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# “When the levée breaks”

a ‘forensic psychosocial studies’ approach to climate-induced migration, toxic othering and the politics of the armed lifeboat

“If it keeps on rainin', levée's goin' to break  
When the levée breaks I'll have no place to stay  
Mean old levée taught me to weep and moan  
It's got what it takes to make a mountain man leave his home”

## **John Adlam**

Consultant Adult (Forensic) Psychotherapist, Bethlem Royal Hospital  
South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust  
Principal Adult Psychotherapist, Wandsworth Complex Needs Service  
SW London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust

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# Mississippi 1927→Isle de Jean Charles 2016

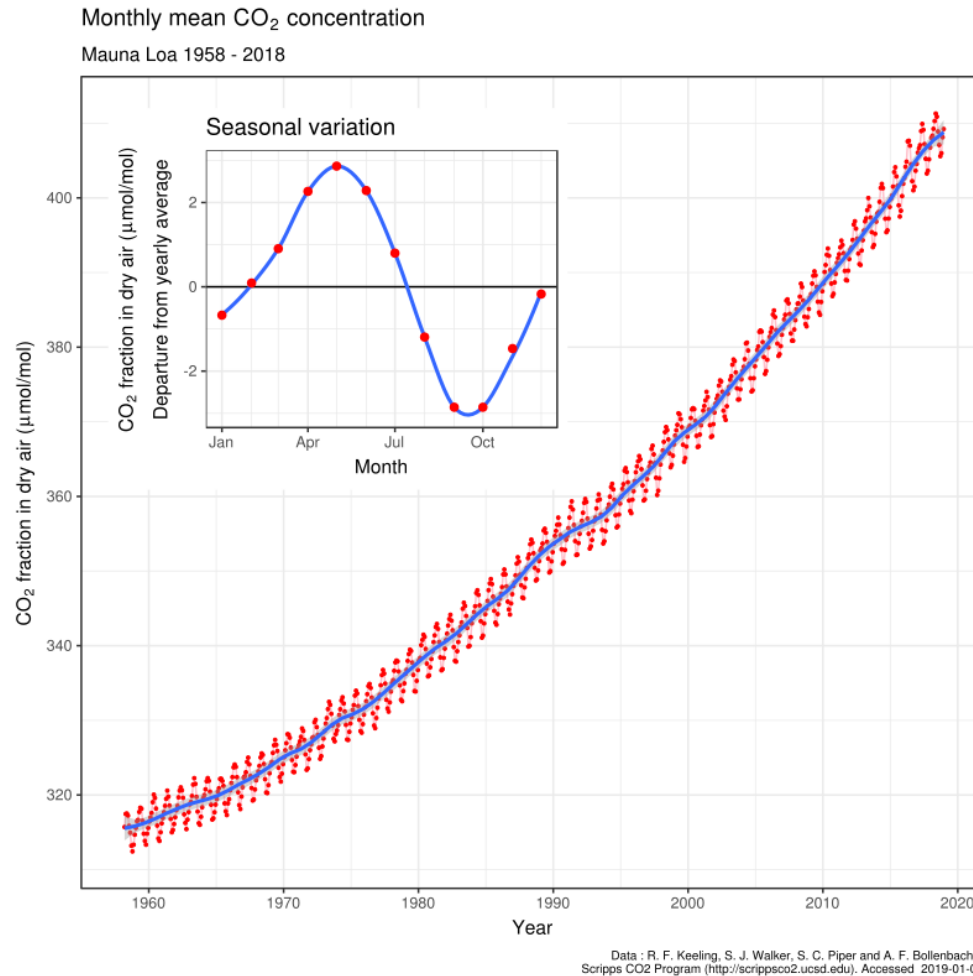
- Great Mississippi Flood of 1927
- 27,000 sq miles flooded – Mississippi was 60 miles wide below Memphis in May that year
- St Bernard and Plaquemines Parish flooded when New Orleans bankers dynamited the levee at Caernarvon LA
- 100,000s of African Americans join the Great Migration to northern & midwest cities – how the blues came to Chicago
- Louisiana loses area size of Manhattan to the sea each year
- Isle de Jean Charles in Terrebone Parish – home to Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians – since 1955 has lost 98% of its 22K acres to salt water intrusion and subsidence
- In 2016 the Band becomes the first Federally-funded 'climate refugees'

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“we live in a world...profoundly shaped by empire and its disparities” (Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement* (2016))

