



FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

Traballo de Fin de Grao

# **Wayfarers in the Shadow: A Rambling Exploration of Migration Literature**

Autora: Valeria Solís Villaverde

Titora: Laura María Lojo Rodríguez

CURSO 2022–2023



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**Formulario de delimitación do título e resumo**

Traballo de Fin de Grao curso 2022/2023

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**Resumo** [na lingua en que se vai redacta-lo TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

This dissertation aims to focus on the sociopsychological progression of numerous refugees and migrants through the analysis of several short stories written in the English language and that are collected in projects that asses these experiences, such as *The Refugee Tales* series edited by David Herd and Anna Pincus, *Shatila Stories* translated by Nashba Gowanlock (2018) and *Breach* (2016) by Olumide Popoola and Annie Holmes, amongst others, thus providing a space for deep rumination on questionable migratory policies. The short stories of the wayfarers will allow to contrast real-life testimonies with the stages of migratory grief, the so-called 'Ulysses syndrome', and to address concepts such as 'assimilation versus multiculturalism', 'acculturation versus adaptations' or 'xenophobia and discrimination'. Thus, this dissertation is also meant to foster a space to explore innovative content associated to topics of migratory nature that represent highly discussed and highly controverted discussions in today's world and society.

The research methodology will be mainly of theoretical nature, using the interdisciplinary field of 'border studies' – such as Mireille Rosello and Johan Schimanski's *Border Aesthetics: Concepts and Intersections* (2017) or Doris Wastl-Walter's *The Routledge Research Companion to Border Studies* (2011), among others – with the aim of relativizing and conceptually framing the stories to be analyzed, allowing the exploration of their cultural and geopolitical dynamism, having as a major objective to establish bridges between theory and reality as testified to by the 'walkers.'

Santiago de Compostela, 3 de novembro de 2022.

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## **Introduction: Stepping into the Light -the Narrativization of Borders.**

One could say that migrants follow routes (paths), they pass through crossing points (bridges), they are excluded and have to wait outside selective barriers in order to enter (doors), and they can see a better life on the other side of the border (windows).  
(Nyman and Schimanski, 2)

How often do we stare at our lives and recognize our privileges? When one takes a pic into the type of everyday life one carries, perhaps he or she is not completely aware of the advantages one enjoys with respect to other individuals, even in terms of basic human rights. Nowadays, a large number of countries are hosts to groups and collectives who seek to improve their living conditions and to overcome the contingencies of their contexts (i.e. their places of origin). In a modern world where the cross-border crisis is throbbing, and mobility is at the order of the day, refugees are exposed to traumatizing experiences of assimilation and detention. The role of human rights and how society embraces others are ravenously questioned through the exposure of their stories in refugee narratives.

From a more personal perspective, this dissertation is motivated by my own journey as a displaced person. The process of analyzing the anthologies and exploring the theoretical spectrum of living as a refugee partly arises from my personal necessity to name a number of emotions and socio-psychological stages I experienced after emigrating from my motherland, near the end of the last decade. My intention has never been to see myself reflected in the voices of the characters of the anthologies -neither would I ever compare my living situation to theirs, yet I do attempt to carry this project, to a certain extent, as research on myself.

The following pages are meant to assess the social and psychological obstacles refugees must overcome when facing the process of displacement through an evaluation of border narratives. One of the main objectives of this dissertation is to study concepts related to border tales, and to theorize on the experiences of refugees. In addition to this, the present dissertation is also an attempt to give a sense of community to the collectives through establishing shared features in their experiences and examining the social stigmas they must face and the psychological consequences of their displacement.

Thus, the project has the goal to analyze the stories from a border perspective, highlighting the ‘othering’ of the refugees that survive in the ‘margins’ of host countries, taking these individuals as a collective. In addition, this dissertation also aims to assess their experiences from a narrower point of view, evaluating the individual’s undergoing within the community. Since the study of tales will take place from border narrative anthologies, it is another one of the objectives of this dissertation to appraise the process of both creating and publishing the volumes, along with the social and political repercussions they have.

The critical examination of the anthologies here analysed is meant to pave the way for the comparative and contrastive analysis of the narrative features of the stories, the image that is provided of the refugees as a community and of the recipient countries and societies. Moreover, similarities and discrepancies will be established from a more clearly literary standing, dealing with the writing processes of the volumes, the elements of the collective’s traumatic experience they wish to highlight and challenge, and the variation of the format of the anthology with respect to their genre and level of fictionality.

Furthermore, to carry this research, the concepts will be drawn mainly from sources that deal with the role of the refugee in the current migratory crises and with the aesthetics and redefinition of borders such as *Border Images, Border Narratives. The Political Aesthetics of Boundaries and Crossings* (2021), edited by Johan Schimanski and Jopi Nyman, *Memory, Migration and Travel* (2018), edited by Sabine Marschall, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995) by Giorgio Agamben, *Geopolitics of Europe's Identity: Centers, Boundaries, and Margins* (2016), edited by Noel Parker and many others. Secondly, it will also draw from updated statistics published by reliable sources such as the Council of Europe and the European Commission: Migration and Home Affairs.

The concepts and data extracted will provide a clearer picture of the geopolitical context in which the stories are presented, and the relevance of the publishing of the anthologies, taking into consideration the current cross-border and mobility phenomenon. Later on, the research will come in hand for the assessment of the four anthologies that have been selected to be evaluated in this dissertation: *Refugee Tales IV* (2021) edited by David Herd and Anna Pincus, *Shatila Stories* (2018) translated by Nashba Gowanlock, *Breach* (2016) by Olumide Popoola and Annie Holmes, and *A Country of Refuge* (2016) edited by Lucy Popescu. It is necessary to mention that the anthologies will not be evaluated in their

wholeness, but rather their main features as volumes. From each of them, one significant and poignant story has been selected to elaborate a more detailed analysis.

Following the line of analysis of border studies, the project stands upon the critical examination of the selected anthologies and the tales from a geopolitical perspective. In terms of the assessment of the refugee experience, this line of study also paves the way for a deep rummaging through the psychological repercussions of the quite often traumatic process of 'othering' of the refugee collective. In order to do so, the first step to be taken is to frame the dissertation in a theoretical space related to concepts such as 'borderlands', 'assimilation', 'migratory grief', and several others that are tightly related.

After the aforementioned theoretical framing of the project, the research will be applied from a contrastive standing to the four previously mentioned anthologies that present real experiences, fictional tales, or essays of refugees. Comparing and contrasting the anthologies will enable the establishment of similitudes and discrepancies between the selected volumes, especially in terms of the narrative characteristics of the stories and the image that is drawn of the collective and their living circumstances. Later on, the same type of evaluation will be applied from a narrower scope to four specific tales -one from each volume.

This is meant to structure the project in three blocks with two different chapters each. The first part will develop on all theoretical aspects and introduce the concepts needed to evaluate both the anthologies and the stories. The second part will mainly focus on establishing both similarities and differences between the volumes -thus, assessing the refugee collective experience. Finally, the third part will also take on a comparative and contrastive eye, yet in this case over four individual tales. To conclude, and also to begin, it is this project's greatest hope that by its end, a glimpse of the immense human quality that resides in this community, their constant struggles, and the importance of their stories being known, will have come to light.

## **Chapter I: Anamnesis and the Refugee's Quest.**

Today, immigrants are the emergently self-conscious social (cultural) group that demands the transformative authority of legal-doctrinal presence. Today, they are the ones who provoke us to ask, what is wrong with us?  
(Means, 387)

The moment an individual must adapt to a new cultural, geographic, and social scene, an inner and outer revulsion takes place. Refugees and immigrants are vessels to many social stereotypes, and the quest of these groups who attempt to improve their quality of life becomes even tougher when these circumstances are also intertwined with social stigma. They must face a distressing process of adaptation -for reasons amongst which law, religion, cultural clashes, and many others related could be mentioned.

According to the Greek's ancient paradigms, an individual's identity was built upon the coexistence of overlapping identities that were in continuous evolution. The individual self was framed by factors such as the place of birth, which simultaneously determines the civic identity, the role and relation to be established with the surrounding community. Identity was intrinsically connected to belonging.

Getting closer to modernity, the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre poses the following: 'I am not what I am ... I am what I am not' (Sartre, 118,128), theorizing that the past constitutes the self, but does not determine it. The dimension of the future influences the present -actions and decisions are based on projections of the future self. However, the future is not the present yet. The self is, then, the nothingness between that non-determining past and the open future, a nothingness that is possibility.

When analyzing the position of immigrants and refugees, both politically and socially, it is necessary to comprehend that they stand right at the verge of that nothingness, a present that can feel overwhelming and, at first sight, without the hopeful horizon of possibility posed by Sartre. They must redefine their identities, while overcoming geopolitical adversities, a task that becomes even more difficult when considering the constant flux of migration

policies, the redefinition and re-evaluation of geopolitics of today's world, which is mostly globalized.

According to David Neuman, modernity has become 'the context of the post-modern debate concerning territory, boundaries and sovereignty, and the role of the State in a world which has been impacted by globalization on the one hand, and the resurgences of ethnic and national identities on the other' (Newman 1999, 1). The new set of boundaries in today's world, marked by the constant evolution of the globalized market and by the ever-changing roles of sovereignty, has reshaped several territorial definitions of identity and the delimitation of spaces.

