

## RELUCTANT REFUGEES: A STUDY OF 'REFUGEES IN MOVEMENT' IN PAUL LYNCH'S *PROPHET SONG*

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### Abstract

*Prophet Song* (2023), the Booker prize winning novel of Paul Lynch, is the story of Eilish Stack, who is forced by the conditions, created under the totalitarian rule in fictional Ireland of the book, to leave her home country. But it is not before she has paid a heavy price for delaying her migration from her country. Her husband goes missing after being detained by the police, her eldest son, Mark, joins the rebels, her daughter Molly spirals into depression and the worst-hit is her thirteen-year-old son, Bailey, who is tortured to death. However, like many refugees, she is unable to judge the right time when one must leave one's country; and when she finally decides, she has to face the unsurmountable problems that most of the refugees in movement have to face. Her plight is no different from the refugees, past and present, but the intensity with which it is presented in the novel makes it pertinent to go into the depths of the novel and explore some basic vignettes related to the refugees in movement. Therefore, on the basis of the two theoretical models of refugees in movement — of Ernst F. Kunz's and Stephen Keller's— the present study will undertake the perusal of Paul Lynch's novel *Prophet Song* to understand Eilish Stack's transition from a reluctant refugee to a refugee in the state of 'midway to nowhere'.

**Keywords:** Refugees, Refugee Kinetics, Anticipated/Acute Refugee Movement, Push/Pull factors, Camp behaviour.

“... history is a silent record of people  
who did not know when to leave.” (*Prophet Song* 103)

“... who are these people without their eyes and  
who are these people with their eyes blinded to the future,  
these people trapped between the fire and the dark?” (*Prophet Song* 278)

These two excerpts drawn from the novel, *Prophet Song* (2023), highlight two very crucial phases in the life of refugees—one when they are in the dilemma whether they should leave their home country or not (the scales weighing heavily on the side of their reluctance to leave their home); and another when they have finally taken the decision to flee their home country. The whole of the book presents the compelling, depressing, rather claustrophobic political situations under which any sensible person would have left the country, but the protagonist Eilish Stack took her time to decide when to leave her home country; and she had to pay a heavy price for the delay in her decision. However, the dilemma she was caught in is the predicament of every prospective refugee — When is the right time to leave one's country? The final pages of the novel, then, portray the challenges and appalling conditions that she had to face as a 'refugee in movement' with people of same status as hers (all were refugees). Her plight is no different from the refugees, past and present, but the intensity with which it is presented in the novel makes it pertinent to go into the depths of the novel and explore some basic vignettes related to the refugees in movement.

**Theory of Refugee Movement:** The studies in refugee movement has a long history. Its commencement can be traced back to H. P. Fairchild's study of immigrants in his book *Immigrant Backgrounds* (1927), where he had observed that the immigrant's background — race, culture and nationality — affect his future as settler. It became a sort of a template for future studies. In 1958, in his article, "A General Typology of Migration," W. Petersen while enumerating the "emigrants' motives and the social causes of emigration" as an important background factor affecting aspirations and migrant outcomes" provided a general typology of migration with different categories related to flight and displacement (258, 266). Ernst H. Kunz picked out in Petersen's typology certain shortcomings, chief among which was its assumption by implication that "migratory actions are single vector movements"; Kunz, however found that "involuntary migrations leading to re-settlement in a non-adjacent country ... are not necessarily single step movements connecting an origin and a destination point with a single line. ...there are others which can be more validly conceptualized as two-vector moves with separate forces activating each step." Kunz further discovered that this inflexibility of the origin/destination model was lessened by Everett S. Lee by his concept of "intervening obstacles" which are the pre-existing

notions that affect decision making of would-be migrants (126). Lee's Theory of Migration, introduced in 1969, emphasized the interplay of "push" and "pull" factors, intervening obstacles, and personal characteristics in determining migration patterns.

