COMPLICATING THE SINGLE STORY: A VISUAL ANALYSIS OF IMAGES OF FORCED MIGRANTS

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ABSTRACT

The overall focus of this project is to analyze images and writing produced by people with forced migrant experience and examine how they respond to the dominant narratives produced in the mainstream. My study asks the following questions: how do refugees and forced migrants use narrative and images to create representations of their migration experiences? How do such creative works respond to and resist the dominant ways in which forced migrants are constructed by others? What is the role of visual methodologies in projects aimed at challenging the single story of forced migrant experience? This project is framed by theories of cultural studies and critical pedagogy with respect to representation and how encounters with creative works can lead to imagining alternative possibilities. Situated within visual culture studies, I used the visual analysis techniques of compositional interpretation and semiological analysis to analyze my objects. In chapter three, I examined images from two NGOs and four news media websites. While there was some complexity and nuance from all the sites, I found that the NGOs largely reproduced the dichotomy of forced migrants as either threatening or vulnerable, while the news media sites focused on portraying them as either grateful and deserving or as needing to be contained by fences and borders. In chapter four, I examined two graphic narratives produced by women with forced migrant experience and discuss how the creators used the tools of graphic narratives to reflect on how their experiences complicate the dominant narratives of forced migrant experience. Chapter five examines two creative projects completed by young people and children with forced migrant experience and discusses how the participants of these projects represent and reflect on their experiences. In my conclusion, I discuss the limitations of the study, focusing on the challenges of applying the same level of critically to my reading of all the images across the project. Finally, I discuss the contributions, focusing on the richness of the visual analysis and the importance of arts-based work as a lens through which to consciously and compassionately take the perspective of others.

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I have always been intrigued by other people's words. Since childhood, I have kept notebooks full of them. Other people's words always seemed so perfectly phrased, so effortlessly meaningful, so much more important than my own. Because of this, no one is more surprised than I am that I have produced such a large document of my own words. There are many people whose invaluable support helped me to get here.

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Chapter One: Introduction

As of this writing, 86.5 million people are of concern to the Unite Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with 32% of those people living in Europe and the Americas (UNHCR, 2019). Between November 2015 and February 2016, the government of Canada resettled more than 25000 Syrian refugees and the number rose to over 40000 into the beginning of 2017 (Government of Canada, 2017), placing refugee issues at the forefront of the nation's imagination. At the time, I was surprised by the response to the Liberal Party's promise to resettle 25000 Syrian refugees – not that it was positive or negative (I heard both), but that it prompted so much response. Hearing about it day after day in the media and from my family and friends while also observing my church go through the process of applying to become a private sponsor of a refugee family, I felt as if I was being inundated with coverage of the proposed sponsorships of refugees. Curious about what this would mean in a more global context, I did some quick research and came to the UNHCR website. Even using the smaller number of official refugees (21.3 million), the proposed 25000 resettled refugees would only represent 0.0012% of the world's refugee population. This is not to diminish the efforts of those who helped with the resettlement of the Syrian refugees who did arrive or to belittle the importance of their arrival, as their health and safety in a safe third country is the only thing that should matter, but to represent my confusion as to why there was so much coverage and reaction to such a small percentage of the world's refugee population being resettled in Canada. This confusion, along with my previous research experience with the arts and what works of art are potentially capable of, is what eventually led to this project.

Although there was so much coverage of resettling Syrian refugees in Canada, I do not remember hearing much from refugees or forced migrants themselves. This does not mean that

they were not part of the public discourse, but that their voices were not prominent. O'Neill (2008) writes that refugees tend to be represented by others in the mainstream media, such as non-governmental organizations (NGO's), support groups, or groups who are anti-refugee and want them to "go home." The knowledge generated by advocacy groups and support services is often a much-needed alternative voice to anti-refugee messages, but it still comprises a representation by someone else and not the refugees or forced migrants themselves (O'Neill & Harindranath, 2006). The limited space and opportunity for refugees and forced migrants to represent themselves leads to generalizations being made about them, adding up to a few narratives which over-simplify their lived experiences (O'Neill, 2008). What might a disruption of this oversimplification look like? I think that works of art have the potential to allow for more complex narratives of forced migrant experience to be told, so my study asks the following questions: how do refugees and forced migrants use narrative and images to create representations of their migration experiences? How do such works of art respond to and resist the dominant ways in which forced migrants are constructed by others? What is the role of visual methodologies in projects aimed at challenging the single story of forced migrant experience?

How did I get Here?

Like most dissertations, the project that I ended up doing was not the project I planned on doing. Initially, I proposed a different project altogether – a photovoice and photo elicitation project with refugee women who had resettled in Toronto. According to Wang (1999), "photovoice is a method that enables women to control the photographic process in order to express, reflect, and communicate their everyday lives" (p. 186). Through the process of taking photographs, participants can identify and represent themselves and their communities, enabling them to act as recorders and potential catalysts for change (Wang & Burris, 1997). Harper (2002)

defines photo-elicitation as “based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview” (p. 13). I planned on leading a series of workshops with a small group of women and taking pictures on a theme each week, which we would share and discuss in the following week’s workshop, as well as conducting photo elicitation interviews with each participant, and potentially hosting an exhibition of some of their photographs. My goal was to provide space for women with refugee experience to produce images that were important to them and represented some aspect of their lives.

I made contact with an organization in Toronto that works with refugees and they seemed interested in the project. I attended a few meetings to discuss the project with staff members and was able to pitch the project at one such meeting which was attended by potential participants. However, the project did not generate the interest that I hoped it would, and by the time it was clear to me that it was not going to work at this particular organization, I had relocated to Montreal, Quebec, and my attempts to make contact with organizations there were hampered by my inability to fluently speak French and the fact that I was unfamiliar with the city and its organizations. At this point, I was beginning to panic – my study had not panned out the way that I was expecting it to, and I was not sure how I could proceed, given that I had written my proposal based on this particular project. However, with support and guidance from my supervisory committee, I began to look at the questions I was asking and think about how I could answer them in a different way. I was still interested in forced migrants producing visual images and how they might compare and contrast to images that are produced about them and so I looked for objects that already existed that might address these questions.

From the beginning, I was interested in art produced by forced migrants, which was one reason why I wanted to do a project involving photography – I thought it was the kind of project

that I, as a novice, could handle facilitating, and would not involve or require too much technical instruction. As I began to look for objects that would meet my criteria, there were several different projects that could have worked. For example, *The Refugee Art Project*, based in Australia, was one of the first projects that I looked at – in this project, a group of artists and academics offer art therapy classes to both recently settled refugees and asylum seekers in Villawood detention centre (facebook.com/TheRefugeeArtProject). However, the website shut down shortly after I began looking at it and moved to a Facebook page, and the new layout of the pieces was not as conducive to conducting research. Other projects I considered were Artolution's *Community Murals* and Darcy Alexandra's digital stories entitled *Undocumented in Ireland*, but they both felt too far away from my original plans and the media of murals and digital stories were outside of my (extremely limited) set of skills to analyze.

While looking for projects that specifically addressed producing images that pushed back against the stereotypical ways that forced migrants are constructed, I came across two interesting and different projects that did this work as part of their mandate – *Waves of Childhood*, a photography project by Another Kind of Girl Collective and *We Are Here Now*, an art project by the Surrey Welcoming Communities' Refugee Myth Busting Project. I was struck by the titles of both projects – *Waves of Childhood* uses the same elemental language that is often used to describe forced migrants (Marfleet, 2006; Voutira & Doná, 2007). However, in the context of this project, it suggests a wave rolling onto the land and changing the landscape as a metaphor for how childhood crashes up against the barriers around it, changing the landscape even as it is defined by it. The title *We Are Here Now* hit me with its urgency – the children of this project were claiming their right to be here now, in Canada, and demanding that the viewer acknowledge this claim. The participants of each project produced different kinds of images and represented

different ages and stages of the forced migration process, so I was interested in how the images produced might compare and contrast.

While these projects were interesting, they were not enough on their own for a dissertation – I needed another set of images to examine in relation to the dominant images produced by the media and NGOs. I had previously read *The Complete Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi and I knew that it told her story of living in Iran after the revolution and during part of the war with Iraq, her time in Austria escaping the violence of the war and the Guardians of the Revolution, and her return to Iran as an adult. While she was never officially labelled as a refugee, she was sent out of the country by her parents because they were concerned for her safety, not only from the bombs Iraq was dropping on Tehran, but also because her outspoken and rebellious nature could potentially put her in harms way with the conservative and fundamental Guardians of the Revolution. My decision to use this graphic narrative as an object of study for this project was driven by my interest in the complexity of Satrapi's position as a forced migrant, but not a refugee, and how the narrative addresses three different stages of her life – as a child growing up in Iran after the revolution and during the war, as a teenager in Austria, and as a young adult returning to Iran. Wanting to pair this graphic narrative with another story of forced migration, I came across *The Best We Could* Do by Thi Bui – a beautifully illustrated, nonlinear work that documents her journey from Vietnam to America, while also incorporating the narratives of her mother and father from before she was born. This narrative represents what might be perceived as a more traditional refugee story – oppression, escape, time spent in a refugee camp, and arrival in a safe third country. Both narratives are written by women who are looking back at their childhoods, as opposed to the two art projects,

which were completed by children and young people examining the present, providing another interesting point of comparison.

Theoretical Framework

In the following section, I lay out the theoretical fields which underpin this project. I will begin with a discussion of representation, focusing on the thinking of cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall (1997, 1997a, 1997b). I will then move on to a discussion of some of Paulo Freire (1970) and Henry Giroux's (2000, 2001, 2004) ideas related to critical pedagogy and how Maxine Greene (1995, 2001) takes up these ideas to build on her work on the importance of art and the imagination. In particular, I will be looking at how encounters with the arts can lead to imagining alternative possibilities and spark a more empathetic, ethical relationship with others.

Representation and Hall.

In theorizing representation, I am primarily working with the ideas of Hall (1997, 1997a, 1997b). Hall (1997a) writes that representation is part of the way people produce and exchange meaning, and it involves language, signs, and images to represent things. He identifies the first system of representation, which is the linking of objects, events, and people with a set of concepts we have in our minds, and that without this, we cannot meaningfully interpret the world. The second system of representation that constructs meaning is language, consisting of signs to represent words, sounds, or images which represent the concepts, and relations between them, that we have in our heads - together, they bring meaning to things in our culture (Hall, 1997a). He goes on to write that the relation between "things," (objects, for example), signs (words, sounds, or images), and language produces meaning, and the process that links the three is representation (Hall, 1997). He notes that, along with a written and spoken system, images are also a kind of language and he describes an "old view" of representation as something that

depicts or stands in for something else, literally a re-presenting of meaning. He contrasts this with a "new view," which is more complex – in this view, there are no fixed meanings to an object, image, or event (Hall, 1997a). In a lecture on representation and the media, he reiterates that representation is part of the meaning making process as it happens, not something that happens after the event is over (Jhally, 2014).

From a constructionist perspective, meaning is constructed and produced within history and culture – nothing is fixed, and everything is subject to change (Hall, 1997). Because meaning changes and is not fixed, it must be "read" or "interpreted," and it changes or shifts depending on the context and the audience, is in constant negotiation and is often being contested (Hall, 1997). In terms of communicating meaning, binaries such as good/bad or civilized/primitive helps to define what "normal" is and establishes who is included and who is excluded from the majority (Hall, 1997, 1997b). While identifying difference is necessary for producing meaning, it is also a site of danger and hostility toward the other, even while the binaries that establish that difference are always being undermined (Hall, 1997b). Rather than asking if there is a "right" or "wrong" meaning to an image, we should ask which is the preferred meaning, or which of the many meanings is being privileged (Hall, 1997, 1997b).

As an exercise of power, representation is often dependent on false assumptions, and implies that a person is a homogeneous representative of a particular category, such as gender, ethnicity, or nationality (Greene, 1994). Power is not just about economic and physical coercion, but also about the power to represent someone or something, and stereotyping is key to this symbolic violence (Hall, 1997). The circulation of meaning involves questions of power, such as "*who* has the power, in *what* channels, to circulate *which* meanings to *whom*?" (Hall, 1997a, p. 14, emphasis in original). He goes on to say that it is necessary that meaning can be changed,

which can only happen if it is not firmly fixed in place. In a lecture on media and representation, Hall says that "the *attempt* to fix it is why power intervenes in representation at all...they want, as it were, a relationship between the image and a powerful definition of it to become naturalized so that *that* is the only meaning it can possibly carry" (Jhally, 2014, 45:27, emphasis in original). This is what stereotyping is – an attempt to firmly fix meaning in place, to ensure that when someone sees an image there is only a limited range of options for who they can be, what they can do, and what their possibilities or constraints are. When representation is closed down, meaning becomes naturalized, and we forget that it was produced.

One strategy for contesting stereotypical representations is to substitute "positive" images for "negative" ones, privileging the subordinate and reading the negative positively (Hall, 1997b). Positively, this strategy expands the range of representations and the complexity of what it means to belong to a particular group and acknowledges and celebrates diversity, but it does not displace the negative – it challenges binaries, but does not undermine them (Hall, 1997b). For example, forced migrants are often categorized as "bogus" or queue-jumping people who are not "legitimate" refugees. A common response to this argument is to replace this negative stereotype with a positive one, usually along the lines of pointing out how helpful and good forced migrants are when they resettle in a safe third country, contributing economically and socially to their new home. While this is certainly the case with many newly arrived forced migrants, it continues to reproduce a binary of deserving vs undeserving asylum seekers instead of opening up the space for representation of all different kinds of subjectivities. Opening up stereotypes is a struggle to increase the diversity of options which subjects can be, and a desire to produce new kinds of subjectivities and new dimensions of meaning to explore not yet foreclosed by the dominant institutions in power (Hall, 1997a).

Finally, I was very intrigued by Mitchell's (1994) idea of representation as a process or a set of relationships. He writes that

> suppose we de-reified the *thing* that seems to 'stand' before us, 'standing for' something else, and thought of representation, not as that thing, but as a process in which the thing is a participant, like a pawn on a chessboard or a coin in a system of exchange? (p. 420, emphasis in original)

Understanding representation as a process or a relationship suggests that it is unstable and dialectical. Hall (1997) agrees, writing that representation is not a one-way street, but that it is dialogic. In order to work towards a more fully inclusive democratic process, it is important to listen to perspectives that are not our own, as this cultivates participation in a pluralistic society, and the potential for "a mediating space between the private and public realms" (Low, Brushwood Rose, & Salvio, 2017, p. 5). Dominant storytelling technologies, such as television, have reduced the complexity of the stories we hear - instead of a multiplicity of stories, now we hear the few available to us via the mainstream media. Towards the end of his book, Mitchell (1994) concludes that, although it is unlikely that the world will change, "we can continue to describe it critically and interpret it accurately. In a time of global misrepresentation, disinformation, and systematic mendacity, that may be the moral equivalent of intervention" (p. 425). With this in mind, I will turn to Freire (1970) and Giroux's (2000, 2001, 2004) work to discuss how people producing representations of themselves is part of the ongoing work of critical pedagogy.

Freire, Giroux, and critical pedagogy.

In aiming to respond to unjust misrepresentation, this project also draws on traditions of critical pedagogy. Paulo Freire (1970) insisted that education should be dialogical, intentional, and conscious rather than one person in a position of authority speaking to a group of people who are presumed to know nothing. He criticized the more traditional model of education, which he called the "banking model," as an approach that promotes passivity in students and sets them up to believe that they know nothing while their teachers know everything. This kind of education limits one's humanity, and also limits the student's creativity in a way that serves the interests of the oppressor, who does not wish to have the world revealed or transformed because that would mean rethinking the structures that keep them in power. Freire (1970) believed that knowledge emerges when people are creative and when they can engage in hopeful inquiry with others in the world, and to illustrate this point, he describes a style of education that he calls "problem posing," which is intentional, dialogical, and conscious. Within a problem-posing environment, students and teachers are jointly responsible for an environment where everyone grows, and students begin to see problems as part of a total context, not simply as individual issues affecting individual people. Much as Hall (1997) writes that no meaning is fixed or permanent, Freire's (1970) problem-posing approach insists that people are unfinished beings, constantly changing as a result of their surroundings, and as a result, able to change their surroundings as well.

Thinking along with Freire and Hall, Giroux (2001) insists on the importance of critical pedagogy as a force for challenging the status quo. He writes that critical pedagogy is animated by a spirit of critique and possibility, and that it can "provoke students to deliberate, resist, and cultivate a range of capacities that enable them to move beyond the world they already know without insisting on a fixed set of meanings" (Giroux, 2001, p. 20). Giroux's ideas here echo

both Freire's call for problem posing education and Hall's claim that the meanings of images and events are not fixed but are constantly changing and require interpretation. Giroux (2000), following Hall, writes that culture provides the framework for recognizing that how and what we learn is tied to strategies of understanding, representation, and disruption, and that "these strategies offer opportunities for individuals to engage and transform when necessary the ideological and material circumstances that shape their lives" (p. 352). Engagement with images that disrupt hegemonic representations of who forced migrants are, such as those that represent their own experiences, have the potential to provide this kind of opportunity.

> Throughout Hall's career,
>
> he has insisted that cultural workers deepen the meaning of the political by producing pedagogical practices that engage and challenge those representational strategies, institutional formations, and technologies of power that condition and are conditioned by the indeterminate play of power, conflict, and oppression within society." (Giroux, 2000, p. 353)

By challenging the representational strategies of the news media and nongovernmental organizations, asking what other kinds of representations of forced migrants are possible and looking for projects that work to produce representations of many different subjectivities, this project is participating in a practice of critical pedagogy. Giroux (2004) writes that hope is "the affective and intellectual precondition for individual and social struggle" (p. 76) and I feel this hope in the alternative representational possibilities of images produced by forced migrants themselves.

While critical pedagogy plays an important role in how I think about representation and the importance of expanding representational possibilities, there are limitations to applying it to visual objects. One such aspect is its positioning of oppressed versus oppressor as too simplistic a discussion of power. “This didactic 'oppressed vs. oppressor' model glosses over the myriad gray areas of power struggles, and perhaps more importantly, fails to recognize the powerful role everyday cultural texts and discourses can play as dynamic, dialectical, and political vehicles of resistance” (Savage, 2010, p. 110). Ellsworth (1989) notes that there are some things a teacher could never know about the experiences of her students, and therefore there can be no one voice of authority in the classroom. Along these lines, Gore (1993) writes that it is an oversimplification to locate power as existing in a single, stable centre against which we can strategically resist.

This was something that I struggled with as I examined the images produced by forced migrants in chapter five. While part of the impetus of this project was to examine images that challenge the stereotypical representations of forced migrants, I had to work against imagining them as a homogenous group of people without access to power heroically challenging some kind of homogenous powerful centre. A more sophisticated reading of power dynamics will become “part of a critical practice designed to understand the social context of everyday life as lived relations of power” (Giroux, 2000, p. 355). Thinking about power in more subtle and diverse ways, as part of everyday lived relations, can help illuminate how “ordinary” people, seemingly without any power of their own, can challenge the status quo. In the next section, I will review the work of Greene (1995, 2001) who, like Hall, Freire, and Giroux, has influenced this project through her commitment to political life and social justice through the engagement with the arts.

Greene, imagination and the arts.

Greene (1995) argues for what she calls an aesthetic approach to art education, one that makes “deliberate efforts to foster increasingly informed and involved encounters with art” (p. 138). In my master's work, I met some amazing young women who showed me what “informed and involved encounters with art” could look like through zine-making and dialogue (Alyea, 2012). Together, we met once a week to talk about life and to make zines, which was a new experience for all the participants, including myself. Working in a focused way for six weeks, we produced zines and discussed them with each other, reflecting on our own work and offering interpretations of others' work. This is art as O’Neill (2008) defines it - a social product, making visible experiences, hopes, and ideas while bringing something new into the world and contributing to knowledge and understanding. Greene (2001) emphasizes this approach to art, concerned with perception, imagination, “and how they relate to knowing, understanding, and feeling about the world” (p. 5). O’Neill’s (2008) work dovetails with both Freire and Greene in that she emphasizes the importance of knowledge production as collaborative between artists, researchers, and participants, facilitating a project that combines ethnography and art to create a dialogic or reflective space where dialogue, narratives, and images can emerge that challenge refugees as having “bogus” claims or as always and only victimized.

Fundamental to her thinking on the arts, Greene (1995) also writes about the importance of imagination and how it is absolutely vital to understanding our realities and experiences on a daily basis. She writes,

> imagination may be our primary means of forming an understanding of what goes on under the heading of 'reality'; imagination may be responsible for the very texture of our experience. Once we do away with habitual separations of the subjective from the

> objective, the inside from the outside, appearances from reality, we might be able to give imagination its proper importance and grasp what it means to place imagination at the core of understanding. (p.140)

She goes on to write that imagination does two important things: it is "the power to mold experience into something new, to create fictive situations. It is, as well, the power—by means of sympathetic feeling—to put oneself in another's place" (Greene, 2001, p. 30). I will look at these two important aspects of imagination through the lens of the arts and how they work together as vital to developing a more nuanced and complex understanding of images of refugees and forced migrants. Rather than thinking about the arts and imagination as simply pleasurable parts of our education, we can begin to think of them as part of our everyday lives that are fundamental to living well with one another.

Imagining alternative possibilities.

> There is in all human beings a capacity to go beyond what is immediately in front of their noses. Indeed there is an absolute necessity for them to do so. (Warnock, 1976, p. 201)

Greene (1995) insists that imagination is necessary in order to think beyond what is, to see "that which is not yet." Inspired by her writing, other authors have echoed her call to use imagination to open up new possibilities and think about our realities not as if they are fixed, but as if they can be changed (Jeffers, 1998; Luce-Kapler, 1998; Salvio, 1998; Slattery & Dees, 1998). However, our culture tends to discourage the use of imagination as we get older – education tends to place importance on perceived objectivity and seeing the world in an impersonal way (Greene, 2001). Yet, when we attempt to understand another's reality, it is not something that is necessarily knowable – rather, it is an interpreted experience, with multiple perspectives and interpretations within a particular context (Greene, 1995). As in Freire's (1970)

problem-posing approach, being creative and using our imagination to think about alternative possibilities can introduce us to perspectives other than our own, can keep us from becoming resigned to the present as it is, and can push us to believe in and work towards change. Without it, we risk succumbing to "a resignation that paralyzes and prevents people from acting to bring about change...to call for imaginative capacity is to work for the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise" (Greene, 1995, p. 19). This idea is critical to producing and interpreting images of forced migrants – in order for different and more complex subjectivities to become visible, we must first challenge the idea that the ways in which forced migrants are represented are the only ways that could be.

