

In a time of war, what is the shape of love?

Silence is My Mother Tongue

SULAIMAN ADDONIA

The young, headstrong Saba wants to go to school, whereas her brother Hagos is unable to speak, read and write. The siblings, who have an extremely close bond, both refuse to conform to the roles imposed on them by gender and society. With 'Silence is My Mother Tongue', Sulaiman Addonia has written a compelling, vivid novel about the everyday challenges, feelings, intimacy, hopes and fears of refugees in an East-African camp.

Riveting, mysterious, almost magical and delightfully chaotic

NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Through intense, realistic characters, Addonia explores what it means to be a man or a woman, what it's like to be an individual when you no longer have a home or a future. He dissects the ways society wages war on women and explores the stories we need to survive in a hostile environment. The rebellious characters symbolise the current refugee crisis, cultural norms and gender identity.

Addonia is a born storyteller, with a highly distinctive, dreamy language. The enchanting double portrait of Saba and Hagos gives us a brilliant glimpse into an exiled community that's trying to establish a new home inside the camp. With its sensuous, intoxicating atmosphere, 'Silence is My Mother Tongue' is a unique and surprising novel.

Darkly poetic. Addonia maintains a strong voice with vibrant lyrical imagery.

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



AUTHOR



Sulaiman Addonia (b. 1972) is a British-Eritrean-Ethiopian novelist. He spent his early years in a Sudanese refugee camp. He studied in Saudi-Arabia as a teenager and ended up in London as an unaccompanied minor, without any grasp of English. He now lives in Brussels.

ORIGINAL TITLE This book was originally published in English (Indigo Press, 2019 and Graywolf, 2020, 144 pp). The Dutch translation 'Stilte is mijn moedertaal' was published by Jurgen Maas (2021, 272 pp.)

PRIZES longlisted for the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction, shortlisted for the Lambda Awards 2021

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