In 1973, Kunz himself developed a theoretical model known as "Refugee Kinetics" that analyses the factors that influence the movement and decisions of refugees such as reason for flight, the circumstances of their journey, and their likelihood of returning or settling permanently. Stephen Keller found in Kunz's Kinetic Model of the refugee in flight, many useful ideas and classification, yet, he saw it as "a partial and abstract model limited to flight." In his book *Uprooting and Social Change* (1975), Keller charted the different stages of the refugee experience as — perception of threat; decision to flee; the period of extreme danger and flight; reaching safety; camp behaviour; repatriation, settlement or resettlement; the early and the late stages of resettlement, adjustment and acculturation and residual states and changes in behaviour caused by the refugee experience. It is on the basis of these two theoretical models — of Kunz's and Keller's—that the present study will undertake the perusal of Paul Lynch's novel, *Prophet Song*. Set in the fictional Ireland of present times, the book is about the chaos that overtakes the country under the changed regime, the New Alliance (NAP), with its curb on people's rights and life with its secret service, Garda National Services Bureau (GNSB) and full control on the judicial system.

Usually, migration is based on "push" and "pull" factors based on what motivates the migrant; it also distinguishes a refugee from a migrant because the refugees' motivation to seek a new place of settlement differs from that of voluntary migrants — the 'push factor works in case of refugees who leave their home country because of certain conditions (political or military) not in their hands; whereas, to the migrant, "the country of choice provides him with a purpose and a wish to migrate." Thus, in his case, the "pull" factor is operational (Kunz 131).

Kunz tried to give a new dimension to this "push-and-pull theory." In his article "The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement," he attempted "to analyse the processes of flight and displacement, conceptualize the constituent elements and present some models and typologies." In the same article, he also differentiates between various subtypes of anticipatory and acute refugee movements" and additionally draws a typology of acute displacement "under the headings of displacement by flight, displacement by force and displacement by absence" (144, 146)

Based on the "flight and settlement pattern of the overwhelming majority of refugees, Kunz has typified two kinetic types — *anticipatory refugee movement* and *acute refugee movement*. The anticipatory refugee, according to him, is the one "who arrives door-to-door to the country of immigration, leaves his home country before the deterioration of the military or political situation prevents his orderly departure. He arrives in the country of settlement prepared" (131-132); the acute refugee, in contrast, flees home country when political situation changes drastically or there is movement of armies, "either in mass or, if their flight is obstructed, in bursts of individual or group escapes, and their primary purpose is to reach safety in a neighbouring or nearby country which will grant them asylum. The emphasis is on escape and at the time of passing through the border few refugees partaking in acute movements are aware that later further migration will become a necessity" (132)

### **Refugee's Perception of Threat: When is the right time to leave one's country?**

There is no right time to leave one's country; each person is impelled by different reason. And the thing that compels a person to leave has much to do with his perception of threat, its immediacy and intensity to some extent, but which, for the most part, is inexplicable. "The anticipatory refugee," according to Barry N. Stein "perceives peril early, whereas some acute refugees begin to flee only when the bombs start to burst about them. Similarly, even at the point of clear and present danger there are some who refuse to leave" (323). His opinion is that "Normally the better educated, more active age groups escape" (323). But such is not the case with Eilish Stack, mother of four, who is a microbiologist by profession. Changes are apparent in all key systems—political, judicial and even Eilish's office where the supporters of the new regime replace those who are against it, yet Eilish turns a blind eye to everything going on around her. Much against her sound reasoning mind, she allows her husband to take part in the protest against the government, still believing in the power of peaceful protest to bring about drastic changes —

... the NAP seem to think they are above the law, everybody knows this emergency legislation is just a grab of power, who else will stand up for our constitutional rights if the teachers don't stick it to them? (29)

By the end of the first chapter, however, when the protestors (Eilish's husband is one amongst them) are beaten to submission by the horse-mounted police and some teachers are dragged towards "an unmarked car," Eilish could feel "as though the day has come under some foreign sky, feeling some sense of disintegration" (31) Still, when her husband Larry goes missing (suspected to have been taken in custody by the new regime) and her father, Simon, suggests her to leave the country for Canada, the "push" to migrate is not strong enough for Eilish. She refuses to believe what her father suggests, "Dad, what is that supposed to mean?" She rather feels agitated and thinks he is over-reacting; she is more concerned about her "career and Larry's job and the kids with school, and then there is Molly's hockey, they're going to win the Leinster schoolgirls' junior league this year, they're nine points ahead already, and Mark has just entered the senior cycle at school"; she is even

much more anxious about her father, “who is going to keep an eye on you ... what if you fall and break a hip, tell me, what then?” (PS 22)

