

UGC Approved (old) List of Journals

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43940	Concrete Operators	UNIV	Science	De Gruyter Open, POLEND		22993282	Poland
43946	Journal of Robotics and Mechatronics Systems	UNIV	Science	Truro, United Kingdom Tronix Publishing	23991550		United Kingdom
43959	International Research Journal of Business Studies	UNIV	Social Science	Universitas Prasetya Mulya	23384565		Indonesia
43967	Random Matrices - Theory And Application	UNIV	Science	World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd	20103263	20103271	United Kingdom
43975	Eurasian Business Review	UNIV	Social Science	Springer		21474281	Italy
43977	Market Microstructure and Liquidity	UNIV	Social Science	World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd	23826266	24248037	France
43979	IJELH [International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities]	UNIV	Arts & Humanities	Smart Moves c/o Support Foundation		23217065	India
43982	Journal of Royal Statistics Society - A	UNIV	Science	Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd ,UK		13697412	United Kingdom
43984	International Journal of Financial Engineering	UNIV	Social Science	World Scientific Publishing	24247863	24247944	China
43993	Journal of Royal Statistics Society - B	UNIV	Science	Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd ,UK		00359254	United Kingdom
43995	Observatorio Medioambiental	UNIV	Science	Universidad Complutense de Madrid * Servicio de Publicaciones	11391987	19883277	Spain
43997	Journal of International Finance and Economics	UNIV	Social Science	International Academy of Business and Economics	15556336	2378864 X	United States

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Woman as Refugee in *Inside Out and Back Again* By Thanhha Lai

"No one would believe me but at times I would choose wartime in Saigon over peacetime in Alabama." (October 29). The cry and the crisis of a refugee wherever they are, go unheard and underrepresented.

The normal people love the land of their birth, the territory of their Nation or State, which they familiarly think of as their country. They love their language, culture and memories of their land. They love its rocks and rills, its woods and hills, its folk, its ways and temper. They love it for the most part unconsciously, quite as they love their mother. But once they become refugees, they undergo unimaginable loss as they are displaced in their own country or seeking safety in another country. There are number of refugees filled with unique life experiences and dreams for the future. All of them long to return home, yearn to work and search for prosperous livelihood. In the case of women refugees, they face gender specific challenges in steering their daily life. Frequent challenges they face include healthcare issues, physical abuse, sexual violence, human trafficking and various kinds of discriminations. They are often subjected to forced labour in refugee camps through the reinforcement of traditional gender roles and customary labels. "The effects of trauma on refugees are immeasurable, long lasting and shattering to both their inner and outer selves" (Steel et al 2006).

According to Kunz, there are two types of refugee movements: anticipatory and acute refugee movements. Anticipatory refugees sense danger early, thus allowing an orderly departure before the crisis occurs. Acute refugee movements on the other hand, are responses to an overwhelming push where people are forced to leave their homeland on a moment's notice. They are unprepared for the journey and concentrate simply on surviving the disaster zone (Kunz 1981). The situation is crucial when one is forced to flee their home due to conflicts such as war, famine, persecution and other disasters in order to preserve their life and freedom. After they escape the massive danger, they must seek shelter in another country until they are finally relocated. While they flee home, their lives are turned inside out, as they wind through changes and deal with losses. Crisis of women refugees is getting worse day by day. Refugee camps are overcrowded and thousands of women and children are living in extreme poverty, without access to their basic needs. The brutalization of women in such refugee camps is a deplorable and constant trend. Women have been repeatedly raped or forced into marriage or sold into slavery. There is also another threat for the women refugees – they are being pushed in the sea by nations unwilling to let refugee boats land. Thus female refugees across the world are highly exposed to all forms of sexual and physical violence.

The power of refugee literature is that it offers first-hand insight into the complexity of the refugee experience, which can lead to a better understanding of what it means to be a refugee. Although each refugee's experience is unique, some common themes in refugee literature include war, education, childhood, identity, culture, equality, respect, fear, hope, suffering, sadness, discrimination, and displacement. There are quite a number of short and long fictional works, memoirs, autobiographies by both men and women writers who deal with issues of refugees. The heartbreaking refugee experience is well-documented by so many women writers in several books such as *The Girl Who Smiled Beads*, a painful plight of two

sisters by Clemantine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil, *Girl at War* a powerful novel by Sara Novic, *Sweetness in the Belly*, story of an orphan girl by Camilla Gibb and so on.