Along with said re-definition, the world historically evolved into being distributed in an arrangement of focuses of territory that are centers of pull for forces such as market, industrialization, and politics. It is necessary to highlight that establishing strict dichotomies has not proved to be the most correct approach in a world where mobility and globalization have opened the possibility of blurring lines that were categorically formed in the past.

On the edge of those centers are the outskirts -what some academics recognize as 'margins', these being 'defined [as] ("where the space ordered from a center is subject to challenge") by peculiar features rather than clear-cut edges. It follows that it is neither confined to the inside nor the outside of a center's order. (...) In either case, the entities in question have features associated with marginality. The term "othering" can be understood in this context' (Parker, 18).

The Merriam-Webster dictionary provides two main meanings for the definition of 'borderland': 'territory at or near a border' and 'a vague intermediate state or region'. When seen in the scope of the 'margins', as previously defined, the second meaning becomes most interesting due to the fact that the definition of the 'other' occurs at spaces that are not associated with a particular center, but related to vagueness, to strangeness.

Secluded to these margins of territories of complex socio-political status, the refugee and the immigrant becomes subject to a process of 'othering' which often entails the creation of a forced collective identity given to the foreigners by those privileged in the 'centers', building a 'discourse that emphasizes the outsider's difference, often with the effect of

turning it into a security threat. It thus amounts to driving some of the margin into the clear-cut outside. Where those on the margin are “othered,” the similarity of the marginal is denied, lessons from them are precluded, and they may be constructed as objects of fear or preemptive attack’ (Parker, 18).

Seen from this perspective, the subjectivity that springs from the margins poses a menace to the normality established by the sovereign state, since it is viewed as not related or dependent from the ‘inside’. This being said, hybridity could also be turned into a positive concept when the ‘centers’ both embrace and accept those particular and remarkable features of the margins. The ‘other’ that stands for the ‘outside’ of the margin, contributes a certain level of subjectivity to the ‘inside’, and is considered a part of the space limited by the sovereign state in charge of framing the political spaces and, therefore, the territory. This standing shows itself to be beneficial for the state -it can be exerted as a means of emphasizing its alternative ways: how the ‘center’ has joined the flow of modernity and accepted heterogeneity, thus providing a new face to sovereignty itself.

Migrants face the ambiguity of being neither ‘inside’ nor ‘outside’, a position that aggravates their already distressing process of adaptation. Taking into consideration what has been previously posed, the displaced individual represents either a menace to order or a figure to exhibit the efforts made by a state to integrate diversity into that order. In neither of these two prisms, the individual or collective experience of the migrants and refugees is prioritized.

Within these individuals, there exists a crashing coexistence of the ‘individual identity’ and the ‘collective identity’. The first, sparks from the background of the immigrant and is partially lost in the process of adaptation to the new culture since there is no contact with the one of the places of origin anymore. Some fraction of cultural identity disappears. The second deals with how individuals confront their natural and most immediate environment. In the case of migrants, how their new ‘collective identity’ grows upon their capacity to adapt to the new culture and the host-country’s ability and willingness to allow assimilation to take place.

Assimilation is defined by the European Commission as “the process by which a minority group adopts the patterns of behavior of a majority group or host society and is

eventually absorbed by the majority group/host society.” (EC: Migration and Home Affairs). It is highly relevant to distinguish between the concepts of assimilation and inclusion, the second implying the acceptance of the cultural spectrum of the incomer and a change of perception in the receiving societal group. According to their level of cultural performance and assimilation to the new culture, the immigrant or refugee is considered to be more nativized, hybrid or still a very clear outsider.

Often, these cases of mobility, which tend to be forceful and not by complete willingness but rather as a means to escape conflict, may trigger several stages of unusual and increased stress, which slows down the path that begins with acculturation (i.e. the contact between two different cultures). This means that the refugees or immigrants not only have to deal with the physical contingencies of being placed in a completely new context and society, but also to maneuver around the psychological effects of migrating while in the process. One of the often consequences of displacement is the appearance of the so called ‘Ulysses syndrome’.

Coined in 2002 by the Spanish psychiatrist Joseba Achotegui Loizate, this syndrome focuses on the extreme levels of stress suffered by people who have left behind their known contexts (often these being countries of origin) under difficult circumstances. It may express itself through constant anxiety, depression, or somatization. This pathology constantly appears in migrants along with migratory grief, which must not be confused with the syndrome itself.

The name of the syndrome is associated with the myth of Ulysses and his journey. Once the protagonist of the *Odyssey* sets sail and begins his adventure, he faces a completely unknown world, which quite often seems monstrous in his eyes. Solitude and loneliness play a very relevant role in his voyage, just as in the lives of refugees and migrants. The story of Ulysses could be taken as an analogy of the stories of these wayfarers.

The migratory grief shows stages, just as the mourning grief, yet both are different in the condition of the grief itself: the migratory one is partial, since the loss is not permanent, multiple, since the migrant may simultaneously grief several of the many types of losses that he or she faces, and recurrent, since it may resurface at any moment and by a bare contact

with the place left behind. Bowlby, in his *Process of Mourning* (1961) mentions four stages of the grieving process:

1. Shock and numbness: the phase where the loss seems not real and impossible to accept. There is physical distress during this phase, which can result in somatic symptoms. Determines how the individual will continue the grieving process, and if all of the stages will take place correctly.
2. Yearning and searching: awareness of the loss. In this stage, the individual attempts to remain in contact with the person he or she was in the past. The fact that said contact is left behind, establishes the type of last stages of grief the displaced person has.
3. Despair and disorganization: acceptance that what was is not anymore. That life has changed. This notion carries along hopelessness and despair, as well as anger and questioning. The individual must accept this fact in order to rebuild his or her life. We may withdraw from others. If not overcome, this stage is said to provide the individual with a perpetual negative perspective on life.
4. Re-organization and recovery: faith is restored through the reestablishment of goals, routines and long and short term expectations on life. In this phase your grief does not go away nor is it fully resolved, but for Bowlby the loss recedes and shifts to a hidden section of the brain, where it continues to influence us but is not at the forefront of the mind. (317-339)

Among the losses faced in the grief, the psychiatrist mentions the one of family and loved ones, social status, loss of the homeland, language grief, loss of natural codes -associated with societal and cultural costumes. Lastly, we find the loss of the group of belonging: those that shared the natural codes with the migrant.

For immigrants and refugees, their post-migration present is the nothingness described by Sartre, a present that is neither 'inside' nor 'outside' their host-societies. Their present is a liminal space, understanding liminality as a threshold or an intersection between one thing and the other. This liminality is determining for the definition of 'culture', since "creating limits is a central human activity that creates, socially and symbolically, a system of cultural structures. In contrast to traditional concepts of culture that define culture as work on nature, one can show that it is based here on the activity of creating relations. Constructing borders is one such central cultural activity on a social as well as on a symbolic level. In this respect, the analysis of borders and boundaries enriches our understanding of culture as a

permanent process of opening and closing, of homogenization and 'heterogenization' (Muller-Funk, 24). This liminality mirrors the one of the territories in which they are submerged. In the stories to be analyzed, the context in which the refugees are reflects the existing cross-border crisis of the modern world.

## Chapter II: The Politicization of Wayfarers.

“National government explicitly locates both the center and the edges of the power contained within political orders. Where, in recent times, this national-state self-enclosure has broken down— notably in European integration—there is no longer an undisputed center where power resides. Instead, it is dispersed across a multiplicity of focal points, whose mutual relations and relative authority is uncertain and shifting.”  
(Joenniemi and Parker, 48)

The increasing restricting nature of migration policies, which moves only in an ascendent curve, is oppositely proportionate to the need of today’s society of attaining broader and better life quality and opportunities. Mobility is at the order of the day, even for individuals who have not been exposed to life-threatening situations and contexts. Migrating has become a measure to improve life status for many, and for others a means for accessing a much-needed escape.

In its primary definition, a border is nothing but the limit of something and the beginning of another thing, a boundary that coincides with a beginning. In the case of territorial borders, the limit and edge where a territory finishes and the other starts. These spaces hang in the middle of one nation and the other, which opens the window for continuous conflict, especially in nations that historically have had clashes, see for instance the yet ongoing skirmishes between India and China, the clashes between Ethiopia and Sudan, the border disputes between Bangladesh and Myanmar, amongst many others that are currently dormant.

Understanding borders in this sense allows a certain comprehension of the position of migrants in the current cross-border crises: citizens of borderlands coexist in spaces besieged by conflict, without a clear definition of laws. The tensions and the struggle for power between the participant nations results in a lack of a perspicuous definition of legal rules. The cross-border migration crisis has become an escalating phenomenon, this is also related to the increasing mobility consequence of wars that have taken place in the latter centuries. Next to this, the migrant must face the rejection of the center society for belonging to the margins and the politicization of their lives by the governments.

In order to have an approach to this process of politicization, it is convenient to bear in mind the conceptualization of 'biopolitics' presented by Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (2016): 'In the last years of his life, while he was working on the history of sexuality and unmasking the deployments of power at work within it, Michel Foucault began to direct his inquiries with increasing insistence toward the study of what he defined as biopolitics, that is, the growing inclusion of man's natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power' (Agamben, 119).