The “push” to migrate isn’t strong enough even when things begin to spiral out of control. Eilish doesn’t take her sister Áine’s words seriously, when she advises her “I wish you would listen to me ... history is a silent record of people who did not know when to leave”; rather she accuses her sister “That is easy for you to say having abandoned our father to my care,” and she is adamant that “I’m not going to move a bloody inch past my door until I see my Larry home” (PS 103)

Eilish refuses to acknowledge the real threats to her and her family. Her father Simon counsels her:

... you need to consider the situation as it is, armed insurrection is growing around the country, soldiers are defecting from the Defence Forces and joining the free army or whatever you like to call them, defectors are being shot on sight, the rebels are growing in size and will continue to grow and that is where Mark is going to go, that is what he feels he must do, and regarding your job, there won’t be an economy in three months’ time, so really, I wouldn’t worry about it, *now is the time for you to act before they tighten the border*, you need to go and get the children out, go to England, Eilish, go to Áine in Canada, they printed your address in the newspaper, your son has been publicly shamed and is a target for arrest .... *You cannot put a stop to the wind, he says, and the wind is going to blow right through this country ...* (130, emphasis added)

The threat which is visible even to her fourteen years’ old daughter, Molly, fails to catch Eilish’s eye. Molly urges her mother, “we need to go, we need to leave before it’s too late.” Eilish still has the wishful thought that Larry would come back, and makes excuses, “And what about your grandfather?” she says, “who is going to mind him, he’s getting worse all the time, and what will your father do if he’s released without warning, you haven’t thought any of this through.” Molly tries to reason with her mother giving examples of people from school who have left for Australia, Canada, or England, and suggests that they can go to their aunt Áine and wait there for her dad to be released (PS 169).

Eilish, however, lives in the illusion that things will change for the better, though she herself doubts her conviction; tries “sifting truth from falsehood”; trying to assure herself, giving false hope to herself:

... anyhow, this is not going to go on much longer, we don’t live in some dark corner of the world, you know, the international community will broker a solution, there are talks going on right now in London, this is how it goes, first there are stern warnings and then there are sanctions and when the sanctions don’t bite they bring everyone around the table, they’ll broker a ceasefire any day now.” (169-170)

It is not just that Eilish does not realize the gravity of situation, there are other factors also which dissuade her from taking the decision to leave the country; there are obviously some practical problems that Eilish points out like “the government will not give Ben a passport, they wouldn’t renew Mark’s passport either” because they are in the suspect list because of Larry’s detention, but still she can’t be compelled to make a decision. Her sister might have said that “History is a silent record of people who could not leave,” but Eilish differs from her on this point, and it is a valid one also “it is a record of those who did not have a choice, you cannot leave when you have nowhere to go and have not the means to go there, you cannot leave when your children cannot get a passport, cannot go when your feet are rooted in the earth and to leave means tearing off your feet” (185).

There obviously are practical problems in forced migration. Sometimes, migration through legal means becomes impossible, then people resort to illegal means. When Eilish could not get passport renewed for Mark and a new one for Ben, her sister Áine makes arrangement for her to get her out of the country with her family and their father. Through a small organisation, hired by people who lived outside the state and who were in a position to help their loved ones, Áine facilitates a letter signed by a senior official bearing the seal of the Department of Justice, which would help Eilish meet her immediate needs — “to cross unimpeded to the government side where you can buy fresh meat, vegetables, dairy for your children without paying end of the world prices.” She was also ready to spend a lot of money on Eilish’s passage to safety as “there are passports and documents to be forged, bribes to be paid, there are transit fees” (213), but despite all the arrangements done by her sister, Eilish could not make up her mind to leave

