Nowak, Helge

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Refugee Tales: An Essay in (Re-)Classification of Literature by and about People on the Move

Helge Nowak, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

Against their conventional heterostereotype, the British have time and again opened a door (yet maybe not also their arms) wide to "bloody foreigners" in need (see Winder). A distinctive instance of Britons reaching out to persecuted Europeans from the Continent is the *Kindertransport*, which brought about 10,000 Jewish children from Hitler's Third Reich to Britain in 1938-39. Over time, *We Came as Children* (1966), a non-fictional collection of refugee tales edited by Karen Gershon, became accompanied by Gershon's thematically related poems and novels as well as *Kindertransport: The Play* by Diane Samuels (1993). Among literary scholars of English, Christoph Houswitschka stood out for his long-standing commitment to increase public awareness of the *Kindertransport* and its reflection in English-language refugee literature, a commitment which he followed up in numerous academic essays for a variety of audiences.[1] In this, he did not pursue merely a special and therefore necessarily limited interest. By contrast, he embedded the object of his research in wider contexts over and above those of Holocaust literature, as delimited by titles of his further publications, such as *Staging Displacement, Exile, and Diaspora* (co-edited 2005) and "Crossing Borders in English Literature" (2015). Both the special interest in refugee literature and the (re-)consideration of its position in a much wider framework is shared in the present essay.

A personal recollection: Christoph Houswitschka had already left the University of Regensburg for its counterpart at Dresden when I arrived at Regensburg in April 1995. By the nearly exactly full year that he was older than myself, he preceded me in completing his doctoral and post-doctoral studies (in 1991 and 2001, respectively), and in being appointed to a professorship at the University of Bamberg (in 2002) before I followed suit at LMU Munich (in 2006). For the next decades, we continued to meet each other at British Council seminars and on the academic circuit. Christoph proved to be an enrichment to any academic meeting he attended and continued to be relied upon for good advice. To the study of literature in English, he brought both professionalism and a personal touch. He is missed as much for his professional curiosity and commitment as for his habitual friendliness, basic humanity, and sense of humour.

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[1] As one of Christoph Houswitschka's publications in recent years, "Vicarious Witnesses and Translation in Kindertransport Poetry" (in *Translated Memories: Transgenerational Perspectives on the Holocaust,* edited by Bettina Hofmann and Ursula Reuter, Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, pp. 183-98), built upon earlier essays that had appeared in 2004, 2009, 2011 and 2013.

In 2016 – the year of the 'Brexit referendum' – two innovative and still topical collections of migrant and refugee tales of travel and of traumata were brought out in Britain. Already in their titles, they reflect the by now well-rehearsed distinction between economic migrants and refugees seeking asylum. When those parables of *The Good Immigrant* (edited by Nikesh Shukla, 2016) plus all four volumes of *Refugee Tales* (edited by David Herd and Anna Pincus, 2016-2021) are being read together, they will be seen to add new facets to the already colourful variety of tales of travel.

In order to recalibrate the position of migrant literature, the present essay ventures to take an aerial view on those two groundbreaking collections in wider literary and generic contexts, namely of mobility and migration as well as of tales on and from 'people on the move'.[2] It will not exactly be a "Journey Without Maps" (to quote Graham Greene's account of travels in Liberia). Instead, it will amount to a journey that sets out from, and all the while will continue to fill in details in, a road map of its own (see table 1, pp. 426-27).

A first and yet unsystematic overview on the range of such documentary or fictional accounts of migration may not stop at motivations to leave one's personal habitation such as either economic advancement or relief from prosecution. In addition to such reasons for escape, or interest in upward mobility, one comes across other and widely different motivations for 'leaving home', be it for an interval or forever.

In acceptance of such diversity of travel accounts and motivations for going on a journey, a more systematic arrangement of both documentary and fictional literature on or by real or imaginary 'people on the move' seems called for. The types of such diversity might be usefully arranged on a scale and along a continuum directed to increasing *pleasure* and relaxation as one of its ends and increasing *pressure* as its other end (see table 1, pp. 428-29). The number of categories is open to be modified or extended, as the array of types of personal mobility, though detailed and illustrated by literary examples, cannot claim to be exhaustive.