This subjectivization is what makes the individual a part of the major systems, and, from the point of view of politics, a part of one that is controlled by the sovereign state. Often, this determines the destiny of the individual by establishing patterns of life in which each of the members of a society must fit. When in the process of determining those patterns, states tend to dichotomize all aspects of life, that is how many oppositions come to take place -hence the 'centers' versus the 'margins, the 'inside' versus the 'outside'.

In the case of migrants, fitting into the aforementioned 'subjectivization' poses a major challenge for the sovereigns. In totalitarian states, every aspect of the life of refugees becomes bilateral: the 'neither inside nor outside' status of their residing space, the dichotomy of 'the marginality of the foreigner' versus 'the belonging of the native', their 'for some aspects legal, and for others illegal' status, etc. Due to this, the liberties, and rights that these individuals humanitarily deserve, vanish quite often. One of them being the right to belong, the right to reinventing and rediscovering him or herself. Is it possible to call a mass democracy as such, if any of its members is not welcome to forge their reality whilst fulfilling collective obligations within society?

A refugee's displacement is a desperate measure that results of desperate times, it is a consequence of the contingencies present in their place of origin. Seen from the scope of politics, the analysis of this type of mobility belongs to the field of geopolitics: 'the study of geography as the political, societal, and historical shaping of space' (Parker, 3). This field examines the conduct of a certain nation or state in respect to space. It does not forge or formally formulates laws, but it provides a narrow evaluation of the way in which territory is managed.

Nowadays, geopolitics deals with the scrutiny and interpretation of conflicts related to crises in borderlands. Also, it takes into consideration the types of laws that regulate and direct these spaces. These laws are the ones to which refugees are subjected to, a set of judicial norms pendant on aspects related to political order, which, in turn, stands upon a number of parameters listed by Joenniemi and Parker:

The political orders' coboundary; principles, the locations within them where power is assumed to be found, the manner of exercising power practiced within them, their characteristic geometrical figure, the vectors implicit in their power relations, the articulation given to the boundary, the meaning ascribed to the margin. (Joenniemi and Parker, 47)

The framing of the laws that regulate the systems within a particular territory has reshaped the notion of citizenship, especially in borderlands, thus changing the definition of what a citizen is. While totalitarian states tend to forcefully create dichotomies and polarities in their society, modernity has the gracious tendency to blur all lines that are too definite in any aspect. In this, globalization plays one of the protagonist parts.

Globalization has unlocked the expansion of economy and industrialization, as well as the loosening of frontiers -not just geographically speaking. The rise in trading, mobility and technology set the foundations for this process. The current digital era allows for information to be spread widely and at mesmerizing rates. The globalization phenomenon has also opened a window for contact between cultures, which has often produced a chance of exoticisms for the foreign.

The modern era enables proximity and transculturation. Going back to mobility as one of the defining features of globalization, the displacement of refugees has set the path for the building of a new form of culture. When coexisting in borderlands, refugees and immigrants tend to reshape their culture and the receiving one, creating a new bi-national and bi-cultural identity.

The border is a space of dependence and disparity that expresses its people's resistance by reinforcing its cultural identity. Borderlanders have mixed and blended the institutions, expressions, structures, and languages of the two societies and generated something that is entirely original. The underlying collective Mexican identities -diverse along the border, as the original dwellers were diverse as well- have

been redefined by the irremediable penetration of the Anglo influence, originating a fusion culture. That fusion culture, although apparently local, is seen by some critics as a process of transculturation, as it involves relationships between two countries across a border, conferring therefore a bi-national dimension to the phenomenon. (Dueñas, 8-9)

Transculturation in itself stands on the basis of dissipating rigid limits and allows for the features of different cultures to become intertwined with each other. The mixture sets the foundations of new cultural groups which experience traditions, conventions, and costumes in a completely different way. Diversity and variability are fundamental pillars of transculturation.

From transculturation sparks a more fluid and plural understanding of collective identities as well. Contact between different ethnic groups and the exchange and blending of cultural features between these groups, results in an impact in the shaping of the self-identity, which is intrinsically connected to the role that each individual plays in their society. This sum of backgrounds enriches the cultural spectrum of a nation and encourages integration. One of the positive aspects of globalization is that it has promoted an increase in this influx of culture.

Just as everything in life, globalization has silver linings and downsides. One of the downsides has been its impact on climate change. The economic expansion and industrialization have had severe repercussions on the planet. Along with political and territorial feuds and wars, the weather conditions produced by climate change are one of the primary reasons for the displacement of refugees in modernity. According to the United Nations' refugee agency (UNHCR), by 2050 over one billion people could be displaced as a result of climate change and natural disasters.<sup>1</sup>

The refugee crisis is a current and conflictive topic. According to The Council of Europe, in 2022 over one million people arrived in Europe, the largest number of refugees

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<sup>1</sup> McAllister, Sean. "There could be 1.2 billion climate refugees by 2050. Here's what you need to know." *Zurich*, 13 Jan. 2023, <https://www.zurich.com/en/media/magazine/2022/there-could-be-1-2-billion-climate-refugees-by-2050-here-s-w-hat-you-need-to-know#:~:text=And%20as%20the%20threat%20of,and%20extreme%20temperatures%20-%20since%202008>. Accessed 04 April 2023.

ever received. Eighty-four percent of refugees come from countries affected by on-going conflicts and wars in the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> By June 2022, over seventy-five thousand people sought asylum in the UK, and it is estimated that around eighteen percent of migration in the territory was by refugees.

The judicial process to attain a legal status in the UK is daunting and arduous. During the long period of ruling of the Labour Party between 1997 and 2010, the restrictiveness to achieve citizenship became tighter. The political party established the ‘earned citizenship’, which sprung from the 2005’s ‘earned regularization’ policies developed by the Migration Policy Institute in the United States (Grove-White, 44). The process consists of several steps that migrants have to undergo in order to be granted the ‘usual residency’<sup>3</sup> and later on the ‘naturalization’<sup>4</sup> in the country.

The legalization process implemented by Labour includes a period of ‘probationary citizenship’, which allows the immigrant to apply for the ‘usual residency’. The choice of the term ‘probation’ is quite curious, since in the collective consciousness it is normally related to the period when criminals must show themselves apt to be reinserted into society, in order not to be legally penalized again and to avoid re-entering prison. During the ‘probationary’ period, migrants would be deprived of non-contributory social welfare benefits (Grove-White, 46).

Furthermore, the ‘earned citizenship’ process established a points-based test, which is meant to measure the applicant’s knowledge of language, history, and national costumes. All these stages eventually result in either a positive or a negative decision by the state, each having its pertaining consequences for the refugees. Although the current government has stated to be in the process of analyzing and reformulating migratory laws, the foundation of the ‘earned citizenship’ is still very present nowadays.

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<sup>2</sup> “The geopolitical context of migration” *The Council of Europe*, 25 May 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/tool-1-the-geopolitical-context-of-migration-language-support-for-adul/1680716c0d>. Accessed 02 April 2023.

<sup>3</sup> The place at which a person normally spends the daily period of rest, regardless of temporary absences for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment, or religious pilgrimage or, in default, the place of legal or registered residence. [European Commission: Migration and Home Affairs](#)

<sup>4</sup> The act of making someone a legal citizen of a country that they were not born in. [Cambridge Dictionary: Naturalization](#)

The level of difficulty to attain the legal status in the UK has been aggravated since Brexit. One of the arguments of those in favor of the British withdrawal from the European Union was migratory policies. The rejection of ‘otherness’ was one of the fundamental pillars of the Leave campaign, under the excuse of re-establishing the old British sovereignty and protecting the britishness. The fact that a country so openly and emphatically declared as democratic categorically refuses to accept multiculturalism speaks of how alive its colonial past still is.

For a long time, the stories and the traumatic experiences of immigrants and refugees have been dismissed. Modernity and globalization have brought with them the possibility of a wider and faster spreading of information, the possibility of discussing realities beyond the most immediately contiguous ones. In the last couple of decades, the testimonies of many refugees have been finally made public, exposing their distressful living conditions in borderlands and camps. The unveiling of this reality has been positive since it has given way to examining many migratory policies and the defense of the human rights of these individuals.

That being said, not all media coverage and information spreading can be considered positive. While some coverage promotes the embracing of multiculturalism, the other side of the coin is where refugees are depicted as a threat to the sovereignty of the country, where their foreign quality is exaggerated, and the distinction between ‘us’ (citizens) and ‘them’ (non-citizens) is highlighted (Croucher 2004). Immigrants and refugees have had to face the increasing hostility towards them promoted by certain type of coverage that the media has had of the impact of the rising numbers of global migration.

Taking this into consideration, it is not a coincidence that the volumes to be analyzed were published from 2016 onwards. The disclosure of these stories impeaches the migratory policies of the territories that serve as scenarios for the volumes, where camps are presented as completely anarchical spaces both politically and juridically. Spaces where there is an “absolute impossibility of deciding between fact and law, rule and application, exception and rule, which nevertheless incessantly decides between them.” (Agamben, 169), and where the upholding of human rights by the host-country could be considered rather questionable.

