format on March 1, 2022.

This flash fiction anthology examines the experiences of being a transplant in a foreign land and looks critically at what it means to forsake tongues, traditions and comforts in the hope of starting a new life in another world. These stories push readers to expand their understanding of the world beyond their own front doors.

"The stories give the reader the perfect vantage point to witness various manifestations of pulling away and putting back together, [and] the changing tides within these stories offer truly vivid imagery, reflection and voice, and a deep reflection on what it means to be displaced." — Patricia Murphy, author of "Bully Love"

"When a collective silence is broken, thunder. "Short, Vigorous Roots" is beautiful, necessary thunder. A collection that takes and gives breath." — Junot Diaz, author of "Drown," "The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao" and "This Is How You Lose Her"

The scraggly, pale yellow, flowering, uprooted plant you see on the cover is a yarrow. Yarrow is a special herb that has been used by humans for thousands of years for its medicinal properties and its application in spells of love and divination. The plant is thought to bring good luck and is used for healing burns, soothing colds, relieving headaches and more. This miraculous little plant is remarkably resilient — as are the characters featured in this collection — making the yarrow symbolic of the themes presented in this flash fiction anthology.

Founded in 2001, Ooligan Press is a general trade publisher rooted in the literary tradition of the Pacific Northwest. A region widely recognized for its unique and innovative sensibilities, this small corner of America is one of the most diverse in the United States, comprising urban centers, small towns and a wealth of culture. Ooligan Press aspires to discover works that reflect the values and attitudes that inspire so many to call the Northwest their home. Ooligan is a teaching press and is dedicated to the art and craft of publishing. Affiliated with Portland State University, the press is staffed by students pursuing master's degrees in an apprenticeship program under the guidance of a core faculty of publishing professionals.

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For more information, to receive a review copy or to arrange an interview with Mark Budman, Susan O'Neill or any of the contributing authors, contact Ooligan Press at stephanie.johnsonlawson@ooligan.pdx.edu or publicity@ooliganpress.pdx.edu.

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Ooligan Press to publish important flash fiction collection, "Short, Vigorous Roots," Feb. 1, 2022

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ABOUT THE BOOK

"Short, Vigorous Roots: A Contemporary Flash Fiction Anthology of Migrant Voices" by Mark Budman and Susan O'Neill blurs the line between imagination and reality in these 40 poignant pieces written by first- and second-generation immigrant authors.

Giving a glimpse into the immense loss of oneself and the strange beauty of rediscovery, this collection explores a diverse map of migrant experiences. The stories confirm that not all plants grow with deep roots in the ground, yet they flourish nonetheless. Global voices interweave and tangle together themes of humanity and identity with stories that thrive when read adventitiously — in the moments between other moments.

Regardless of their origin, the authors share the experience of putting down roots in new soil. Each story examines how adapting to new lives and lands impacts the characters' understanding of themselves and their community. At 1,000 words or fewer, every vignette redefines resilience and the meaning of home; the intensity of each is captivating from the very first line.

BOOK HIGHLIGHTS

"Short, Vigorous Roots" depicts the complexities of migration in an accessible way. Readers who are migrants or who come from migrant families will enjoy seeing themselves represented in an authentic way. These glimpses into the lives of migrants use varying writing styles, character types and settings to highlight reflections around culture, family, identity, frustration and home, from the authors' own voices.

Enthusiasts of literary fiction and flash fiction will find satisfaction in reading this compilation either in sections or all at once, as each story is a unique entity. Readers will find strong and complex protagonists who include marginalized peoples. These stories will catch the attention of adults with different cultural, political and educational backgrounds.

The collection, which captures different moments of young and old migrants, sheds light on current and relevant events in the global news cycles and humanitarian issues. Within affecting flash fiction stories, readers find visceral accounts of compassion, faith, fear, guilt, survival, vulnerability and truth.

ABOUT THE EDITORS



MARK BUDMAN is a first-generation immigrant to the U.S. He is an engineer by training but currently works as a medical interpreter. His fiction has appeared in *Catapult*, *Witness*, *World Literature Today*, *Mississippi Review*, *The London Magazine* (UK), *McSweeney's*, *Painted Bride Quarterly* and elsewhere. He is the author of the novel "My Life at First Try," published by Counterpoint, and is the co-editor of anthologies published by Ooligan Press, Persea, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press (China), University of Chester (UK) and Livingston Press.

Budman loves to travel so he can compare foreign countries to America, and he appreciates the fine choice he made 41 years ago when he came here. Learn more at markbudman.com.