(1) At one extreme of the continuum, therefore, we find an individual who decides to seek contact with landscape and nature for its own good as well as means to find relaxation, yet also and by contrast, to establish or increase, through physical exertion, personal awareness of one's own self. The type of individual **wanderer** that immediately springs to mind has been established – long before Wordsworth's lyrical persona who "wandered lonely as a cloud" – by the two Old English

[2] The term 'people on the move' is met for example in statistical publications, and it is exactly its ambiguity that renders it useful as an umbrella term – for example to comprise emigrants and immigrants, exchange students, commuters, cross-border workers, travellers and tourists (Eurostat 2020) as well as discreet denominations for migrant groups (Meyer 5-6).

elegies from the *Exeter Book* entitled "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer". Although altogether less mobile than other specimens falling into this category (as for example the **hunter by vocation**), the sit-and-wait **angler** is also covered by the definition. (As most prominent example, see Walton.) The **runner** principally moves into the same direction as the wanderer, if only faster. Thus, Alan Sillitoe's short story "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner" is a literary example that clearly belongs into this category, too; and – without stretching the definition too far – so do tales centring on the **swimmer** and the **scuba diver**. (Up-to-date lists of relevant fictional and non-fictional literature are available on the internet.) Moreover, when the pleasure principle is kept in view as motivation to go on the move, even though the stress falls less on the strictly pedestrian sort of nature experience, then "The Seafarer" might be taken as a hint to include the sailor, the cyclist, the rider on horseback, and possibly also the motorist and the pilot within this category; otherwise see categories (4) and (5) below.

(2) In the ***flâneur***, stroller or loafer – as a relaxed individual pedestrian who, by contrast, seeks pleasurable contact with citizens, cityscape and urban renewal rather than with rural landscape and the sounds of nature – one can discern a second category and not merely another variation on the first type of pedestrian wanderer. In response to Edgar Allan Poe's "man of the crowd", Charles Baudelaire's "gentleman stroller of city streets" and Marcel Proust's *passante* as its female counterpart,[3] the German critic Walter Benjamin developed a (fragmentary) concept of such casual passers-by found rambling along the boulevards and passageways in revamped nineteenth-century metropolitan cities. Such literary representations and conceptualisations of *flâneurs*, however, were not altogether new to English readers, who might have made out similar, if earlier, examples. In that most famous of early eighteenth-century weekly magazines, namely *The Spectator*, London was mapped twice, in different though complementary ways, by essayists Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. Addison's "The Cries of London" had charted the urban microcosm by listening to the milkman's, vendors', or watchman's calls from morning to night. In "Twenty-Four Hours in London", Steele followed suit by taking his readers on a day's journey by boat and coach passing from Richmond to the City and to Covent Garden.

(3) In yet another category of its own, we find the pilgrimage as a time-hallowed form of internal rather than external migration (with the *Camino de Santiago de Compostela* as one exception of border-crossing that proves the rule). For centuries and the world over, **pilgrims** have embarked on their (pedestrian) journey either alone or in a group, motivated by religious – though still not altogether pressing – grounds for travel. However, ritual cleansing and the absolution from sins may

[3] Apart from the *passante* as a singular gender-specific exception, the types and kinds listed in the typology under discussion are principally used in a gender-neutral fashion.

be incentives to visit a shrine and to have established closer contact with the Sublime or a Supreme Being along the road. Well-known and in themselves unique examples from British literature, then and now, include – besides *The Canterbury Tales* (the medieval comic masterpiece written by Geoffrey Chaucer and first printed by William Caxton) – also *The Pilgrim's Progress* (an allegory published by John Bunyan, a Puritan preacher). They were succeeded first by *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (a 'travelogue' in verse from the quill of Romantic poet Lord Byron) and more recently by Rachel Joyce's prize-winning and best-selling debut novel entitled *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*.

(4) External migration is moreover the cue for the **true traveller** (again single or within a group) who tells of his or her personal, social, and cultural travel experience abroad, usually gained in a foreign context. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, a new kind of pilgrimage took place, however towards different shrines. For a long time (and with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as a singular exception) predominantly men of the upper classes embarked upon the Grand Tour and on other travels to the Mediterranean. If indeed some pressure was exerted on young, well-off British males of that time to follow convention and the itinerary of the Grand Tour to raise their social esteem, there were other and more pleasurable incentives, too, namely the promise not just of a cultural but eventually moreover also of a sexual initiation abroad. For its cultural and educational motivation alone (whatever may be additional incentives), that kind of *Bildungsreise* finds its modern equivalent in **student and scholarly exchange**.

From the 1790s, the Wars with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France and the Continental Blockade effectively hindered Britons in travelling to Continental Europe (except Lord Byron who broke new ground with his entertaining as well as opinionated "travelogues"). When such *Reiselust* set in among Britons with new vehemence after Waterloo, leisurely travelling turned away from the former ideal of the *Bildungsreise*, focussed instead on new tourist hotspots within Britain or abroad, and now involved more women, too. A point at which the true traveller here met with the **tourist** (on record since 1780) may have been when (in 1855) the travel operator Thomas Cook & Son offered its first organised package tour up the river Rhine. The equivalent, in print, of the guided tour is the tourist guide (see Murray and Cook).