“tell me, how does my sister expect me to leave just like that, without even speaking with me, do you know what happens to a house like this when it’s abandoned, my eldest son could return any moment, he’ll slide open the patio door and slouch into the kitchen as though he had never gone, he’ll go to the fridge and give out that there is no ham then pull a chair asking if there’s any news of his dad, my husband was taken, you see, we haven’t heard from him since he disappeared —” (210-211)

The young girl, who contacted Eilish on behalf of her sister and who was not a trafficker but “a medical student,” rather “was a medical student,” is doing this job now “until [she] can be a medical student again,” tries to reason with Eilish, tries to explain to Eilish:

Mrs Stack, you have a difficult choice before you, leaving home is the most difficult thing to do, but *I don’t believe you are looking clearly at the situation*, at what is about to happen, that spotter plane overhead, what do you think it’s doing up there all day, this ceasefire is not going to hold, the rebels have run out of momentum and the military has begun to encircle them, the south of *this city will be put to siege and the military will turn this place into hell*, they will pound the rebels into submission, *you’ll be cut off from the world*, from supplies, *none of what I tell you is a secret*, you have children to think of, you have an elderly father who is in need of medical care ... (212, emphasis added)

Everything is out in the open for all to see, but Eilish still does not want to see. She does not realize the gravity of the situation even when so many people attest to the prevailing truth. She is still stuck on —

... what my father needs is to remain at home, to be surrounded by his memories, to have the past within reach, in time there will be nothing left to him but shadows, a strange dream of the world, to send him into exile now would be to condemn him to a kind of nonexistence, I cannot allow that to happen. (212)

There is a soldier also, from within the system, who wonders, “why you [Eilish] chose to stay, there is nothing here for you now.” Rather than understanding his good intention, Eilish counter questions him, “And what about you, she says, why are you here?” His answer is straight and truthful, “I am here because I have a job to do, he says, and I will remain until that work is done or leave in a box.” Despite witnessing her adamant behaviour, he gives sound advice to Eilish:

It’s not too late to leave you know, he says, this place is going to become a hellmouth all over again, the regime is about to agree to let the UN open a humanitarian corridor from Lansdowne Road stadium through the port tunnel to the north, you’ll be allowed to leave like rats so long as the piper calls the tune, take care of yourself, alright?” (254-255)

Though slowly and steadily, yet finally, it begins to seep into Eilish the foolishness of her actions and grief overtakes her; she regrets “how she was told and did not listen”; instead of performing her duty to deliver her children from danger, she “stood [her] ground, such foolishness and blindness before the facts”; she regrets not having taken seriously her father’s repeated well-intentioned warning, “to leave the country and make a better life”; sees “the missed opportunities grow before her and how they could have escaped ...” (260).

Eilish is not the only caught in such a loop of despair-hope-despair; she is not the only one reluctant to leave her home and country in face of adverse circumstances, there were some others around her who refused to leave the country earlier despite all odds. Mona too (a woman Eilish meets in camp who too had lost her husband and close relatives to the ongoing state of affairs) hadn’t felt the necessity to leave early on; she shares with Eilish that “We were offered visas, you know, to Australia, and we turned them down, my husband said no, plain and simple, he said it was impossible to go at the time and I suppose he was right, and how could he have known anyhow, how could anyone of us have known what was going to happen...” and, moreover, “how were we supposed to go when we had so many commitments, so may responsibilities” and “when the things got worse” and they decided to flee, “there was just no room for manoeuvre” (PS 302). Mona confesses that she could never understand those that left,

how they could just leave like that, leave everything behind, all that life, all that living, it was absolutely impossible for us to do so at the time and the more I look at it the more it seems there was nothing we could do anyhow, ... I think what I’m trying to say is that I used to believe in free will, if you had asked me before all this I would have told you I was free as a bird, but now I’m not so sure, now, I don’t see how free will is possible when you are caught up within such a monstrosity, one thing leads to another thing until the damn thing has its own momentum and there is nothing you can do ... (PS 302)