### Chapter III: Common Ground.

“Literature will never provide easy answers (...) But what it might do is give us an example of how we can connect with each other through one part of our shared human experience: our creativity.”  
(Ziervogel, 19)

In order to ponder upon the theoretical aspects posed in the first chapters, four volumes of anthologies have been selected to be analyzed in this dissertation: *Refugee Tales IV* (2021) edited by David Herd and Anna Pincus, *Shatila Stories* (2018) translated by Nashba Gowanlock, *Breach* (2016) by Olumide Popoola and Annie Holmes, and *A Country of Refuge* (2016) edited by Lucy Popescu. In this dissertation, a short story from each one of these volumes will be taken into consideration as representative of the perspective of the physical and sociopsychological challenges that refugees must face and that have been mentioned in the previous chapters.

The anthologies are all united by the same purpose, which serves as backbone of the collections: raising awareness on the traumatic experiences of refugees. By publishing and sharing these stories, the turmoil of the displacement and alienation of the migrants is exposed. It is a well-known fact that representation opens the window of visibility and through these volumes a new, more sympathetic and -even more importantly, more realistic image of what a refugee is and what they undergo is depicted. Moreover, the four projects intend to challenge the political agency<sup>5</sup> of several states and the role that human rights play in the handling of migratory policies and refugees.

Beyond the exposure of the way in which nations deal with borderlanders and the extreme conditions of the ‘margins’ when talking about rule of law and civility, with respect to the ‘centers’, perhaps the most unsettling thing that is made visible through the testimonies is the situation of absolute anarchy in the refugee camps under examination, which unearth the harsh reality of such liminal places, where human rights are barely visible and where each individual is not aiming to live but to survive. Refugees coexist without any system to regulate their current living situation, and when the system does appear, it is only to neglect

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<sup>5</sup> The capacity to take part in the struggle to define the models of a common life, stressing the conflictual dimension of politics (Mouffe 2005)

them further away from society, to exile them. The ‘insertion’ of the migrant in the host society is quite often limited and conditioned, both by the state and by the citizens’ prejudice.

The word ‘refugee’ has already appeared several times throughout these pages, but what is the exact definition of this term? According to the UN Refugee Convention, a refugee is someone who ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country’ (Article 1, 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees).<sup>6</sup>

In this definition, there is no mention of any differences in the constitution or the human quality of a refugee. Therefore, the conclusion to be reached is that there is an absolute arbitrariness in the pejorative social meanings and prejudice assigned to the word ‘refugee’. As well as in the most frequent arguments behind the detention and deportation of refugees. Nothing factual stands behind the designation of negative meanings associated with this status. In this sense, the rejection of refugees is completely arbitrary, and these anthologies aim to highlight that fact. Border narratives have gained notoriety in the last few decades, which coincides with the current world-wide refugee crisis and the upsurge of frontiers, that results in the hardening of migratory policies. Along with the easiness in which information is able to be shared due to the rapid development of globalization.

The border-crossing crisis acquired much more relevance when the real experiences of refugees were made accessible and readable through mass media in the current digital era, thus proving to be a global phenomenon. This, of course, is related to the dates of publication of the anthologies selected. The four volumes were all published in the last decade, coinciding with a post-Brexit mentality and as a critical response to it: three of these collections were published within the 2010s and one of them even after the COVID-19 pandemics in 2020, which also shifted the situation of refugees since mobility was further limited. Moreover, the ‘margins’ or ‘borderlands’ did not count on the resources or the medical systems to support their residents.

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<sup>6</sup> Refugee Action is a charity that provides basic support to survivors of regimes and refugees, in order for them to establish themselves in the UK. <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/about/facts-about-refugees/#:~:text=Are%20there%20many%20refugees%20and,of%20the%20UK%27s%20total%20population>.

These collections of testimonies allow not only for the refugees' experiences to be heard, but also for the world to listen, key to critical awareness. According to the Nobel literature laureate Svetlana Alexievich, history is found in little details, and the most interesting knowledge about life resides in what she calls 'mysteries': 'the memories that appear when people speak to each other and tell stories of what has happened' (Alexievich, 2017).

The first anthology here under examination is *Refugee Tales IV* (2021), edited by David Herd and Anna Pincus, the last of a four-book collection of refugee stories. *Refugee Tales* in itself is a 'walking project' that forged a 'walking community' (Herd, 139). It began as a social project that had the aim of collecting true testimonies of wayfarers across a walking path, and summer after summer since 2015, volunteers for the project have been selecting and editing stories. The main focus of the collections is to challenge illegal detention in the UK, since they fiercely believe that 'detention is a breach of a person's human rights' (Herd, 140). In the afterword of the fourth volume, Herd goes as far as to quote the Article 9 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* as a banner of what the project stands for: 'Nobody shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile' (Herd, 140).

This purpose shapes the anthology since the stories that are compiled in it and in the other three previous volumes are meant to question the claustrophobic and unjust system of detention of refugees in the UK. Considering the fact that this is a short story cycle that tells the stories of walkers, the selection of the medieval text *The Canterbury Tales* as a powerful intertext for the anthology brings to the fore refugeehood and human movement as central to British history and culture. The individuals whose experiences are rendered here are constantly and relentlessly moving, focusing on refugee displacement and on their search for safety. Amidst the contingencies and the troubles which refugees face due to migratory laws and their illegal status, glimpses of what the refugee experiences in the search of acceptance and a home are brought to the surface, exposing these subjects as being in a 'relentless struggle to assimilate' (Popescu, 2).

The exposure of the effects of detention is another element that connects all the anthologies studied in this dissertation. It is equally surprising and worrying that still to this day the UK is the only country in Europe able to indefinitely detain people under its currently established migratory laws (Herd, 139). The consequences of this illegal and abrupt process

produce a lasting effect in the individual, both spiritually and in the relation that the refugee is able to establish with the host country. This breach shows itself to be proportionally damaging for the refugees and beneficial for the state. Physical and emotional isolation produces in refugees a need to either (almost willingly) accept exile, to escape being in indefinite detention, or to comply with the legal and societal requirements of the host country. The process of detention has deportation as an often result, something that can be attested in the volumes.

In *Shatila Stories* (2018), translated by Nashba Gowanlock, there is a clear intention of drawing a realistic image of the Syrian refugees in Shatila, a camp that received its name due to the terrible 1982 massacre. Nowadays it is the home of over forty thousand borderlanders that reside in the territory due to the current Syrian crisis. *Shatila* sparked from the idea of publishing true stories from the everyday, common people who happened to be refugees, a characteristic that was to condition the course of their lives. The book aims to prove to the reader ‘the power of collaborative imagination to open up new ways of remembering and from that, perhaps, a vision for the future’ (Ziervogel, 13).

The editors of the anthology, Meike Ziervogel (who came up with the idea of the collection) and Suhir Helal, developed a three-day program of creative writing, in which they reshaped nine selected stories. The stories were originally meant to tell individual experiences, yet in the process of editing the stories, the collection took a turn and instead of just being a compilation of isolated, independent stories, these became a short story cycle of a single narrative. This gives shape to the format of the anthology, since the stories are ‘interweaved’ between each other (Ziervogel, 16) even though they can be perfectly understood separately and read independently.

In this collection, the anarchical system of the camps is one of the principal underscores of the stories, along with the dehumanization of humans, in this case, the refugees. This comes as a result of the loss of human rights in these territories, the borderlands, or margins. This dehumanization is witnessable and a shared feature in all the collections. In *Shatila*, this is highlighted through the isolation of characters in the camp, the survivor mode in which they find themselves to be, under no system of law within a claustrophobic space that hosts refugees way beyond its capacity.

In *Refugee Tales IV*, dehumanization is made visible through the focus on illegal detention, highlighting the violent, abusive, and distressing process that it entails for the refugee, along with its consequences. In *A Country of Refuge*, the way in which the stories are told stretches the loneliness of the refugees. The isolation of the individual vanishes a vital part of his or her humanity which is the correlation with the environment and the contact with society. Loneliness and isolation take away the refugee's collective identity, and consequently, the very identity of the individual. Lastly, in *Breach*, there is an animalization of the refugee collective, which is perceivable from the very nickname of the camp, the 'Jungle', suggesting the existence of a pre-modern, colonial space in comparison with Enlightened Europe.

Olumide Popoola and Annie Holmes' *Breach* (2016), focuses on the refugee crisis in Calais, a town between France and Britain. The stories are all set on the camp, created in 2015, which gained notoriety and became the focus of public scrutiny during the refugee crisis of the same year, mostly due to the exponential increase of the camp's population. Many of the refugees of the camp were waiting to be accepted into the United Kingdom or for a response to their request for asylum in France,<sup>7</sup> which made them vulnerable and exposed to an indefinite limbo.

The anthology compiles stories of refugees, volunteers, locals and other individuals who interact within the camp. The residents are presented as humans who have a completely anarchical existence and that interact with each other in what could only be described as survivor mode. The stories are individually written by different authors, yet intertwined in one single line of narrative which brings to the anthology a sense of collectiveness and even of community in a border space. This is what gives the collection its structure and form. The interactions between the residents of the 'Jungle' are determined to a great extent by the border itself and by their status as 'crossers' and not as 'hosts' (Nyman, 189) and also by the type of hierarchical roles and rules that somewhat regulate the camp.