By contrast, what is sometimes called the Home Tour (see Korte) had set in after the establishment of the United Kingdom of Great Britain (in 1707) with Daniel Defoe's *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, which is not the account of one single journey but a synthesis of several of Defoe's travels, always seen with a merchant's eye. In *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, by comparison, the Scottish novelist Tobias Smollett contributed his share of nation-building when he cast his account of an eccentric family's Home Tour by stagecoach from South-

West England up to Scotland in the form of a comical novel in letters. By the turn to the nineteenth century, the 'tourist' mapping of the United Kingdom in the age of the stagecoach was completed and waited to be revised and updated for twentieth-century **motorists** (who might eventually find their place in this category, too) in the *Shell Guides* published in the half-century between 1934 and 1984. It was John Betjeman – then already a published poet but not yet the epitome of a popular Poet Laureate and conservationist – who initiated this series and moreover contributed the first instalment on Cornwall. Two years after the establishment of the *Shell Guides,* Victor Hugo Green followed suit with another and very particular sort of what could be labelled mo-tourist guides. With his self-published and continuously updated issues of *The Green Book* (1936-66), the New York City mailman addressed himself to fellow Black US-American motorists, told them how to travel safely, and recommended where to stop in times of segregation. Each in their very own fashion, both the *Shell Guides* and the *Green Book* have not only become remarkable literary and socio-cultural documents themselves but also had an intermedial impact on film. The Shell oil company sponsored *Discovering Britain with John Betjeman*, a promotional series of 26 nostalgic, black-and-white short films produced for British cinemas in which Betjeman appeared himself on screen in 1955 while reading his travelogue as a voice-over. *Green Book*, by comparison, inspired the eponymous US movie directed by Peter Farrelly and released in 2018.

Now, before we resume our inspection of further categories and respective types on the continuum, let us come back to the fourth category under discussion. Covered by its definition of travelling for pleasure, the Welsh and Georgian poet W.H. Davies rightfully referred to himself as *The True Traveller*, albeit of a special kind. Another pedestrian on the move, Davies however distinguished himself from the types mentioned so far by roaming the countryside and hitting city streets alike, yet neither as a religious traveller nor as a secular tourist, and moreover not as a gentleman stroller. By contrast, Davies' form of travel and perspective on society was very different, as he lived much of his life as a **tramp** in Britain, Canada, and the USA. It is just because of this peculiar way of going on the move, which does not seem to fit properly into either of the first three categories mentioned above, that *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* – Davies's travel memoir from which the British pop group Supertramp derived its name – is perhaps best assigned to this fourth category, into which not only George Orwell's social reportage on living *Down and Out in Paris and London* seems to fit as well, but also the broad range of picaresque travel narratives.

(5) The point on the continuum at which pressure rather than pleasure becomes the dominant reason to go on the move seems to have been reached when earning a salary to make a living begins to stick out as the primary incentive to travel. The

appearance of **shepherds and shepherdesses** on the Arcadian scenery of pastoral literature might already be said to mark that point on the continuum from which on (internal) travelling happens less by choice than by profession. Without doubt, that turning point has been passed in William Wordsworth's anti-pastoral poem "Michael", with its description of an old shepherd and rural labourer who must make up for misfortune and make ends meet for his family. By extension, **drovers** moving cattle also belong in this category. When Walter Scott told a tale about "The Two Drovers", he focussed once more (as in his *Waverley Novels*) on a contrastive characterisation of (male) Highlanders, Lowlanders, and *Sassenach*, and moreover combined it with a study of masculinity. **Travelling showmen** and **circus artists** (as represented in Angela Carter's fantastic novel *Nights at the Circus*) should be assigned to this category, too. There, they rub shoulders not just with travelling journeymen, but also with the **commercial traveller** or sales representative, such as Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's stage hit *Death of a Salesman*.

Travelling by profession rather than by vocation is also typical of persons with an official brief or specific order, such as the **messenger**, the **summoner**, or the **soldier** – the **mercenary** in particular. Examples of messengers' and mercenaries' tales abound in the (dramatic) literature since Antiquity and need not be summoned. "The Summoner's Tale" from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* however seems worth mentioning, if only for its intermedial impact upon *Ten Summoner's Tales*, that is, pop songs released six centuries later by Gordon Sumner (!), better known as 'Sting'.