Greene connects this with Freire's idea of dialogue to bring about change: naming the word and the world in order to name the situation and give voice to alternatives (Freire, 1970; Greene, 1995). The banking model of education critiqued by Freire mirrors an oppressive society - as learners spend their time learning and storing the deposits given to them by the teacher, or those in power, they are spending less time developing critical consciousness. Freire (1970) connects those who have the power to define the world with knowledge production, which is then imposed on others "whose words have been stolen from them" (p. 134). This can lead to what Adichie (2009) calls the "single story," denying others the chance to tell their own stories and counter the dominant ideas produced by those in power. Greene (1995) writes that "participatory involvement with the many forms of art can enable us to *see* more in our experience, to *hear* more on normally unheard frequencies, to *become conscious* of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed" (p. 123). Thinking about what life might be rather than accepting what exists without question can help to move us away

from thoughtlessness and carelessness and encourage us to be more mindful and thoughtful (Greene, 1995). For this reason, imagination is integral to social justice and social change.

Works of art are often lovely to look at and think about, but what can they actually do? Can they provoke change? And if so, what might that change look like? According to Greene (2001), works of art have the potential to create a state of "wide awakeness" which is helpful in seeing what could potentially be accomplished. From a social justice point of view, "wide-awakeness implies moving beyond mere knowing about an unjust scenario and toward acting in some way that may potentially incite change or attention" (Powell & Serriere, 2013, p. 4). Being able to push back against the ways in which you have been constructed and defined in order to articulate the kind of person you think you are and the kind of life you are living and that you envision for yourself is essential to formative justice, and this is what works of art can push towards (Dzula, 2013). Works of art can provoke people to "choose themselves and to be strengthened in their choosing by art experiences that open doors, that allow them to realize how wide and various and enticing the contemporary world can be" (Greene, 2001, p. 185). On the one hand, this kind of thinking might sound naïve and "pie-in-the-sky." However, as Donoghue (1983) writes, "let's concede that in one way the arts are useless: they won't cure a toothache. But in another way they are really momentous, because they provide for spaces in which we can live in total freedom" (pp. 128-129). Engagement with the arts can help us imagine other possibilities, but it can also impact how we engage with others, and I will explore this in the next section.

Imagination, empathy, and ethics.

> Imagination is the chief instrument of the good. It is more or less a commonplace to say that a person's idea and treatment of his fellows are dependent upon his power to put himself imaginatively in their place. (Dewey, 1934, p. 362)

The second aspect of imagination that Greene (2001) identifies as important is that it makes empathy possible between people. Empathy, the ability to imagine and understand another's perspective (Bertling, 2015; Waite & Rees, 2014), is an imaginative process that (hopefully) leads to a more understanding relationship with that person. Once this recognition occurs, then we may begin to de-centre ourselves and "cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called 'other' over the years" (Greene, 1995, p. 3). These "empty spaces" leave room for misunderstandings, misrecognition, hurt, and anger to build between people and groups of people, and Greene is calling on our efforts to shrink these spaces and to understand one another better through the employment of imagination.

Engaging with the arts in an open, imaginative way can help encourage people to reach out to each other and look anew at the view of the stranger in a way that arouses the imagination and defamiliarizes experience (Jeffers, 1998). Works of art encourage experiential engagement with the world and can trigger questions about the things we take for granted, potentially shifting our perceptions of both self and society (Bertling, 2015; Salvio, 1998). This can potentially promote more empathetic relationships between people and expand the social vision to include "others" who are historically excluded. The creativity and expression that art can allow for opens another space for conversation and dialogue that can serve as a catalyst for action and empathy. Of course, the arts and imagination are not "the answer" to every question and to every problem we encounter. Donoghue (1983) notes that merely consuming the arts, such as reading a great novel, will not necessarily do enough of the imaginative work required to bring people together into more empathetic relationships and I am inclined to agree with him. Greene (2001) makes it clear that more is required, writing that "we all have to look out as persons somehow in pursuit, somehow leaning toward a future of possibility" (Greene, 2001, p. 190). Her use of the word

"pursuit" suggests that action is required along with thinking and learning, and this action is galvanized by an intentional engagement with the arts that goes beyond consumption.

However good our intentions might be, acting on our empathetic imaginings will not always guarantee an ethical response. I used the concept of alterity, a difference of being that we can never know (Todd, 2003), to help me think through my response to the work that I examined. This is particularly important for me, considering my location as a white, middle-class, Canadian woman without refugee experience who is analyzing images of, and/or produced by, people with forced migrant experience. Throughout this project, I struggled with the tension between, on the one hand, the importance of seeing, hearing, and working with images and narratives produced by historically marginalized people and the powerful learning that can arise from that and, on the other hand, the violence in imagining that I understand another person, particularly someone whose experiences are so different from my own. This is not a tension that I expected to resolve during this project, but one I tried to work within. There will always be inclusions and exclusion in representation, and I tried to bear that in mind throughout my reading of the images and narratives. In my conclusion, I discuss how Nussbaum's (1997) idea of *narrative imagination* helped me, towards the end of this project, crystallize my thinking about how to work within this tension. Instead of trying to fold people into the knowledge base that we already have, we might instead work to preserve alterity as a nonviolent alternative working towards social justice, and for this to work, there must be an offer of an alternative to what is unjust (Todd, 2003). What might this alternative look like? It is my belief that close engagement with images and narratives produced by people with forced migrant experience can help to do some of the work to produce different, more complex, and alternative narratives to counter those produced about them. In the following section, I will describe the methodology and methods that

I used to closely engage with images and narratives, both those about, and those produced by, people with forced migrant experience.

Methodology: Visual Culture Studies

Methodologically, I am situated in visual culture studies. Visual culture can be roughly defined "as those material artefacts, buildings and images…which serve aesthetic, symbolic, ritualistic or ideological-political ends, and/or practical functions, and which address the sense of sight to a significant extent" (Walker & Chaplin, 1997, pp. 1-2). Visual culture studies mainly looks at film, photography, advertising, video, and the internet, providing analysis that is missing from contemporary visual culture. It asks questions such as: what hidden meanings does scholarship uncover? Who is it hidden from, and how? Who can recover it, and why (Elkins, 2003)? Paying attention to the visual characteristics of things, such as shape, form, tone, colour, and lighting, is very important, as this emphasis justifies the "visual" in visual culture and distinguishes it from media and cultural studies (Walker & Chaplin, 1997). Another way to look at visual culture studies is as a "toolbox of interpretations" (Elkins, 2003, p. 138), emphasizing that images are constructed, not natural, and that they construct viewers in their turn. Finally, visual culture studies emphasizes the importance of looking closely at images, analyzing data closely and systematically. Wagner (2006) writes that, while it is important to observe what is visible, it is also important to ascertain which objects are noticed and which are ignored. Along these terms, Mitchell (1994) writes that having more than one reading of an image does not mean that one is right, and one is wrong. Even though different readings might oppose one another, there could also be a dialogue between them. In the following subsections, I will discuss the work of Roland Barthes (1981, 1999, 2013) and Susan Sontag (1973, 2003) who have methodologically influenced this project.

Barthes: anchorage, relay, punctum.

One of the significant thinkers of visual culture studies is Barthes and his ideas have helped shape how I looked at the images in this project. In the methods section, I describe how his thinking on semiology, and particularly his concept of mythologies, influenced how I read the photographs that I examined. His concepts of anchorage and relay have also helped me think about the relationship between word and image. Although images were the primary objects of analysis in this project, there were words attached to them that impacted my reading of them. For example, the photographs from the news media websites had captions, the graphic narratives had dialogue and narration, and the drawings had descriptions. When describing anchorage, Barthes (1999) writes that, because a linguistic message is present with every image, such as a title or a caption, "in every society various techniques are developed intended to *fix* the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs; the linguistic message is one of these techniques" (p. 37, emphasis in original).

Put another way, anchorage between text and image means that the text selects some connotations offered by the image and rejects others (Burgin, 1999). For example, I discuss an image in the chapter on NGO and news media images that shows two children staring into the camera as an example of the kind of image that NGOs use to show people who need help and to solicit sympathy and donations from visitors to their website. Attached to this image are the words "Nigeria emergency," priming my reading of the image to include children who are in danger and need help. Relay is less common than anchorage in photographs, but more common in comics and cartoons – here, the text and the image are complementary, and the text explains, develops, and/or expands on the significance of the image (Burgin, 1999). McCloud (1993) expands on this idea, indicating that there are several different kinds of relationships between

words and images in comics and that they are not always in equal balance – if more is said with the text, then the pictures could "go exploring" (p. 155) and vice versa. For example, in her graphic narrative *The Best We Could Do*, Thi Bui recalls staying with her aunt and uncle during her early days in America and the difference between herself and her sisters, and her cousins. She draws the two sets of siblings side-by-side to illustrate the differences – the cousins look confident and cool in their American clothes and she and her sisters look skinny and a bit ragged (Bui, 2017, p. 285). Bui uses the text to expand on the drawings, noting that, since the cousins had already been in America for three years, she and her sisters "probably embarrassed them with [their] fresh-off-the-boat appearance" (Bui, 2017, p. 285).

Another of Barthes' ideas that impacted how I thought about and analyzed the photographs was his concept of the "punctum." One reason that photos of suffering are printed is to shock people into reacting, and for this to happen, they must be provoked. Barthes (1981) uses the terms "punctum" and "studium" to describe aspects of photographs and their impact on him as a viewer. He writes,

> The *studium* is that very wide field of unconcerned desire, of various interest, of inconsequential taste: *I like/I don't like*. The *studium* is of the order of *liking*, not of *loving*; it mobilizes a half desire, a demi-volition; it is the same sort of vague, slippery, irresponsible interest one takes in the people, the entertainments, the books, the clothes one finds 'all right.' (Barthes, 1981, p. 27, emphasis in original)

In contrast, the "punctum" is a prick or a mark, such as that made by a pointed instrument. Punctum disturbs studium – it turns a photo from something in which one might show polite interest to something made more poignant, through a particular detail that "fills the whole picture" (Barthes, 1981, p.45). If details do not prick the viewer, it is likely because the

photographer has put them there on purpose – the punctum surprises the viewer, sometimes revealing itself only after the viewer is no longer looking at the photograph. In discussing the difference between erotic and pornographic photographs, Barthes (1981) writes that there is no punctum in pornography, but that erotic photos take the viewer outside the frame, "and it's there that I animate this photograph and that it animates me. The *punctum*, then, is a kind of subtle *beyond* – as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see" (p. 59, emphasis in original). Much like Greene's (1995) idea of "that which is not yet," the punctum pushes the viewer to think beyond the actual image in the frame and consider what else there might be. This idea greatly intrigued me and gave me permission to think about how the circumstances beyond the frame might be impacting my reading of it. For example, a photograph of a family sitting outside amidst a pile of belongings that I examined in the chapter on images from NGO and news media websites showed a chair perched at a haphazard angle and some cushions piled in front of it that look like they should be inside rather than outside. This disturbed me – are these their belongings and why are they outside? Have they been thrown out of their house? Are they waiting for someone? I felt "pricked" by this detail and it prompted me to think more about this image and how it might be read.

Sontag, suffering, and compassion.

There is a long history of photos being used to elicit sympathy from a distant viewer. The Lisbon earthquake of 1755 was one of the first times that distant strangers felt sympathy for suffering people who were far away, and there was a large appetite for news of the quake, which spread via pamphlets and engravings (Sliwinski, 2011). Sliwinski (2011) describes the "tele-pathos" that emerged as a result, which she describes as "the sympathetic response to another's distant suffering" (p. 46). She goes on to describe two categories of visual images of the Lisbon

quake: “truthful” accounts, which documented the damage done to the city in detail and “fantastic” accounts, which focused on the suffering of citizens (Sliwinski, 2011). Since then, opportunities for this kind of depiction of suffering have dramatically increased. For example, the Congo Reform Association (CRA) was formed in response to the atrocities occurring in the Belgian Congo and was the first to use photographs of atrocity as part of a campaign for change (Sliwinski, 2011). Displaying images of suffering is thought to be key to catching people’s attention so that they might feel compelled to respond to a crisis or traumatic event that does not directly impact their day-to-day lives.

Although seeing images of suffering might be thought to provoke compassion in the viewer, this is not always, or even mostly, the case. Sontag (1973) writes that living with images of suffering does not always strengthen compassion, and in fact, can corrupt it, anesthetizing you against seeing more and more and making atrocities seem ordinary or familiar (Sontag, 1973). This is part of the distancing that can occur when viewing photographs of suffering, in which “something *is* happening, and no one knows what is *going* to happen. In the image-world, it *has* happened, and it *will* forever happen in that way” (Sontag, 1973, p. 168, emphasis original). This sense of inevitability can cause people to tune out and makes them less engaged, less willing to react. However, Sontag’s thinking on photography and compassion changed over the years, and in her later book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, she writes about this change. While she originally thought that photos have a diminishing impact, that they “shrivel sympathy,” (p. 104) now she is not as sure (Sontag, 2003). She writes that compassion is unstable and must be translated into action, or it withers. It is passivity that dulls feeling, not the quantity of images that we see (Sontag, 2003). She goes on to say that we should let the disturbing images “haunt us,” and that even if they are tokens, they remind us of what humans are capable. Towards the

end of her book, she notes that, while we feel we do not have the right to experience the suffering of others, there is "nothing wrong with standing back and thinking" (p. 118). She makes a distinction between standing back and thinking and the call to "never forget," and insists that more value should be tied to thinking and less to memory. Sontag's thinking on viewing the suffering of others really impacted how I thought about and looked at the images of forced migrants on the NGO websites and in the news media. While not all the images showed people in distress, many of them did, and I really struggled with what felt, at times, like voyeurism. Her work helped me to think about my viewing of the photos as part of my thought process about them, rather than an attempt to imagine that I understood what they were experiencing or an attempt to distance myself from their experiences as too far away from my own. In the next section, I will discuss the specific methods I used to analyze the images from this project.

Methods

Luttrell's (2000, 2010) idea of "good enough" research methods helped me think about and work within what this project was, rather than be too anxious about what it was not. In characterizing "good enough" research, Luttrell (2000) writes that researchers would

> view their fieldwork as a series of ongoing realizations that lead to complex choices and decisionmaking. By 'good enough" I mean thinking about research decisions in terms of what is lost and what is gained, rather than what might be ideal. (p. 500)

Characteristics of "good enough" research include being aware that you have a personal stake in the research, not shying away from frustrations, anxieties, or disappointments, seeking to understand and appreciate differences between self and other, not getting mixed up between fantasies or projections of who others are with who they actually are, accepting, rather than

defending against, healthy tensions in the field, and accepting the mistakes you make (Luttrell, 2000, 2010). This was very important to me because most published work is very polished, without much discussion of the struggles that the researcher went through or the mistakes they made throughout the project. Trying (and often failing) to keep this at the forefront of my thinking about conducting research has helped me to identify places in my work where I would make different decisions and changes I would make with the benefit of hindsight, while also accepting that the work that I have done has its own merit and something to contribute, even with the mistakes that I have made. I have tried to indicate where I would make different decisions now throughout the project, particularly in the following methods section. I will first discuss how I selected the images that I chose to examine for this project and then I will move on to the methods that I used to examine those images.

Data selection.

As a project that relies very heavily on visual images, choosing which images to include in this project was a very important first step. Lister and Wells (2011) write that it is important to note editorial judgments and the researcher's purpose for selecting the particular images that they do. Because I am interested in how refugees and forced migrants self-represent through visual practices, and how these might differ from mainstream representations, I had to get a sense of what those mainstream representations were. In order to do this, I chose two different places that produce images of forced migrants – NGOs and the news media. For NGOs, I chose the UNHCR, one of the largest international organizations that is responsible for the care and protection of forced migrants around the world and Refugees International (RI), an NGO based in the United States. I chose RI because it is a smaller organization, and I was interested in how the size of the organization might impact how forced migrants are represented, but also because,

on each page of their website, there is the following disclaimer: “Refugees International advocates for lifesaving assistance and protection for displaced people and promotes solutions to displacement crises. We do not accept any government or UN funding, ensuring the independence and credibility of our work” (www.refugeesinternational.org). This intrigued me and I wondered if their purposeful distancing from UN or government funding would impact how forced migrants were represented. Initially, I also chose a Canadian organization to examine – the Canadian Council for Refugees, which is an umbrella organization for NGOs around the country, but I did not pursue this website beyond the initial examination phase because their website was very text-heavy and did not have nearly as many images as the other two. Because I would be focusing entirely on Canada when I examined the news media images, I decided that this would give a good sense of how forced migrants are constructed in this country.

In order to capture the images to analyze at my leisure, I took screenshots and saved them to my computer. For the NGOs, I visited their websites and took screenshots of their front pages and pages that I thought people would be most inclined to visit. For UNHCR, it was their “emergencies” section of their website and for RI, it was their “our work” section. I took data from two different days – March 22, 2018 for UNHCR and March 28, 2018 from RI. In retrospect, I would have collected these images slightly differently – instead of collecting images from different parts of the website on one day, I would have looked at the front pages of each site over a period of time to get a sense of representation over time, since this ended up being somewhat limited. However, I am not making grand claims for how either of these organizations represent forced migrants, nor am I only using these two websites from which to gather visual data. This is one of the reasons why I chose semiology, which I will discuss below, to examine these images – semiological analysis stands or falls on the analytical integrity of a few images,

which is what I was working with. I am not trying to make a claim for how the UNHCR or RI always represent forced migrants, but that the images that I did examine position them in particular ways, and this is what I was interested in.

Selecting the images for the news media sites was both similar and different. I chose four different news media websites – cbc.ca, ctvnews.ca, theglobeandmail.com, and torontosun.com. *CBC* and *CTV* are both national news services and *The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Sun* are both large newspapers based in Toronto. Like with the NGOs, I captured screenshots from the news media websites in order to have the images to examine at my leisure, but because they were not solely focused on forced migrants, I had to search for articles that had still images attached to them. I used the term "refugees" as a search term on each website, which generally brought back too many hits, and three out of the four websites did not offer an option to filter by date or relevance that I could see. Because I was aware of trying to keep the number of images manageable, I selected the first ten stories from each site that included still images of or related to forced migrants.

Data analysis.

I used compositional interpretation and semiological analysis to analyze most of the images that I selected for this project and I will describe each in the section below. Following that, I will describe the techniques I used to address the formal qualities of each of the different kinds of images: Luttrell's (2010) sites of meaning-making and techniques of narrative analysis.

Compositional interpretation.

Before this project, I did not have any formal training at examining visual images (apart from a graduate methods course), so I felt I needed to use some basic techniques to begin my

visual examination. My first step was to conduct a compositional interpretation of each image that I examined, using the techniques laid out by Rose (2016). She writes that compositional interpretation looks at images for what they are, rather than what they do or what they are used for, paying close attention to the site of the image. Composition refers to different elements in combination, including the content of the image, its colour, its spatial organization and its expressive content, which, according to Taylor (1957) is the "feel" of an image, an attempt to evoke its affective characteristics. In order to get at this aspect of the images, I wrote about how each image made me feel, and what emotions or memories it evoked for me. According to Rose (2016), compositional interpretation is useful as a first stage in getting to grips with a new image and describing its visual impact. I did this for each image that I chose as part of this project, which produced approximately one and a half pages of description for each image. I then used both the image and my descriptive analysis of it to create codes that reflected the main themes of each image. This was initial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, as cited in Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, 2006), where I created codes based on how forced migrants were pictured (or not pictured, in a few cases) in each image. I did this for each set of objects that I analyzed.

While compositional interpretation is a good start, Rose (2016) identifies some limitations which need to be addressed through other visual analysis techniques. First, images do not exist in a vacuum, so looking at them solely for what they are neglects how they are produced and interpreted through social practices. She goes on to write that "in its focus on the image itself, compositional interpretation neglects both socially specific ways of seeing and the visual representation of the social" (p. 57). Another limitation she identifies is that compositional interpretation does not encourage discussion of the image's production or how the image might

be used, understood, or interpreted by different viewers. Finally, it does not allow for "reflexive consideration of the particularity of any interpretation" (p. 83) because it is only concerned with images "as they are." In order to address these limitations, I employed aspects of semiological analysis of the photographs that I examined in chapters three and five.

Semiology.

Once I had developed the codes for the photographic images and selected the images that best represented those categories, I then performed a semiological analysis of these images, which worked out to be approximately 20 images for chapter three and ten images for chapter five. I used techniques laid out by Rose (2016) and ideas from de Saussure (1959) whose work helped to develop the language of semiology. According to Rose (2016), semiology looks at how images make meaning and how images work in relation to broader systems of meaning. Semiologists focus on detailed case studies of a few images which stand or fall on its analytical integrity, and as I was performing this analysis on a limited set of images, I thought that this was a logical next step. In terms of limitations of semiological analysis, the preference for detailed readings of individual images can make the replicability of analysis difficult, and the elaborate terminology can be confusing (Rose, 2016). Additionally, there is a strong anti-reflexivity strain present in semiology, particularly for those who claim to uncover the true meaning of an image by looking underneath its surface. I am not making any such claims and I address how I utilized techniques of reflexivity later in this chapter.

The most important semiological tool is the sign (Rose, 2016), which de Saussure (1957) identifies as the basic unit of language. There are two parts to the sign: the signified, which is the concept or object, and the signifier, which is the sound or image attached to the signified (de Saussure, 1957). Rose (2016) writes that "the point that Saussure made with this distinction

between signifier and signified…is that there is no necessary relationship between a particular signifier and its signified" (p. 113). Some codes are so widely distributed in a culture or community that they appear natural, rather than constructed (Hall, 2007), but since the relationship between signified and signifier is conventional and not inherent, it can be problematized and questioned, calling to mind Hall's (1997) idea that meaning is contextual and never fixed, and Freire's (1970) idea that people themselves are unfinished and constantly changing.

The first stage of semiological analysis is to identify the signs of an image (Rose, 2016). Dryer (1982) as cited in Rose (2016), provides a checklist for what signs of people might symbolize in advertising and I used parts of this checklist to pay attention to how people were represented in the images I looked at:

1) Age (what is it meant to convey? Innocence? Wisdom? Senility?)
2) Gender (who is shown as active and who is shown as passive?)
3) Race (does it depend on stereotypes?)
4) Size (what is big and what is small?)
5) Facial expression (who is happy and who is sad? How is this conveyed by facial or other expressions?)
6) Eye contact (who looks at whom? Who is looking at the viewer?)
7) Pose (who is standing and who is not? What might this say about social position?)
8) Setting (where has the photo been taken? How does this impact the image?)

The next step is to identify what these signs signify in and of themselves. For example, if I am analyzing an image of a child, I might look at their age and ask myself what it signifies – is innocence being conveyed by the image? Next, I identified the signs of the image and how these signs relate to other signs. Charles Sanders Pierce, as cited in Rose (2016), writes that there are three kinds of signs, the first of which is the iconic sign. Here, "the signifier represents the signified by apparently having a likeness to it" (p. 119) – for example, a photo of a baby is an iconic sign of that baby. The second sign is the indexical sign, which describes an inherent

relationship between signified and signifier, such as a sign of a baby soother denoting a public baby-changing facility. The third sign is the symbolic sign, which is a conventionalized, but arbitrary relation between signified and signifier, such as a baby representing the future. I used these three kinds of signs as the building blocks of my semiological analysis of the photographic images.