Eilish and Mona are amongst the people who perceived the threat, though quite late, but surprisingly, there are some people who decide to never abandon their country. Eilish’s father, for that matter feels that “I’ll be fine on my own, no one is going to make trouble for an old man (130). Gerry Brennan, Eilish’s neighbour, is also affirmative: “Why should we leave? he says, tell me that, they won’t get us out, we will live underground if we have to, I’ll dig a hole in my fucking garden, if you’ve lived in one place all your life the idea of living someplace else is impossible, it’s what do you call it, neurological, it’s wired into the brain, we’ll just dig in, that’s what we’ll do, what else are you supposed to do anyhow, I don’t know where else I’d go, they can drag me out in a coffin” (228). Then, there is Mrs Gaffney, whose two sons have long gone to Australia, and are even trying to get her to leave the longest while but she doesn’t want to go. When Eilish asks her why had stayed, “the woman is silent a long time. She puts a mottled hand to her chin and goes to speak but sighs instead and looks away. Why do any of us stay? she says” (234-235).

**Decision to flee:** Eilish finally decides to flee with whatever little is left with her, her two children, Molly and Ben, when she sees the unspeakable atrocities inflicted on her thirteen years’ old son, Bailey who is tortured and murdered by the repressing regime. It is not easy for a person to simply detach themselves from their country and in an interview with Ron Charles, Paul Lynch tries to put to words the plight and mental state of the refugees, who have to finally make a decision to leave: “They are all unplugged one by one by one until there’s nothing left and that’s when you leave but that’s also when you become a nonperson right that’s when you become a thing we watch on the thing on the news.”

When they reach the British checkpoint, the finality of being refugee sets in. Eilish knows that —  
... once they walk across this line the weight will begin, that what is left behind will not be left behind at all but will continue to grow in weight and be carried forever on their backs. (PS 286)

Again, when she is ready to cross the border, Eilish tells herself “not to look behind” yet she “turns around and a stone forms in her mouth so that she must whisper as she speaks, the stone sliding down her throat so that she must breathe around it...” (PS 291). The stone keeps growing; she cannot breathe; “she thinks her heart has stopped.” Numbed, she watches the road, then “closes her eyes unable to think or feel, seeking within for some path forward, in the shadows Bailey comes to her and she touches his face and strokes his hair and the numbness of her body swells into a pain that forces her to open her eyes...” (PS 293) She is insensate as “There

is no will now, no sovereignty nor strength, just a hollow body reflected in the glass, a body pulled forward along the road..." (PS 294)

**Period of Extreme Danger and Flight:** When Eilish had the opportunity, she did not flee. Earlier, Eilish's sister had sent money and a message to her that she has arranged for her to get out of the country with her children and her father. By the time she decided to leave it was already too late, so she had to take the illegal route her sister had suggested to get out of the country. She becomes a part of group escape planned and paid by her sister. She did not have the passport of her infant son, Ben and moreover, they were on the "scrutiny list" because her husband was in detention. "Mass flight," which in Kunz's opinion are "impelled by immediate fear, often accompanied by shock caused by the sudden turn of events, and are not infrequently augmented by hysteria. Individual and group escapes are refugee moves in acute situations, in which exit is denied or severely restricted, and armed or physical barriers have been erected against exit. In contrast to mass flights, escapes are essentially of fragmented nature, and the size of the groups involved in each escape is limited. Also, in contrast to mass flights, escapes are characterized by planned, prepared and secret actions and not infrequently by individualistic solutions" (141).

The period of flight is fraught with dangers. On the way, there are people out there to take advantage of the already dispirited refugee, like "the rattish man" who seems to offer people place to stay for night, but, actually, lures away the gullible ones and then robs them (PS 277). Then, one way or the other, the refugees are at risk — there are "violent gangs that roam the borderland" or "armed patrols along the border roads" (PS 278) — there is no way they can be safe. Their escape is not uninterrupted; from evening to night, the bus meets one checkpoint after another ... different faces each time speaking the same commands, the driver standing away from the bus with a cigarette in his mouth counting the cash he has to pay. IDs must be shown, they must explain where they are going, they are forced to open their bags and place their belongings onto the road and then pack them again and sometimes the bags are a little lighter and each time there is a different price, an exit tax some of them call it, a contribution to the cause you are leaving behind (PS 281).