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<sup>7</sup> Someone who has arrived in a country and asked for asylum. Until they receive a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee, they are known as an asylum seeker. In the UK, this means they do not have the same rights as a refugee, or a British citizen would. For example, people seeking asylum aren't allowed to work.

Facts                      About                      Refugees.                      Refugee                      Action.  
<https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/about/facts-about-refugees/#:~:text=Are%20there%20many%20refugees%20and,of%20the%20UK%27s%20total%20population.>

The ‘hearing’ of these stories encourages the mass exposure of the current refugee crisis around the world. Today’s media allowed these stories to be heard but also had an impact on the shaping of the image of refugees and the way they were perceived by society. Depending on the sources that the reader has access to, the narratives’ rhetorics may be empathetic or anti-migrant. This has a direct correlation with the way in which states manage migratory laws, and the influence that said states have over the media of the country. To act on behalf of the refugee community, these projects do not draw on mainstream publishers, but on the support of smaller presses which paved the path for these stories to be heard and for these volumes to become pioneers on refugee storytelling.

Deeper into the world of fiction, *A Country of Refuge* (2016), edited by Lucy Popescu, was first conceived in 2014, inspired by an Australian collection of stories. The book was published thanks to the support of the Unbound website,<sup>8</sup> where the ideas of some writers were posted, and where readers were able to contribute with private funding for the volume to be published. The anthology’s main aim was to ‘challenge negative press and to cast a more positive light on a situation that, for many, is a living hell’ (Popescu, 2). The editor compiled a number of what she calls ‘fictional essays’ written by refugees or descendants of refugees, in order to expose the true nature of the lives of borderlanders through fiction.

In doing so, the editor attempts to emphasize the role of artists and of artistic expressions in effecting change in relevant and controversial topics for society. Through writings that ‘provide a valuable political context and suggests what needs to change’ (Popescu, 4), the anthology is meant to exhibit that ‘writers are uniquely placed to challenge pre-conceived ideas and stereotypes because of their understanding of the power of words and their ability to articulate truths’ (Popescu, 5). The book is formed by a series of texts that can be very well read independently. Even when read isolated and with no correlation with each other, they are perfectly understandable, but all narratives are connected by the main objective of the book: to stand up against anti-refugee rhetoric.

The challenging of negative images of refugees created by the press is another common thread in the four anthologies. The refugees’ dehumanization and their portrayal as a

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<sup>8</sup> <https://unbound.com>

social threat relate to the spatial imaginaries<sup>9</sup> posed in the first chapters of this dissertation: the reshaping of identities based on the idea of ‘the other’ comes into being from the homogenizing of spaces and of collective identities, many times spread by the media. This, as a consequence, sets the limits of belonging and unbelonging within a society, an idea which these narratives utterly challenge.

All the collaborators involved in these volumes state to have as a principal goal the defense of refugees in various respects by inducing critical awareness in the reader. Through the exposure of the effects of detention and the process of deportation, the dehumanization of humans, the challenging of the negative press and of spatial imaginaries, these short story cycles and essays reshape the picture of the refugee that the world receives from the news. All things considered, these anthologies are more than a collection of self-sufficient, independent texts: they add a sense of community to a collective that is most often not even considered as such. However, and despite the common ideological aspects which inspire these anthologies, there exist substantial differences among them, which will be examined in the following chapter.

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<sup>9</sup> Spatial imaginaries – such as ‘the West,’ ‘Eurasia,’ and ‘the Global South’ – take the form of textual, visual, or performative representations. They matter because they reduce complexity and shape identities. *Spatial Imaginaries*. Institute for Transnational & Spatial History. <https://spatialhistory.net/guide/spatial-imaginaries.html>

## Chapter IV: Diverging Points.

“Where human rights are denied, there is always a silencing of stories because, inconvenient as it is for states to acknowledge, rights have force.”  
(Herd, 152)

In the previous chapter, the similarities between the four anthologies selected to be analyzed, were exposed. That being said, these compilations also show some substantial differences. Although all of them share a common aim, the making of the volumes, the publishing process, the context of the stories and the way in which these are presented are some of the points that make each of the books differ from each other. In all four anthologies, what becomes most evident is the goal to expose the reality of refugees, yet the light in which refugeehood is presented varies according to the volume.

To walk is to create a path while also following one. In *Refugee Tales IV* (2021), while united in several shared traumatic experiences -hence the apprehension by authorities, legal processes, illegal detention, etc. – the image of the collective is made individual through a chronological recording of lives. Each story represents a timeline in the span of displacement and asylum-seeking of an individual, thus providing a more sentimental approach. In this sense, the volume adds a very humane quality to the full refugee experience: sensibility.

The very first phrase quoted in *Shatila Stories* (2018), comes from a wall in the refugee camp in Beirut where the stories are set, which reads as follows: ‘Don’t talk about the camp unless you know it.’, a poignant invitation for the reader to humble the eye for what is in store in the pages of the book, and an urge to reconsider society’s preconceived ideas of what it means to exist in a refugee camp. In *Shatila Stories* (2018), the narratives deal with the individual experiences of the writers who collaborated, and simultaneously, they also lay bare as a background for the stories the new hierarchies that took over the camp when the Lebanese government went missing in action and allowed for Palestinian factions to get the handle of this borderland.

In *Breach* (2016), it is made even more evident the crucible of refugees in the camps and the way in which these new anarchical hierarchies determine the living conditions and

restrictions of those who inhabit a borderscape. In the stories, the focus relies upon the way in which refugees coexist with each other within the camp and their interrelationships. The fact that in the ‘Jungle’, the ‘center’s’ societal and legal norms don’t apply is stressed by the inclusion of testimonial narratives<sup>10</sup> of non-refugees within the tales:

Even though I had stayed in the car, barely opening the door at the camp entrance, I felt that I must wash my hands when I got home. I felt gritty, as though I had in fact crawled into that pup tent. This is what comes of going too close, I told myself. You lose all perspective. (Popoola and Holmes, 27).

In this story, a refugee goes as far as to state: “A jungle (...) is a place for animals only. And that is a jungle, I tell you madame.” (Popoola and Holmes, 37), referring to the camp in Calais, which exemplifies how conscious the collective is of their own situation and the outsider’s perception of them as residents of a pre-modern space of degradation, in comparison to the ‘enlightened Europe’. The intertwining of these voices has direct consequences in the perception of refugees for the reader, and the antimigrant rhetoric employed by some factions of the press is defied. This is directly connected to the ‘hearing of stories’ mentioned in chapter III, along with the voice that is used to tell them and the way in which they are heard.

In *A Country of Refuge* (2016), the challenging of the anti-migrant rhetoric occurs through heart-felt fiction that draws from voices of collaborators who have been impacted by this controversial topic in one way or another. Fiction allows for the volume to place itself in times and situations that humanize refugees through establishing ‘disturbing parallels’ (Popescu, 3) with previous humanitarian crises that are in many respects similar to the current refugee and cross-border crises. Time is critical when examining these anthologies since the position and perception of displaced individuals has continuously fluctuated through history.

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<sup>10</sup> Testimonial writing may be defined as an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.).  
“Testimonio, the Assumption of Hybridity and the Issue of Genre”  
<https://studiesintestimony.co.uk/issues/volume-two-issue-one-2019/testimonio-the-assumption-of-hybridity-and-the-issue-of-genre/#:~:text=Testimonial%20writing%20may%20be%20defined.%2C%20revolution%2C%20etc>  
(.).

By 2016, when both *Breach* and *A Country of Refuge* were published, over three hundred thousand refugees arrived in Europe.<sup>11</sup> In the same year, the European Commission presented a plan to the European Parliament, Council, and Investment Bank where three point one billion euros were to be destined to the support of those within European territory who were seeking asylum and had already the refugee status. This budget was supposed to cover security and basic human needs until 2020. Parallel to this, the 2016 UK European Union referendum took place, where Brexit came out victorious along with its campaign that promoted an increase in the restriction of migratory laws.

Following the idea and pursual of strengthening migratory policies, the UK government issued the 2016's Immigration Act,<sup>12</sup> in which new sanctions were introduced for illegal workers and new procedures were set to be employed to decrease the percentage of access to basic services such as health, by illegal migrants and asylum seekers. In 2018, the year of publication of *Shatila Stories*, the Statement of Changes<sup>13</sup> in Immigration Rules HC1779<sup>14</sup> was issued by the House of Commons and presented to Parliament. Amongst the newly suggested changes was the relocation of refugees that illegally entered the territory, proposal for which the government faced sharp criticism, especially after intending to deport individuals (who illegally entered the country seeking refuge), to Rwanda,<sup>15</sup> right after the news sprang up of several Congolese refugees who had been presumably assassinated with firearm by the police.