Rose (2016) describes other kinds of signs that I looked for during my analysis, although these were less common than the first three. One is the syntagmatic sign, which is a sign that gains meaning from those around them, and another is a paradigmatic sign, which gains meaning in contrast with other signs. A third sign is the synecdochal sign, which is a part standing in for a whole or a whole representing a part. Rose (2016) gives the example of Paris (a whole) often being represented by a picture of the Eiffel Tower (a part). It is important to recognize that any one sign could be working in one or many of these ways and that a sign is considered polysemic when it has more than one meaning (Rose, 2016).

The next step I took was to look at how certain signs connected to wider systems of meaning, which Barthes (2013) refers to as mythologies. Myth builds on denotive signs becoming a signifier at the second, or mythological, level of meaning – here, the signifier has its own signified (Barthes, 2013; Rose, 2016). Barthes (2013) uses the example of a famous picture of a Black soldier in a French uniform saluting with uplifted eyes – in this example, signification constructs the idea that France is a great Empire which produces sons who are proud to serve her, no matter their race (Barthes, 2013; Rose, 2016). Rose (2016) sums this up neatly by writing "myth makes us forget that things were and are made; instead, it naturalizes the way things are. Myth is thus a form of ideology" (p. 131). In order to address this, I asked the question "what is this image naturalizing?" for each image on which I performed semiological analysis.

Site of meaning-making

I was cognizant of the fact that I was not speaking to the participants who had created the photographs or drawings for the projects discussed in chapter five: *Another Kind of Girl Collective* and *We Are Here Now*. Much of the literature that I read discussed the analysis of participatory visual projects and had the creators talk about their work as part of the analysis (Chege, Maina, Mitchell, & Rothman, 2014; Luttrell, Dorsey, Shalaby, & Hayden, 2011; Theron, 2012). While this would have added another layer to this project, ultimately it felt too big a piece to add to what I was already doing. I examined some poetry that the participants of *Another Kind of Girl Collective* had written, as well as some journalistic work on the project to enhance my reading of the images, and the drawings from *We Are Here Now* had short descriptions with them, but I felt that I needed another layer of analysis to complicate my reading of these sets of images. For this, I turned to Luttrell's (2010) three sites of meaning-making: picture-taking and its constraints, picture-viewing in dialogue with different audiences, and picture-content of what is made visible. To this, I added one more piece – a question about how the image is in dialogue with and/or in conflict with larger social forces (Luttrell, 2010). Having already addressed the third site of meaning-making in other parts of my analysis, I posed the following three questions to each of the photographs and drawings that I selected for as representative of the larger themes of chapter five: How was the making of this piece of art constrained? How is it in dialogue with different audiences? How is it in dialogue with and/or in conflict with larger social forces? These questions helped me to think more about the actual making of the works, how different audiences might think about and interpret the images, and the complex nature of the photographs and drawings in relation to their larger social context.

Narrative analysis.

While there were some similarities in the ways that I analyzed the photographs and the graphic narratives, there were also some differences. I began my analysis of the graphic narratives with the same compositional interpretation strategies as described above, but in order to grapple with the large graphic narrative works *The Complete Persepolis* and *The Best We Could Do*, I used some techniques from narrative analysis, informed by Riessman's (2008) work. She defines narrative analysis as "a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form" (p. 11). A narrative analysis looks at how a speaker assembles events and uses language to communicate meaning, the intention of the speaker, and the details of extended accounts that are treated as units, with the goal of generating detailed accounts rather than brief answers. It is important to look at intention, not just content – it is significant how, why, for whom, and for what purpose stories are told, and since there are many ways to narrate experience, how the narrator chooses to do it is also significant (Riessman, 2008).

Riessman (2008) writes that narratives are composed for particular people at particular times in history and do not allow for a view into the essential self of a person, but instead, require interpretation and she defines a narrative as a speaker connecting events in a sequence that has consequences for later action and of meanings they want the listener to take away. She goes on to identify some of the functions of narrative: 1) remembering the past, excavating or reassessing memories that are fragmented, unbearable, or scarcely visible, 2) persuading an audience that might be skeptical, 3) inviting the reader or listener to enter their perspective, 4) entertainment, 5) misleading the reader or listener, and 6) mobilizing others for social change. Apart from misleading the reader, I think both *Persepolis* and *The Best We Could Do* engage in all of these functions at various times throughout the narrative. While narrative analysis is case-centred, which was one of the reasons I chose it for this project, it can also generate categories,

as other case-based methods do, prompting the reader to think beyond the surface of the text and move towards broader commentary (Riessman, 2008).

In order to analyze the narratives of these two graphic narratives, I used a combination of Riessman's (2008) thematic analysis and dialogic analysis. Thematic analysis focuses on the content of the narrative and in her analysis of Tamboukou's (2003) work (as cited in Riessman, 2008), she writes that thematic analysis begins with an examination of thematic categories at the surface level, which I thought would help me get a general sense of the larger themes of each chapter. I preserved the sequences of each chapter, keeping the story intact, rather than coding small segments, as would be the case in grounded theory (Riessman, 2008). Next, I took some aspects from Riessman's (2008) dialogic analysis, which pays closer attention to the context of the production and interpretation of the narrative and asks at whom the narrative is directed and for what purpose it was crafted. She notes that "stories don't fall from the sky…they are composed and received in contexts – interactional, historical, institutional, and discursive – to name a few" (p. 105) and that it is important to pay attention to the larger historical contexts and how they shape the stories that are told. In this kind of analysis, meaning resides in the dialogue between the text and reader (Riessman, 2008). Based on a combination of these two approaches, I asked the following four questions of each chapter: 1) what are the thematic categories at the surface level? 2) what does the narrator accomplish by telling the story like this? 3) how does it effect the reader? and 4) what is the larger context of this particular narrative? I looked for sequences that appeared at important moments in the narrative, such as when Satrapi breaks the fourth wall and addresses the reader directly. I also looked for sequences that particularly addressed their forced migration experience, such as when Bui employs what she calls her

"refugee reflex" to escape from a burning building. Finally, I looked for sequences that addressed the questions I was asking.

Reflexivity and Ethics

Reflexivity "recognizes the centrality of the subjectivity of the researcher to the production and representation of ethnographic knowledge" (Pink, 2013, p. 36). When working with images, a reflexive epistemology holds that the meanings of images reside in how the images are interpreted, rather than as something inherent in the images themselves (Stanczak, 2007). Additionally, part of reflexivity is attempting to resist universalizing claims of academic knowledge, and to recognize that it is partial and incomplete (Rose, 2007). For my own practices of reflexivity, I relied on Luttrell's (2000) work. She identifies a number of characteristics of reflexivity that I did my best to adopt during this project, the first of which is that reflexivity is learned in degrees rather than absolutes. This was both frustrating, in that I wanted to be able to check off a series of steps to prove that I had "done" reflexivity, but also freeing, in that she is giving permission to not have all the answers right away.

Secondly, she writes that part of reflexivity is sustaining multiple, sometimes opposing emotions, and staying with contradictory ways of world theorizing. As a novice researcher, being told that having emotions in relation to your work is an acceptable part of the process of doing research was important for me to hear, and that including the (sometimes) contradictory nature of those emotions in your data analysis is also part of the process. I found this especially helpful in analyzing the photos taken of forced migrants for publication on the NGO websites because, on the one hand, these are photos taken of people who are in difficult, violent, or dangerous situations who need help and they cannot and should not be ignored. Publishing these kinds of photos is a way to solicit donations from people to support the work these organizations are

doing, and it is necessary. On the other hand, as my analysis in chapter three shows, heavily relying on these kinds of images helps to contribute to a dominant narrative of forced migrants as always and only abject and vulnerable, or as threatening. Reading and analyzing the images while holding these two opposing views was both difficult and emotional, at times causing me to feel frustration and doubt as to whether my reading of these images was fair to the organizations that were only trying to do the work to support the people who relied on them.

The ethics of working with found visual images was something I struggled with all throughout this project. Using the example of images uploaded to social media sites, Luttrell (2000) writes that people have not given researchers their explicit consent to use these images and their associated data. Some researchers argue that this is not a problem, and that they are studying images and text available to anyone, while others write that images uploaded on a social media platform may then be shared on other platforms without the uploader's consent, so researchers should be guided by protocols for ethical research (Luttrell, 2000). She, along with Miller (2015), goes on to write that there might be an ethical issue with people in photographs being identified, since standard research protocol for research data is that it be anonymized. In order to mitigate this risk, I will not be publishing any of the photographic images or pieces of art without the permission of the creator.

Lenette and Cleland (2016) take a different approach – they write that the ethical issues of vulnerable populations not being able to consent to their images being used are negated when examining those images in a secondary analysis process where they have already been disseminated through another source. In their own visual analysis of asylum seekers in times of crisis, they evaluate the risk of misrepresentation, another risk of analyzing images in a secondary context, to be low because there was contextual information provided along with the

photos they analyzed. The images I examined from the news media and NGO websites were disseminated through their websites and were meant to be looked at by people visiting those websites – they also had some contextual information, so the risk of entirely misreading the photos was low. The images produced by the participants of AKGC and WAHN were both produced as part of projects to challenge the dominant ways in which forced migrants are represented and were disseminated through websites associated with those projects. I also had access to contextual information for both projects, via either descriptions written by participants or news articles written about the project.

Conclusion

The overall focus of this project is to examine images and writing produced by people with forced migrant experience and see how they respond to some of the dominant narratives produced by images in the mainstream. Chapter two will outline some of the relevant literature around refugees and forced migrants, and how they are often constructed as either a threat or a victim and ending with a review of studies that employ arts-based methods with refugees and forced migrants. Chapter three examines images from the websites of two NGO's – the UNHCR and RI – and images from the websites of CBC, CTV, The Globe and Mail, and the Toronto Sun to establish some of the narratives produced by the Canadian mainstream media. Chapter four examines two graphic narratives – *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui and *The Complete Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi – and discusses how the creators use the tools of graphic narratives to look back on how their experiences complicate the single story of forced migrant experience. Chapter five examines the projects *Another Kind of Girl Collective* and *We Are Here Now* and discusses how the participants of these projects use their art to represent and reflect on

their experiences with forced migration. I will conclude by identifying some limitations and contributions of this project.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this literature review, I will explore some of the scholarship on refugees and forced migrants, with a focus on work from a historical-sociological perspective, as well as work that examines how forced migrants are constructed by media outlets and aid agencies or includes a visual component. I will then move on to a discussion of some arts-based projects that involve people with refugee and forced migrant experience and why these projects are important.

Refugees and Forced Migrants

The 20th century saw a huge increase in the number of people who were forced to leave their country of origin for one reason or another (Marfleet, 2006). The 21st century has seen that trend continue, with vast numbers of people risking everything in an attempt to leave countries torn apart by war, genocide, and tyrannical oppression. As of this writing, the UNHCR provides services to refugees in 134 countries and identifies 70.8 million people as having been displaced by violence and conflict worldwide (www.unhcr.ca). The 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention states that a person may claim refugee status if they are "unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UNHCR, 2010). At the core of this treaty is an understanding that the international community will step in to protect people as a substitute for their sovereign government (Forbes Martin, 2004). In this section, I will outline a brief history of the UNHCR and the modern refugee, discuss some of the reasons people claim refugee status and the solutions that are available to people after they are displaced.

A bit of history.

While the idea of sanctuary is ancient, the modern refugee is not (Marfleet, 2006). The UNHCR was founded after WWII with European refugees in mind who were displaced during the war or fleeing from oppressive regimes considered enemies of the west (Forbes Martin, 2004; Johnson, 2011). It was initially given a three year mandate to address what was considered a temporary problem and the original convention that defined who a refugee was used a very narrow definition: the official focus was on Europe, the events leading to displacement had to take place before January, 1951, and it had to be a particular event, not generalized violence or mass displacement, limiting its scope and emphasizing its temporary nature (Johnson, 2011). Contrary to later interpretations, this was not a statement of universal rights for refugees and was not meant to embrace refugees in general (Marfleet, 2006), but was addressing a particular kind of person who was

> imagined as a white, male individual who may or may not have been accompanied by his nuclear family; the refugee had a past, a story and a voice, all of which were used to validate the West in its ideological war. (Johnson, 2011, p. 1020)

This context shaped the image of who refugees were and created a willingness in the west to accept them, as this version of the refugee was not seen as threatening (Johnson, 2011).

As the twentieth century progressed, large-scale events such as decolonization began to challenge the Convention's definitions, and in 1967, it was amended to remove limitations on dates and places (Johnson, 2011). A new status of de facto refugee was identified as someone in need of sanctuary and recognized through temporary asylum as more refugees began to be part of mass population movements (Marfleet, 2006). Into the 1970s, images of refugees shifted from individuals to depictions of masses of people from the global South and African countries in particular, with the "normal" image of a refugee as a poor African woman or child (Johnson,

2011). During the 1990s, and especially since September 11, 2001, there has been increased concern over border security and the right to asylum has become more tenuous in the global North, with more emphasis on aid "over there" rather than asylum here (Johnson, 2011).

While asylum seekers have existed at all points throughout history, there has been an increase in the 20th and 21st centuries, the scale of which has not been seen before (Castles, 2003). The global North-South division of wealth and resources is a crucial aspect to the dramatic growth in people fleeing their homes and seeking refuge in other countries. According to Castles (2003), "the North does more to cause forced migration than to stop it, through enforcing an international economic and political order that causes underdevelopment and conflict" (p. 18). Despite the contributions the industrialized world has made to the precarious situations in which refugees find themselves, there was an increasing reluctance to take in refugees after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, particularly, but not only, in the United States, resulting in an increase in trafficking (Forbes Martin, 2004).

Who is a refugee?

Although there are currently 70.8 million displaced people in the world (www.unhcr.ca), not all of them are refugees. In order to gain refugee status, a person must demonstrate that the harm they experienced is persecutory, their own government cannot or will not protect them from harm, and that the persecution is based on one of the protected grounds in the definition of the treaty (race, religion, nationality, etc.) (Forbes Martin, 2004). Since refugee status also implies movement across international borders, the responsibility for them is joint between international organizations (such as the UN and other NGOs) and national governments, but state governments have no legal obligation to take in refugees, although many have yearly quotas (Forbes Martin, 2004). Generally, receiving countries in the global north focus on family

reunification, people who have a previous link to the country or people whose protection is dependent on resettlement, and applicants for resettlement must prove that they meet the definition of a refugee, plus other admission standards, such as how quickly they are likely to adjust to the new culture or learn the language (Forbes Martin, 2004). In the global south, it generally looks different – forced migrants flee across the border to a neighbouring country and hope to register with the UNHCR.

People become forced migrants for a variety of reasons and Castles (2003) lists five basic categories of forced migration. Firstly, a person might be displaced and forced to leave their country because of persecution, whether religious, political, or otherwise. This is perhaps the most well-known reason for a refugee claimant and one which often captures the public imagination. Secondly, he lists internally displaced people, who are forced to leave their homes for a variety of reasons but have not actually crossed an international border. A recent example of this in a Canadian context is the fire that took place in Fort McMurray, Alberta, which forced thousands of people to flee their homes. Thirdly, people can be displaced by development projects, such as dams, airports, roads, or luxury housing. These are often people who do not have much cultural or social capital, and who are considered “easy” to move. For example, the predominantly African American neighbourhood of Tremé in New Orleans was “revitalized” through the building of an interstate highway, resulting in the displacement of many of the neighbourhood's residents (Powell, 2015). Fourthly, people can be displaced by environmental degradation, such as natural disasters or industrial accidents. Examples of this type are Hurricane Katrina that hit New Orleans in 2005 and the tsunami and earthquake that hit Indonesia in 2004. Finally, people can be displaced because they have been involved in trafficking for exploitative purposes, usually as part of the global sex trade. These categories are not mutually exclusive nor

are they exhaustive: often people will overlap between them or have experiences which do not fall into any of the five categories. While these categories identify people who have been displaced in different ways, not all of them would qualify as a refugee – for example, if they did not cross an international border or could not prove they were being persecuted, they would not be granted refugee status. In order to examine a broad category of people for this project, I am looking at images of people who have been granted official refugee status as well as people who were forcibly displaced for a variety of reasons who may not have been granted refugee status.

When a person flees their home and claims refugee status, there are three official solutions to their situation, and Forbes Martin (2004) lists these. The first is voluntarily returning to their country of origin, hopefully after conditions have stabilized and it is safe for them to do so. This is the most desirable outcome as the refugees know the culture and lifestyle and often have family or a network in place to help them on their return. Secondly, they may seek settlement in a neighbouring country. This is a good option for many people because they often share cultural values with those in countries close to them, and the physical and economic conditions of a neighbouring country are generally similar to their own. As the years have passed and the number of people claiming refugee status has risen, this has become less of an option as countries that once permitted and even encouraged resettlement have become more hostile towards it. Often facing their own difficulties, they argue that they should not be expected to shoulder the burden of more people coming into the country, particularly when there is less international aid available. The third option is resettlement in a safe third country. This is often considered the least desirable option, as it moves people far away from what is familiar to them and often separates families and community networks. However, a fourth situation has emerged in which people end up staying in refugee camps for years or even generations. Parekh (2017)

identifies this as “warehousing,” where people are placed in camps for long periods of time where they are dependent on aid. She goes on to write that 17 years is the current norm for displacement in a camp and since states are not legally obligated to resettle refugees, less than one percent of official refugees are permanently resettled in a new country.

One of the reasons states have become less willing to engage in resettlement is because forced migrants have been constructed as a threat to countries which might offer them asylum. In the following section, I will outline the perceived security threat, economic threat, and social threat which forced migrants are alleged to pose to receiving countries.

Forced Migrants as a Threat

> Must living in peace – so fervently wished for throughout human history and yet enjoyed in only a few parts of the world – inevitably result in refusing to share it with those seeking refuge, defending it instead so aggressively that it almost looks like war? (Erpenbeck, 2015, p. 241)
>
> These cute refugee babies grow into vile adults who want to destroy our country and all thats [sic] in it. (Evans, 2017, p. 32)

As the Cold War ended and the old enemies became less dangerous in the collective imagination, new ones came into focus to replace them: Islam, terrorism and refugees (Marfleet, 2006). With this, a new discourse of refugees took shape where forced migrants “bore the same base and threatening qualities said to produce instability and disorder in their places of origin” (Marfleet, 2006, p. 4). This is one of the factors that has led to an increase in securitization of migration, including calling out “bogus” asylum seekers as potential terrorist threats (O'Neill, 2010; Voutira & Doná, 2007). In addition to posing as a threat to national security, refugees and forced migrants are also perceived as posing an economic threat and a social threat. While I recognize that these categories are not simplistic, and Chouliarki and Stolic’s (2017) analysis of headlines of European newspapers covering the refugee crisis complicates a simplistic

understanding of victimhood and threat, I found that the categories of threat and vulnerability emerged from my analysis and from my review of the literature.

Security threat.

According to Kertes (2018), there is perhaps a natural impulse to think that unknown others might represent some kind of threat to you, and this certainly plays out with respect to refugees and forced migrants. Forced migration is often linked to security concerns and border control (Johnson, 2011; O'Neill, 2010), positioning asylum seekers as representing a threat to the security of law-abiding citizens (Moore, 2012). O'Neill (2010) writes that, "following the events of 11 September 2001, refugees have been branded as a sinister transnational threat to national security – even though none of the 11 September terrorists were actually refugees or asylum seekers" (p. 16). Many Western states are succumbing to the politics of fear and viewing all migrants as potential security threats (Minh-ha, 2011; Welsh, 2016) and "calculating foreigners" looking to penetrate its borders (Farbotko, 2012, p. 137), who are often depicted using elemental language such as surges, floods, or waves (Marfleet, 2006; Voutira & Doná, 2007). Using this kind of metaphoric language has the potential to influence how people think and feel about political issues and the use of metaphors by some politicians or journalists can lead to debate being underpinned by unreasonable arguments and emotional language (Bleasdale, 2008). For example, in their study of metaphoric language used by some journalists and politicians in the United Kingdom (UK), Bleasdale (2008) writes that the use of metaphors of water or liquid creates an image of the UK being overcome by waves of people, which could lead people to believe that the UK is under threat from asylum seekers.

Depictions of refugees and forced migrants as a threat to the receiving country have consequences for how they are viewed and treated upon arrival. Esses, Medianu, and Lawson

(2013) found that media depictions of immigrants and refugees as a threat to their new country can lead to dehumanization, "with a media claim that refugee claimants are often fake leading to the dehumanization of refugees in general" (p. 528). This dehumanization could lead to negative behaviour towards them, which may be justified in the minds of those perpetrating it because of the threat they are seen to pose (Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013). This is highlighted by the novel *The Boat People* by Sharon Bala, which tells the story of a group of Tamil asylum seekers who arrive by boat off the west coast of Canada in the early 2000's seeking refuge from the Sri Lankan civil war. The author describes a call-in radio show that begins with a caller giving their opinion: "There are two ways of immigrating. There is the hard way that I took of getting higher education, learning English, and gaining work experience. And there is the easy way of becoming a terrorist and claiming refugee status" (Bala, 2018, p. 84). The host of the show agrees and adds "Lock and load would be my approach" (Bala, 2018, p. 84). This casual, public threat of violence directed at people who have already endured violence, trauma, and a harrowing journey to arrive in Canada is indicative of the view that refugees and forced migrants are a threat, and those who arrive to claim asylum in particular should not be allowed to get in the "easy" way.

Economic threat.

Another threat that refugees and forced migrants are said to pose is an economic threat, which usually takes the position of "them" coming over here and taking "our" jobs (Castles, 2003; Schiff, 2018). An increase in forced migration emerged alongside the global economic crisis in the 1970's and 1980's, causing people in the west to view forced migrants with suspicion, seeing them as taking jobs that they had no right to take and threatening western standards of living (Castles, 2003; Johnson, 2011). Refugees and forced migrants are often

depicted as desperately poor, creating suspicion as to their motivation for migrating – they are not only (or at all) fleeing persecution, but they are also making a migration choice that will benefit them financially (Johnson, 2011). This is not just the case for forced migration in the west but plays out in other parts of the world where people are perceived as moving from a less advantageous to a more advantageous country. In his essay about his family's move from Zimbabwe to South Africa, Tshuma (2018) writes that, once they arrived in South Africa, they were not just themselves, but part of a larger group of Zimbabweans who were seen as a burden to national resources meant for South Africans. Cast as thieves and murderers, they were identified as an economic threat, looking to steal South African jobs (Tshuma, 2018).