- slow onset climate disaster: drought, desertification, soil degradation, sea acidification, sea-level rise
  - rapid onset climate disaster: cyclones, heavy rain and flooding, wildfires, earthquakes, volcanoes
  - food security, water supply, losing land to the sea
  - IPCC (2007) most at risk are: (1) the Arctic (2) Africa (3) small islands (4) Asian & African mega-deltas (eg Cyclone Fani)
  - Antarctic ice sheet loses 219 billion tons of ice yearly 2012-17
  - 25% of world rivers (most in Asia) run dry before reaching sea
  - proximity to water signifies affluence, power, mastery
  - Imperial Cities: Bombay, Madras, NY, Hong Kong, Singapore
  - Biopolitics & the maintenance of dominance: the ‘armed lifeboat’
  - A collective predicament faced (or not) by an atomised humanity
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# The Keeling Curve (Mauna Loa) – atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations 1958-2018 parts per million



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“The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;”

- “Do not build your homes beyond this point”: The tsunami boundary stones above Fukushima – hubris and modernity...
  - “I am the boundary of the agora”: Inscribed marble posts to mark the boundary and to prevent encroachment onto public land by private buildings
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# Innocence, Empire and climate disaster

"I know what the world has done to my brother and how narrowly he has survived it and I know, which is much worse, and this is the crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them, that **they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it.** One can be--indeed, one must strive to become--tough and philosophical concerning destruction and death, for this is what most of mankind has been best at since we have heard of war; remember, I said most of mankind, but **it is not permissible that the authors of devastation should also be innocent. It is the innocence which constitutes the crime.**"

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**James Baldwin** (1963) from *The Fire Next Time*

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The unhoused, the dispossessed, the disinherited

“Each slow turn of the world carries such disinherited ones to whom neither the past nor the future belongs.”

“Jede dumpfe Umkehr der Welt hat solche Enterbte, Denen das Frühere nicht und noch nicht das Nächste gehört.”

RM Rilke, *Duineser Elegien: Die Sebente Elegie*, ll.64-65 (1912-22)

“The only true commonwealth is that which is as wide as the universe. I am a citizen of the world” Diogenes

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# Climate migration and the Metropolitan State

**“The territoriality which is inherent in the Westphalian state model is fundamentally questioned and challenged by large-scale migration movements ... Migrants – regardless of whether their movement is voluntary or forced – challenge national boundaries, defy legal and political categories and question dominant understandings of national belonging and citizenship. The migrant thus becomes a figure that questions a state’s ability to control its borders, political institutions and citizenship regulations”** (Fröhlich and Klepp 2018)



# Migrants, refugees, displaced persons, asylum seekers...(1)

- International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is... <https://www.iom.int/>
- UNCHR (2011): refugees are those "who are outside their country of nationality or habitual residence and unable to return there owing to serious and indiscriminate threats to life, physical integrity or freedom **resulting from generalized violence or events seriously disturbing public order.**"

# Migrants, refugees, displaced persons, asylum seekers...(2)

- Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**) Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: internally displaced persons are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced to flee, or leave, their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, and habitual violations of human rights, as well as **natural or man-made disasters** involving **one or more of these elements**, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border".
- **Not protected in international law by refugee rights treaties** – no one international body charged with their aid

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# Climate induced migration...?

- Complexity – complex systems & causation
  - 'Pushed' or 'pulled'? – 'Voluntary'/'forced'? – Intra- or international? – Temporary/permanent? – circular/return? – migration neither 'good' nor 'bad'
  - High exposure to climate disaster effects + high coercion + poor management + low adaptive capacity = high vulnerability
  - "Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely effect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their homes or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad." **International Organization for Migration (2007)**
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# Pope Francis – *Laudate si* (2015)

“25. Climate change is a global problem with grave implications ...There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. They are not recognised by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever. Sadly, there is widespread indifference to such suffering, which is even now taking place throughout our world. Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded.” (p. 8)

ENCYCLICAL LETTER  
*LAUDATO SI'*  
OF THE HOLY FATHER  
FRANCIS  
ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

# Case study 1: the Syrian Civil War

- Biopolitics and Western domination in the Middle East - The abundance of oil and the scarcity of water...
- 2016: 6 million internally displaced + 5 million outside Syria (UN figures worldwide >50 million refugees 2014) (UN projection (2015) 2050: 200 million climate migrants
- Gleick (2014): water-related conflict in MENA/Levant – access to water/control of water supply – drought & displacement – “if climate change is a shark, water resources are the teeth” – 500 water-related conflicts since 1900, two thirds of these since 2000
- Syrian population 3m (1950)⇒ 22m (2012)
- <250mm annual rainfall
- multi-season drought 2006-11 ‘worst since start of Holocene’

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# Case study 1: the Syrian Civil War