Sailor and soldier, the ship's pilot and the plane's pilot are much alike, and for their mobility due to profession are best subsumed together in category (5). Without doubt, economic pressure is in evidence: the simple fact that the sailors' pay allowed them to earn a living must have had entailed a strong appeal for most common sailors to sign on – much stronger an appeal certainly than to follow a professional ethos that went together with a social sense and a service mentality ('my pleasure'). The latter ethos – as a motivation that likewise falls into category (5) – may be more in evidence with, say, **a ship's or airplane's captain, pilot**, **steward and stewardess**, or with other professional travellers employed in general transport of goods as well as of people, such as **lorry/bus/coach/taxi/tube/tram or train drivers**. What common sailors and soldiers as well as their captains may have lacked in public service motivation when they crossed the seas and oceans, they made up with military values and explorers' ethos. Captains and crews went on the move and embarked on journeys that were not free from pressure, yet also came with the promise of material gain and public fame. Those early modern voyages of discovery, scientific explorations, and eventually circumnavigations of the globe that extended the limits of what had hitherto been known of the world, clearly were *not* voyages of pleasure: first, because those forays into the unknown

were replete with dangers, and second, because they were undertaken under royal – and eventually the Royal Society's – commission. It seems fit to revert once again to category (5) to account of all those persons involved in such a commissioned journey – and especially so when a 'letter of marque' had been included in such commission, authorising the captain of a ship to roam the seas as a **privateer**, to his own benefit. One nation's privateer truly was another one's pirate, yet might eventually and unexpectedly turn **explorer**, too, as in the case of Sir Francis Drake, whose *Famous Voyage* around the world (1577-80) was told by Richard Hakluyt. By comparison, Charles Darwin reported himself on his commissioned voyage to the discovery of Evolution. In yet another century, such endeavours in travelling space – now undertaken by **flight pilots**, **astronauts** and **cosmonauts** – would be extended first into air and then to outer space. Time-travelling, by contrast, remains at present an experience provided by fiction and film only (see Wells, Niffenegger and Gabaldon).

For all the reasons and motivations that have been stated, it does seem fit to summon all those who made the move to become involved in such a commissioned journey (sailors, soldiers, and explorers alike) and allocate them to a **single category**. This could best be category (5), which would moreover accommodate people in the service trade – steward and stewardess, for instance, as mobile modern equivalent to manservant and maid – as well as public servants who have become 'travellers by profession'. Communal taxi drivers, local bus or tram drivers, ferry boat captains and even conductors fall in this category, especially when they regularly serve the same route as well as clientèle and moreover trade stories that might travel on. Under the mobile public servant's umbrella, one might also meet **(time-)travelling priests**, **nurses, and midwives**. Travelling priests who feel a responsibility towards their rural congregations to offer them an individual churchman's service on top of a routine church service, frequently roam the countryside in Irish short fiction, as for example in William Carleton's "The Death of a Devotee" and in Daniel Corkery's "The Priest". The epitome of a (time-)travelling nurse from popular fiction is Claire Beauchamp, the protagonist and autodiegetic narrator of Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* series of historical romances and its adaptation for the television screen (2014-20[24]): Beauchamp, a trained nurse and later physician, time-travels in the Scottish Highlands between 1945 and 1743-45 to witness military action both at Culloden and on the battlefields of the Second World War.

Yet there are **cases in which one or more categories overlap** and thus seem to preclude their affiliation to a single category only. Let me illustrate such overlapping once more with persons who regularly move to the rivers and lakes, to the seaside and onto the sea. Depending upon the specific circumstances and motivations of their travel, their particular kind might be allocated to a different, and

altogether to more than one category – for example next to category (5) also to category (1) above. This is because the Old English elegy *The Seafarer* had already marked out the sailor, and Izaak Walton in the seventeenth century also the "complete angler", as non-pedestrian variations upon *The Wanderer* in regard to their title characters' reflected experience of nature. Among sailors, such an outlook seems most true for single-handed yachtsmen and -women, particularly when sailing round the world alone (in contrast to the crews sailing with Drake or Cook). And would such an overlapping, and perhaps combination of categories (1) and (5) not also solve practical problems of how to account for

a) ship-wrecked people involuntarily halted in their movement, like the travelling slave-trader by vocation called Robinson Crusoe (in Daniel Defoe's novel), or

b) whale hunters by profession and also with an obsession, out to kill a giant albino whale, like Ishmael and Captain Ahab (in *Moby-Dick*, the epic tale by Herman Melville, himself a sailor), or

c) professional yet aging fishermen like Santiago the Cuban, who has time to reflect on "the Old Man and the Sea" (in Ernest Hemingway's eponymous novella) while first winning and ultimately losing the fight of his life against huge carnivorous predator fish such as a marlin or sharks,

all of them literary characters and people who, while on the move, find the time to contemplate and come to terms with nature, humanity, and metaphysics.

Finally, and depending on the proportion of pressure and pleasure in their motivation to roam the seas, sailors could moreover be subsumed under category (6) on the continuum, which is reserved, for instance, for migrants who have become victims to human trafficking ending up in forced labour. However, before this sixth category is going to be shifted into focus, let us at first come back to the example of sailors as a kind of people on the move whose ambivalence has them turn up in more than one category. Such overlapping and possible combination of categories may turn out a blessing rather than a blemish once the typology here discussed is used for analysis. Ambivalence in the type and kind of person on the move is not limited to the sailor. It is for example found also with the **airplane pilot**, namely when such a one is a traveller both by profession (5) and by vocation (4), and moreover finds the time to taste of nature (1) or alternatively to put humanity and urbanity to the test (2). Brief examples may suffice. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's reminiscences from a pilot's point of view spring to mind easily. They compare with the opening scene of Julian Barnes' novel *Staring at the Sun* which centres on the mind of a fictional pilot of a Hurricane fighter plane during the Battle of Britain.