These attitudes can potentially impact how forced migrants interact with the economies of the receiving countries. In their article on the employment experiences of refugee claimants (RC's) in Canada, Jackson and Bauder (2013) found that many of their participants were involved in informal employment and all of them experienced downward mobility. Some of the barriers to employment that their participants faced were a lack of English (although this was seen as surmountable through free language classes), a devaluation of previous work and education experiences, a social insurance number that began with nine, marking it as temporary, and employer expectations. They write, "the phrase 'refugee jobs' was used to denote physical labour, cleaning, and construction, which matched some employers' low expectations of RC's capabilities" (Jackson and Bauder, 2013, p. 371). This perceived economic threat is related to the perceived security threat, as "respondents suggested the 'bogus refugee' label and its pervasive assumptions regarding RCs' high cost and propensity to abuse the welfare system cast doubt on RCs' legitimacy to live and work in Canada" (Jackson and Bauder, 2013, p. 376), reinforcing assumptions about the "place of refugees" in Canada, including which jobs they should have.

Social threat.

Finally, refugees and forced migrants are perceived as posing a social threat to their new countries, often framed as a refusal to assimilate "correctly." In the assimilationist view, the pre-migration culture is useless and must be renounced and replaced with the culture of the receiving country, which is imagined as homogenous and harmonious, and which the migrant's assimilation keeps intact (Castles, 2003). Those who share a nation state are encouraged to share nationalism, to identify with traditions said to define "their" nation state in relation to others (Marfleet, 2006). Refusing this assimilationist view, and maintaining language, culture and/or religion to cope with racism and exclusion is seen as a threat to social cohesion (Castles, 2003). Schiff (2018) writes that "a sudden influx of refugees raises acute questions of national identity and implicit standards of belonging that are ordinarily taken more or less for granted, and these questions rapidly introduce different, sometimes conflicting, behavioural norms into a political community" (p. 748), which can disturb the sense of home and security of members of the receiving country. How the receiving country responds to these disturbances shapes how they assume the political responsibility of hospitality (Schiff, 2018).

One of the consequences of this perceived social threat is an expectation on the part of the receiving country that refugees and forced migrants perform gratitude upon their arrival. Ahmed (2010) writes about this phenomenon in her book *The Promise of Happiness*, where she writes that migrants are subject to the "happiness duty," which she describes as

> telling a certain story about your arrival as good, or the good of your arrival. The happiness duty is a positive duty to speak of what is good but can also be thought of as a negative duty not to speak of what is not good, not to speak from or out of unhappiness. (p. 158)

Fixating on injury or unhappiness is an obstacle both to the melancholic migrant's personal happiness and to the happiness of the nation (Ahmed, 2010). For Nayeri (2018), arriving in the US as an asylum seeker meant enduring some hate, but they were eventually accepted on the condition that they act grateful. She writes "as refugees, we owed them our previous identity. We had to lay it at their door like an offering, and gleefully deny it to earn our place in this new country" (p. 141). In her novel *Americanah,* Adichie (2013) writes

> If you're telling a non-black person about something racist that happened to you, make sure you are not bitter. Don't complain. Be forgiving. If possible, make it funny. Most of all, do not be angry. Black people are not supposed to be angry about racism. Otherwise you get no sympathy. This applies only for white liberals, by the way. Don't even bother telling a white conservative about anything racist that happened to you. Because the conservative will tell you that YOU are the real racist and your mouth will hang open in confusion. (p. 275)

This places considerable pressure on the people who are arriving to western countries to adopt the happiness duty and perform gratitude for the people of the receiving country – if they succeed in resettling, they are blamed for taking work from someone else, and if they do not secure happiness in their new land, they are accused of being ungrateful (Minh-ha, 2011).

Finally, perhaps the very "newness" of refugees, and immigrants more generally, is part of their perceived threat. Arendt (1958) identifies natality as the condition of new, unique people continually being born into the world who may be capable of new ideas or actions which can interrupt the chain of events set in motion by previous people. It seems likely that the same could be said for new people arriving in new spaces. The hope that natality provides is that, with new people being born (and arriving from elsewhere), the world will continue to grow and evolve.

The flip side is that our institutions are frail and seem unlikely to withstand the unpredictability of all this natality (Arendt, 1958). Perhaps the often-negative response to refugees, particularly those who are resettled in a third country far from their country of origin, is tapping into this idea of natality and the perceived instability that they may cause for which we may be unprepared. When our beliefs are challenged, we often thoughtlessly respond with an attack in an attempt to demolish the beliefs of others, rather than enter into dialogue with each other (Eisner, 1979).

Forced Migrants as Vulnerable

When refugees and forced migrants are not being constructed as a threat, they are often constructed as victims, and indeed, their vulnerability cannot be ignored – as Forbes Martin (2004) points out, they are vulnerable as victims or potential victims of human rights abuses and they are outside of their home communities, unprotected by their state governments, requiring legal protection of their rights and physical protection to ensure their safety. Although many refugees have survived violence, trauma, and loss that are beyond the imagination of many, "we mustn't assume that refugee status in and of itself constitutes a recognizable, generalizable psychological condition" (Malkki, 1995, p. 510), essentializing refugees into one "refugee experience." While most of the literature around forced migrants views them as deficient, "refugee lives usually speak of energy, resilience and imagination, qualities highly prized in other contexts" (Marfleet, 2006, p. 289). This section will examine a shift in the representation of forced migrants from political figures to voiceless victims and how women carry the load of victim representation.

From political to voiceless.

In her article on how visual images work to produce particular constructions of refugees, Johnson (2011) writes that, since the 1951 Convention, the refugee has been re-framed from a "heroic, positive individual" to a "nameless flood of poverty-stricken women and children" (p. 1016), and one of the shifts that made this possible was the victimization of the refugee, moving from political to a victim without agency. She goes on to write that "as a victim of political persecution, the condition imagined for the European refugee, a refugee is fundamentally political; as a victim of violence, however, the refugee is objectified and loses this political agency" (Johnson, 2011, p. 1029). This change in representation is strategic in order to mobilize support for refugees while simultaneously managing the threat of their statelessness, preserving the agency of the citizen and attempting to diminish the perceived political and economic threat of the refugee (Johnson, 2011). Rajaram (2002) writes that the archetypal images of refugees are repetitive and predictable in the emotions they convey, making them ripe for particular ends such as fund-raising, but Johnson (2011) cautions against this over-reliance on constructing the refugee as a voiceless victim: In comparison to a refugee who is politically persecuted and therefore fundamentally political (the condition imagined for the original European refugee), if they are *only* victims of violence, they are objectified and lose their political agency.

In her examination of refugee coffee-table books, Szörényi (2006) looks at the publication *Images of Exile*, a text produced by the UNHCR to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees. In her analysis, she points out some of the assumptions that are made just from the inscription on the inside front cover of this book, which reads as follows:

> When men, women and children decide to leave their homelands and to abandon their roots, it is after a period of agonizing appraisal. It is because they are finally convinced

> that this is their only chance of survival. Some flee political terror, others actual violence. Many flee to escape persecution because of their race, religion or political beliefs.
>
> They are all victims.
>
> Nobody takes the road to exile lightheartedly, because to flee means to be uprooted. Despite the pain of leaving, the alternative – staying behind – could be far worse.
>
> When all other rights have been violated, one remaining right – the right to seek asylum – is the only hope. If all goes well a safe haven will be reached and a life rebuilt. (UNHCR 1991, inside front cover, as cited in Szörényi, 2006, p. 27)

This inscription emphasizes the victimhood of refugees, assuming that this issue must be addressed through the discourse of human rights, and that no matter the complexities of their personal situation, refugee experience can be characterized as flight – exile – rescue – resettlement (Szörényi, 2006). I wonder if this is part of a strategy to attempt to diminish the perceived political threat of refugees, as Johnson (2011) suggests, since the UNHCR emphasizes the difficult choice that people must make before fleeing and that their rights have been violated, contesting the idea that people are lightly making an economic choice and trying to "jump the queue."

Women carry the load.

Johnson (2011) also notes that gender plays a key role in the construction of the vulnerable refugee, and that women "have done much of the 'work' that the discourses of victimization and depoliticization demand" (p. 1032). Women are at the centre of refugee representation and vulnerability defines female refugees – in fact, one of the patterns that

Johnson (2011) describes as transforming the way that refugees are represented is the feminization of the refugee, a shift in imagined figure from man to woman. One reason for this is because of the tendency for women to arrive in refugee camps, where they are more available to be photographed, as opposed to men, who tend to arrive at borders, hoping to cross (Johnson, 2011). This is not to deny that refugee women are often in positions of vulnerability – they often need protection from being forcibly returned to their homes, armed attacks, unduly long detention, and sexual abuse (Forbes Martin, 2004). Although they are associated with vulnerability, dependency, and victimhood, women claim asylum for the same reasons men do – they are escaping persecution, they are afraid for their lives, they have been treated inhumanely, and/or they are seeking a better life for themselves and their families (O'Neill, 2010). The association between women and vulnerability can actually make their asylum claim more difficult to prove because their political activity is usually deemed to be at a lower level than men's, and this is made even more complicated when the violence or danger is coming from within their own family (O'Neill, 2010). Even though refugee women are featured as victims, they can also play an active public role, participating in the same roles as men, such as joining armies or militia (Marfleet, 2006).

Whether constructed as a threat or as a victim, what most images published by media outlets or on government or NGO websites have in common is that they are not produced by forced migrants themselves. In order to counter this, there are many projects around the world that feature work between researchers, artists, and people with forced migrant experience that produce both images and narratives that are representative of their experiences. In the section below, I review a selection of these studies.

Forced Migrants and Arts-Based Research

Projects involving art and forced migration take many different forms. For example, Wyatt (2013) writes about a neighbourhood in Melbourne, Australia, where an unknown person created a piece of graffiti with the words “The West Welcomes Refugees” spray painted on the side of a bridge. Using this graffiti as inspiration, the local government decided to commission a public art project that explored this theme. A local artist was selected, and he stenciled stories of eleven different migrants on the side of a bridge. In both the original language and in English, these stories tell of the migrant experience of disorientation, the losses that come with arriving to a new home, and “the emotional projections inflecting migrant relationships to place, precariously balanced between hope and fear” (p. 120). The artist was hoping that his work would spark dialogue about how refugees are understood in the broader Australian context, but the project was criticized for a couple of reasons. Firstly, no one from a refugee background was on the panel who chose the proposed art project, which led to criticism that the committee did not seek the experiences of the very people they sought to represent. Critics felt that the government wanted to use the mural to “beautify” the city, rather than as a catalyst for discussion and dialogue (Wyatt, 2013). Secondly, critics asked the committee to consider how this project is imagining the west – if, indeed, “The West Welcomes Refugees,” then to whom is it in opposition that does not welcome them, and how does this account for all the barriers that western countries have put up in response to the flow of refugees? Wyatt (2013) also notes that this statement disavows Australia's racist immigration policies and the ways in which “others” have been welcomed (or not) into Australia.

Unlike the work described by Wyatt (2013), the following studies are projects where the researchers/artists have worked with people who have forced migration experience and produced or analyzed work using arts-based methods to explore a number of different issues related to that

experience. These projects use many different types of artistic methods, including photography, digital stories, film, drawings, and songs, and represent people in different stages of life, with different identity locations, and at different stages of the forced migrant or resettlement process. I will begin by reviewing five studies that used photography as a method, followed by four that used digital stories and three that used other methods, such as videos, drawing, and "ethno-mimesis" (O'Neill & Harindranath, 2006, p. 45).

Photography.

The idea that images produced by forced migrants might provide more complex and nuanced representations of themselves and their journeys does not just apply to recent images. In her study analyzing photographs taken in 1948 by Manivald Sein, an Estonian asylum seeker arriving to Canada on a boat from Sweden, Mannik (2012) notes that,

> through depictions of a range of experiences, emotions and activities this collection visually expands on notions of what a refugee looks like and asks the viewer to rethink socially recognised 'modes of knowledge', which in turn allows for shifts in attitudes and political perspectives. (p. 266)

When showing these images at conferences or talks, she was often asked to defend their status as "real" refugees because the pictures did not show them suffering physically. Instead, many of the images show smiling faces and people looking directly into the camera, even though many of those on that boat who were interviewed 60 years later by Mannik expressed the physical and psychological traumas they were experiencing at the time (Mannik, 2012). For example, the photos taken after the asylum seekers had arrived at Pier 21 in Halifax, where they were detained for two to four months, showed images of people who looked happy, healthy, and comfortable, even depicting a New Year's Eve party in December, 1948. At the time, most of those aboard the

ship were Estonian refugees who had escaped Soviet occupation towards the end of World War Two and were once again fleeing the Soviets after living in Sweden for four years. Mannik (2012) suggests that Stein took these kinds of pictures to have a collection of optimistic images to look back on or to show to his family and friends, and so was not concerned that they might constitute proof of a perceived illegitimate claim for asylum. Sein's photographs provide an alternative to the stereotypical depictions of forced migrants as either victim or threat and "show the humanity of refugees – moments when positive emotions such as love, companionship, cooperation and belonging emerge. These can all be considered attributes of acceptable civic citizens" (Mannik, 2012, p. 274). Through their analysis of these images from the 1940s, Mannik (2012) provides an example of images produced by forced migrants that challenge the victimized/threat dichotomy and provides a more nuanced picture of one forced migrant's journey.

Once forced migrants have been resettled in a safe third country, that part of their journey is complete. However, a new journey of settlement to learn about their new country, possibly learn a new language and figure out where they belong is only just beginning. As part of a longitudinal study, Robertson, Gifford, McMichael, and Correa-Velez (2016) gave cameras to newly arrived refugee youth and asked them to photograph their settlement journeys in their first and third years in Australia, to visually capture and portray their early experiences. They note that, since the mid-19th century, the journeys of forced migrants have been photographed by others, but rarely are refugees documenting their own journeys, directing the focus back to the receiving country and positioning themselves in relation to their world of settlement in Australia. The idea of settlement as a continued journey is particularly interesting – the imagined refugee journey as persecution, flight, exile, and resettlement ignores the continued work of learning a

new country's language and customs. The participants were newly arrived refugee youth from 12 different countries, aged 10-19, and they asked them to take photos of specific places, things, and people (such as "my family" or "my house"), while also giving them the freedom to take photos of anything else they chose. The authors note that many participants made an active effort "to remake, reimagine and reconstitute places as a way to garner a sense of belonging and security" (Robertson, Gifford, McMichael, and Correa-Velez, 2016, p. 40). For example, one participant photographed a mural on the wall of his school that depicted iconic animals of Africa on one side and iconic animals of Australia on the other, with some of the animals meeting in the middle to depict harmony between them. This photograph "allows the viewer to see an attempt to capture and find comfort in iconographic cultural elements of Australia and Africa in the same visual frame" (Robertson, Gifford, McMichael, and Correa-Velez, 2016, p. 42), making the unfamiliar more hospitable and familiar. This photo, and others from this project, offer a more nuanced look at the process of migration, showing a reflection of settlement that often remains silent or unstated, and insisting on the continuation of the resettlement journey after refugees have arrived in a safe third country.

Another study using arts-based methods with young people with refugee experience was completed by Ramirez and Matthews (2008). They developed the Narrating Our World (NOW) Project, which aimed at understanding educational experiences of newly arrived young people with refugee experience through artistic activities, such as photography and drawing. Working with arts-based projects helped them to generate narratives about school, and develop listening, speaking, and language skills. Ramirez and Matthews (2008) found that their participants very often chose to focus on the future, rather than on the past or the trauma of their re-settlement, and used this project to have fun and create connections with others in the present, which is helpful

because they are often isolated from other young people with similar experiences. Another important finding was that, like all young people, refugee young people want to take risks, while at the same time staying safe. This is an especially tricky line for them to walk, because young people with refugee experience are often labeled as inherently "at risk," which is an absolute state. For example, they would take pictures of themselves at parties or participating in underage drinking, which the authors describe as "contained risk" - a way of taking control of it and becoming familiar with it, rather than avoiding it (Ramirez and Matthews, 2008). The authors also emphasize throughout their writing that "refugee" is just one part of their participants' identities, and that they should not be solely identified by it. While the categorization of refugee might have granted them access to resources and a safer place to live, it can also be an unwanted label that restricts how they are imagined by others (Powell, 2015).

One study conducted in Canada with forced migrants was completed by Fobear (2016) as part of a project on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) refugee settlement in Vancouver. In this study, participants took photographs that spoke to their feelings and experiences of home and belonging, and this article explores the narrative and photography of Jordan, a refugee from South Asia. Fobear (2016) understands home and belonging to be embodied, which "allows the exploration of how LGBT refugees locate and situate themselves in their narratives of migration and settlement" (p. 35). All of Jordan's photographs included in the article are nature shots - a winding path, a close-up shot of tree bark, an owl. Fobear (2016) writes that he chose the picture of the tree bark to show a contrast between settlement and unsettlement, soft and rough, belonging and not belonging and that she sees "in Jordan's story and photographs that home for him is not a static place of rootedness, but a constantly shifting terrain that is attached to relationships, emotions, memory, and embodiment" (p. 40). Because of the high cost of living in

Vancouver, Jordan has a precarious living situation and does not consider any of the places he has lived as home, but instead, "home is located centrally in Jordan's body, a body that is sensual and experiencing the world around him" (Fobear, 2016, p. 40). Jordan's story, like other refugee claimants, is not a straight journey from oppression to freedom, but much like his photograph of the winding road, it has taken many turns. Although he can openly live as a gay man upon arrival to Canada, he has also experienced marginalization in the form of homelessness and poverty. While he does not feel as if he belongs to his country of origin because of the pain he experienced there, he still feels a connection to it through familial and cultural attachments and this leaves him with a sense of longing and loss (Fobear, 2016). As with Robertson, Gifford, McMichael, and Correa-Velez (2016), Fobear's (2016) work challenges the idea that the refugee journey ends with resettlement and draws the reader's attention to the difficulties after arriving in a safe third country.

Finally, McBrien and Day (2012) explore perspectives of 17 recently resettled youth with refugee experience through a digital photography project designed to record impressions of their daily lives in Florida. They interviewed them about their photos and also had them write two essays – one about their experiences coming to the United States and one explaining what they will do with their "newfound freedoms" (p. 547). I was quite skeptical about this question because it positions the United States as the end of a journey from no freedom to having freedom, and while the authors admit that the notion of freedom is problematic and the question came from a US citizenship documentary that has a very pro-American viewpoint, I wondered why they had chosen to ask this particular question. It does not seem to allow for space to imagine anything other than a journey from a miserable, oppressive situation to one of freedom in the United States. The top themes that were present in the photographs taken by the young

people were family and friends, where they discussed both gratitude for making new friends and sadness at missing old friends. They also discussed culture, which often took the form of a comparison between the culture of the United States and their home culture. For example, one student wrote about the educational opportunities they had in the US that they did not have before they arrived, whereas others commented on the materialism of US culture. Overall, while the participants expressed pain at the loss of, or inability to see, their families and friends, the trauma of death and war or ongoing uncertainty in their homelands or the discrimination or uncertainty in their current lives, the researchers also observed great determination. They write,

> it is important not to reduce one's response to refugee children down to a simplistic deficit model of psychopathology. The students in our study struggled with grieving and the impacts of trauma. But they also showed high indications of resilience, particularly when offered the outlet of creativity and support resulting from the photo project. (McBrien & Day, 2012, p. 563)

While this study disrupts the idea that young people with refugee experience are only and always dealing with the trauma of their past, their invocation of the term "resilience," which has been heavily critiqued in educational and social justice discourse, gives me pause. In their work on the idea of resilience, Evans and Reid (2014) situate their critique on

> the premise that liberalism is aimed today not at solving or preventing the manifestation of dangers and threats to security, but at making us forego the very idea and possibility of security, through the embrace of the necessity of our exposure to dangers of all kinds as a means by which to live well. (p. 2).

They go on to write that resilience within this line of thinking is about more than calling to increase our vigilance or preparedness against attacks, but that it encourages people to learn from the catastrophes that happen so that our society can become more responsive to an even worse fate that might happen in the future. Here, the people who are the most greatly impacted by events like war or environmental disasters are the same ones who are expected to do the resilient work of picking themselves up and going on with life. This is not to say that people cannot do this, but to recognize that relying on, or expecting, people's resilience in the face of hardship works to absolve those responsible for, or implicated in, the disasters with which people are faced and are expected to respond "resiliently." Finally, while I am still skeptical of the framing of the question on freedom, the authors did note that some participants were critical of the culture of the United States. In the following section, I will review some studies that use digital storytelling as a method to discuss and analyze refugee experience.

Digital stories.

Digital storytelling engages participants to use photos layered underneath voiceovers and/or music to create a short video (Lenette & Boddy, 2013) which, as a method for working with people of refugee backgrounds, is another way to access narratives that might otherwise be silenced or ignored. Two studies that used the creation of digital stories to highlight the settlement experiences of women with refugee backgrounds in Australia were completed by Lenette and Boddy (2013) and Lenette, Brough, Schweitzer, Correa-Velez, Murray, and Vromans (2019). Lenette and Boddy (2013) wanted to highlight the challenges and opportunities that single refugee women might encounter during settlement and demonstrate their sense of agency to navigate everyday tensions. They argue that the dynamic space of the everyday lives of refugee women allows for the enactment of a more complex set of possibilities and that this

gives meaning to the processes, rather than the traits, of resilience. They asked participants to take pictures of meaningful aspects of their lives that contribute to their resilience or well-being and used those photographs to complete photo-elicitation interviews and create a digital story, which prompted them to share aspects of their lives which were previously unexplored.

For example, one of the participants, Mila, barely discussed the meaning of being a widow during the interviews, but this was featured prominently throughout her digital story as a key determinant of her sense of well-being and resilience (Lenette & Boddy, 2013). This is particularly relevant because she was able to share an aspect of her life that greatly impacted her that might not have come to light had the researchers not included a visual component to their research. Overall, the participants shared their sense of achievement, pride, and accomplishment at the obstacles they had overcome, often using older photographs taken from before their participation in the project to reflect on how different their circumstances now were.

Interestingly, the participants declined the option to remain anonymous, taking a sense of ownership of the project and their contributions, but Lenette and Boddy (2013) also wrote about the sense of burden that this project presented to some of the participants. Out of the larger ethnographic project, only three out of eight participants undertook the visual project, with those who chose not to participate reporting that they felt uncomfortable or burdened with taking photos and participating in the project on top of everything else in their lives. This is significant because it is a reminder of who the burden of doing the important work of disrupting hegemonic representations typically falls upon, and that this extra labour can sometimes become too much to bear. Overall, Lenette and Boddy (2013) note that “the women’s narratives based on photographs and digital stories offered novel perspectives on resilience and well-being and were helpful to understand refugee women’s resettlement experiences” (p. 84).