SUSAN O'NEILL is the author of two books: the fiction collection "Don't Mean Nothing" (Ballantine Books, UMass Press and Serving House Books) and a slim volume of mostly humorous short essays "Calling New Delhi for Free" (Peace Corps Writers Books). She co-edited *Vestal Review*, the oldest continuously-running journal for flash fiction, from its beginnings in 2000 until 2020, and has published



stories and essays in numerous literary magazines, digital and print. She is a two-time nominee for the Pushcart Prize in fiction and nonfiction, and once had a piece listed as a "Notable Essay" in "Best American Essays."

O'Neill is also an RN and has a BA in Journalism. Born and raised in Indiana, she's lost count of the number of places she's lived, but they include a stint in the Army — most of which was spent working in an operating room in Vietnam — and a year in the Peace Corps in Venezuela, as well as shuffling around various locations in Massachusetts and Maine. She's worked in hospitals, nursing homes, nursing labs, weekly newspapers, public libraries and was even a lounge singer. She now lives in Brooklyn with her husband Paul, whom she met in Vietnam 50 years ago, and writes, edits and mentors aspiring authors as a freelancer. Her website and essay blog can be found at susanoneill.us.

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PRAISE

"Lives are made out of strings of minutes. Like a freshwater pearl, each is slightly different from the ones flanking it. The inner worlds of the contributors to 'Short, Vigorous Roots' intersect with the physical worlds they inhabit and the casts of characters that leave their mark on the dynamics of each moment. The common denominator of the writers whose works appear as brief fictional anecdotes in this literary collection is that they all come from elsewhere. Through the prisms of their old lives and locales, they now view past and present moments, aspirations and challenges with both frustration and awe as they chart new lives in the U.S. Together, their fascinating stories weave together a rich tapestry that is today's America."

— **Talia Carner, author of "The Third Daughter" and others**

"Unique, eclectic, emotional...A highly recommended read that helps one understand the complexities of individuals who make up the cultural mosaic of a country."

— **Christine Ho Younghusband, Ed.D., University of Northern British Columbia**

"The reader is transported to foreign lands through stunning narration and description...part travel writing, part historical artifact, part emotional appeal for a new world humanity, these stories capture poignant details from immigrants young and old."

— **Patricia Murphy, author of "Bully Love"**

"An artfully arranged collection of masterful stories that resonate with the essential truths of our time."

— **Dzvinia Orlowsky, author of "Bad Harvest" and others**

"If history rhymes, then this collection is a chorus for its time."

— **Val Vinokur, Poets & Traitors Press**

"A gem of global literature...These stories open horizons through content and style to the intimate moments and life experiences of generations on the move and allow us insight into the destinies and lives taking place next to us that so often go unknown and unnoticed."

— **Nicole Witt, International Literary Agent**

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What inspired you to put together this collection?
2. Why did you choose flash fiction as opposed to nonfiction essays?
3. What are some of the similarities and differences between the stories?
4. How have the personal experiences of the authors influenced the stories in "Short, Vigorous Roots"?
5. How was your experience with compiling stories and working with different authors? 6. How has this project differed from other books you have edited or authored in the past? 7. What are your personal favorite stories from the collection?
8. What have you learned from working on this collection?
9. The rhetoric about immigration and immigrants has been heated in recent years. Where does "Short, Vigorous Roots" land among all of this?

10. What message do you hope readers will take away from this book?

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LIST OF AUTHOR APPEARANCES

November 13, 2021: [The Meat For Teacast](#) featuring Mark Budman and Susan O'Neill

December 1, 2021: Meat For Tea Volume 15, Issue 4: Raw featuring excerpt story from "Short, Vigorous Roots"

February 1, 2022: "Short, Vigorous Roots" launch party (details TBD)

Stay tuned for upcoming author events at ooligan.pdx.edu, @ooliganpress on [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#), or at [Ooligan Press](#) on Facebook.

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Q&A / INTERVIEW

Q: What was the initial inspiration behind "Short, Vigorous Roots"?

MB: As a first-generation immigrant, I try to be a champion of immigration fiction, and I try to give an opportunity for fresh voices that normally go unheard by the American reading public.

SO: It was Mark's idea. I was eager to work with him on such a timely and important theme.

Q: Why did you choose flash fiction as opposed to nonfiction essays?

MB: Not to disparage essays, but fiction is more creative, has fewer boundaries and is therefore more effective than one person's opinion.

SO: We'd worked together for 20 years on Vestal Review, the magazine Mark established, and we have both come to appreciate the impact and immediacy of flash. As for fiction versus essay, I've always felt that fiction can be truer than nonfiction because it can explore emotional truth without being hamstrung by the need for literal fact.