All the restrictions became only more severe during and after the pandemics. While the world's mobility was limited by the COVID-19 in 2020, Brexit officially took place. By 2021, the year of publication of *Refugee Tales IV*, the new British immigration system was

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<sup>11</sup> The World Economic Forum focuses on publishing information and developing projects related to the industrial revolution, issues of global commons and global security problems. <https://www.weforum.org/about/what-are-the-forum-s-key-areas-of-focus>

<sup>12</sup> Immigration Act 2016. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-bill-2015-16#:~:text=The%20Immigration%20Act%20will%20introduce,measures%20to%20enforce%20immigration%20laws.&text=On%20Thursday%2012%20May%202016.as%20the%20Immigration%20Act%202016.>

<sup>13</sup> "The Statement of Changes amend the Immigration Rules ('the Rules') which are used to regulate people's entry to, and stay in, the United Kingdom." IMA. <https://ima-citizensrights.org.uk/the-statement-of-changes-to-the-immigration-rules-presented-to-parliament-on-18-october-2022-hc-719/>

<sup>14</sup> Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules HC1779. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/764738/Immigration\\_Rules\\_-\\_11\\_December\\_web.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/764738/Immigration_Rules_-_11_December_web.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> The UK-Rwanda asylum agreement. <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/uk-rwanda-asylum-agreement-why-is-it-a-memorandum-of-understanding-and-not-a-treaty/>

operating at full capacity, with the point-based system as a foundation for the regulation of both European and non-European incomers.<sup>16</sup> In these contexts, and facing such migratory-policies systems, the anthologies' defense of refugees and their human rights resonates loudly.

Criticism of the way in which governments have conducted the refugee world-wide crises, becomes pivotal in order to promote respect of the refugees' human rights, especially in what pertains to their right of belonging. These anthologies focus on presenting the reader not only with the stories of individual experiences, but also with how nations manage the refugee crises in several territories. They question the capacity of states to regulate migration and illegal breaking into territories, while still maintaining the limits of respect of the human rights. This is the reason why the dehumanization of the refugees is stretched and emphasized in the volumes, through tales of illegal detention, the isolation of characters, their animalization, and extreme loneliness. It is supposed to reflect the fact that despite the states' efforts to turn refugees into threats, statistics, and subdue them into a process of 'othering', they are in fact still as human as the perpetrators of the anti-migrant rhetoric themselves.

When in the process of finding sponsors, governmental criticism limited the scope of financing and funding for the anthologies. None of the projects was originally financed by the state, which unveils the position of the government when it comes to the publication and promotion of these types of stories, and of the socio-political issues that they bring to light. *Refugee Tales IV* (2021) is the last of a series of short story books published by an independent and not-for-profit publishing house in the UK. Even though the collection hasn't been sponsored by any state-related institution, it must be mentioned that in this last volume, the British Academy's funding of a related project allowed for international stories (i.e. not from the UK) to be published.

*Breach* (2016) was also published by an independent publishing house, Peirene Press, the same one that published *Shatila Stories* in 2018. *A Country of Refuge* (2018) was published with the support, funding, and donations from readers of the website "Unbound", related to the International Refugee Aid Project (IRAP). This goes to show the little-to-non influence of state institutions in the adaptation, edition, and selection of the stories included

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<sup>16</sup> The UK's New Point-Based Immigration System.  
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8911/>

in the anthologies. The voices of the writers, who in the majority are refugees who offer their personal experiences to be compiled in the volumes, is only filtered through the editors of the books.

The prism of the editors in these collections is a key element in both the selection of the stories and in the way that each of the volumes is structured. In the case of *Refugee Tales IV*, the work of the two co-founders and editors of the project, David Herd and Anna Pincus, has shown itself to be an intersection of storytelling and a defense of human rights, which molds the way in which all the stories of the four volumes of the series are presented. In *Shatila Stories* and *Breach*, the influence of Meike Ziervogel steps strong, since the author is not only the founder of Peirene Press, the publishing house of both anthologies, but also the deviser of the concept of the first book and the editor of the second.

Ziervogel's work as an author focuses on the dynamics with which close interrelations work, such as family relationships and individuals who coexist every day in proximity with each other: this explains the approach with which the stories selected for these two anthologies are presented. Finally, Lucy Popescu, editor of *A Country of Refuge*, has worked with persecuted writers, with the international association of writers and has a long background in human rights, which allowed her to compile in the anthology fictional stories and essays by renowned authors from Britain and Ireland.

The prism of an editor greatly determines the voice and format in which a story is to be presented to the reader. The testimonies of refugees that were used for these anthologies were molded according to the filters of each publishing house and editor. *Refugee Tales IV*, and all its predecessors in the series of volumes, takes its form from the journey and displacement story cycle written by Geoffrey Chaucer in the medieval period: *The Canterbury Tales*. All the anthologies sprang as very organic projects, overflowing with mobility and dynamism in the way the tales are written and depicted. *Shatila Stories* was born from the idea of collecting of Syrian individuals and creating a short story cycle where the shared elements of their experiences were highlighted. That is how the three-day creative-writing workshop where the stories were born, took place. Nine writers with their stories were selected and included in the anthology, and since they were all created on the same basis and principles of storytelling, they share format and narrative characteristics.

Moreover, the feature that unites the aforementioned anthology is its quality as collaborative fiction, as a collective project which mirrors the sense of collectivity of the refugee community. Fictionality increases in the other two volumes: *Breach* captures together a number of stories and voices thanks to the powerful and daring writing of Olumide Popoola and Anni Holmes, commissioned by Ziervogel. In the pages of the anthology, the creation of characters who provide the volume with different perspectives of testimonial writing (boderlanders, host-country citizens, volunteers), highly enriches the book's perspectivism. Furthermore, amongst all the analyzed anthologies, *A Country of Refuge* is the one where fiction is presented at the highest level. The collection explores from the fictional perspective, the experience of living as a refugee -both through narratives and, from a more theoretical approach, through its essays. In doing so, each volume presents different images of displaced individuals, and also of borders:

The border is not only a line of separation, but it also brings together various actors, and creates new modes and spaces of interaction – these can be seen as new borderscapes where identities, belonging and citizenship can be negotiated ... borderscapes are sites of encounter that extend beyond the actual border and where it may be possible to construct new identities – or prevent their formation. Borderscapes, then, are open rather than closed formations where increased interaction reveals the status of border as a process rather than as a fixed entity. (Nyman, 189).

The narrativization of borderscapes shows itself differently in each anthology, which results in a mutable shaping of the aesthetics of the borderscape itself. On the one hand, *Refugee Tales IV* (2021) harshens the idea of borders through its emphasis on detention. The tales show individuals who are in a continuous state of liminality both physically and in terms of their identity, but the aesthetic of the 'margin' is sharpened and its quality as a rigid border rather than an ever-changing and non-static space is stretched. The loneliness that stands out in the characters of *A Country of Refuge* (2018) and the relative isolation of the texts integrated in the collection with respect to each other, has a similar effect.

On the other hand, the volumes that could be categorized as short story cycles<sup>17</sup> create a completely different aesthetic related to the borderscape. *Shatila Stories* (2018) and *Breach* (2016), join their respective stories through the repetition of geographic locations, characters, or narrators. The limits between their stories are blurred through these recurrent elements: a main characteristic of short story cycles, which makes the genre a very suitable one for the dealing of borderscapes -liminal spaces where change is ever-present. In his section of the book *Border Images, Border Narratives: The Political Aesthetics of Boundaries and Crossings* (2021), the academic Jopi Nyman, uses the approach of Rocío G. Davis, to pose that:

The genre of the short story cycle contributes to the remaking of community and identity in the in-between conditions of cultural encounters that are similar to those generated by the borderscape. As a ‘hybrid form’, Davis argues, the genre challenges conventional generic taxonomies and thus resists easy categorization, making ‘the ethnic short story cycle (...) [a] formal materialization of the trope of multiplicity. (Nyman, 191)

The level of isolation of each text in the anthologies and the independently readable quality of their stories, is connected to the notion that each anthology presents refugees as collectives, as communities. The use of the short story cycle genre not only provides narrative union to the volumes, but it also connects the experiences of the characters in the stories, uniting them.

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<sup>17</sup> A short story cycle is ‘a set of stories linked to each other in such a way to maintain a balance between the individuality of each of the stories and necessities of the larger unit’ (Ingram, 15)

## Chapter V: Common Ground -a Narrower Scope.

‘The asylum seeker born out of shoddy bureaucracy often struggles to prove not only their identity but their ill-treatment too. (...) Migration is a complex issue. People will always disagree on intake numbers and overall policy. But whatever your position, we should never forget that they are human beings in fragile circumstances, and they deserve our respect.’

(Saro-Wiwa, 129,131)

Finding commonalities and discrepancies between the selected anthologies and the refugee experiences told in their pages to emphasize the collective quality of them was one of the main purposes and ideas that inspired this dissertation. In order to do so from a more detailed frame of analysis, four stories were chosen to be studied -one from each anthology. Before diving deep into mincing the tales and their shared features, it is necessary to mention that, by becoming collaborators of these volumes, the authors, and transcribers of these stories, expose themselves to the political hazards of challenging migratory systems and the anti-migrant rhetoric press. The effort to publicly defend refugees and their rights is certainly one of the elements that all the tales have in common.