The second study, by Lenette et al (2019), reports on a digital storytelling project within a larger, mixed-methods study looking at the settlement experiences of women who entered Australia through the *Women at Risk* program, a designation that was introduced to address the precarious situation of refugee women without the protection of a male relative and who are in danger of victimization, abuse, or harassment. Digital storytelling was employed as a method in order to allow the participants to tell a story according to their memories and interests, rather than responding to a series of questions, as this would enable the researchers to be able to critically reflect on the concepts that the participants proposed for themselves as meaningful to their lives. For example, one participant, Najiba, uses the digital story to tell part of her refugee journey, but some of it remains unknown – she speaks about her childhood in Iran, but not about the specific circumstances that led to her and her family leaving Iran and arriving in Australia (Lenette et al, 2019). The details she leaves out would be key to the narrative that determined whether she was granted refugee status, but she is more than this designation. Throughout her digital story, she tells more than the "expected" story, speaking about her late husband and the importance of the craft of weaving carpets called *gillim*, which she has taught to her daughter while in Australia. Of the three stories that they analyze in this article, some commonalities include stories of forced migration and disrupted lives which are recognizably "refugee" stories, but "all three narratives bring together meanings of social connection, identity, purpose, and hope" (p. 83) that work to contrast the more common "trauma stories." Pushing back against these familiar narratives is one way for people with refugee experience to insist on their own discursive space and the viewer learns about how they make sense of their lives through the telling of their "preferred" stories.

In a comparative study of two community-based multimedia storytelling projects in Toronto and Montreal and the narratives the participants produced, Brushwood Rose and Low (2014) look at how both participants and facilitators of these projects talk about the process of crafting a digital story and how they experience those stories as crafted objects. Both projects were committed to documenting stories of women and young people impacted by immigrant or refugee experience and the authors ask how researchers might account for the "craftedness" (p. 30) of the visual narratives they study as part of the meanings made about them. Recognizing that media production is a process of self-representation which offers complex and contradictory meanings and experiences, Brushwood Rose and Low (2014) suggest that, rather than dismiss the aesthetic qualities of the digital stories as simply a means to an end, we might start to consider how they can act as evidence that contributes to an overall understanding of the meanings of the narrative. For example, one of their participants, Amrita, told a factual account of the birth of her first child that she describes as "very controlled," but the visual narrative of her story reveals emotional content that supplements her spoken narrative. Brushwood Rose and Low (2014) write

> while the spoken narrative offers a linear and detailed story of experience, and the images reveal an emotional content, the multimedia juxtaposition of these representations offers an additional field of interpretation in which Amrita's experience of both depression and self-representation might be characterized as ambivalent and uncertain. (p. 35)

The constructed nature of the digital story might suggest that the data collected is not "real," but Brushwood Rose and Low (2014) suggest that we can look at multimedia narratives as both

crafted and empirical, not as some kind of transparent reflection of the participant's experience, but as creative and imaginative products that involve aesthetic choices and editing.

Using art and narrative as a way to raise awareness, advocate for needs, or change public policy is helpful in that it can bring issues facing people with migrant or refugee experience to light, but, as Alexandra (2008) explains, it can also result in complex lived experiences becoming simplified. She writes, "at times we accomplish important outcomes through this strategic act of defining meaning, but the possibility of opening up a narrative to reveal multiple truths and more evocative, revelatory pathways for dialogue and understanding is often shut down" (p. 101). In an attempt to counter this simplification of experiences, she facilitated a digital story-telling project for undocumented migrants in Dublin, Ireland. She found that the approach to storytelling through the creation of a digital story is different from the testimonial performances we often see in academic and NGO sectors, and that it "not only responds to the complex phenomena of migration, but to the urgency for narrative" (p. 103). She also found that when participants were able to select the story they told, they felt greater ownership of their story, and it spoke to the researchers and facilitators in more revelatory ways, similar to what Lenette and Boddy (2013) found in their study. For example, one participant, Zaman, chose to tell a story about the important role his father had played in his life, and how much he missed him now that he was gone. However, as the process of creating his digital story unfolded, it also became a story about his expectations for a better future in Ireland as a computer engineer and his daily reality as a worker in an industrial kitchen. Alexandra (2008) notes that this complexity is part of the challenge of producing images that represent difficult and emotional experiences such as discrimination and separation, and that there is a tension between the creation of the product, during which the participant makes both aesthetic and content decisions, and the final

crafted product which is subject to the researcher's interpretation. Her exploration of this tension is important because of its reminder that these are “crafted” (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014, p. 30) products and that the process of creating them is as much a part of the narrative as the final product. In the next section, I will explore some studies that use a variety of other visual methods to explore forced migrant experience – video, drawing, and “ethno-mimesis” (O’Neill & Harindranath, 2006, p. 45).

Video, drawing, “ethnomimesis”.

While young people with refugee backgrounds work to make sense of their new surroundings, it is also important to remember that they have come from somewhere else and the people and memories attached to that place will impact how they experience their new surroundings. The Home Lands Project in Melbourne, Australia explored the idea that maintaining their connections to home might enhance a sense of being at home in Melbourne for resettled young people of refugee backgrounds (Gifford & Wilding, 2013). The participants in this project were Karen Burmese refugee young people and they were asked what they remembered and missed about home and what they thought of Australia, and throughout the project, they produced photos, digital stories, a short film, and a CD of songs. The authors use the term “digital settlement escapes” to describe the three analyzed pieces in this article, arguing that there is potential

> for virtual spaces in which young people with refugee backgrounds are able to imagine and navigate their possible social horizons and environments. In the process, they are also able to escape from the realities of the challenging settlement contexts in which they conduct their daily lives—including but not limited to the project space of Home Lands. (Gifford & Wilding, 2013, p. 565)

One of the examples that they highlight in this article is a short video made during a participant's return to Mae La refugee camp in Thailand for a visit to see his family. Part of the focus of this film is the everyday scenes of life – people watching television, children playing, people sitting down to a communal meal, providing a reminder of this life and displaying a longing for what was left behind. Gifford and Wilding (2013) note the positive portrayal of pre-migration life that, although contained, "is none the less rich with the sociality of daily life. The edited images chosen for inclusion in this clip are not those of the poor vulnerable refugee but of a different way of life and a community now left behind" (p. 570). This nostalgic representation of home, a source of fond memories rather than simply a narrative of trauma, can be read as resisting the narrative of a settled forced migrant who is entirely shaped by the trauma of their past and reminds the viewer that people with forced migrant experience had lives before leaving their countries of origin - lives that were filled with people and places that they miss.

In a study analyzing the pre-migration roles and responsibilities of refugee youth and how these have changed since their arrival in Canada, Guruge, Hynie, Shakya, Akbari, Htoo, and Abiyo (2015) employed drawing as a method with participants aged 16-24 from Afghan, Karen, or Sudanese communities who had arrived as refugee claimants in Canada in the last five years. Each participant drew two pictures – one to represent pre-migration responsibilities and one depicting post-migration responsibilities – and they discussed their drawings in a group and with the researchers in semi-structured interviews. Overall, they found that, while the participants continued with the same roles and responsibilities in Canada that they had before arriving, they added responsibilities upon arrival. For example, in one Karen participant's drawings, her "before" picture, which features her home, school, and a picture of her friends, is much more sparse than her "after" picture, which features school, the seniors' home where she volunteers,

and a church, along with much more writing listing her various responsibilities. This list includes going to school, volunteering at the library and at the seniors' home, cooking, cleaning, singing in the church choir and participating in youth group activities. Another participant, from the Sudan, explains the growing responsibilities she took on upon arrival in Canada. Before arriving, her responsibilities included cooking, cleaning, and babysitting, whereas after, she has greater responsibilities outside the home to help herself and her family. These include working to help support them financially, helping her mother with documentation, watching out for her brother and making sure he is hanging out with the "right" kids, fitting in at school and navigating new and challenging weather. In many cases, the new responsibilities were spoken of as just a part of their new situations, as well as chance for personal growth (Guruge et al, 2015). Many of the drawings completed by the children in the project *We Are Here Now,* one of the projects that I will be examining in chapter five, compared their lives in Canada to their lives in their countries of origin, and while this study emphasized the visual component less than in many of the other projects, it did allow for the participants to create something that represented their lives and gave some insight into how they have changed since arriving in Canada, often challenging the idea that life is automatically easier after arriving in a safe third country.

In their work with Bosnian and Afghan refugees in Britain, O'Neill and Harindranath (2006) engage in participatory action research (PAR) to build theory based on lived experience using both visual and narrative biographical materials. They write that the nearly complete absence of the perspective of the refugee "raises important ethico-political issues relating to the politics of representation, democracy, and immigration" (p. 41). In this article, they discuss a project that emphasized the sharing of memories of exile, displacement, and belonging, and that worked to reproduce these memories artistically, in both poetic and visual form. They looked to

develop these hybrid texts, drawing on the relationship between art and ethnography, as "ethno-mimesis" (p. 45). The narrative and digital photographs were part of an exhibition bringing together the work of an Afghan community in London and a Bosian community in the Midlands. O'Neill and Harindranath (2006) provide an example of a poem entitled *In The Name of Kabul,* a short written piece on the theme of good neighbours and a visual piece that depicts a colourful and festive scene of ribbon, decorations, and candy placed on top of stark black and white images of a set of keys and what appears to be bread that has been ripped in half. They note that the texts work on a few different levels: firstly, they document people's life stories as testimony to suffering, exile, and forced displacement, as well as the experience of exile. Secondly, the visual representation re-presents "their life story narratives, saying the 'unsayable,' challenging normative media representations and producing auto/biographical visual and poetic texts to re-present their lives and experiences as lived" (p. 47). Thirdly, the combination of the visual and textual, and its presentation in both the communities of the creators and others, helps to foster practical processes of intervention for both the creators and the audiences. O'Neill and Harindranath (2006) insist that biographical research can offer resistance to dominant narratives related to asylum and refuge by producing "alternative and renewed narratives that generate social knowledge to inform, raise awareness and empower" (p. 43), countering the normative and stereotyped stories accessed through larger media institutions, and that this knowledge production is a form of social justice. This study was particularly interesting for me to consider because the combination of the textual and the visual, as well as the focus on the biographical, are themes that I am exploring in my own work.

Conclusion

The studies I have reviewed in this section all have one thing in common – they employed arts-based or visual methods with participants from forced migrant backgrounds to explore some aspect of that experience. Because of the nature of these projects, they all centred around a particular group of people, such as refugee women or youth labeled "at-risk" or LGBT refugees living in Vancouver, and for the most part, they all employ one or two media – photographs, digital stories, drawings. My study looks across a broad array of people, in different situations, with different experiences, and of different ages, as well as three different media – graphic narratives, photographs, and drawings – and looks for ways to compare and contrast these different narrative and visual forms. The following chapter will document some of the ways in which refugees and forced migrants are constructed by NGOs and the news media, followed by an examination of four projects that provide alternative, nuanced, and complex representations of people with forced migrant experience.

Chapter Three: NGO and News Media Images

> Images shape what can and cannot be seen and indirectly, what can and cannot be thought. They influence not only what can be said legitimately in public but also what cannot be said. They help prevent some political positions from being established while leaving open a discursive space that can be occupied by others. (Bleiker, Campbell, Hutchison, & Nicholson, 2013, p. 400)

A forlorn-looking woman sitting in the sun holding a baby. A man wading ashore from a small boat carrying two young children. A group of men waiting to give blood in St. John's, Newfoundland. A child sitting on the side of the road, smiling at the camera. Government and non-government organization (NGO) officials holding forth, both in the field and in brightly lit, sanitized rooms behind a podium and in front of their country's flag. Images of forced migrants, and those who represent them, fill our screens and our imaginations as the world continues to grope for solutions to accommodate the millions of forcibly displaced people around the world. When I began this work analyzing images of refugees and forced migrants from NGO and news media websites, I must confess that I was expecting to find a rather straight-forward picture that painted forced migrants as abject victims in need of help – this is the picture that the literature prepared me to see. While this certainly emerged in some images, the picture was more complex than I was expecting, with the difference in images between the NGO and news media websites of particular interest. This chapter looks at images from NGO and news media websites and asks: what and who are these images showing? What messages are they sending to their viewers and readers, and what are the narratives they are perpetuating, challenging, or responding to?

Constructing representations is an act of political power that helps us interpret our world, shapes our imagination, and forms the context for making and implementing policy (Johnson, 2011). In this chapter, I will outline the objects of representation that I analyzed in order to get a sense of the dominant narratives that shape our thinking about refugees and forced migrants. I

am primarily working with Hall's (1997a, 1997b; Jhally, 2014) ideas of representation. Recall from the introductory chapter that Hall (1997b) writes that the relation between "things," (objects, for example), signs (words, sounds, or images), and language produces meaning, and representation is the process that links the three. Representation is also related to the exercise of power, not just economic and physical coercion, but also the power to represent someone or something in a particular way (Hall, 1997a). This attempt to firmly fix meaning in place, to ensure that when someone sees an image of a person or group of people, there is only a limited range of options for who they can be, what they can do, and what their possibilities or constraints are (Jhally, 2014) is essential to forming the stereotype of who refugees and forced migrants are or what they look like (Wright, 2002).

I examined images from the websites of two NGO's: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Refugees International (RI). I chose these organizations because they both work with and for refugees and forced migrants, but also because they offer different perspectives. The UNHCR is one of the largest international organizations that works directly with refugees and forced migrants, and RI is a smaller organization based in the United States and does work around the world with refugees and forced migrants. I also examined images from the websites of two national media outlets and two newspapers: the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), CTV, *The Globe and Mail*, and *The Toronto Sun*. I chose these media outlets because they are all large, influential sources to which Canadians turn for news.

As stated in the introduction, constructing representations is an act of political power (Johnson, 2011) and one of the ways that power plays out is who can look and who is being looked at. In the case of many photographs of refugees and forced migrants, "the 'Third World'

plays the role of objective reality so that the 'First World' viewer can remain the one who is able to see, consider, create meaning and decide whether or not to be involved – the individualist subject by definition" (Szörényi, 2006, p. 35). While photography is a tool for documenting human rights abuses, it is also a tool of colonialism – the emergence of the "other" depended on photography, constructed for both public and private consumption by Western audiences (Sliwinski, 2011). One of the ways that this plays out today is through the websites of NGOs who are committed to doing the work of helping refugees and forced migrants and must fundraise to support this work. In the next section, I will explore the role of photography as "evidence" and how events that have been photographed are positioned as important historically. I will then move on to outline the themes that emerged from my examination of the websites of the UNHCR and RI: a focus on women and children, women pictured in still poses, and the facial expressions of the people who were photographed. I will end the chapter by discussing my examination of images from the news media outlets, which showed different kinds of images than the NGO's, focusing on "grateful, deserving" refugees and forced migrants who had already arrived in Canada, as well as images of borders and fences. I argue that these images work to reinforce a dichotomy between two categories of forced migrants: that there are grateful, deserving refugees who are "allowed" into Canada, and there are others who are not, and must be contained by borders and fences.

Photography

> But despite the presumption of veracity that gives all photographs authority, interest, seductiveness, the work that photographers do is no generic exception to the usually shady commerce between art and truth. Even when photographers are most concerned with mirroring reality, they are still haunted by tacit imperatives of taste and conscience. (Sontag, 1973, p. 6)

In this chapter, I examine photographs taken of forced migrants or photos related to forced migration. Photographs are used daily in a variety of ways across the world – to convince the viewer of something, to sway the viewer's opinion, to elicit emotion, or to show something beautiful or meaningful. Whatever the intent of the photograph, there is a sense that the viewer is looking at proof that something happened at a particular time, in a particular place, and this was captured by the photographer to preserve for all time. However, photographs, like all visual media, are the product of choices made by the photographer that impact how people read them and the meanings that can be made from them. In this section, I will discuss the perceived objectivity of photography and the power of photographs to define an event or group of people.

"But I saw it!"

While a photojournalist's "snap" has authority as an objective recording of something that has happened (Burgin, 1999), this is not the whole story. Photographs are fragmentary and incomplete, showing a particular framing of an event that represent choices made by the photographer (Sekula, 1999; Wissman, 2008). In fact, Burgin (1999) goes so far as to write that "manipulation is of the essence of photography; *photography would not exist without it*" (p. 41, emphasis original). Sontag (1973, 1999) also addresses this idea in her work. She writes that photographic images have "virtually unlimited authority" (p. 80), which stems from properties that are peculiar to images produced by cameras (Sontag, 1999). She goes on to say that photographs are as much of an interpretation of the world as a painting is, despite the sense that it is capturing reality (Sontag, 1973), but even more than this, that photos are not simply an interpretation of the real, but a trace of the real, like a footprint (Sontag, 1999). This link between the photograph and what the photograph depicts is one of the reasons they are imagined as displaying some kind of objective reality.

Goldstein (2007) writes that we should not approach an image expecting it to represent reality, but instead, we should assume that it does not, and that every image is the result of several choices made by the photographer. Images are edited in the moment the photographer decides to photograph one thing and not another and all photographs are manipulated in one way or another – for example, was it a conscious choice to shoot one thing and not another? What does the photographer want us to notice in that photo? Do we see something that they did not intend? These questions may have more than one answer or no answer at all (Goldstein, 2007). Content, as well as the composition of the photo, might also be produced deliberately (Burgin, 1999). When working with photographs, researchers need to be careful to not romanticize their capacity (Miller, 2015), as the line between thinking that what it captures is real and thinking that images are a construction is always moving and sometimes images ask us to hold both positions simultaneously (Stanczak, 2007).

Pics or it didn't happen.

> A photograph is not just the result of an encounter between an event and a photographer; picture-taking is an event in itself, and one with ever more peremptory rights – to interfere with, to invade, or to ignore whatever is going on. Our very sense of situation is now articulated by the camera's interventions. The omnipresence of cameras persuasively suggests that time consists of interesting events, events worth photographing (Sontag, 1973, p. 11)

Photographs are very commonly used to illustrate historical events, suggesting that significant events are those which are pictured (Sekula, 1999). This is encapsulated in the modern phrase "pics or it didn't happen," meaning that, unless pictures are posted on social media, a particular event did not occur or is not important. In her work on archival photographs and labour, Sekula (1999) notes that the selection and interpretation within photographic production is rendered invisible and pictures are very commonly used to illustrate history,

suggesting that significant events are those which are pictured, and that these visual histories reproduce "established patterns of historical thought" (p. 188). She goes on to write that "awareness of history as an *interpretation* of the past succumbs to a faith in history as *representation*. The viewer is confronted, not by *historical-writing*, but by the appearance of *history itself*" (p. 187, emphasis in original). This faith in images that show history as representation de-emphasizes the importance of interpreting images and the different meanings that might emerge, and instead relies on images to tell us something objective about history and "what happened."

The connection between violence, reality, and photography is an interesting one to explore and Sontag (1999) takes this up in her work. She writes that reality has come to be seen as more like what we are shown by cameras – for example, those who have experienced a violent event describe it as "like a movie" in order to explain how real it was. In viewing photographs of such events, we are both curious and vulnerable - we are curious about events like war or a plane crash, and this curiosity is partly satisfied through viewing photographs, but we are also vulnerable to disturbing events depicted in photos in ways we might not be in reality (Sontag, 1999). She goes on to write that "that vulnerability is part of the distinctive passivity of someone who is a spectator twice over, spectator of events already shaped, first by the participants and second by the image maker" (p. 88). In our own lives, we can choose when to look and what to focus on, but when viewing a photograph or a movie, the photographer or filmmaker has done this for us, putting us in a more passive situation (Sontag, 1999). In her writing on war and photography, Butler (2005) gives the example of Rumsfeld's initial decision not to show the disturbing photos taken at Abu Ghraib of American soldiers tormenting prisoners to the press because he was afraid this would be what came to define Americans – this shows the enormous

power of photographs, not only to represent Americans, but to build an interpretation of who they are. Perhaps Rumsfeld was concerned that Americans who saw these images would be vulnerable in the face of what they represented and would consequently be less likely to support the War on Terror.

With respect to images of refugees and forced migrants, there are many questions around how their situations should be photographed – is it more important to show images that contain distressed people in order to illustrate how much help they need, and therefore solicit more donations in order to help them? If so, then what are the consequences of the over-saturation of these kinds of images? What tools might the viewer bring to viewing images of refugees and forced migrants? How might the curiosity and vulnerability that Sontag (1999) writes about impact our reading of the images? In the following section, I will discuss photographs that appeared on the websites of the UNHCR and RI, and how my reading of these images was impacted by these kinds of questions.

Non-Governmental Organizations

The UNHCR is one of the largest organizations in the world assisting refugees and forced migrants and works with an annual budget of $7.7 billion, 86% of which comes from donor countries and the European Union (www.unhcr.org). Citizens play a role in persuading their governments to contribute (or not), and what countries donate might not reflect what they are able to donate. For example, Canada did not get a seat at the UN security council partly because our contributions to humanitarian and development aid have not been very substantial (Harris, 2020). The UN was created in 1950 after the Second World War (WWII) to help the millions of Europeans who had either fled from or lost their homes and was initially given a three-year mandate. The original definition of a refugee was more limited than today's – it focused on

people who were displaced in Europe before January 1951, but in 1967, the specific reference to dates and places was removed (Johnson, 2011). The UNHCR primarily co-ordinates and looks after refugee camps while refugees wait for one of three "durable solutions": They can voluntarily return to their country (repatriation), they can integrate where the camp is located (local integration), or they can apply to move to a safe third country (re-settlement) (Johnson, 2011). According to Johnson (2011), voluntary repatriation is emerging as the preferred, and sometimes only solution, and when this is not possible, people often stay permanently in camps that are supposed to be temporary. Parekh (2017) writes about how this has become the de facto fourth option, since the average length of stay in a refugee camp is 17 years.

RI began in 1979 as a citizens' movement to protect Indochinese refugees, and since they do not accept UN (United Nations) or government funding, their advocacy is independent. It is a different kind of organization from the UNHCR, both in size and funding – while the UNHCR is a large, multilateral organization that relies heavily on funding from governments, RI is smaller, with its headquarters located in Washington, D.C. and relies on private donations. On the bottom of every page of their website, along with their contact information and important links to other parts of their site is a statement that reads "Refugees International (RI) advocates for lifesaving assistance and protection for displaced people and promotes solutions to displacement crises. We are an independent organization, and do not accept any government or UN funding" (www.refugeesinternational.org). They also conduct field work missions to identify displaced people's needs for basic services, such as food, water, and health care, and use this information to challenge policy makers to improve the lives of the displaced. They sum up their work by stating, "where there are needs, we witness what is lacking, we present solutions and we demand action" (www.refugeesinternational.org).