And now to category (6) as one that is reserved for **migrants**, who however will arrive or leave in different fashion and may be motivated by a variety of reasons.

One could take such diversity as a cue for a finer distinction of categories and subcategories than is marked out on the continuum presented here. For purely practical reasons, therefore, migrants are here subsumed under two major subcategories (and not under further categories of their own), namely as persons

a) who arrive under circumstances which necessitate a move, *for economic reasons but in the absence of physical force*; as distinct from those other migrants

b) who arrive under circumstances in which, *to the contrary, migration – perhaps, but not necessarily including labour migration – is physically enforced*.

Subcategory (a) allows for a subdivision into the following (and possibly more) cases:

- regular short-distance labour migration, or to put it simpler: **commuting** between residence and workplace (for a humorous treatment of which, see A.L. Kennedy's short story "Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains");
- individual or mass migration for economic reasons (as depicted in *The Emigrants*, George Lamming's novel about the Windrush Generation);
- a singular major move of external and long-distance labour migration (exemplified for example by Deepak Unnikrishnan's experimental short stories about South Asian **contract workers** in the Arab Gulf States, such as "Gulf Return" and "Birds", both from his relevant collection *Temporary People*);
- external and long-distance migration that leads **expatriates** to stay put in a permanent settlement far away from home (in this subcategory, Nikesh Shukla's collection *The Good Immigrant* could find its proper slot on the continuum);
- by contrast, one major move which eventually leads to others, and may include **return migration** as a further option: for a fictional treatment of such a **cycle of migration**, Samuel Selvon's 'Moses Trilogy' of comic novels (setting in with *The Lonely Londoners* in 1956 and ending with *Moses Migrating* in 1983) is one of the usual candidates that spring to mind, beside Selvon's earlier humorous short stories in Caribbean Creole English, such as the picaresque account of "Finding Piccadilly Circus".

By contrast, subcategory (b) could be used to systematically fork out into further subcategories that address cases of

- temporary forced labour (**sex workers** included);
- forced labour for life (**enslavement** on colonial plantations and in Great Houses, etc.);
- eviction and resettlement, as for instance in Johannesburg's Alexandra Township and in Cape Town's District Six under the Apartheid regime in South Africa;
- as well as abduction and imprisonment;

all with or without economic exploitation. This cluster (b) would account for the consummate experience of **child soldiers, captives or hostages, prisoners and slaves**, as told through prison memoirs, captivity tales or (neo-)slave narratives.

For more detail, let us review cases of human trafficking ending up in temporary forced labour. This has happened to children as well as adults, male or female. Over centuries, the practice of *shanghaiing* – that is, the kidnapping of people to serve as sailors – provided the most striking example of the sheer use of force set against an individual's independent motivation to go on the move. In various parts of Africa, for example, that practice of abduction and forcible recruitment of child soldiers has persisted to the present day. There is a gender dimension to human trafficking: by contrast to the mostly male victims of *shanghaiing* into naval or army service, the victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation are predominantly women who end up in unfree labour as sex workers.

(7) **Refugees** – homeless and displaced persons as well as asylum seekers – would be relegated to a single category of their own. Subdivision would of course be possible for that category, too. Displaced persons may have been forced to take flight from home because of natural disasters (such as famine or drought), poverty and hunger, or military conflicts up to open war. By comparison, asylum seekers may have had to escape from various forms of persecution and unfree internal or external migration (including forced removal, 'ethnic cleansing', or genocide) to come to need shelter and a 'safe haven' abroad. Literary examples drawing attention to refugees seeking asylum on political, religious, or ethnic grounds abound and included in recent years – apart from the publication of *Refugee Tales I-IV* – also Kay Adshead's stage-play *The Bogus Woman* and Salman Rushdie's *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*.

(8) An eighth and final category could be reserved for remaining instances, varied as they may be. Here, one would take note of the pressure to go and stay on the move that is exerted by convention, that is, a traditional way of life of a distinct ethnic and cultural group such as the Romani people (formerly called 'Gypsies'), yet also of 'Irish Travellers' or Tinkers. In addition, one could take this last, heterogenous category to moreover include those haunted characters from literary legend who are given out as bound by a curse to eternally stay on the move, like the Wandering Jew, S.T. Coleridge's Ancient Mariner and Richard Wagner's Flying Dutchman.