Q: How did you go about gathering potential contributors for this collection? What was the selection process like?

MB: We advertised on social media. We went to our contacts in the literary world and they amplified our calls for submission.

SO: In truth, Mark did the gathering; I was more involved in picking through the material he received. Many of the stories from highly-experienced authors came to us completely polished. Others showed great promise but needed work; I worked with these writers to help them refine and shape what they had written. It was delightful dealing with writers who had such amazing material.

Q: The stories in "Short, Vigorous Roots" take place across a multitude of countries and continents. What was the intention behind including stories rooted in so many different places?

MB: We wanted to paint a picture across different cultures and languages. The more diverse our writers' experience, the richer our readers' immersion. It's an armchair voyage of discovery.

SO: The migrant experience is a highly individual transplantation. And yet, for all its uniquenesses, there are commonalities in migration accounts — no matter where you're moving from or to. We cast as wide a net as possible to enrich the collection with both the personal and the universal.

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Q: The rhetoric about immigration and immigrants has been heated in recent years. Where does "Short, Vigorous Roots" land among all of this?

MB: The negative rhetoric stems from misunderstanding and a lack of knowledge. Once you know us, immigrants, you'd see we are not a scary bunch. "Short, Vigorous Roots" is a way of introduction, a blind date of sorts.

SO: For my part, I hoped that providing a window into the minds of writers who've experienced migration could add a grace note of authenticity, perhaps even empathy, to the national discussion.

Q: How have your own experiences informed the compilation of these stories?

MB: I came not only from a different country but from a different form of government — a totalitarian one. I knew that the American way of life is not the only one. I knew that first hand. So I could choose the stories that the American reader hasn't seen yet, but perhaps should.

SO: I'm the only non-immigrant in the mix here, but spending a year in Viet Nam during a war and another year in Venezuela in the Peace Corps taught me how difficult (albeit for very different reasons) it can be to live outside the comfort of home and community. Even those brief experiences left me with a fascination for immigrant stories — to suss out how others cope with the upheaval of it, the "outsider" feeling that is so acute and becomes so much easier for their children. My ancestors did this! It boggles the mind.

Q: Have any of these stories made a lasting impression on you?

MB: If I'm to select just one (which is exceedingly difficult), it would be *The Perfect Girl* by Ruth Knafo Setton, a story of a girl who wants to fall into the melting pot desperately but still doesn't.

SO: Ah, man. SO many! I am in love with Amit Majmudar's *Throwing Down Roots* because of his brilliant use of magical realism to make his point. *Old Men, No English* by Edvin Subšić made me laugh out loud. Maija Mäkinen, Genia Blum, Irina Popescu, Philip Charter — they broke my heart. I can't think of any of our authors who didn't make a lasting impression.

Q: How did your experiences as writers inform your work as editors?

MB: The most important thing in the publishing world, for me, is the writer's dignity. There were so many times editors treated me like a disembodied presence somewhere in the clouds, so my answer is to treat writers the way I want to be treated.

SO: I think, as a writer, you know how demanding the process can be — so I try to do as little to disrupt it as possible when I edit. It's a matter of respect, as Mark has said.

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Q: While putting together the collection, what message did you hope to convey to readers?

MB: Immigrants may look and behave differently, but we are people like you. We are here, not to take away something that belongs to you, but to contribute to our now mutual world.

SO: I really hope our readers see and appreciate the humanity behind the immigration

experience. **Q: What has been your experience working with Ooligan Press?**

MB: One word: excellent. Every single person we worked with was a pleasure. Professional, hard-working and knowledgeable. Most importantly, they know what dignity is.

SO: Ooligan has been amazing. It's everything I think a university-based press should be — a teaching experience, a use of the training and talents of its staff. I love the way they grouped the stories — a nod to the aforementioned personal and universal in migration. It's a smart, smart press.

Q: What's next for you after "Short, Vigorous Roots"?

MB: Some people have urged me to have a sequel. Working with so many different creative personalities is a challenge. We shall see.

SO: I'm still hacking away at my own writing, throwing stuff up on my little blog, trying to get it right. In the meantime, I'm editing for some excellent writers — it's humbling.

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ABOUT THE PRESS

Ooligan Press is a student-run trade press rooted in the Pacific Northwest, dedicated to cultivating the next generation of publishing professionals. We prioritize literary equity and inclusion. Ooligan strives to publish culturally relevant titles from our local, marginalized voices in order to make literature accessible and redefine who has a place within its pages.

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