Inside Out and Back Again is a semi-autobiographical novel by Thanhha Lai, a Vietnamese American poet. It is a historical fiction written in verse form based on a true event. It was published in 2011 and awarded the National Book Award for Young People's Literature and one of the two Newbery Honors. *Thanhha Lai's award-winning work of poetry takes the readers into a baby girl's experience as a refugee and the American South through the beautiful and lyrical storytelling.* Lai's book has been duly recognized for its contribution to the modern canon. The fact that it is written by a woman who arrived in America, unable to speak a word of English, is even more impressive.

Rootlessness is a complex reality – to experience and even to comprehend. It is the essence of the crisis of the refugees. The term rootless is commonly used to describe a state of not having the things that most people would associate with having a home. For most of us need a home as well as being a physical place that meets certain physical needs. It is also a place that meets many psychological and emotional needs. If it is not met then it is sheer rootlessness. More than that, the term rootlessness also signifies the feeling of having nowhere, to belong and nowhere to call home. This state is usually brought about by a lack of meaningful relationships in life which causes a sense of emotional and psychological isolation. As the refugees move to a strange country they undergo intense physical and mental agony due to this kind of rootlessness take hold of their lives. Fear, insecurity, loneliness, constant sense of alienation, knowledge and longing for a lost world, are more explicit and distressing in their lives. The number of refugees in the world has reached the highest level ever recorded, according to figures published by the United Nations. Around the globe the number and the consciousness of the refugees are ever increasing. And the young writers concentrate on their

women. Miriam George recognizes "women endure trauma as refugees during their pre-migration, migration and settlement period as well as traumatic experiences unique to women" (383).

The novel *Inside Out and Back Again* recounts the fleeing of Vietnam by Ha and her family and their immigration to the United States of America. In 1975, ten year-old Ha lives in Saigon, South Vietnam, with her mother and three older brothers, Vu, Khoi, and Quang. They are a close-knit, traditional family, though their father was captured by the Communists on a naval mission nine years before. The family endures high prices and scarcities in food as North Vietnamese forces move toward Saigon. Uncle Son, a friend of Ha's father, encourages Ha and her family to be ready to flee Saigon at a moment's notice. Ha's family is divided on whether to leave or stay, but in the end, Ha's mother convinces everyone to leave. Situation compels them to leave; and they leave. But they are not disappointed; in spite of adverse conditions around, they take courage. Ha and her family make it out of Saigon by boat just as the city falls to the Communists. They are on board the ship for weeks, sailing toward Thailand. Food and water are scarce, but the people on board are cautiously hopeful about what could happen next. During their perilous journey Ha's mother takes courage and encourages her children to study English without wasting the time. Thus Ha and other siblings use the time to practice their English. By the time an American naval vessel appears, which distributes food and supplies, and tows the boat to Guam where a refugee camp has been established. There, Ha learns about how most of the refugees are either going to France, Canada, or the United States. Ha's mother's prime concern is her children and she sees to that all her children will be fine at US and thus they decide to travel to the United States. They are sponsored by a Southern farmer named Mr. Johnston, who helps the family to settle in Alabama and looks after their interests. Ha's mother insists they assimilate into American society as quickly as possible, shutting out

“Refugees suffer losses of every description, including social identity, place, family, livelihood and support systems and must struggle to find their way in a new, often hostile environment with a foreign language and customs” (Miriam 384). As Ha and her family move from the familiar land to the unfamiliar, they receive mixed reactions from their new neighbours. Ha feels rootless and she does not become a part of her class as they segregate her. At school Ha is bullied by a pink-coloured boy who takes every chance he can to make fun of Ha. She reports thus:

I'm hiding in class

By staring at my shoes

I'm hiding during lunch

In the bathroom

Eating hard rolls

Saved from dinner (September 13)

Women are becoming victims of violence at huge level wherever they are, day by day, because of increasing crimes against women. They may face violence within the family such as dowry related harassment, death, marital rape, wife-battering, sexual abuse, deprivation of healthy food, female genital mutilation etc. and they face violence outside the family such as kidnapping, rape, murder etc. “The conditions associated with refugees clearly put them in the category of risk for physical and psychological distress because embedded within them is the often-unspeakable violence associated with the refugee experience” (Miriam 384). Ha is humiliated, when the pink-coloured boy attempts to become physical with Ha, she uses self-defense against him, frightening him into no longer bullying her. To quote one more instance of attack,