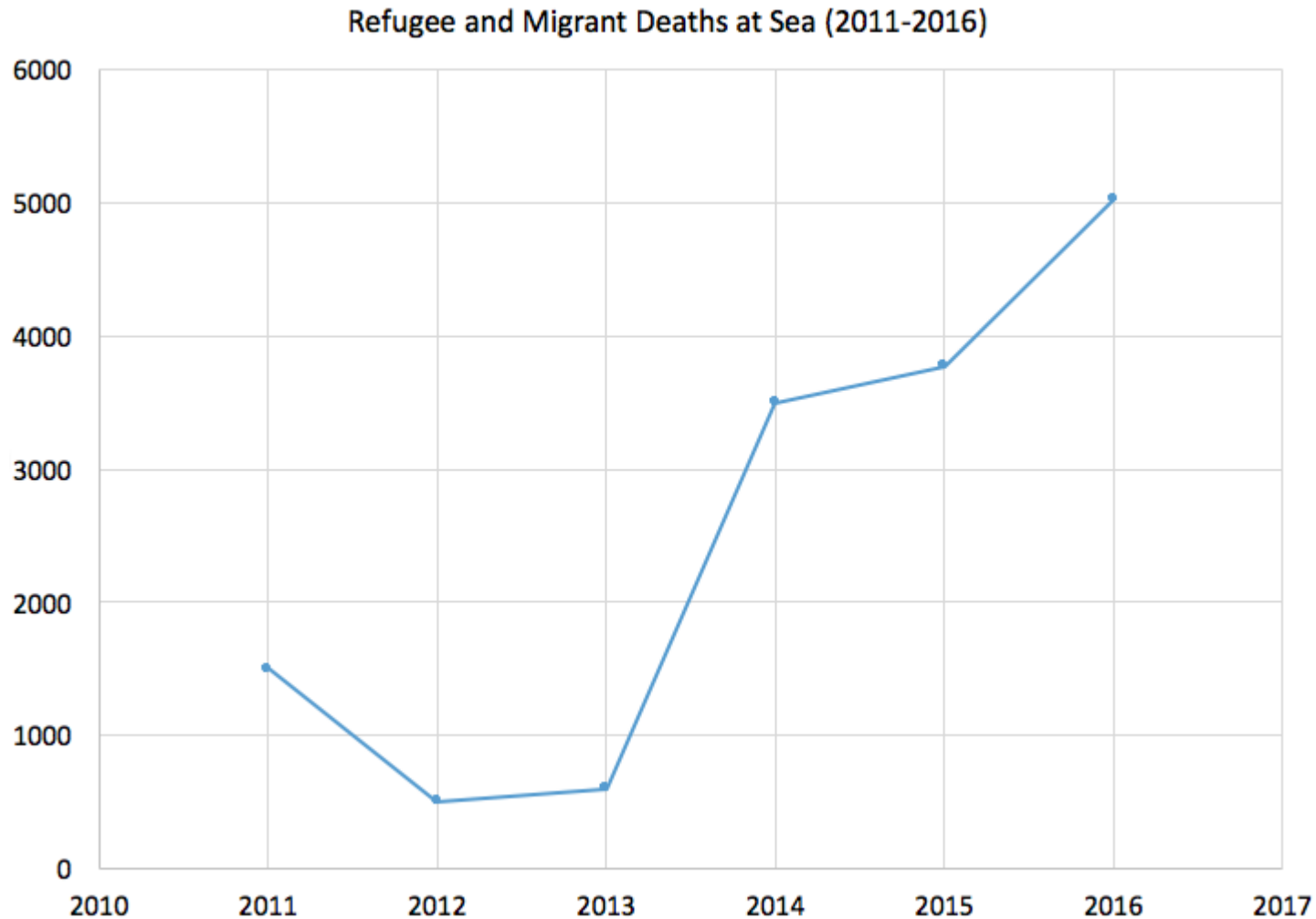
- 2008 fallout from drought “beyond our capacity to deal with”  
Syrian Minister of Agriculture to UN July 2008
  - rural communities (est. 1.5 million people) migrated to cities eg
  - Dara’a – on the aridity line (Eyal Weizman *The Conflict Shoreline* (2015)) – where the conflict first erupted – historically the ‘bread basket’ of Syria
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## Case study (2) - The drowned & the saved? Lampedusa

- Lampedusa 3/10/13 – 66ft fishing boat carrying 500+ people sinks on fire – 368 bodies recovered – Yohanna and her baby
  - #I am a migrant – Centre for Political Beauty
  - 2,262 deaths attempting the Mediterranean crossing in 2018
  - 19 April 2015 – 800+ die when commandeered trawler collides with container ship sent to its rescue
  - 7 May 2019 – the wreck of the trawler is presented at Arsenale as part of the Venice Biennale by the Swiss-Icelandic artist Christoph Büchel
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# The drowned and the saved...?