This is the end of our aerial view on migrants' and refugees' tales in the wider frame of literature on and from people on the move. The two recent collections edited by Nikesh Shukla as well as by David Herd and Anna Pincus, respectively, were not only taken as a good opportunity to place them in such a wider frame, but also as a cue to reconsider the whole variety of a literature concerned with mobility and migration as motivated by a highly individual yet at the same time

characteristic mix of pressure and of pleasure. This effort can be said to have reached out to Ottmar Ette's programme of research into "a bordercrossing literature on the move". Departing from a kind of travel literature, it then allows for opening up a view on other "patterns of movement, which will shape the literatures of the 21st century . . . [as] for a major part *literatures with no fixed abode*" (Ette 9, original emphasis). Here, however, our understanding of literature by and about people on the move differs. When Ette refers to 'literature on the move', he concentrates less on a literature of travel than indeed on a travelling literature among whose major features are a trans-national and global outreach together with intertextuality and travelogue as modes of writing. This agrees with Schaff (2020). In such an understanding, the major stress falls on the mobility of literature rather than, as here, on a literature about mobility and migration.

A word on the two collections themselves. Together, they are united in their opposition to a policy of hostility rather than hospitality that led to the 2018 Windrush Scandal. Yet there are also distinctive features. Beginning with its ironic title, *The Good Immigrant* confronts the allegedly disrespectful treatment of labour migrants and their descendants by countering it with stories of success, eventually across generations. Editor Nikesh Shukla, the son of Asian migrants to Britain, and the twenty contributors chosen from his circle of friends ostensibly stress their individual experience of living in Britain as a 'person of colour'. Yet their generally autodiegetic narration does not rule out seeing them as representative of their section of society.

> This constant anxiety we feel as people of colour, to justify our space, to show that we have earned our place at the table, continues to hound us. For, while I, and the 20 other writers included in this book, don't want to just write about race, nor do we only write about race, it felt imperative, in the light of . . . the backwards attitude to immigration and refugees, the systemic racism that runs this country to this day, that we create this document, of what it means to be a person of colour now. Because we're done justifying our place at the table.
>
> For people of colour, race is in everything we do. Because the universal experience is white. (Shukla xv)

'People of colour' serves as an umbrella term to share an individual or an ethnic group's varied experience of migration, race, and racism in Britain. In Shukla's collection, this happens in a random order with regard to geography, ethnicity, gender, age, and profession, as well as theme and style. Some of the contributors simply narrate their personal history and experience, others conduct interviews among their peers (Wei Ming Kam). Still others – like Kieran Yates, "the typical Southall girl" (112) – leave London for a route to roots in the Punjab left by their grandparents. And besides those who abstract from their personal mixed-race experience to talk about Blackness (Varaidzo), one finds also the opposite, namely

Reni Eddo-Lodge who would spark controversy (in the year 2017) with *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*.

Shukla's collection will appeal on aesthetic grounds, too. My own four favourites? Stylistically, Shukla's own story "Namaste" (1-9) sticks out for his change of language register from his "normal voice" to "Guy-lish" (5). Then, "Airports and Auditions" by performance artist Riz Ahmed is a well-written, entertaining, and ironical piece on identity politics (159-68), and so is "Shade" by Salena Godden (181-97) – another spoken-word artist and the only contributor in the entire collection with a Windrush Generation background. Finally, then, "Flags" by Coco Chan (119-29) comes across as both a well-told and stylishly-written account of the sex life of a woman of colour, including a tryst with the enemy and a surprising twist at the ending.

On the continuum, the categories of refugee and migrant tales themselves were not broken down into further, more clearly specified subcategories, but the random list drawn up of respective keywords helps to address a cycle of migration across generations, including further and return migration. This view is supported by *The Penguin Book of Migration Literature* (2019), which in the meantime was brought out with the subtitle: "Departures, Arrivals, Generations, Returns".[4] Such a cyclical view of migration may also help to identify those instances in *The Good Immigrant* when Kieran Yates returns to her roots (108-18); when Musa Okwonga decides to leave Britain, "The Ungrateful Country" (224-34) of his upbringing, for a more tolerant Berlin amidst the 2015 Refugee Crisis; or when Chimene Suleyman actually moves on to the USA (22-32).[5]

The Good Immigrant does not only mingle stories of successful integration with protest against pervasive racism and xenophobia. Shukla's collection is moreover special in that it was the outcome of a creative kind of crowdsourcing in connection with the website of Unbound, the publisher. Earlier on within the year 2016, Comma Press, a Manchester publishing house committed both to the political refugees' plight and to the promotion of the short story, had offered the initial

[4] Dohra Ahmad's Penguin anthology is built upon this image of a cycle of migration. The words in the subtitle are used to mark out (as here) respective stages of migration to which the selected texts are affiliated. There is no distinction made between, for example, migrant and refugee tales, and there is no topical reason stated for bringing out the collection. The assembled corpus ranges over centuries and continents, from Olaudah Equiano to Deepak Unnikrishnan but consists principally of English-language literature. "Tea in the Harem" (200-02), the passage lifted from Mehdi Charef's French novel and translated into English, remains the singular exception that proves the rule.