They chase me

They pull my arm hair

They call me Pan-cake Face

They clap at me in class (Nov 14)

As the Vietnamese New Year comes on, a letter is received from Ha's father's brother, who has no news about Ha's father to report. When Ha's mother loses her amethyst ring--a gift from her husband years before--she takes it as a sign that he is dead. As a result, the family holds a mourning ceremony for him and vows to move on in America while remembering the past. Missing of the father creates a kind of displacement in the family members of Ha. All the family members undergo the pain of the absence of the father. The whole burden of the family is upon the mother. The love, care, support and solace provided by the father is withdrawn. They are not sure whether he is alive or not. Finally the revelation comes and the family obliges to the will. That bereavement is deepened and widened through their displacement from Saigon. Ha notes her mother's words:

It is more difficult here

than I imagined (September 21)

Thanhha Lai shared in her *Author's Note* seen at the very end of the book that much of the things that happened to Ha also happened to her. Thanhha was also born in Vietnam and moved to Alabama at the end of the war. The author remarks in an interview, "It was shockingly easy to write. Because it is my story and I'd already been processing it for years and years". The author opens up her mind in the *Author's Note*: "The emotional aspect is important because of something I noticed in my nieces and nephews. They may know in general where their parents came from, but they can't really imagine the noises and smells of Vietnam, the daily challenges of starting over in a strange land. I extend this idea to all: How much do we know about those around us?"

As one is firmly rooted in one's own homeland, the displacement of any kind brings pain and distress to human beings. And the pain is doubled when the displacement is by force or by any kind of social issues. The characters in the novel are forced to quit their hometown and all its niceties due to the social upheaval. Ha's brother Quang says,

No!

What's the point of

new shirts and sandals

of abandoning our own country

and begging toward the unknown

where we will all begin again

at the lowest level

on the social scale (July 2)

They undergo too much of a trauma as they quit their homeland, in their journey and in the land they found refuge. As they moved away from their hometown they are cramped in a ship without ample food and accommodation. They also face various perils during their journey like engine breakdown and such kind. By reducing the allowance the commander of the ship says:

Sip

he says

and don't waste strength

moving around

because it is impossible

to predict

how much longer

we will

be floating (May 16)

“The notion of ‘refugee’ does not fit neatly within any particular theory, as some experiences are too deep and painful to allow full comprehension” (Miriam 386). As they settle in Alabama they had to face still more issues. Ha tries to word her innermost feelings thus:

All the while

Surging from my gut

Fire

Sourness

Weight

Anger

Loneliness

Confusion

Embarrassment

Shame.

Though their sponsor is a kind hearted man, the people around him are intolerant and negatively charged to the refugees. It is exposed through their hostile attitude towards Ha and her family. As Ha and her mother meet their new neighbours they are totally intolerant of the newcomers. Literally they shut their doors to Ha and her mother. To quote,

In the house

to our right

a bald man

closes his door

Next to him

a woman

with yellow hair

slams hers

Next to her

shouts reach us

behind a door unopened (September 14).

The buoyant element is that even though greater part of the events of Ha's life is not in favour of her, she does not succumb herself to those distressing moments; instead she rises above them all and stands on the victory stand by the end of the day. She faces all kinds of difficulties with a strong mind and she always counts great the support from her family members.

Adaptation is not an easy experience. Assimilation is still more difficult. But it is rare that readers are given an opportunity to experience specifics of those phenomena, and rarer still to hear them from a Vietnamese perspective. Lai's fictionalized portrait of Hà may bring to our mind the well-known photograph of 9-year-old Phan Thi Kim Phuc running naked and burning from a napalm attack during the Vietnam War. Just as that picture was worth a thousand words, Lai's *Inside Out and Back Again* paints another portrait which the reader would like to value it with all its distinctiveness. As Hemingway reminds, Lai proclaims man may be destroyed but he cannot be defeated even amidst such grave hurdles of life. The spokesperson of the novel Ha is notable for her spirit of undying enthusiasm and perseverance. The work is also an encouragement for the readers to treasure our native land, our soil, our water and our kith and kin close to our heart. Valuing the worth of these resources we should be able to nurture them and protect them for the sake of our next generation. Above all, we should learn to be grateful to God for keeping us safe in our own native land where we can be ourselves, where we can speak our language, breathe our air, taste our food, drink our water and what not.

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