**Refugee and migrant deaths in the Mediterranean Sea, 2011-2016. UNHCR (2017)**

By Monopoly31121993 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=54751581>



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# 'Humanity's crisis' and the 'Black Mediterranean'

- whose lives matter more? – climate, empire and capitalism
  - 'ungrievable life'? Butler – 'homo sacer'? Agamben
  - sacrificial zones and sacrificed peoples (Naomi Klein)
  - "an ongoing crisis for black people" (Saucier and Woods)
  - 'ecological genocide': Saro-Wiwa, Shell Oil & the Niger delta
  - securitisation of migration from Global South to Global North
  - mobility as threat to existential security of the 'settled'
  - agriculture & the sedentary paradigm as Holocene practice
  - epistemologies of ignorance/white innocence – a white (washed) sense of self (Mills, Alcoff; Wekker)
  - *sumud* (to stay put, to hold on) Marshall Islands, Tuvalu:
- 'We are not drowning. We are fighting.' – '1.5 to stay alive'
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# The view from the special relationship’?

- who defines what a crisis is?
- “I want to send a very strong signal to people who do think about making this journey – *we will do everything we can to make sure it is not a success...* I don’t want people to think that if they leave a safe country like France that they can get to Britain and *just get to stay* ...our job here is to make sure this doesn’t turn into a new route for *ever-increased **illegal migration***...I want to stop it now *as much as I possibly can.*”  
(Sajid Javeed, UK Home Secretary, December 2018)
- “I think it is fair to say **Europe has done its part**, and must send a very clear message – ‘we are not going to be able to continue provide refuge and support’ – because if we don’t deal with the migration issue it will continue to roil the body politic.”  
(Hilary Clinton, Nov 2018)

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## Brexit summarised – one quote, one fact....

- David Cameron (2015): “you have got **a swarm of people** coming across the Mediterranean, **seeking a better life**...what we can't do is allow people to **break into our country**...the British people and I want to **make sure our borders are secure** and you can't break into Britain without permission.”
  - UK is only European country with no time limit on detentions of immigrants
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# Voices from the 'Jungle' (Calais Refugee Camp)



"It was big trouble for me when I came to Calais. I couldn't believe that this is Europe. Is it true that this place exists in Europe? Where is humanity, where is democracy? Where is all this bullshit? ... I think, because we have come here, we are not human beings, we become animals, a new kind of animal...that has developed at this time; it's known as 'refugee'"      'Africa' (from Sudan)

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## Voices from the 'Jungle' (Calais Refugee Camp)

“I will not go to the country that just wants rich men who can pay for smugglers. I'll not go to a country whose government talks all the time about human rights and helping refugees but closes their borders against them; a government that does everything to keep the refugees away from their borders, far from their land – those people who are escaping death, ignorance and poverty, and dictatorships supported by western countries” Muhammad (from Syria)

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# Bruno Latour and the New Climate Regime

- the 'very notion of soil is changing...each of us is beginning to feel the ground slip away beneath our feet...we are all in migration towards territories yet to be rediscovered and reoccupied'
- gated communities, armed lifeboats and spaceships vs 'looking for a place to land'
- attaching to a particular patch of soil vs having access to the global world – a contradiction in late modernity – rethinking the construction of 'backwardness'
- globalisation *plus* (recognising diversity) vs *minus* (imperialist projection of homogeneity)
- localisation *plus* (hospitable communities)  
Vs localisation *minus* (Brexit!)
- 'out-of-this-world' vs 'terrestrial' identifications

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# Gaia and the Anthropocene

- **Gaia** (James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis) a self-regulating system made up from the totality of organisms, the surface rocks, the ocean and the atmosphere tightly coupled as an evolving system [whose goal is] the regulation of surface conditions so as always to be as favourable as possible for contemporary life (Lovelock 2006)
  - The **Anthropocene** – in which both humankind and Gaia are understood to have evolved agency in geology and climate
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# UNCRPD and coercive psychiatry

“7. Forgotten issues beget forgotten people. The history of psychiatry and mental health care is marked by egregious rights violations...performed in the name of medicine. Since the Second World War and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...increasing attention has been paid to human rights in global mental health and psychiatry. However, whether the global community has actually learned from the painful past remains an open question.”

United Nations (2017) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health*



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# PTM Framework: What is your story?

- 'What has happened to you?'  
(How is Power operating in your life?)
  - 'How did it affect you?'  
(What kind of Threats does this pose?)
  - 'What sense did you make of it?'  
(What is the Meaning of these experiences to you?)
  - 'What did you have to do to survive?'  
(What kinds of Threat Response are you using?)
  - 'What are your strengths?'  
(What access to Power Resources do you have?)
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'Who knew 'forensic' derived from forum,  
which senator's sword sealed the deal?' (Muldoon)



- The dilemma of the IAFP conferences – behavioural vs structural (subjective/objective) violence
- challenging **epistemic injustice**
- *Forensic psycho-socio-therapy* and the negotiation of spaces and interfaces between excluded and excluding
- The publication of (individual *and* system (and Gaia?)) distress
- A forensic psychosocial studies approach?

# The hospitality of the city...?