On the NGO websites, key visual themes that emerged included a focus on women and children and women pictured in still poses. I expected to see an overwhelming number of images of people looking distressed, frightened or unhappy, and while some of the images did show this, there were more images of people smiling or looking calm than I was expecting to see. In the first part of this chapter, I argue that most of the images work to challenge the narrative that refugees and forced migrants are threatening by showing them as people who need help and appear unlikely to pose a threat to receiving countries. This is likely due to the mandate of the NGOs, which is to raise money to help forced migrants. However, by responding to and challenging the idea that refugees are a threat, these images work to reinforce the idea that refugees and forced migrants are abject victims with no agency. In particular, the focus on women and children as the victims of the forced migrant crisis might also underline the idea that other kinds of refugees, such as racialized males, are threatening.

A focus on women and children.

> Achor Achor is rifling through the magazines on the end table. He finds something of interest and shows me a newsmagazine with a cover story about Sudan. A Darfurian woman, with cracked lips and yellow eyes, looks into the camera, at once despairing and defiant. Do you know what she wants, Julian? She is a woman who had a camera pushed into her face and she stared into the lens. (Eggers, 2006, pp. 249-250)

One of the themes that I noticed early in the analysis was a focus on images that featured women and children. While there are roughly equal numbers of male and female forced migrants, 40% of the world's displaced people are children (unhcr.org). Out of 43 images examined from the NGO websites, 24 of them featured either women, children, or women and children together. When children were featured in the foreground or the centre of the shot, they were usually in pairs or groups. Spatially, the children were most commonly looking directly into the camera and the photographer had positioned the camera either directly at the eyeline of the

children or slightly above them. This section will discuss how a reliance on women and children emphasizes the vulnerability of forced migrants, positioning them as less threatening to receiving countries.

Innocent children who are the future.

One theme that emerged through my analysis of images on the UNHCR and RI websites was a focus on images of children. An illustrative example of this kind of image is taken from the "Emergencies" drop down menu of the UNHCR website and is one of nine images on that page, each leading to a different emergency to which they are responding (Image 1 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (Producer). (2017). *Fleeing Boko Haram: "Every day we pray for protection and peace."* [digital video]. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/nigeria-emergency.html on March 22, 2018.). The image is titled "Nigeria Emergency" and is a close-up photo of two black children walking against a blurry background, looking directly at the camera. The smaller child is squinting into the sun and standing in front of the taller child, who gazes straight at the camera with her mouth closed and very little expression on her face. They are younger children – perhaps five and eight years old, at a guess – and their young age highlights their innocence in the face of the emergency that is happening around them. There are body parts of adults on the outside of the frame around them – an arm here, a chest there, showing that they are not alone. The presence of adults around these two children indicates that the photographer has made a strategic decision to focus on these two children. They look directly at the viewer, perhaps in a deliberate confrontation of the person sitting comfortably at their computer thousands of miles away – these children are looking at me, so I cannot look away.

The UNHCR is an organization doing necessary and important work to help the millions of forced migrants around the world – they offer life-saving assistance and support to people who badly need it. However, as one of the largest organizations assisting refugees and forced migrants, the UNHCR plays a role in their discursive representation, which has come under some critical scrutiny. Viewers of this photo would likely feel sympathy for these children, who look forlorn and appear to be suffering, in need of support from the UN and its donors. The text participates in Barthes' (1999) idea of *anchorage*, which anchors the viewer to the idea that this is a picture of an emergency and primes them to think that these children are in danger. It is important to note that girls in northern Nigeria are in danger of being kidnapped to become brides of Boko Haram soldiers and the UN is trying to raise awareness and money to provide protection for these girls – thus, it is not surprising that they would post such a picture to highlight this issue. Symbolically, children are often used to represent the future – appeals to "think of the children" crop up when discussing long-term issues such as climate change, and parents will often make sacrifices in the present in order to give their children a chance for a better future. Perhaps the viewer is being asked to think about the possible futures of these two children and how they might be in danger of a terrible future or no future at all. Or more broadly, what kind of future might the viewer be implicated in, or responsible for - one where children are living through emergencies or one where children are safe? Through donating to the UNHCR, the viewer is contributing towards a safer future for these children and others like them.

Directing the viewer's attention to the future also ignores any past responsibility that may have contributed to this emergency. The emphasis on individual testimony and images makes those individuals appear "save-able" and tends to focus less on causal structural factors (Powell, 2015). For example, how might colonialism have played a role in contributing to this

emergency? Since the 1970's, the increase in refugee women and children from vulnerable regions in the global South fleeing hunger, repression, or conflict has "raised uncomfortable questions about the legacy of colonialism and the instability of the world system" (Marfleet, 2006, p. 151). Does the UNHCR have a responsibility to make and engage with these kinds of connections or does their focus on fundraising for people who desperately need it absolve them of becoming mired in these complexities? It is also important to bear in mind that countries in the west, who are largely responsible for the devastating impacts of colonialism, are not taking responsibility for this and so force the UNHCR to privately fundraise and persuade countries to fund them, complicating the issue further.

Although children are associated with innocence, refugee children may not be granted the same protection as other, non refugee children. While the child is associated with newness and the future, this argument presumes a privileged child endowed with futurity, ignoring colonial legacies that deny marginalized children this promise (Dyer, 2017, as cited in Farley, 2018). Evans's (2017) work *Threads from the Refugee Crisis* intersperses messages that she has received with the graphic narrative reporting that she is doing in the camp in Calais, France. One message reads "these cute refugee babies grow into vile adults who want to destroy our country and all thats [sic] in it" (p. 32). Gender plays a role here as well – when the body of Alan Kurdi was photographed after he drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, the images of this toddler's small body inspired compassion, but there is a growing view that eventually boys become dangerous, violent men from whom society needs protection (Pruitt, Berents, & Munro, 2018). So, while images of forced migrant children who are in need of help may highlight their vulnerability and initially position them as non-threatening to any potential receiving country, it is important to keep in mind that not all children have equal access to the narratives of innocence and futurity.

Women and children together.

Along with images of children, I found that images of women with children were quite common. While RI had fewer images overall on their website as compared with the UNHCR, and of the images that I examined, fewer featured women and children, there were still ten that fit with this trend. In one of these images taken from the front page of the RI website, a black woman stands in front of a wall amid some makeshift tents (Image 2 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Yarnell, M. (Photographer). (2017, July 13). *Woman stands with children*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.refugeesinternational.org on March 28, 2018). She is holding a baby and three older children stand with her, with the top of a fourth child's head just barely visible at the bottom of the page. The headline reads: "Testimony on Somalia's Current Security and Stability Status" (www.refugeesinternational.org). The woman's mouth is slightly open, and she has a distressed look on her face. The three children to the right of the woman are school-aged and those whose facial expressions are visible are sad, angry or distressed – the girl in the middle has her left index finger in her mouth, suggesting uncertainty. She, and the child to her left, are standing slightly behind the woman, perhaps seeking protection from her. The boy on the far left is the only child whose facial expression is entirely visible, and he looks angry - his mouth is open, almost as if he is speaking angrily to the photographer. He stands slightly in front of the other two children, as if he wants to offer them some protection. The baby that the woman is holding has her hands to her ears, suggesting that they are in a noisy environment that is unsuitable for young children, and they all stand in a straight line, as if posed. The image of a woman with children is meant to put a human face on a larger tragedy, conveying their helplessness in the face of this situation and their need for help from visitors to the website. If so, the absence of a man could be significant as they potentially represent

protection for women and children, signalling to the viewer that this woman and these children are lacking protection.

The absence of a man could also be the result of black masculinity being associated with danger and the perpetration of violence, rather than victimization. This could be a strategic choice by these websites, who want to counter the association of refugees with violence and instability by emphasizing vulnerable women and children who need help. It could also be an indication of who is available to photograph, as men are generally the combatants in conflicts and women and children are the ones forced to flee or live in uncertainty. In their article about the role that gender and age play in the construction of the migration crisis in Europe, Pruitt, Berents, and Munro (2018) write that "rather than suggest that simply the presence of young men leads to violence, we advocate for the need to think about *how* particular constructions of masculinity lead to violence and how such constructions might be altered, unmade, or resisted" (p. 697). For example, the 2016 New Year's Eve assaults on women in Cologne and other German cities was used by many media reports to "legitimize and heighten the perceived threat of migrant men" (p. 698) by emphasizing the reported appearance of the men as "Arab" and the predominant use of the term "migrant" (Pruitt, Berents, & Munro, 2018). The authors state that, while it is of course important to support the victims' right to justice, it is also important to interrogate how the characteristics of those who perpetrated the violence came to stand in as inherent features of all the migrants and asylum seekers from the global South. This reliance on assumptions of young men as dangerous even when they are fleeing conflict positions them against a narrow understanding of women and children as innocent civilians, which limits our understanding of their experiences of conflict and displacement (Pruitt, Berents, & Munro, 2018). Taking this beyond a limit to understanding, allowing these assumptions about who

forced migrants are to dictate the terms of the conversation also entrenches a desire for ignorance so that our own investments are not called into question and we are not implicated in anything which might disturb the tidiness of our world.

While the UN and RI might be using their representational power to portray refugees and forced migrants in ways that undermine the discourse of the forced migrant as a threat, they are also simultaneously reifying these discourses, and the tensions here are worth exploring. For example, in the lower left side of the image described above, there is a school-aged boy looking directly into the camera with an angry look on his face. Perhaps he is angry at the photographer for asking them to pose or perhaps he is offering an angry expression as a sign of protection for the others with him. While children are symbolically associated with innocence, this boy is black and might not be afforded the same level of innocence as white children. In their study, Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, and DiTomasso (2014) found that, while up to nine years old children were read as innocent regardless of race, from the age of ten onwards, participants began to think of black children as less innocent than other children at every age, which could lead to a conflict in the perception of children needing protection. Farley (2018) provides an example at an even younger age, where an incident in a school prompted teachers to call the police because a six-year-old girl was supposedly kicking and punching staff. She goes on to write, “in this story, a 48-pound Black girl is read as a physical threat to the full-grown adults surrounding her” (p. 64). This example shows that even very young black children can be read as inherently violent and dangerous, and the boy in the image described above could be read as embodying a future threat to potential receiving countries.

“Who cares about the young men?”

While they were less common, there were examples of men photographed with children. One such example from the "Emergencies" drop-down menu of the UNHCR website is titled "Yemen Emergency" and features an older racialized man sitting on the ground in front of a temporary shelter with two young children in his lap and another, older boy sitting to his right (Image 3 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Hamoud, M. (Photographer). (2018). *Man sits with children*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.unhcr.org/emergencies.html on March 22, 2018). Like the first image, this was one of nine images on the emergencies page to which the UN was responding. Behind the man and children is a temporary canvas tent fastened to the dirt ground with ropes and pegs, with another tent in the background. While the man and the children draw the eye, I think the canvas tent dominates this photo. It looms above them and takes up most of the background, blocking out a large portion of the sky. The looming tents, and the ropes sticking out every which way, stress the temporary nature of these accommodations and the tenuous situation in which these people are living. These kinds of makeshift tents are a synecdochal sign for a refugee camp – a part standing in for a whole (Rose, 2016), and their precarious nature – thrown together with whatever is available in the hopes that they will offer some protection – mirrors the structure and purpose of the refugee camp as a whole. Parekh (2017) writes that, although refugee camps were initially intended to be a temporary response to a crisis, and that is why they are often built with precarious materials that can be easily put up and taken down, they have become long-term places where people live for years, and sometimes decades.

This image evokes sympathy for the man, who, judging by his gray and white beard, is older and is perhaps caring for these young boys. His age might also account for the still pose – he is not expected to do the kind of physical work that a younger man might in this situation. He

cannot possibly be a threat – he is just an older man, looking after these children. Perhaps they are his grandchildren? Showing an image of a still, older man with children might help to assuage fears of refugee and forced migrant men "coming over here" and taking "our" jobs, a concern which increased in strength in the 1970's at the end of an economic boom in the West which also coincided with an increase in forced migration (Castles, 2003). A focus on women and children might also be an indication of who is available to photograph, as forced migrant women and children are more likely to end up in camps, while spontaneous arrivals at European borders are usually men (Johnson, 2011). Evans (2017) makes note of this in her graphic novel *Threads From the Refugee Crisis*, where she reports that the camp that sprung up in Calais, France is 95% male. She writes, "Who cares about the young men? When home is a war zone, for men 'of fighting age' the choice is conscription or extermination. Everybody here could have been looking down the barrel of a gun" (p. 15). This focus on women and children emphasizes their vulnerability and victimhood, stressing to viewers that these people are not a threat. However, in so doing, this possibly positions young men, through their absence, as embodying a potential threat to receiving countries.

Still women, distressed faces.

This section focuses on the poses and facial expressions of the people in the images displayed by the NGOs. In particular, I look at how women are often photographed in still poses and how the facial expressions of the people photographed contribute to the narratives that are told about refugees and forced migrants. I argue that the still poses in which women are photographed contribute to a narrative of vulnerability. While there were fewer people with facial expressions of distress than I was expecting, those that I did examine contribute to this narrative.

Stillness as less threatening.

I expected to find forced migrant men photographed in active poses more often than forced migrant women, but this was not the case. Of the 43 images I examined from the NGO's, six showed men in active poses and five showed women in active poses – roughly the same numbers. However, images that showed people in still poses and not engaged in any kind of activity (such as reading together or addressing a group of people) revealed a larger gap. Of the images I examined, men were photographed in still poses only twice and women were photographed in still poses 11 times. The second image described above is an example of this, and another image from the front page of the RI website is also illustrative of this. In this image, four black women are sitting inside a shelter on the floor, with facial expressions ranging from questioning to bored to challenging to fatigue (Image 4 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Lamarche, A. & Yarnell, M. (Photographers). (2018, March 12). *Four women sit together*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.refugeesinternational.org on March 28, 2018). The headline reads: "Political Pressure to Return: Putting Northeast Nigeria's Displaced Citizens at Risk" (www.refugeesinternational.org). All four women are sitting together in what appears to be a temporary shelter, suggesting they know one another. Behind them, and up against the rusted tin walls of the shelter are the supplies of a precarious life – a bag of what looks like rice, a bucket, some other items in a clear plastic bag.

Refugee women are typically perceived as less threatening than men as they are less likely to move because of economic pull factors and they tend to move shorter distances (Johnson, 2011). They are also usually seen as dependents and less active in the political arena, their activities meaningful only in relation to the males in their lives (Marfleet, 2006; O'Neill, 2010). Focusing on images where refugee and forced migrant women are in still poses might be

a way for the NGOs who help them to respond to the discourse of refugees as threatening by showing them in poses that highlight their vulnerability and their need for help. Johnson (2011) writes that "by constructing the refugee as a voiceless victim, the agency of the citizen is preserved within the same discourse that diminishes the perceived political threat (and, subsequently, the economic threat) of the refugee" (p. 1028).

While there was a trend of women and children in still poses, this was not always the case. I also examined five images that showed women in an active pose. One example of this was taken from the front page of the UNHCR website, showing a racialized woman in water past her waist with three children (Image 5 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Arnold, R. (Photographer). (2018). *Woman swims with children*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.unhcr.org on March 22, 2018). She is looking to the left of the photographer with her mouth open, and there is a distressed look on her face. One boy, aged approximately three or four years old, clings to her as she wades through the water, clutching an open bottle of water. An older boy, about 10 or 11 years old, lifts a young boy, about three or four years old from under the arms, as if preparing to hand him to someone else. There is no headline, but a Tweet by Filippo Grandi, the High Commissioner for Refugees at the UN, reporting that humanitarian agencies are asking for more aid money to support Rohingya refugees hosted by Bangladesh (www.unhcr.org). This image was on the front page of the UNHCR website and was likely seen by many people when they visited the site. It also highlights a person in distress, which I will discuss further below.

Distress, unhappiness, fear.

In her third Massey Lecture titled *The Return of Mass Flight*, Welsh (2016) discusses how asylum comes from the Greek meaning "what cannot be seized," and that during ancient

times, the persecuted and distressed would go to temples to seek asylum. The concept of asylum features in all the monotheistic religions, imposing a duty of hospitality and protection for strangers, and to the distressed (Welsh, 2016). Perhaps this long history of having a duty to respond to people in distress has primed people in the west to expect to see desperate people seeking asylum – this was certainly the case for me, as I expected to see the majority of the people in the photos looking distressed, frightened or unhappy. Out of the 43 images from NGOs that I examined, 11 showed people looking either distressed, unhappy, or in danger, which was fewer than I expected**.** The UNHCR website showed more of these kinds of images than the RI website: eight from UNHCR vs three from RI. Part of the reason for this is likely the sections of the UNHCR website I examined – I looked at their front page and the "Emergencies" drop-down menu, so it is likely that there will be more pictures of people looking distressed in those sections of the website. I chose to examine those sections because visitors to the website will see the front page immediately and because specific crises reported on in the news are likely a main draw for people to visit their website to see what is happening in those areas of the world, so these images are important to how visitors to their website see and imagine refugees and forced migrants.

An example which illustrates this pattern (while also highlighting the pattern of showing women and children in still poses) is from the "Emergencies" menu of the UNHCR website. This image is titled "Syria Emergency" and shows a woman and four children sitting on the edge of an open field, with items piled and scattered all around them (Image 6 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Unidentified photographer. (2018). *Woman sits with children outside*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.unhcr.org/emergencies.html on March 22, 2018). The woman's mouth is turned down and there is a very sad look on her face. To her left are three young boys, aged approximately 2-10 years old, who appear to be sitting on a pile of

blankets. Behind the boys and the woman, there are items that stretch out for several feet – blankets, pillows, chairs, cushions – and at the edge of all these items is another child, who appears to be a girl. She is blurry but sits with her body facing away from the photographer, looking back over her shoulder at them. What is odd about this photo is that the trappings of domesticity (pillows, blankets, cushions) are outside instead of inside, where they should be, signifying that something bad has happened. As discussed above, the absence of a man is also telling and could potentially provoke feelings of protection in the viewer – this woman is left alone with four children in the aftermath of a difficult situation and she is left on her own to protect them. It could also work to highlight their vulnerability and diminish any sense of a threat that racialized men are perceived to pose.

As the suffering of others looms larger through the globalization of images, people may feel as if they ought to care more, but they may also feel as if the sufferings of others is too vast for them to be able to do anything, making compassion flounder (Sontag, 2003). In order to alter conduct, photos must shock or disturb the viewer, calling to mind Barthes' (1981) punctum, which pushes the viewer to see beyond what it permits us to see within the frame of the image, but Sontag (2003) notes that shock too can become familiar and wear off. Towards the end of her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag (2003) writes that more value should be placed on thinking, that there is "nothing wrong with standing back and thinking" (p. 118), even though we may feel as if we do not have the right to experience others' suffering from a distance. This is something I grappled with throughout this process, and I tried to take Sontag's advice about "standing back and thinking" by carefully examining each image and asking questions about it, especially if I felt "pricked" by it. For example, for myself, the punctum of the image described above consists of the chair and the cushions towards the top-right of the image – the chair is

perched haphazardly at an angle at which no one can sit, and the cushions, while soft and comfortable, are outside where they will soon become wet and dirty. I found it disturbing to see these kinds of comfort items out of place in a field: Are these their belongings, and if so, why are they outside? Is the shadow casting across the front of the shot the shadow of their house? Have they been thrown out of their house? If so, why? Are they waiting for someone, and if so, who?

As stated in the introduction to this section, I expected to see considerably more images of people looking distressed or frightened than people looking calm or happy, but this did not bear out in this particular analysis. Of the 43 images I examined, six featured people who were smiling – two from UNHCR and four from RI. One example from the RI website, under the "Our Work" section, shows a young, black girl sitting or crouching down on a dirt road beside some grass on which sit temporary shelters (Image 7 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Unidentified photographer (2018). *A young girl sits on the side of the road, smiling slightly for the camera*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.refugeesinternational.org on March 28, 2018). She fills up the right side of the frame from top to bottom and is wearing a royal blue shirt, her hair is braided, and she is looking directly into the camera, appearing happy to have her picture taken. Behind her are several white tents and make-shift clothes racks that stretch into the background of the shot. This seemingly peaceful image provides a complication to the idea that people are always and only in distress or unhappy in refugee camps and echoes the experiences of Thi Bui, a cartoonist who documented her family's forced migrant experience from Vietnam to Malaysia in her graphic narrative *The Best We Could Do*. Her family spent a few months in Pulau Besar camp, and one of the ways in which she described it was "a wonderful vacation," followed by illustrations of her and her sisters having fun and enjoying themselves (Bui, 2017, p. 270). She positions this description

close to a description of the difficulties of daily life – boiling drinking water, gathering wood from the forest, and not having proper facilities (Bui, 2017, p. 274), forcing the reader to confront the complexity of both these experiences – fun and difficult – as being possible inside a refugee camp.

The UNHCR and RI websites were quite different in their depiction of people looking distressed, frightened or unhappy – I only examined three images from the RI website that fit with this theme, while I examined eight from the UNHCR website. Perhaps this is a way for them to position themselves as different from the UN, and one way in which they differ is how they show refugees and forced migrants. Similar to my analysis of parts of the UNHCR website, I analyzed images from the front page of the RI website because those would immediately catch the eye of the visitor, and I also examined the dropdown menu titled "What we do – Our work" because it would presumably show visitors to the website images of their work in action and some of the ways in which donations to their organization are being spent.

Thinking about these differences provoked many questions for me: Who benefits from seeing images of people who are distressed or unhappy? Are these the images that are more likely to provoke people to donate money, which is the purpose of these websites? Is this exploitative? Does it matter if it is exploitative if it provokes people to give more money and provide more support for refugees and forced migrants? These are difficult questions with which to grapple. On the one hand, people are in life-threatening situations and may not care how their image is used if it helps provide for their immediate needs of safety, food, and shelter – a large part of what the UNHCR does, in particular, is emergency response, and so their concern is getting donations and funding to help with the immediate aftermath of violence and mass displacement. On the other hand, images that reify and perpetuate the narratives of refugees and

forced migrants as vulnerable work to position refugees as only victims without agency and ignores the complexities of their experiences, which can impact how they are received by safe third countries if they are resettled at some point. These tensions are not easily resolved, but they are worth holding and exploring in order to continue to ask questions about how refugees and forced migrants are represented.

Canadian News Media Websites

CBC and CTV are both national broadcast services, so Canadians are accustomed to seeing one, or both, deliver the news, either on TV or through their website. The Globe and Mail is a national publication and the Toronto Sun is owned by Postmedia Network Inc. which puts out daily newspapers all across Canada, so they are also a presence on the national scene. It is important to note that NGOs like the UNHCR and RI focus their work on flight, provision, and encampment, whereas the Canadian media seem focused on the journey, border protection, the refugee determination process, and resettlement, and that these two different foci will result in different kinds of images for different purposes. Two major themes emerged in my analysis of media images: the "grateful, deserving" forced migrant who has arrived in Canada and is "allowed" to be here, and a focus on fences and borders to contain forced migrants who are perceived as a threat.

