

Suggested Reading about War and Refugees

Compiled by Kathy Weaver, September 2023

Dynasty Divided by Fabian Baumann *Dynasty Divided* uses the story of a prominent Kievan family of journalists, scholars, and politicians to analyze the emergence of rivaling nationalisms in nineteenth-century Ukraine, the most pivotal borderland of the Russian Empire. The Shul'gins identified as Russians and defended the tsarist autocracy; the Shul'hyns identified as Ukrainians and supported peasant-oriented socialism. Fabian Baumann shows how these men and women consciously chose a political position and only then began their self-fashioning as members of a national community, defying the notion of nationalism as a direct consequence of ethnicity.

Understanding Ukraine: Tracing the Roots of Terror and Violence by Marieluise Beck, ed. Foreword by Dmytro Kuleba This anthology tackles the complex history of terror and violence in Ukraine – from the millionfold starvation of the Holodomor to the changing occupation regimes, from the 'Shoah by Bullets' to the Chernobyl disaster. Those ready to delve deeper into the checkered, painful history of the country will better understand Ukraine's current quest for independence, freedom, and democracy.

Ukraine, War, Love: A Donetsk Diary by Olena Stiazhkina In *Ukraine, War, Love*, Olena Stiazhkina depicts day-to-day developments in and around her beloved hometown Donetsk during Russia's 2014 invasion and occupation of the Ukrainian city. An award-winning fiction writer, Stiazhkina chronicles an increasingly harrowing series of events with sarcasm, anger, humor, and love.

List of recent books from H-Ukraine. H-Ukraine promotes scholarly and intellectual discussion of Ukrainian studies and history. This source suggested by Adrienne Kochman, curator of The Ukrainian Institute for Contemporary Art, Chicago.



The Girl Who Smiled Beads by Clemantine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil In *The Girl Who Smiled Beads*, Clemantine Wamariya provokes us to look beyond the label of “victim” and recognize the power of the imagination to transcend even the most profound injuries and aftershocks. Devastating yet beautiful, and bracingly original, it is a powerful testament to her commitment to constructing a life on her own terms.

Exit West by Mohsin Hamid Mohsin Hamid’s novel of the strife created by the Syrian Civil War is told through the lens of the love affair of young Nadia and Saeed. The pair find one another as their country teeters toward violent conflict and explosive unrest climbs to a terrifying fever pitch, forcing the couple to flee for survival.

The Girl Who Smiled Beads and Exit West from New York Times Book Review



La Bestia/ The Beast by Oscar Martinez Salvadoran journalist Oscar Martinez raises awareness of the freight train known as [“The Beast”](#) (la bestia) that migrants use to ride north through Mexico in narco territory. Threatened with the possibility of kidnapping and human trafficking as well as government corruption and the very real physical danger of riding this train, people continue to risk their lives for the chance of life in the U.S. More than a quarter of a million Central Americans make this journey and close to 20,000 are kidnapped each year. This was the first book to focus on this treacherous journey and it features color photos that emphasized the brutal reality of what they endure.

Signs Preceding the End of the World by Yuri Herrera In his haunting novella [Signs Preceding the End of the World](#), Yuri Herrera tells the story of a switchboard operator in Mexico who sets out to search for her missing brother. She’s smuggled into the States with two secret messages — one for her mother and another from the underworld in Mexico given to her by gangsters. This is the first book by the Mexican writer to be translated into English and one of the most acclaimed Spanish books published in the last few years. Herrera explains how language can be fluid when it comes to immigrants in the U.S. or U.S. born-Latinxs. “More than the midpoint between homegrown and anglo their tongue is a nebulous territory between what is dying out and what is not yet born,” he says.

Books suggested by HipLatina, a publication dedicated to highlighting the diversity of the U.S. Latina experience.