[5] After Chimene Suleyman's move to the USA, Nikesh Shukla teamed up with the Turkish-Cypriot/American performance poet as his co-editor, to bring out a companion volume entitled *The Good Immigrant USA: 26 Writers Reflect on America* (Little, Brown 2019).

collection of by now four volumes of altogether 63 *Refugee Tales* originally modelled on *The Canterbury Tales*.[6]

Over 600 years after Chaucer's death, various British charities organised a non-violent form of resistance to the alleged violation of refugees' human rights in Britain: a protest march to Canterbury instead of a pilgrimage. From the outset, Chaucer's medieval classic was not just part of the packaging but moreover suggested the form of narration. During the walk, refugees were interviewed about their experience by another person who would take down what had been told, then pass it on to a wider audience, first of all in a form of oral storytelling and reported experience during the walk, and later in print. As a rule, this "collaborative model of storytelling" (in editor David Herd's words, *RT* III.AW.192)[7] was followed up in most of the tales and through all the four volumes. It is at this point that the varied interests of asylum seekers, of the non-profit organisations who seek to support them, and of an independent publisher committed to furthering short fiction on the book market coalesce.

The two co-editors teamed up lesser-known writers of fiction with more household names such as Patience Agbabi, Monica Ali, Bernardine Evaristo, Jackie Kay, Kamila Shamsie, Gillian Slovo, Ali Smith, Marina Warner, and – last but not least – Abdulrazak Gurnah. An Emeritus Professor at Kent University and also a novelist, Gurnah won the Noble Prize Laureate in Literature when the fourth volume of *Refugee Tales* was published. Inua Ellams is the only person contributing to both collections, with a workshop focusing on an "Unaccompanied Minor" (*RT* I.04.17-24) as well as with a report of his African journey (Shukla 130-43).

The intertextual engagement with Chaucer's "The Man of Law's Prologue and Tale" in "The Migrant's Tale as told to Dragan Todorovic" is given pride of place as the very first refugee tale in the original collection (*RP* I.02.01-12), following right upon David Herd's "Prologue". In "The Migrant's Tale", Todorovic pairs and compares the Syrian-related refugee experience of Chaucer's Lady Custance (or Constance) with that of a real-life Syrian refugee called Aziz, in which both of them have to flee from Syria, cross the Mediterranean Sea by boat, to end up in England – in Aziz' case in a detention centre. Moreover, in terms of form and style, Todorovic is the first in a series of contributors to use Parallel (Dual) Narration: in "The Migrant's Tale", focus and voice are constantly shifting from an interview in the present between an unnamed homodiegetic narrator (read: Todorovic?) and Aziz, the Syrian refugee, with the author's prose adaptations of consecutive extracts from the medieval "The Man of Law's Tale".

[6] In Nowak (2023) I refer to the same corpus but with a stronger stress on the intertextual link with Chaucer.

[7] In the following, references to *Refugee Tales I-IV* will be quoted as such: volume number, number of prologue/tale/afterword, page number.

In many of those refugee tales, the 'collaborative model of storytelling' is transformed into a combination of a split narrative with Parallel (Dual) Narration. Moreover, second-person narration is encountered much more frequently than in average collections of short stories today, where it is still exceptional. In these instances, the matching of a tale first told and then transformed for the printed page appears adequate and convincing, as for example in "The Appellant's Tale as told to David Herd" (*RT* I.10.69-84), which reads like an explicitly Kafkaesque story of 'Hostile Environment'. There are ethically questionable borderline cases, though, in which the transformation of the refugee's tale looks like a welcome opportunity for writers to bolster their own Modernist credentials, for example by producing an imitation of the Penelope Episode at the end of Joyce's *Ulysses*.[8]

By contrast with 'good immigrants' tales, the refugee tale is distinctive with regard to

- its storyline: from persecution and eventually torture in the past over flight to the routine stages of the asylum process, from application to eventually refusal, judicial review and appeal;
- its constellation of characters (refugee – supporter – opponent);
- its typical events and situations;
- the media of transport during the flight (rafts, damaged boats and refrigerated lorries) which may take on an iconic value, and;
- finally, the lessons to be learned, namely about xenophobic tendencies in society and their impact, about the resilience of refugees, and about support (through the organisation of walks and collections alone, but moreover also through the statements of contributing writers within the tales).