The news media plays a key role in bringing the image of the refugee and forced migrant into people's homes, and visual representation is essential in forming the stereotypes of what they look like (Wright, 2002). Across the years, the Canadian media has responded to forced migrant events in a variety of ways, but there are some trends worth noting. Firstly, there is a focus on security and potential illegality of forced migrant arrival (Bauder, 2012; Bradimore & Bauder, 2011; Lawlor & Tolley, 2017). For example, in their analysis of how the Canadian

newsprint media engaged with the arrival of 76 Tamil refugees arriving off the coast of British Columbia in October 2009, Bradimore and Bauder (2011) found that there was a heavy emphasis on terms of illegality, using language like “seized” and “found” to frame the situation as one between police and criminals. The first sources quoted were usually government agencies, departments, or officials, reproducing the “security-driven state perspective” (Bradimore & Bauder, 2011, p. 649) and silencing the forced migrants themselves.

Secondly, and connected to the themes of illegality and security, is the distinction between “real” immigrants and “bogus” refugees (Lawlor & Tolley, 2017). For example, in their longitudinal comparison of how the media framed refugees and immigrants between 2005 and 2014, Lawlor and Tolley (2017) found that, overall, refugees were portrayed as less deserving and more threatening than immigrants. Canada’s acceptance of immigration is largely tied to economic considerations, and immigration is usually positioned in terms of economics rather than humanitarianism (Lawlor & Tolley, 2017). They found that Canadians distinguish between immigrants and refugees (and the media coverage helps reinforce this) in four ways: 1) coverage of refugees is usually episodic, such as during mass arrivals or conflicts contributing to claims of asylum (as cited in Hier and Greenberg, 2002), which means that the focus is during a time of crisis, emphasizing issues of legitimacy and security concerns and not long-term contributions that refugees make to Canada, 2) coverage focused on costs associated with processing, detention, and integration (as cited in Hier and Greenberg, 2002), emphasizing cost rather than what they might contribute, 3) coverage dehumanized by focusing on potential threats to receiving countries (as cited in Esses, Medianu, and Lawson, 2013), and 4) those who arrived through unsanctioned means were often depicted as queue jumpers and a drain on the system (as cited in Jackson and Bauder, 2013). Through their focus on forced migrants as potential security

threats and making a distinction between “real” and “bogus” forced migrants, media coverage can help shape how Canadians think about, and respond to, forced migrants and issues related to forced migration.

Grateful and deserving: Resettled in Canada

> Mulroney was prime minister, he said. And make no mistake, there was public pressure to send them all back, but I’ll never forget what Mulroney said. Canada is not in the business of turning refugees away. If we err, let it be on the side of compassion. (Bala, 2018, p. 119)

One theme that emerged during the analysis of the news media images and stories with respect to refugees and forced migrants was the narrative of the grateful, deserving refugee who has arrived in Canada. Out of 47 images from the news media sites, 13 had either one or both as part of its focus, although some of these images were part of the same news story that had multiple images attached to it. Most of these images came from the CBC website, with none from the Globe and CTV. This section will discuss how the expectation of gratitude and the narrative of deserving vs undeserving positions some forced migrants as more deserving of receiving asylum than others.

The grateful refugee.

An example that focuses on the gratitude of forced migrants comes from the CBC website. In this image, a group of Syrian refugees wait to give blood in St. John’s (Image 8 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Goudie, Z. (Photographer). (2018, April 4). *Refugees wait to give blood in Newfoundland*. [digital image]. Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfound-labrador/syrians-give-blood-in-st-johns-1.4572173 on April 9, 2018). This image is part of an article by CBC News (2018), with files from Zach Goudie. The caption of the image is “a group of Syrian refugees in St. John’s waiting to give

blood earlier this year as a gesture of appreciation" (Goudie, 2018). There appears to be a mixed reaction to having their picture taken – some are smiling, and one man has two fingers in the air as a peace sign, but some of the men in the group look annoyed. All the men in the picture were looking directly at the photographer while the picture was being taken. In their examination of images in an Australian primary school textbook, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) note that images of immigrants who have arrived in Australia are pictured looking directly at the viewer, whereas images of Indigenous people are hardly ever looking at the viewer. This direct gaze at the viewer could be read as an invitation to engage directly with them in a friendly way, as equals, whereas the Indigenous people in the images are "depicted as objects of contemplation, not as subjects for the pupil to enter into an imaginary social relation with" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 120). This stands in contrast to many of the images of refugees and forced migrants discussed in the above section, who also look directly at the viewer, but I did not feel invited to imagine myself in a social relationship with them, as equals. Instead, their gaze felt more like an appeal for help, perhaps because their images were positioned on websites designed to ask for money to help with emergency situations.

Connected with this same story is an image of part of the letter that the group brought with them to the blood bank (Image 9 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Goudie, Z. (Photographer). (2018, March 12). *Part of a letter from refugees who gave blood in Newfoundland*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfound-labrador/syrians-give-blood-in-st-johns-1.4572173 on April 9, 2018). The part that is photographed reads, "Our donation is a kind of appreciation to the generous country which helped us and saved our souls. Our blood donation is nothing compared to what Canada and Canadians are doing. We are indebted to you all" (Goudie, 2018). The language here is

interesting, almost religious, and it highlights the gratitude that these men feel for Canada having accepted their refugee claim and resettled them. This practice of "giving back" to the receiving country is a theme that Wilson-Forsberg and Sethi (2015) found in their article about the practice of immigrants volunteering once they had arrived in Canada. They found that most immigrants engaged in volunteer work with the aim of gaining the necessary experience to enter the work force in their field, but the opportunities that were available to them often did not have anything to do with their training and so did not count as experience in their field. They also found that volunteering was seen as a debt to be paid to Canadian society before they could enter the paid work force (Wilson-Forsberg & Sethi, 2015). These men write in their letter to the blood bank about the debt they have accrued, so perhaps they feel as if this is one way to show their gratitude and work off some of that debt.

The narratives of gratitude and ingratitude get taken up in different ways. Nayeri (2018) writes how, in an effort to show support for refugees, people on the left talk about how immigrants and refugees make their new countries great – here, the narrative is of happy refugees that have turned into good citizens and contributed to their new country. She goes on to explain that her friends often use her as an example of a refugee who has been an asset to the United States. She pushes back against this idea, writing

> but isn't glorifying the refugees who thrive according to Western standards just another way to endorse this same gratitude politics? Isn't it akin to holding up the most acquiescent as examples of what a refugee should be, instead of offering each person the same options that are granted to the native-born citizen? Is the life of the happy mediocrity a privilege reserved for those who never stray from home? (Nayeri, 2018, p. 146)

This contrasts with how ingratitude gets taken up as unacceptable for refugees to express, as emphasized in an opinion column in the Toronto Sun. The writer describes five Syrian refugee men in St. John, New Brunswick who were protesting outside a YMCA because, after two years in Canada, they could not yet speak English (Fatah, 2017). He seems to be skeptical of this claim, pointing out that they were carrying protest signs with English messages on them that said, "refugees need help they don't need to be put down" and "(Stop) making fun of our religious beliefs," which he characterizes as "playing the victim card" (Fatah, 2017, para. 3 and 4). The YMCA explained that this was the result of a lack of Arabic speakers for interpreting services, but this explanation "didn't satisfy the Syrian protesters" (Fatah, 2017, para. 5). The reader is left with the sense that the protesting refugees should have been satisfied, and that their protest was illegitimate. Participating in an activity that is helpful for the community, such as donating blood, highlights these "good" refugees who are duly grateful for Canada having accepted them, rewarding the country for any risk that was presumed to have been taken when they were accepted as asylum seekers.

Refugees and forced migrants are aware of the importance of those in the receiving country thinking their case is legitimate, and that they are deserving of the country's trust and resources, because of the (still) strong narrative of the "bogus" refugee. According to Esses, Veenvliet, Hodson, and Mihic (2008), there exists the perception that "many refugee claimants are immoral individuals who are falsely claiming refugee status in order to gain entry into desirable host nations" (p. 5). The greater forced displacement of people in the 1970's and 1980's emerged alongside a global economic crisis, which led to Western countries viewing refugees with suspicion. Their difference was not only about who they were, but their motivations for coming – they were not only fleeing persecution, they were also making a

beneficial migration choice and using the refugee classification in an opportunistic and fraudulent way (Johnson, 2011; Marfleet, 2006). In another message sent to her and reproduced in her graphic narrative *Threads of a Refugee Crisis*, Evans (2017) shows how this narrative played out in reference to her work in the camps in Calais, France. The message reads "If u think their [sic] refugees ur seriously deluded they are economic migrants. How can u tell if the so-called 'refugees' at Calais are really asylum seekers? 99% are chancers trying to game the system" (p. 141).

I did not find any stories or images that characterized refugees this way in my analysis, but a quick Google search shows that there are many stories that do. For example, a headline from an opinion column in the Toronto Sun reads "'Poor' asylum seekers dump expensive electronics" and went on to detail how "thousands of dollars of electronics and phones were found by the Toronto Sun, discarded near a popular illegal border crossing on Roxham Rd. in rural Quebec" (Malcolm, 2018, para. 2). While acknowledging that many asylum seekers were in need of help, this column indicates that others appeared to be well off, and the expensive cell phones dumped before crossing the border were evidence that they were not the poor migrants that Canadians had been led to believe they were (Malcolm, 2018). This idea is countered by an article from the CBC that lists four reasons why it is not unreasonable for a Syrian refugee to own a smartphone: refugees do not have to be destitute or old, smartphones are not that expensive in Syria, smartphones are an essential survival tool, and they provide information to help refugees integrate (Dubinsky, 2015). With the strength of the bogus refugee narrative still relevant today, those who have just arrived may feel obligated to perform gratitude for their receiving country in order to distance themselves from this narrative.

The deserving refugee.

The narrative of the deserving refugee also emerged from these images. An image from the CBC website shows the Canadian Prime Minister speaking to Shakila Zareen, a refugee woman who was shot by her husband and whose face is scarred and disfigured on the left side (Image 10 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Scotti, A. (Photographer). (2018, April 5). *Shakila Zareen meets Justin Trudeau*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/refugee-shakila-zareen-1.4607641 on April 9, 2018). This image is part of an article by Britten (2018) and the caption of this image reads "in a handout photo from the Prime Minister's Office, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, meets Shakila Zareen, a refugee from Afghanistan who survived a shooting attack by her husband" (Scotti, 2018). Trudeau and Zareen are in the centre of the shot, looking intently at one another, apparently deep in conversation. This image could evoke pride for Canadians, as it shows our leader as someone who is warm, kind, and willing to take time out of his busy day to meet with people who have suffered but want to meet him to speak about the importance of women's rights. Prime Minister Trudeau has worked to position himself as supportive of refugees, coming to Pearson Airport in December 2015 to greet newly arrived Syrian refugees. He has also positioned himself as supportive of women, forming the first gender-balanced cabinet in 2015 (Ditchburn, 2015). This image was released by the Prime Minister's Office, suggesting that it is an official photo with which Trudeau would like associated with himself and his office.

This image could also evoke the narrative of refugees as vulnerable, as the image was shot to show the scarring on her face, perhaps having a greater impact than a shot from the other side. There were three images of her with this story, and two of them clearly show the scarring on her face, perhaps emphasizing the evidence of her wounds as "proof" that she is a legitimate refugee and deserving of asylum. The posture of Trudeau (looking in her eyes, hands on her

arms, head bent towards her) could be read as someone who is listening to her and really encountering her, but it could also be read as a paternalistic pose that makes her look like a child. The difference in their heights contributes to this reading – he is looking down at her and could be read as representing Canada, the parent country who grants safety to vulnerable people who need it. The flip side of this is that, if Canada can grant asylum to some people, it can also deny it. The viewer is also invited to imagine Trudeau in opposition to Zareen's husband who shot her and caused the scarring on her face. The tension between these two readings (pride in Trudeau and Canada vs a focus on her vulnerability) might depend on how the viewer personally feels about Trudeau, or their already-formed ideas about refugees, but it also highlights the complexities of images and how several potential readings might emerge from one image. Finally, on top of all that, the viewer might also feel admiration for this woman who has been through so much and is now starting a new life in Canada.

In a study by Jackson and Bauder (2013), refugee participants rejected the undeserving refugee narrative while at the same time using it to position themselves as good, genuine refugees. In describing his family's journey from the Soviet Union to Vienna to Toronto, Bezmozgis (2018) writes that once his family was established in Toronto, they were not sympathetic towards other refugees, insisting that today's refugees were not like them. Bezmozgis argues that they are indeed like them – they are all flawed, unexceptional people who adhere to the social contract. One of the reasons refugees might feel compelled to distance themselves from other refugees is because of the stigma of the bogus refugee narrative. In Jackson and Bauder's (2013) study, "respondents suggested the 'bogus refugee' label and its pervasive assumptions regarding RCs' (refugee claimants) high cost and propensity to abuse the welfare system cast doubt on RCs' legitimacy to live and work in Canada" (p. 376). Lewycka

(2018) writes that "'Bogus' became the epithet of choice for 'asylum seeker,' as though people were just *pretending* to flee from persecution" (p. 124, emphasis in original). While this narrative still carries weight, it is implausible to think that refugees are opportunists who are trying to take advantage of a system. As Marfleet (2006) notes, "people do not willingly undertake long and dangerous journeys to unknown or uncertain destinations, abandoning their material, social, cultural and other resources, unless they are under extreme pressure" (p. 14).

This section has examined how themes of gratitude and who deserves asylum play out in the news media through images of "good" refugees who are deserving of resettlement by Canada. These people are decidedly not threatening – they are helpful, or they have experienced visible trauma that legitimizes their asylum claim, and they have been accepted. But the other side of this coin is that, if Canada can accept asylum seekers, then Canada can also deny them. The next section will examine the second theme that emerged from these images – how refugees and forced migrants navigate, and are contained by, fences and borders.

Fences and borders.

> I believe that for the rest of your life, you carry that border inside of you. It becomes part of your psyche, your being, your identity. (Grande, 2018, p. 77)

A second theme that emerged from the images in the news media was a prevalence of borders and fences. Out of 47 images, 15 had this as part of their focus, although some of those images came from the same news stories that included multiple images as part of their story. This section explores some of the images of fences and borders that emerged from my analysis, and how they might be read differently depending on where they are.

Fences abroad.

One kind of fence that is often present in images of refugees and forced migrants is the fence around a refugee camp. An image from the CBC website shows a Rohingya child looking through a fence at a refugee camp with the caption "A Rohingya child looks through the fence at a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, on March 22. There are 671 000 people crowded into 20 makeshift camps along the border with Myanmar" (Ponir Hoassain, 2018). (Image 11 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Ponir Hoassain, M. (Photographer). (2018, April 3). *Rohingya child in a refugee camp*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.cbc.ca/news/thenational/national-today-newsletter-france-strikes-rohingya-migrants-1.4602772 on April 9, 2018). This image is part of an article by Gatehouse (2018) and the shot is taken parallel with the fence, with one child in the middle of the shot who is in focus and another one on the far left of the shot who is blurry. The child in focus has wide open eyes and is clutching the fence with their left hand while pushing their face right up against it. The fence fills the whole shot, making it a focus along with the child, and it is a very close shot that invites a feeling of intimacy from the viewer. This image evokes the narrative of the vulnerable refugee that I explored above – here is a young child who obviously needs help, looking frightened and peering through the bars of a fence in a refugee camp on the other side of the world. The fence and the way that the child is standing with their hands clutching it suggests that they are in jail or trapped, making this a difficult image to look at. However, it simultaneously evokes the narrative of refugees as a threat, as needing to be contained by fences – even the young children.

An image of a person standing close to a fence that is enclosing them could be an invocation of images of World War II and the Holocaust. Sliwinski (2011) writes about how the photographs taken during the liberation of concentration camps in Europe by Lee Miller had to represent something that could not be understood, transmitting what she witnessed because

ordinary speech failed. She goes on to write that the images of Croatians and Muslims in Serbian concentration camps during the Balkan War called up images of the Holocaust, and that recognizing these new atrocities relied on the memory of the Holocaust (Sliwinski, 2011). Since visual language is not transparent and universally understood, but culturally specific (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), this intertextuality between images helps viewers of a certain culture to decode newer images by linking them with similar images from the past. The CBC would likely assume that most of the visitors to their website are Canadians, who receive a heavy dose of World War II history in school and would likely be familiar with the Holocaust images that are being called up here.

Another kind of fence common in images of refugees and forced migrants is a border fence. One example from the CBC website shows a police officer and a dog patrolling the Hungary/Serbia border fence (Image 12 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Gergely Kelemen, Z. (Photographer). (2018, April 9). *Police officer with dog on Hungarian-Serbian border*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.cbc.ca/news/world/hungary-fidesz-party-ngo-crackdown-orban-election-1.4611140 on April 9, 2018). This photo is captioned "A police officer with a dog patrols along the border fence on the Hungarian-Serbian border near Roszke, 180 kilometres southeast of Budapest, in April 2017" (Gergely Kelemen, 2018). While the officer and the dog draw the eye, I think the focus of the shot is the fence, which is large, gray, and approximately the height of two tall people, judging from the limited perspective of the officer with the dog. It stretches from left to right across the shot and top to bottom on the right side. It has furious coils of barbed wire at the top and inside this fence there is a smaller fence that also has coils of barbed wire at the top, once again echoing images from World War II. This photo evokes a sense of authority – there is an officer in uniform who

represents the law and he has a large dog with him that is meant to highlight his authority. Dogs have historically been used to find both people and contraband that have been deemed illegal, and the dog could potentially be both another resource for border guards to use to find people who are trying to illegally cross the border and a weapon to use against those people once they have been found. While this dog appears to be muzzled, and might not actually be able to bite someone, they can still give chase, causing fear and panic. The fence also invokes a sense of authority in that it structures who is part of Hungary and who is not. Part of the mythology (Barthes, 1973 as cited in Rose, 2016) of this photo is that it naturalizes the idea of a border between Hungary and Serbia, and that some people are welcome inside Hungary and others are not. This image of the border guard with his dog suggests that it is right and lawful for people to guard the border and keep certain people out, and that if those people try to get around this law, they deserve to be punished.

This image also evokes a sense of fear – this fence, the officer, and the dog are meant to dissuade people from trying to enter the country outside of the state-sanctioned channels and there is a good chance that you will end up physically hurt and/or arrested if you try. The focus on fences and borders helps to perpetuate the discourse of forced migrants as a risk to the nation state, emphasizing the statelessness of refugees and the problematics of this in a world that promotes citizenship of a nation as the most desirable state of being. Images that show groups of asylum seekers next to barbed wire or border guards promote themes of illegality and invasion (Bleiker, Campbell, Hutchison, & Nicholson, 2013). Even though refugees are absent from this particular image, the story here is about Hungary's new parliament taking aim at pro-refugee NGO's ("'Stop Soros,'" 2018), linking them to this story and making the connection in the reader's mind. The absence of refugees and forced migrants from this orderly scene suggests

they bring disorder and that they threaten the authority of the state, here represented by the large fence and the uniform of the police officer. This is linked to an understanding of migration as a mass movement that threatens "our" security which has led to concerns for border security and the idea that the Global North cannot absorb more refugees, leading to increasingly restrictive legislation (Johnson, 2011).

Fences at home.

The images of border fences that both show and imply violence differ from how Canada's border with the United States is pictured. In an image from the CTV website, a border official directs a migrant couple to a legal border crossing (Image 13 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Krupa, C. (Photographer). (2018, April 7). *RCMP officer directs couple to border crossing*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.montreal.ctvnews.ca/officials-in-canada-braced-for-another-spike-in-illegal-border-crossings-1.3875420 on April 9, 2018). It is captioned "A Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer informs a migrant couple of the location of a legal border station, shortly before they illegally crossed from Champlain, N.Y., to Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle, Que., using Roxham Road on Aug. 7, 2017" (Krupa, C., 2018). This is the result of the Safe Third Countries Agreement between Canada and the United States, where refugee claimants are required to request protection in the first safe country they arrive in (www.canada.ca). If someone has made a claim for asylum in the United States, and then tries to make a claim in Canada at a border crossing station, they will be sent back – however, if they arrive at an unauthorized crossing, Canadian police cannot simply push them back into the United States (Perreaux, 2017). As a result of some of the policies and rhetoric of the Republican administration in the United States at the time,

some migrants felt that their position was unstable or unsafe, and so chose to try to enter Canada (Perreaux, 2017).

This image could evoke order and compassion, particularly in comparison to how other borders are pictured. Canada is trying to control the number of migrants entering the country through unauthorized checkpoints but is doing so in as orderly a way as possible, without the use of guard dogs or barbed wire, such as are pictured in the image with the Hungarian border. The officer appears calm – he is pointing the couple towards a legal border crossing site, but he does not appear to be acting aggressively or shouting at the couple. The photographer has taken the picture from behind the couple, perhaps wanting to protect their identity, but also implying that they are already inside Canada, not outside or on the other side of a fence, looking in. Their luggage indicates both their hope – that they will be able to start a new life in Canada – and their determination, since the hard, rocky road does not appear to be made for easy travel with several pieces of luggage.

However, this image still highlights the border that separates who is part of Canada and who is not, and there are law enforcement officials responsible for preserving this distinction. These kinds of images can support a paternalistic approach to humanitarianism, where Canada remains the parent that grants safety, while forced migrants are depicted as not being able to take care of themselves and needing the aid of a more powerful other. The language in this headline also buys into this discourse of us and them – it notes that officials in Canada are *braced* for a spike in illegal border crossings (Wright, 2018). You have to brace yourself against things that knock you off balance – for example, people and cities are often described as bracing themselves for a big storm that could potentially do a lot of damage, such as a hurricane or a blizzard. This

kind of language suggests that refugees will knock things off balance and that Canadians must prepare for their arrival in the same way that they might prepare for a big storm.

Refugees and forced migrants as stateless people are also seen as problematic. With the increase in transnational communities around the world, people are engaging in recurrent cross-border activities at a higher rate than ever before, and "the result is multiple affiliations which question the dominance of the nation-state as the focus of social belonging" (Castles, 2003, pp. 20-21). Refugees and forced migrants are positioned as having questionable loyalties, and this makes it seem reasonable to close borders to them, emphasizing the need to control them through "technologies of power" (Malkki, 1995, p. 512). This has happened even in Canada, where we perceive ourselves as sympathetic and open to the plight of asylum seekers. Temporary detention centres were set up at points along the Canada/US border to house asylum seekers who had crossed into Quebec without going to a border patrol station. In this image, a temporary fence dominates nearly the whole frame (Image 14 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Robins, G. (Photographer). (2018, January 12). *Refugees wait in a temporary detention centre in Quebec*. [digital image]. Retrieved from www.torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/bonokoski-trudeau-welcome-mat-a-trapdoor-for-el-salvador-refugees on May 1, 2018). This image is part of an article by Bonokoski (2018). The people behind it are visible, but they are not the focus of the shot, and the viewer is positioned as on the ground, almost spying on the people inside. This is a strange perspective from which to take a photo – one possible reading is that the people who are being detained inside the fence are threatening in the way they loom over us. It could also be an attempt to emphasize the subject of the photo, which is a mother and child, and here the photographer has taken the position of the

child. Finally, the photographer may not have been allowed into the fenced-off area, so this was their attempt to photograph the people inside.