The refugees are not just fleeced of their money and self-respect; there are people in authority on lookout to prey on women and young girls —

... the going rate changes each time, they look at your clothes and come up with a price, they look and see if they like your smile, it all depends on the time of the day, the moon and the tide. (PS 287)

Eilish had to face one such audacious move of an official (whether a policeman or a military officer or a small-time bureaucrat), who comes for processing their application for exit, but keeps on asking irrelevant questions, Eilish sees through his game and bluntly asks him "how much money do you want?" The man though taken aback by her frankness, still is not deterred from his intention and replies: "There will be a cost for crossing the border ... an exit tax if you will, but there is also an additional cost, you are seeking to leave the state with a child who does not have a travel document." He says that she will have to buy "a temporary passport for the child" which will have no legal effect after today" and she will have to reapply from her new place of residence. And very unashamedly, he says that "there is always a price for such things" (PS 288-289)

When Eilish expresses her helplessness to pay the demanded exit tax, the official wishes to interview Molly alone. Molly is only a thirteen years old child. Eilish feels "a sudden nausea" thinking how low the man could stoop. She understands his intention to interview Molly alone and enraged asks him:

And for how long do you want to speak to her alone ... do you not want to interview me alone, I can paint my lips if that's what you want, I can fix my hair, but I'm not what you want, isn't that right, perhaps the thing you want is something you can only take from a child. (290)

Such an immoral conduct of the official forces Eilish to cut Molly's hair "I am going to make sure nobody looks at you again" (PS 294).

It is a fact widely acknowledged by the international community that refugees and displaced women and children are particularly vulnerable to violence. Sexual violence is used not just as "a tool of war" but women "encounter violence and exploitation [even] in their flight to safety — at the hands of warlords, soldiers, armed gangs and border guards" (Ferris 584).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Save the Children of UK, prepared a report titled, "Sexual Violence and Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone" (February 2002), intended to investigate sexual violence and exploitation in the region. The study highlighted the fact that "poverty and abuse of power" were the main reasons for the sexual exploitation of children (Ferris 586) and it also found that though girls and boys, both were exploited yet "the most frequently exploited were girls aged 13-18" (Ferris 585). The novel *Prophet Song* also attests to this fact.

**Squalid Conditions in the Camp:** The condition of the camps where the refugees fleeing in a mass are stationed, temporarily or permanently, is deplorable. Eilish and her family are saved from running into such refugee camp by Gary, who comes to rescue them as per arrangement with Eilish's sister Áine. He gives a realistic picture of the refugee camp they would be carried to in a bus; it would be

... limbo land, you would be stuck in the camp for who knows how long with no right to leave Northern Ireland, you could be living there for the rest of your lives in one of them tents with the rain pishing down on you all day (PS 293)

Saved from the refugee camp, they, nonetheless, cannot be saved from the other travesties of refugee plight. They are let into a truck full of people, Eilish feels that “She is no longer a person but a thing, this is what she thinks, a thing climbing into the truck with a child in her arms.” From lorry, twenty-three of them are transferred to a factory yard and led into “a bare industrial room” with “the smell of damp and squalor” and by evening, there are forty-seven people cramped in the same room. They had there only for a few days but while being there, they had follow certain rules according to the Gaffer — “nobody gets to go outside and this door will be locked at all times; there’s a toilet in that room with a shower rigged up and there’s two bins in the corner, you will get three square meals a day until it’s time to go ...” For the small children, there was a little more — nappies, formula, etc. Looking at the lack of basic amenities, when a man complains, “this place is unfit for habitation” and demands heater for infants and small children, his demand is met with a rebuke from the Gaffer, “Don’t be a stupid cunt” and the helpless man walks away. (PS 296-297)

### **Camp Behaviour: Psychological Impact on Refugees**

Now this description of camp is as similar to the description as provided by H. B. M. Murphy in 1955 in his brief essay which Barry finds “useful description and analyses” of camps — “... segregation from the host population, the need to share facilities, a lack of privacy, plus overcrowding and a limited restricted area within which the whole compass of daily life is to be conducted.” These physical conditions may vary widely, the effect is the same as it, “gives the refugees a sense of dependence and the clear signal that they have a special limited status and being controlled.” Barry further draws inference from Murphy that