From *Refugee Tales IV* (2021), “The Teenager’s Tale” by Maurizio Veglio, presents the journey of a failed asylum seeker through different sections that deal with several stages of his life and locations of displacement and detention. Just as the other three stories here under examination, “The Teenager’s Tale” is told from a first-person perspective. The tales were selected under this premise due to the fact that it allows a better exploration of the socio-psychological development and experiences of the character. In the tale collected and transcribed by Veglio, the emotional anxiety and ambiguity experienced by refugees is echoed through the repetition of the question ‘what am I doing here?’, which implies not only the inner conflict of the main character in terms of life determining choices, but also, the situations to which the system exposes refugees.

The story emphasizes the grief of loss by providing the background of the main character, a fact which raises the level of sensitivity in the whole tale: ‘I like driving. I always did, since I was a kid’ (Veglio, 15). This fact humanizes the refugee, since it gives the reader

the notion that this individual used to belong somewhere, and to some people. In doing so, this also stretches the ripping of that ‘belonging to’ and, as a consequence, stresses the effect of the ‘othering’ when in detention and in the new host country. In “Shatha”, the story selected from *Shatila Stories* (2018), the main female character faces the greatest of all losses: the utter loss of hope: ‘One of the worst things that can happen to a person is to be forced to live without goals. And the sign of ultimate failure is for them to live two identical days. As for me, my life is the epitome of failure.’ (Gowanlock, 80).

In this way, the reader is invited to imagine being deprived of expectations of a decent future, of the possibility of building one’s own identity. This is the everyday reality of the protagonist of “Shatha”, a young woman who must face survival in the camp and an aunt who serves as a mirror of all the flaws and deficiencies that society sees in her as an individual. The protagonist’s aunt encapsulates the image that the ‘center’ perceives of the main character, an image that she is very well aware of: ‘In this country, the subject of my ‘nationality’ has always made me feel like a pariah, or as though I’m being punished for something’ (Gowanlock, 81). The fragment reflects how the process of ‘othering’ neglects refugees from the hopes of accessing the ‘normality’ established by host-country societies. This extenuates the anxiety of the protagonist when joined to the loss of her homeland and the longing that surfaces as a consequence.

As the story continues, the female character grows in faith of a better future when she meets a young man who provides her with something that she thought it was impossible: belonging somewhere, to someone. The presence of this young man, and what it implies, changes her perspective on life and the way she has been carrying her situation. His appearance comes along simultaneously with something that allows the protagonist to develop an aspect of her individual identity that she enjoys: ‘I am only truly myself if I manage to find an empty room in the cultural center to practice (...) I can dissolve into the music and shut everything else out (...) That’s when my thoughts truly belong to me.’ (Gowanlock, 83). Building her identity and her chance of belonging provides her with a new and unexpected sense of hope. If there is something humane, moving, and touching, that is hope.

Hopelessness shows itself to be ever present in the refugee camps of these volumes. This fact is made completely palpable in “Ghost”, the story selected from *Breach* (2016). In

the words of the male protagonist, ‘for you and me [refugees], there’s only now’ (Popoola and Holmes, 89). The main character, who is known by the nickname ‘Ghostboy’, tells of the downfall of one of the men that controlled ‘the Jungle’, and, while doing so, provides a horrid image of what life in the camp is like. He narrates how it was necessary for him to become invisible and, at the same time, stronger to be able to survive in the ‘Jungle’ to eventually become the second in line to take the role of ‘Ghostman’, i.e. the aforementioned ruler. This self imposed leader handles illegal trafficking of both drugs and people, and grows in power and wealth out of the misery of the residents of the camp. Just like these two characters, no real people or place names are mentioned in the story, which serves to highlight the collectiveness of it.

In the tale, there are explicit mentions to prostitution, many types of abuse and use of substances: ‘Some of them get wired before we go out but not me. He saw that I didn’t need drugs’ (Popoola and Holmes, 92). The use of narcotics serves, in the case of self-imposed rulers, to establish a dependency and, thus, retain power over the residents of the camp: ‘It’s a more powerful weapon than violence, I can see that. Better than hitting them -make sure they trust no one else’ (Popoola and Holmes, 99). Drug use is also mentioned in “Shatha”: ‘But in recent years the drug problem in Shatila has become much more serious’ (Gowanlock, 83). Yet, in this story narcotics are presented as a consequence of going through the experience of becoming a refugee and as a consequence of both migratory grief and the traumatic process of assimilation into the host-country: ‘nowadays young people take illegal drugs brazenly on the streets. Driven by a sense of despair and hopelessness, they see no other way out’ (Gowanlock, 84).

Similarly, ‘The dark hold of history’ is the gloomy description of camps provided by Sebastian Barry in “Fragment of a Journal, Author Unknown”, the short story selected from *A Country of Refuge* (2016). The tale is the main character’s account of his mobility, thus presenting many similarities with the concept of *Refugee Tales IV*, since the narrative is based on the journeying of the refugee. The journey in itself is described as ‘four weeks of filth, destitution, misery and death’ (Barry, 9). The sordid descriptions appeal to the senses, and, as a consequence, exacerbate the idea of the aggravated conditions of the refugees, thus raising awareness among the readers and simultaneously drawing their humanity.

As opposed to this, faith is one of those things that has the incredible potential of uniting humankind. In the stories, religious faith is put to test when its intervention is questioned in dealing with the trials and tribulations that refugees must face. In “Fragment of a Journal, Author Unknown”, Barry states: ‘There are no gods and no priests for such a people. We were nothing and so nothing needed to be done for us.’ (9). Loss of those common, known contexts and groups may be included amongst the ones suffered in the stages of migratory grief. This is encompassed, of course, with elements such as religious associations or loss of a shared language.

Once more, Barry’s narrative invites the reader to imagine being forced to decide between sacrificing your life or leaving the county, between violence or abusive assimilation. This is what the main character experiences in “The Teenager’s Tale”: ‘He said they were all ready to sacrifice their life to defend Somalia (...) and that I had to decide whether to join them or to leave the country. (...) They attacked me, wounded me on my right knee and threatened me with death. This is why I’m living like a prisoner in solitary confinement’ (Veglio, 17).

Isolation and abandonment are some of the greatest psychological and emotional challenges that the refugee collective undergoes. To exemplify their exclusion from ‘central’ societies, the stories often draw upon the influence of past transnational crises that have influenced the current politicization of refugees. In the story from *A Country of Refuge*, for instance, Barry draws on the Irish famine to weave his narrative of loss and migration. The matter of politicization becomes troublesome and quite controversial when the questionable tactics of institutions of the states to apprehend refugees and manage camps are referenced in the stories. In the words of Sebastian Barry, who echoes the voice of the whole refugee collective: ‘Our sin was that we were poor and therefore nothing. Our sin was that we were too many in the eyes of government and that it would be a blessing on the country if we were to perish. In this way we were described as a plague on our country and nothing more than vermin and rats’ (10).

## Chapter VI: Diverging Points -A Narrower Scope.

‘When ‘humanity’ itself is a category – the only visibility left to refugees – then calling on it uncritically and unhistorically is as likely to make those already in the twilight less, not more, visible. At worst, it requires performances of suffering in order to validate not just the humanity of refugees, but of the rights-rich too.’  
(Cox, Durrant, Farrier, Stonebridge, and Woolley, 3)

Taking into account all that has been posed in this dissertation, one of the main facts to be attested is that the anthologies here under examination are all united by similar goals yet they pursue these objectives through different means. The narrative voices of the volumes vary, presenting refugees from different perspectives, stressing certain elements in order to raise awareness in the reader, depending on the book. Those parameters -the structure, narrator, format of the stories and the way they are related to each other -give each anthology a distinctive shape and frame.

On the one hand, the type of narrator is partly determined by the anthology's level of fictionalization. In those where there are collaborators contributing their own stories, the narrator is the editor's filtered adaptation of the original story -which is taken from real experience. In the case of those volumes where fictionalization is more present, the narrator uses a voice completely built by the writer -which implies that the emotions and inner thoughts of such narrators along with the refugee experience is, at its core, a narrative construction.

On the other hand, and emotionally speaking, the voices of each narrator in themselves differ greatly in each anthology. In the *Refugee Tales IV*'s story, “The Teenager’s Tale”, the main character falls deep into an existential crisis filled with mixed feelings and fright: ‘I could take no more of detention and isolation. (...) This is a mouse-trap. (...) What am I doing in this country? Have I ever considered moving somewhere else? Of course I have’ (Veglio, 20). The ambience of the story is imbued in this tense and anxious vibe that emanates from the narrator.

In “Shatha”, from *Shatila Stories* (2018), the main female character fills the story with a set of emotions that move the reader from a beginning filled with gruesomeness, devoid of all hope, to an end where hope is in the palm of her hand: ‘Every morning, after getting ready to leave for work, my heart races me down the long staircase. The whole camp smiles back at me. Love transforms depressing cities into streets of blossoming flowers’ (Gowanlock, 89). Joy and romance blind her from the rawness of her surroundings, and the flaws that she so clearly perceived, disappear. The fact that this narrator experiences such deep emotions and is able to convey them humanizes her and makes this a relatable story.