Let us once more come back to *The Good Immigrant*. Shukla's collection reports successful integration from the immigrants' side across the generations, if also a lack of toleration from members of the host society. Yet again, by the time of the coronation of King Charles III in 2023, two other 'good immigrants', persons of colour, and 'firsts' had risen to the top job in government both in Britain and in Scotland. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, the first Hindu in office, descended from East African Asian immigrants, while First Minister Humza Yousaf is also the first Muslim in office, coming from a family of Pakistani immigrants. This raises questions as to what extent the situation is still the same as in 2016 or whether it has improved since. And if so, for whom among migrants and refugees? What about the Windrush Scandal, for instance, which has not concluded with a happy ending yet?

[8] Further examples of second-person narration can be found in vols. II (02.03-09; 09.72-83), III (09.85-97) and IV (05.29-36; 07.47-54; 12.93-102). For an ethically questionable example of Modernist style, see the "Chaplain's Tale" (I.03.13-16); for more thoughtful uses of Modernist features, see vols. II (09.82-83) and III (08.71-83).

And while the 2012 'Hostile Environment' policy, the 2015 European Migrant Crisis and the 2016 'Brexit' Referendum are at the heart of the *Refugee Tales* collections, this does not affect the contributors to Nikesh Shukla's collection at all. Judging from that comparison, Shukla's circle of 'good immigrants' seems to have arrived indeed. And quite so has the new Conservative Prime Minister of colour who, in his first months in office, stressed the continuity with the policies of his immediate predecessors, and used every opportunity to advertise an *Illegal Immigration Bill* in order to 'stop small boats crossing the Channel'. Sadly, one remembers that such an image was once used to illustrate a Dunkirk spirit, read: to make a move and reach out, in bad times for everybody, to those with the greatest need.

Pleasure

cat.	type	motivation	kind	literary example
1	**wanderer**	contact with landscape and nature; relaxation; physical awareness of one's own self	(individual) rural pedestrian wanderer, walker, runner hunter, angler, swimmer, scuba diver (sailor, cyclist, rider, motorist, pilot)	Old English elegy "The Wanderer" (*Exeter Book*)
2	***flâneur***/ stroller or loafer	contact with cityscape and citizens; curiosity; relaxation	(single) urban pedestrian wanderer "man of the crowd" (Poe), "gentleman stroller of city streets" (Baudelaire)/(female) *passante* (Proust)	
3	**pilgrim**	religious motivation: visit to a shrine, absolution	(pedestrian) pilgrimage (undertaken alone or in a group)	Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400)
4	**traveller for pleasure**	individual vs. mass travel experience *Bildungsreise*: educational purpose; cultural (and maybe sexual) initiation; social esteem	**true traveller** vs. **tourist** vs. **travel liar** **exchange student/scholar** (pedestrian) **tramp** sailor; cyclist; **motorist** external journey: Grand Tour internal journey: Home Tour	
5	**traveller by profession**	making a living: salary	**shepherd/-ess, drover** **travelling showmen, circus artists** travelling journeymen; *picaro* **commercial traveller, salesperson**	
		official brief/order	**messenger** **summoner** **(mercenary) soldier**	Chaucer, "The Summoner's Tale"
		voyage of discovery scientific exploration circumnavigation time-travelling	**sailor**, incl. **captain** of a ship, **privateer**, (ship's) **pilot** **explorer; astronaut/ cosmonaut** **time-traveller**	
		salary vs. social sense orpublic service	**travel(ling) mid-wife/nurse/priest** **steward/-ess; conductor** **taxi/bus/coach/train driver**	

Pressure	**6**	**migrant**	economic aspect: free-willed or forced labour; regular commuting and seasonal migration (agriculture, mining)	**commuter; contract worker** **emigrant, immigrant; expat(riate)** individual or mass movement permanent settlement or further (return) migration	*The Good Immigrant*, ed. Shukla (2016) Unnikrishnan, *Temporary People* (2017)
			forced labour, temporary	human trafficking: 'pressed' sailor/(child) soldier/**sex worker**	
			forced labour for life	domestic/plantation **slave**	
			imprisonment	**prisoner, captive, hostage**	
	7	**refugee**	flight from poverty/ famine/ drought/ hunger military conflict, war	**homeless/displaced person**	Chaucer, "The Man of Law's Tale" *Kindertransport* on stage, in fiction and non-fiction *Refugee Tales I* (2016) – *IV* (2021), eds. Herd and Pincus
		political religious ethnic	escape from various forms of persecution, incl. ethnic cleansing/genocide in need of shelter 'safe haven'	**asylum seeker**	
	8	further types	traditional way of life of distinct ethnic and cultural group	*'Irish Traveller'/Tinker* **Roma(ni)** ['Gypsy']	
			haunted person from literary legend, bound by a curse	"The Wandering Jew'' (character from 13th-century legend) "The Flying Dutchman" (ghost ship, 17th-century legend)	

Table 1: Typology of 'people on the move' and their literature

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