... it is during the camp experience that the enormity of what has happened finally strikes home to the refugee. The focus is on what has been lost. Besides the suffering, trauma and persecution already endured, and the loss of loved ones, the refugee must now face up to loss of homeland, identity and former life. A new life in a strange land awaits.” This leads to “anxiety, fear, frustration and emotional disturbance appear, and the refugee regresses to a more infantile state, loses his or her willpower, and become apathetic, helpless or maniac or aggressive” (Barry 324).

Eilish too feels “a sudden twist of panic” while stationed in the temporary encampment (PS 297) and there are others too who give expression to their aggression in different ways.

Stephen Keller, using disaster research information, has explored reactions to threats and the impact of stress and trauma on behaviour of acute refugees. Keller strongly argues that the trauma of flight produces residual psychological states in the refugee that will affect behaviour for years to come. “Because they usually endure the greatest hardships and loss, those who are late to flee are likely to come out of the experience with three residual characteristics: guilt, invulnerability and aggressiveness—guilt for loved one’s lost because the refugee delayed flight or failed to protect them during the attack” and “the feeling of invulnerability develops because the refugee has been through the worst and survived” while “aggressiveness [is]...an outgrowth of the other two states” (323). The guilt, especially of having failed Bailey, by taking a late decision to leave her country, stays with her. She could still see Bailey in Molly’s face and “she seeks to remain with him in this null space of looking” (PS 299); but she has to look forward to the safety of her two surviving children. Eilish’s life, however, is totally changed —

When Eilish closes her eyes now she sees only the past, a past that belongs to somebody else and she is emptiness watching from some cold and bottomless dark and is met with the feeling of the world grown intolerable, watching her husband and eldest son taken by a silence that cannot be pierced, it is as though a door opened onto nothingness and each one stepped inside and was gone. (PS 299-300)

“The frustration of confinement, enforced passivity and dependence on others for all of life’s basic needs,” in Benard’s opinion, also “produce[s] two contradictory responses” in the refugees, which H. B. M. Murphy has called “‘DP (displaced persons) apathy,’ a condition of general listlessness and resignation; and random, directionless expressions of violence” (626).

Besides DP, the refugees display “a kind of shock reaction to the total disruption of one’s life and the loss of one’s home and property ... to such a person the world may truly appear to have lost its moorings and such concepts as right and wrong, just and unjust may lose their meaning” (Benard 627). Amongst the refugees “[t]here are quarrels over the allocation of goods but also over quite trivial matters, escalating into violence in a manner that has been described infantile” (Benard 627). In the novel, an old man in the temporary refuge bangs hard on the main door shouting for food to be provided; and when the food does arrive all the people crowd around it, so Mona has to take charge and put a check on what could have escalated into a fight over food distribution. There are scattered incidents of fight over switching light off at a particular time and someone smoking in the room.

**Reaching Safety:** It must be noticed that Eilish’s migration is not a single vector movement—home to destination—which would have been possible if she had heeded to the advice of her father and sister. Even by the end of the novel, as a refugee, she is in a state of limbo. She hasn’t reached safety; there is still a river to cross, with inadequate boats (two) and life-jackets, and untrained men appointed amongst the refugees to pilot each boat; still Eilish realizes that it is the only way forward “we must go to the sea, the sea is life. (PS 309). Her fate and the fate of her family is unknown and uncertain hereafter.

## CONCLUSION

In charting out Eilish's journey from 'perception of threat' to 'decision to flee' to 'the period of extreme danger and flight,' Lynch has truthfully portrayed not only Eilish as an example of acute refugee movement, but a few more like her in the book. As noted earlier, she does not reach safety till the end of the book, depicting that hers is not a single-vector movement; there are many more hurdles to be crossed yet in the portrayal of the plight of refugees in movement and their camp behaviour and the residual states and changes in behaviour caused by the refugee experience, Lynch again is very realistic.

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