However, in “Ghost”, the story from *Breach* (2016), the voice is the one of a toughened boy who becomes part of the repressive dynamics of the camp. He contrasts the periods of his life when he was most innocent with his present where he has to forcefully transform into the character that will get him through living in ‘the Jungle’: ‘I feared many people, I feared the world, I was Fearboy back then. (...) He tells me I learned fast. He tells me it took him years to get as tough as I got in a couple of months, as mean’ (Popoola and Holmes, 91). He trusts no one and sees weakness everywhere where there is a spark of vulnerability. He is surrounded by many, yet completely alone.

Loneliness is the wrap of the narrator’s voice in the short story from *A Country of Refuge* (2016), “Fragment of a Journal, Author Unknown”. His sorrow permeates the whole story, both when talking about his own journeying and when speaking of the stories of third parties who had experienced similar traumas in the past: ‘Out past Delphi Lodge the country became so desolate God himself had never visited. It had neither character nor location but seemed merely a blank district of nowhere’ (Barry, 9).

Another element that affects the way in which the stories are told is mobility. In two of them, “The Teenager’s Tale” and “Fragment of a Journal, Author Unknown”, the main characters -also narrators- present a story of displacement, which means that they are in continuous contact with ‘centripetal’ societies. In the cases of “Shatha” and “Ghost”, the telling of stories comes from the statism of the protagonists who remain in the camp. That being said, they also establish contact with their host societies in different ways. In “Shatha”, the female narrator works outside the camp, which allows her to interact outside of the margins. In turn, in “Ghost”, the boy who narrates the story finds himself in contact with volunteers, also from outside of the camp.

Through the contact with center societies, the reader also learns the center's perception of the refugee and how the process of 'othering' affects the type of relationship between residents of 'centers' and 'margins', respectively. It is necessary to point out that in the selected stories, the perception of the refugee is double filtered: it is not a voice from the center who speaks of what they think of camps and refugees; rather than that, it is the refugees' idea of what host societies think of them and the margins what is presented in the tales. As a consequence, the manner in which borderlanders treat and see 'center' residents is affected as well. The margins' residents respond to the way they are treated and how they believe they are perceived.

Furthermore, in these stories there are two tendencies in terms of the refugees' treatment from 'center' individuals: to reject or to patronize. The first is more prominent in "The Teenager's Tale", "Shatha" and "A Country of Refuge", whereas the second one becomes the predominant attitude in "Ghost". Such patronizing attitude of the volunteer forges the male narrator's response and idea of how the center's society is:

Here comes a woman a bit like her, one of the volunteers who come to help them, In her reflective bib with her heavy backpack. I'm another unfortunate refugee as far as she's concerned, so I smile back at her. Now she wants to talk with me. She thinks I need to tell my story. (...) She reaches into her backpack and out comes a small box. It's a radio. ... 'You can listen to your own people' she tells me in a loud voice, slowly. (...) We never take donations. Ghostman's rule. But this radio is kind of cool. I mime big gratitude, tuck it in my pocket, wave at her as they move on. Finally' (Popoola and Holmes, 97)

The contact between the two collectives also enables the reader to learn about means of assimilation. In the story form *Refugee Tales IV*, the main character becomes a subject of this process after his asylum request is finally accepted. He comprehends that his reality has been completely altered. After the distressing situations he had to endure, it feels mandatory for him to cling to the legal and cultural rules of his recipient society: 'I am currently studying to get my driving license and will soon learn how to flow through such tiny, twisting streets' (Veglio, 21).

Quite often, the extenuating process of assimilation takes place under violent circumstances. The process of ‘othering’ affects both parties so deeply that rejection is exacerbated. This is what the reader is presented with in Sebastian Barry’s story in *A Country of Refuge* (2016): ‘No place on earth it seemed could have wanted us (...) Humanity had slipped away from us and it was as if the candles of our souls had been snuffed out. We had made our desperate attempt to escape the pestilence of hunger but because we were nothing nothing could be done for us’ (11). Moreover, in “Ghost” from *Breach* (2016), the margin’s repudiation of the center is made clearly visible. The narrator recounts: ‘That’s one of his [Ghostman] rules for them too -anyone who wants to get across must see out from the camp in his or her own clothes, no donated shoes or coats or shirts or trousers or skirts’ (Popoola and Holmes, 97-98).

In the words of the narrator of “Shatha”, refugees all ‘bear the same wounds. Born bearing the burden of the Palestinian cause into a country which refuses to accept them as citizens, keeping them as refugees, as outcasts, they have grown up suffering. And once they complete their education (...), they find themselves on a dark and mysterious path (...) This is what our society offers us as an alternative reality’ (Gowanlock, 85). This fragment comes to emphasize the quality of community of the refugee collective, even in the most despairing times and in the face of difficulties. The notion of the residents of the camps as a community is a factor that changes the perception of the camp itself in the eyes of refugees.

In this sense, Jopi Nyman considers that ‘from the perspective of the migrants, the camp provides shelter and community, but its closeness to the harsh realities of migration and the border reminds them also of the violence and oppression that are a part of the border experience’ (Nyman, 197). As Nyman suggests, from the stories where the narrator is mostly in the camp, and his or her contact with the exterior is limited, the reader is able to notice such perpetual duality.

In “Shatha”, the female narrator is able to convey this concept and attach sentimentality to it: ‘I tell him how I feel deeply conflicted when it comes to the camp. That I both love and despise it, that it bores me yet I long for it, how I reject it and I desire it. In spite of its crumbling homes, streets, and pavements, it oozes a substance that is capable of alleviating pain (...) I learn that the problem isn’t in what we see but how we see it.’ (Gowanlock, 88). The last statement could be very well extrapolated to what the stories are

meant to attain. In the issue of the world-wide refugee crisis, the bottom obstacle to deal with is not refugees, but rather the space nations open for them to simply be.

## Conclusions: Migration Literature -Listening to Wayfarer's

That by the oldest action  
Which is listening to tales  
That other people tell  
Of others  
Told by others  
We set out to make a language  
That opens politics  
Establishes belonging  
Where a person dwells.  
(Herd, 5)

After a long process of research and analysis, the main objectives of the dissertation have been accomplished. This study has addressed the role of refugees in the current geopolitical context, on concepts related to borders and how they establish stratified societies that are divided in 'margins' and 'centers', thus allowing the idea of border in itself and its aesthetic to be redefined. Through the first pages of the work, the building of the refugee identity was elaborated on, dealing with both collective and individual aspects of the self. In addition, the project dived into the politicization of displaced individuals in modernity, which often results in a demonizing image of the migrant collective and eventually in the utter 'othering' of the foreigner.

Pondering upon the shared struggles both socially and psychologically speaking of the refugee, is one of the elements that unites all the anthologies, and provides the collective with a notion of community. Although the four volumes here examined may differ in the way they were written and published, the manner in which the voices of the characters are presented, the portrayal of camps, and several other elements, all share one main goal: raising awareness in the general public on what refugees actually must face after their displacement and once they arrive to their host countries. In addition to this, the anthologies focus on fighting anti-migrant rhetoric and question the morally debatable migratory policies that are managed around the globe, putting the spotlight in Europe.

Through the study of the volumes, the dissertation progressively deescalated from a broader study of collective experience towards a more detailed assessment of the role of the individual in his or her community. The narrower approach provided the characters and, consequently, refugees with a much more sensitive and humane quality. Anxiety, despair due to lack of prospects for a future, grief of losses, and loneliness are emotions all individuals get to experience at some stage in their lives. Being able to relate to the feelings of these characters stretches the fact that ‘centers’ members of society and the ‘others’ are not so distant and different after all.

Carrying out this research has opened doors that were closed within me for a long time. It has brought me closer to parts of my own identity and allowed me to get in contact with emotions that were stored inside of me. In writing this dissertation I have been able to name such emotions and come to terms with them. I have also had the privilege to become more aware and sensitive to the struggles of the refugee collectives, at times having to stop reading or researching because of how moving and imposing the stories and data were. In this sense, I can state that the anthologies certainly hit home and reached their goals in me as an individual. I have been enriched by the heartfelt stories of the refugees, and I only hope that this dissertation serves as an invitation and encouragement to read the tales and experience an awakening.

For future stages of research, it would be proper to develop certain branches of the topic that could not be deeply studied in this dissertation, such as the violence inflicted by institutions of the state and its relation to migratory laws. In addition, stories from a narrative perspective other than the first person could be taken into account, along with several testimonial tales, in order to have a broader analysis of the living conditions of the refugees, the way they perceive each other when coexisting in camps, and to emphasize the host countries’s societies perception of the refugee collectives. This last aspect could be taken into other fields connected to liminality such as intermediality and the way that displaced individuals are portrayed in the media and other audiovisual expressions.

Furthermore, and also connected to the role of liminality when analyzing border narratives, another aspect that was not developed and that could enrich the investigation and evaluation of the tales is assessing the role of women in the world of refugees. Studying the

stories from a gender roles perspective and contrasting the position of the female-male dichotomy in the context of the camps and in the migration process.

To conclude, the topic of this dissertation is one that has never been more urgent than today. In a world where war is taking place and societies are in constant flux, mobility has become not only a possibility but a necessity. The methodology that has been applied for this dissertation, which is the comparison and contrast of different border narratives based on a number of concepts related to border studies, serves as a foundation to keep on elaborating this project in higher levels of research, with the possible addition of more tales, anthologies that reflect refugee collectives other than the ones already mentioned, and updated information.

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