Like the images above, this photo could evoke a sense of order, as Canada recognizes that people are trying to enter the country outside of authorized checkpoints and are taking steps to address this by containing those who are trying to enter. The flipside of this reading is that refugees and forced migrants bring disorder and need to be physically contained for them to be managed. It could also evoke discomfort in a Canadian viewer – our national reputation is not one that puts refugees in detention centres, even temporary ones, so this might make some viewers uncomfortable. In an era of globalization, where borders are thought to be more permeable than ever, the right to asylum is becoming more tenuous in the global North, which is "mobilizing particular representations of the refugee to justify aid 'over there' rather than asylum here" (Johnson, 2011, p. 1033).

Conclusion

> Images of the refugee, whether written or visual, evoke several kinds of responses, asking us to question what it means to be a refugee, what it means to be the subject of such representations, the implications of the western gaze, and issues of identity in the refugee experience. (Powell, 2015, p. 120)

This chapter has examined images from NGO and news media websites in order to get a sense of some of the narratives that are being perpetuated about refugees and forced migrants. Two different tracks emerged from this analysis: for the NGO websites, there was a focus on women and children and women in still poses and for the news media websites, there was a focus on grateful, deserving refugees and fences and borders to contain or exclude them. Overall, these images contribute to the competing narratives of refugees as either threatening or vulnerable. When images focus on vulnerability, the intent might be to counter the narrative of refugees as a

threat – positioning them in still poses, or in images without young men (who are seen as more threatening) can work to satisfy a western viewer's sense of unease and perhaps make them more likely to support refugees, either financially or ideologically. However, the consequences of this are that the experiences of refugees and forced migrants are flattened, perhaps making it difficult for them to shed that narrative if they are resettled in a safe third country. The next two chapters will examine creative works by people with forced migrant experience who insist on a fuller, more complex narrative. I will begin with an analysis of two graphic narratives by women with forced migrant experience: *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui and *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi.

Chapter Four: Graphic Narratives

> Comics, with its frames and gutters, is always about boundaries – inside, outside; containable, uncontainable; figurable, unfigurable; constituted, deconstituted. (Chute, 2016, p. 193)

In the above quote, Chute (2016) articulates the importance of boundaries to the interpretation of comics. The frames (the boundary drawn around each panel) and the gutter (the space between the panels) provide a way for the reader to navigate the work, taking two images and transforming them into a single idea (McCloud, 1993). Chute (2016) also identifies some of the different ways in which comics artists use the frame and the gutter (inside/outside, containable/uncontainable) to convey ideas to the reader, and McCloud (1993) gives the example of a "bleed" (a panel running off the end of the page), which can create a feeling of time as uncontained by the panel. Depending on how they are deployed, the use of gutters and frames draw boundaries around the images and impacts how the reader interprets them.

Forced migrants are also faced with boundaries, the most obvious of which are national borders which are drawn between countries in order to divide, contain, and define insiders and outsiders. But the boundaries drawn around forced migrants as subjects of representation are often just as important – the boundaries around the kind of narratives told about them or the kinds of subjectivities they are perceived as occupying work to open certain discursive spaces and close others. In her article on refugee coffee-table books, Szörényi (2006) writes that

> 'the refugee' is a figure which is always imagined in the context of borders. And the books examined here are constructed both visually and verbally so as to make it clear that one of the most persistent and telling of these lines of demarcation is that between 'us' and 'them.' (p. 24)

Pushing back against these boundaries through artistic autobiographical expression is one way that forced migrants can insist on a new discursive space. In her work on identity and power in displacement narratives, Powell (2015) writes that looking at "autobiographical narratives reveals the innovative ways the displaced simultaneously reproduce and speak back to these discursive structures" (p. 18). Art has been used as a vehicle for forced migrants to respond to the narratives that are told about them by telling stories that complicate these narratives (Alexandra, 2008; Mannik, 2012; O'Neill & Harindranath, 2006; Robertson, Gifford, McMichael, & Correa-Velez, 2016) and graphic narratives are a medium that allow artists to tell a more complex story. While there are graphic narratives about forced migrant experience that document important aspects of their everyday lives, such as *Threads of a Refugee Crisis* by Kate Evans, there are fewer works by people who themselves have forced migrant experience and who explore these experiences through the medium of graphic narratives. Narrating and drawing their own stories is an important intervention into how forced migrant narratives generally get told about the people who experience them, which is why I chose to focus on these types of works. This chapter examines two graphic narratives created by women with forced migrant experience and explores how they articulate their experiences to provide a deeper, more complex picture of forced migrant experience. For this analysis, I mainly relied on the works of Hillary Chute (2010, 2016, 2017), Douglas Wolk (2007), and Scott McCloud (1993) to help me interpret the narratives. I ask: how do these artists intervene in the dominant narratives and what tools do they use? How does the graphic narrative allow them to do this kind of work? I will begin with a short discussion on graphic narratives and what they offer as a medium for exploring this topic, followed by an examination of *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui and *The Complete Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi.

Why Graphic Narratives?

The medium of comics in the form of a graphic narrative is uniquely placed to share a complex, personal narrative. Firstly, as a verbal-visual art form, comics are inherently about the relationship between word and image (Chute, 2017). Rather than an illustrative form, in which the words and images necessarily match one another, in comics, each moves the narrative forward in a different way, leaving open the question of how to read it (Chute, 2017). The reader understands the text according to how they negotiate the tensions and harmonies between the visual and verbal signifiers (Watkins, 2012). For example, in Chute's (2017) reading of *Persepolis*, she notes that Satrapi (2004) introduces her 10-year old self to the reader on the first page by drawing herself and declaring "this is me," before drawing herself and her classmates in the next frame and telling the reader that "this is a class photo. I'm sitting on the far left so you don't see me," even though the reader can see part of her, and it is clearly a drawing, not a photo (p. 1). This tension between word and image is part of how readers encounter the space of the page differently than they would a novel or a canvas (Chute, 2017). The interplay between the written and the visual is particularly important to women's life writing "because the visual domain of comics allows the author to imagine invisible worlds and states of being through her hand. This provides a distinct contrast to the ways in which women's lived experiences have been historically silenced" (Nabizadeh, 2016, p. 165).

The combination of word and image moves the viewer's vantage point through time and, often, space, giving readers control over the speed at which they progress through the narrative (Wolk, 2007). Through the process of moving from one panel to another, known as closure, the reader connects the (often jagged) rhythm of these unconnected moments to mentally construct a unified reality (McCloud, 1993). This is a big part of the magic and mystery at the heart of comics – here, the human imagination takes two images and transforms them into a single idea,

known as closure (McCloud, 1993). In comics, "the audience is a willing and conscious collaborator and closure is the agent of change, time and motion" (McCloud, 1993, p. 65), allowing the reader to connect a series of unconnected moments and construct a unified reality. Putting together word and image requires an active and involved literacy and can also invite readers into a space where they can construct their own interpretive meaning (Chute, 2017; Watkins, 2012). Greene (1995) insists that the arts demand cognitive rigor and analysis, as well as affective response, and the combination of word and image in graphic narratives can help to facilitate this. For example, towards the end of *The Complete Persepolis* by Satrapi (2004), she tells the story of the death of a friend of hers who fell off a rooftop while being chased by the Guardians of the Revolution who broke up a party they were attending. A series of textless panels illustrates the chase for the reader, with the last four panels showing the shadow of a person try, unsuccessfully, to leap between buildings and begin to fall between them. The final panel of the row simply shows the two buildings with the gap between them, outlined against the night sky. Here, the absence of text is meaningful – even without words, Satrapi conveys the story of her friend's death, emphasizing how, at times, words fail us.

Secondly, graphic narratives tell stories from a particular social or historical perspective (Park, 2016) that can bring counter-narratives to the fore, pushing back against the dominant discourse of those who have historically "won" (Schneider, 2014). Unlike photographs, which are perceived to have objectivity, comics have a different relationship to evidence, which Chute (2016) explores in her book about visual witness, comics, and documentary form. Despite their obvious *craftedness* (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014), Chute (2016) writes that, as a medium, comics narrative "calls overt attention to the crafting of histories and historiographies – [and] suggests that accuracy is not the opposite of creative invention" (p. 2). I am working with one of

Greene's (1995) core ideas that "the arts provide new perspectives on the lived world" (p. 4) and argue that the alternative perspective that offers the voice of marginalized people helps to "redress overdetermined narratives of marginalized subjectivities, including women's lives" (Nabizadeh, 2016, p. 153). While the medium of comics is an interpretive and subjective medium, it can also express history, recognizing that "pure" historical representation is never possible and calling into question "the status of any 'objective' or 'realistic' account, including historiographies – especially those that bank on the seeming transparency of words" (Chute, 2016, p. 199). We often see history through a false clarity – "'we' (those on 'our side') are good in a manner that is unqualified; 'they' are evil in the total void of good" (Greene, 1995, p. 96). Comics can powerfully address historical narrative by overlaying different temporalities on the page, pressuring conventional notions of linearity and sequence (Chute, 2016). Graphic narratives can work to subvert this dualism, and both *The Best We Could Do,* and *Persepolis* use the medium of the graphic narrative to challenge the reader to pay attention to how particular narratives get taken up as "truth" and what counter-narratives might be possible.

A tool that cartoonists use to indicate different temporalities is the panel, perhaps the comics' most important icon. McCloud (1993) writes that "the panel acts as a sort of general indicator that time or space is being divided" (p. 99). Learning to read comics means learning to perceive time spatially, because comics represent time as space (Chute, 2010; McCloud, 1993). Panelling is how cartoonists experiment with presenting time, using duration and motion, and with directions of reading (Chute, 2017) to experiment with layering moments of time on top of one another. For example, in *The Best We Could Do* by Bui (2017), she recounts her parents' decision to stay in Sài Gòn while many others were fleeing at the imminent arrival of the communist army (p. 214). On one page, she draws her father in the present and her mother in

1975 holding a three-month-old Bui, explaining that they cannot flee because she is so young. This layering of time collapses the past and the present, bringing the past urgently to mind and pressures the idea of "normal" reading because "different moments of time can compete as alternatives" (Chute, 2017, p. 28). The techniques of comics drawing, such as the gutter and the panel, turn time into space on the page and pressure conventional ideas of chronology, linearity and causality (Chute, 2016).

Finally, comics can perform the work of bearing witness because of their narrative texture (Chute, 2008). For example, "through its visual and verbal witnessing, [*Persepolis*] contests dominant images and narratives of history, debunking those that are incomplete and those that do the work of elision" (Chute 2008, p. 94). In relation to his work on exhibitions of lynching photographs, Simon (2014) writes about *transitivity*, and "how exhibitions that offer images and narratives that trace the lives of those who have lived and died in times and places other than our own, may have some force that enjoins something of our capacities and felt responsibilities" (p. 36). He then goes on to list some practices that can encourage the work of inheritance within practices of remembrance: 1) emphasizing that historical narratives include inconsistencies and contradictions that are not easily resolved, which Bui and Satrapi both do, and which I will discuss later in this chapter, 2) showing images that are not easily reduced to illustrations of a particular narrative and that provoke surprise, concern and questions about how to respond, such as Bui's recreation of the famous photograph *The Fall of Sài Gòn*, 3) layers of images, text and recordings so that interaction can happen, and 4) providing access to a variety of responses, as well as providing an opportunity for visitors to add their views to dialogue about the exhibit (Simon, 2014). The force that Simon (2014) writes about can also be felt in the graphic narratives of people with forced migrant experience because of how they use images and

narratives to call us to attend to the experiences of others. Reading these narratives is pedagogically important because it gives readers an opportunity to attend to the representation of traumatic histories of which they might otherwise remain ignorant. In addition, the medium of the graphic narrative, because of the combination of word and image and the insistence on counter-narratives discussed above, can allow readers the space and time to digest and think along with some of the tensions and contradictions that might be present for the reader. Through their use of the graphic narrative medium, both Bui and Satrapi engage in these practices, pushing the reader to engage with the complexities that they bring to their narratives.

The Best We Could Do

> Diasporic communities "generate projects of return, visions of home, and reflections on exile that are productive not only of social and political activism but of great literature and visual art." (Marfleet, 2006, p. 290)

In *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui (2017), she searches for her family's history, weaving personal narratives from the past and present with her parents' childhoods, her own childhood, and the history of the Việt Nam war. The principal characters of the narrative are Thi Bui (the author), her sisters Lan and Bich, her brother Tâm, and her parents Ma´and Bố. Written in a non-linear style, the narrative opens with Bui's own experience of giving birth to her son and moves between the present and different scenes from the past, covering her parents' childhoods and how they met, her own childhood, both in Việt Nam and in the United States, her family's escape from Sài Gòn to Malaysia, their brief stay in a refugee camp and their move to America as asylum seekers. A new mother at the beginning of the narrative, Bui wonders how her search for her family's history will impact her life. She writes "I keep looking toward the past, tracing our journey in reverse, over the ocean, through the war, seeking an origin story that will set everything right" (pp. 39-41). Beautifully illustrated, Bui employs what she calls a "brick" colour

(Jao, 2017) in a watercolour wash style that, at times, suggests blood (Sakal Froese, 2017). Hong (2017) writes that the black, white, and reddish-brown colour of the graphic narrative looks "as if she's melded her very bones and blood onto the page" (para. 1). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) discuss how the hue of a colour can impact a viewer's interpretation of an image, and that the red end of the scale is associated with warmth and energy, whereas the blue end is associated with cold, calm, and distance. In an interview, Bui said that she tried out blue, but it did not work with how the story felt (Jao, 2017) – perhaps because it was such a personal story, the blue felt too distant and cold when she wanted something warmer.

Bui's story offers what appears to be a straight-forward forced migrant narrative, although she does not tell it in a linear way – oppression, escape via boat, time spent in a refugee camp, and resettlement in a third county. Within this familiar framework, she pushes the reader to re-consider some of the assumptions related to refugees and forced migrants. She accomplishes this through her re-examination of famous photographs that provide a more complex picture of both the historical and the personal, her description of the refugee camp as a place where everyday life could occur, and a look at some of the assimilation experiences that helped shape her life once she arrived in the United States.

Complicating the personal and the political.

The Việt Nam War lasted from 1954-1975 and featured the communist government of North Việt Nam and its allies in South Việt Nam (known as the Việt Cộng) fighting the South Việt Nam government and its principal ally the United States (US) who were keen to prevent communism from becoming a more powerful force across Việt Nam (Spector, 1998). Bui provides the reader with a comic version of the map of Việt Nam at the time, complete with a representation of communist China, which she describes as "a source of American fear" (Figure

1 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Bui, 2017, p. 167. A map of Việt Nam). She notes that the Việt Minh, the national independence coalition formed in 1941, signed the Geneva Accords with France in 1954 which recognized Việt Nam's independence from France while dividing it into two parts at the 17th parallel – what she calls "the communist north" and "the American-backed south" (Bui, 2017, p. 167). At the time, her father joined the mass exodus of people leaving the north for the south (Bui, 2017). North Việt Nam wished to unite the whole country under communist rule, while South Việt Nam wished to preserve a close relationship with the west. Throughout the 1950s, the US had military advisors present in Việt Nam and these numbers began to increase starting in 1961, with combat units arriving from 1965 onward. Bui (2017) writes that, in 1965, American troops arrived by the thousands and their planes carpet-bombed a country that was dependent on agriculture with napalm and Agent Orange, while the American military post exchange allowed people with access to it to buy goods at a low price and then sell them at a profit to others, thus contributing to skyrocketing inflation. As the conflict dragged on, the costs and casualties became too much for the US to bear, and their combat units were withdrawn by 1973. Finally, South Việt Nam fell to the north in 1975 (Spector, 1998).

Selling a war to a population seems to rely on fairly cut and dry categorizations of groups of people – think of George W. Bush's famous line in his speech to congress after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001: "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists" (Barker, 2016, 35:10). Part of this categorization relies on stereotyping, and Bui identifies some of the more famous stereotypes of the Việt Nam war that have grown out of American narratives of the conflict. She divides the actors into three groups: the "good guys" (Americans), the "bad guys" (the Việt Cộng, who she describes as "very hard to see"), and "The South Vietnamese," with the

word “South” inserted with a carrot as if to emphasize the two different groups (Bui, 2017, p. 207). She breaks this last group into sub-groups and includes a stereotypical drawing of each - “bar girls and hookers,” “corrupt leaders,” “papa-san,” “kids looking for handouts,” and “small, effete men” drawn beside a tall American man for scale (Bui, 2017, p. 207). Troubled by what she identifies as the overly simplified American version of the war actors (Bui, 2017, p. 207), and the centering of American narratives in a war that was not about America (Tisserand, 2017), she began this project with the intention of addressing what she thought were bad representations of Vietnamese people in war movies (Yu, 2018). In an interview, she comments that, “I have always wanted to tell a refugee story in which the refugees are, first and foremost, fully formed human beings: people with names, personalities, histories, political leanings, varying ability, individual strengths, and failings” (Stauffer, 2017, para. 5), who are not necessarily all moral minorities, but can be “wonderful, average, or total assholes, just like everybody else” (Tisserand, 2017, para. 15).

In order to demonstrate how an overly simplified narrative can play out across the world, Bui focuses on two famous images from the war, *The Fall of Sài Gòn* and *Sài Gòn Exection*, and their impact on both the public imagination and her own family. She re-draws these photos and then discusses their context, bringing to bear both wider historical narratives and her own personal narrative to provide a more complex picture that challenges the dominant narratives that have developed around these photographs. I will focus on *The Fall of Sài Gòn* in this section.

Liberation day or the day we lost our country?

On the first page of the chapter entitled *Heroes and Losers*, Bui writes that the day the war ended (April 30, 1975) was dubbed “Liberation Day” by the victors, but overseas expats thought of it as the day they lost their country. This strategy is present in other kinds of conflicts

as well – for example, Israelis call the West Bank Wall a "security fence" and Palestinians call it a "racial segregation wall," while the English name given to it by its opponents is "Apartheid Wall" (Minh-ha, 2011, p. 5). This panel showcases a device that Bui uses frequently throughout the text – the outline of the country of Việt Nam (Image 2 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Bui, 2017, p. 211. Bui's recreation of the famous photograph *The Fall of Sài Gòn*). The expats stand in front of the flag of South Việt Nam, eyes cast down and looking defeated, with the shape of Việt Nam carved into their chests. This could represent the indelible mark that their country has left on them or that a hole the shape of their country has been carved out of them by the surrender of South Việt Nam. With the focus on the violence, persecution, and trauma that refugees and forced migrants experience before leaving their country, sometimes the sorrow that leaving provokes is lost.

In her graphic narrative account of her time as a volunteer in the refugee camp in Calais, France, Kate Evans sits with a man in his temporary shelter as he shows her pictures of his family home in Iraq. She writes "a leafy grove. Acres of land…what must it be like to feel homesick for somewhere it's not safe for you to be" (Evans, 2017, p. 57)? The complexity of this – homesickness for an unsafe home, beauty and tranquility where one might expect to hear only about ugliness and war – paints a fuller picture of a forced migrant's life, filling in colours which were previously black and white. Below this image of the competing narratives is a drawing of a famous photograph, *The Fall of Sài Gòn*, depicting a helicopter on top of a building and a line of people up to the roof trying to board it. Once again, the outline of Việt Nam features – it runs from the top of the page to the bottom in her rusty watercolour aesthetic, spilling outside the frame and leaving the page. The caption reads "this is the image that most people know of the fall of Sài Gòn" (Bui, 2017, p. 211), emphasizing it as a popular image from the war.

Through her recognition of the different ways in which the day of surrender is described, Bui pushes the reader to consider alternative narratives of the fall of Sài Gòn. The American version of the story is "one of South Vietnamese cowardice, corruption, and ineptitude" (Bui, 2017, p. 216). While a surrender might be considered an unworthy end to a conflict from a military perspective, Bui wonders if this act of surrender saved her life. She was only three months old at the time, and her parents ultimately decided that they could not flee because of her young age. In a full-page drawing that holds both the present-day version of her father and the 1975 version of her mother, Bui addresses her parents' thinking at the time (Image 3 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Bui, 2017, p. 214. Bui's parents make the difficult decision to stay in Sài Gòn). Her father sits at a table and describes the fear that was in the air, while looking down at dead bodies lying on the ground. In the bottom right corner of the page is her mother from 1975, holding a three-month old Bui and looking frightened, but reasoning that they could not run with her because she was too young (Bui, 2017, p. 214). In between them is a similar scene to the *Fall of Sài Gòn*, a small plane with seven people boarding it. However, Bui's image focuses on the people left behind, as those trying to access the plane are being prevented by a barbed wire fence and soldiers with guns. The barbed wire fence recalls some of the images from the previous chapter and is often associated with borders and refugee camps. In their desperation, some people climb the fence even with the barbed wire at the top, while others clamour to be allowed to approach the plane. Bui uses several different tones of red here, with the darkest underlying the dead bodies at the top of the page which represent the people killed during the 1968 massacre in Huế, the largest urban engagement of the war that saw thousands of people die or go missing during the communist takeover of the city (Dror, 2018).

Within a few months of the battle at Huế, people began to find mass graves, and "the massacre of unarmed civilians on such a scale left a deep scar in the memories of survivors" (Dror, 2018, para. 5). Hearing this narrative, the surrender seems more understandable – this might not be a story about cowardice, but about trying to prevent more violence and bloodshed. How many other people owe their lives to this surrender? Bui connects the historical and the personal by linking her own survival with the death of South Việt Nam as it was known at the time (Bui, 2017, p. 214). While the story of the victors is the one that gets told, Bui gives her own version that results in her life rather than death. This insistence on a more complex narrative offers the reader an alternative perspective, and Bui asks that they hold that version together with other versions of the same events.

This tension that Bui identifies brings up some larger questions about the role of photography, the media, and representation as discussed in the previous chapter. Sliwinski (2011) writes that the struggle for universal human rights nearly always includes the circulation of visual images, since justice requires spectators to bear witness to its procedures. These images are framed as evidence – if we doubt something, seeing a photographic image can prove that it happened (Sontag, 1973). However, photos are not necessarily objective evidence because it is the image that someone chose, and "to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude" (Sontag, 2003, p. 46). The photo of *The Fall of Sài Gòn* might be the enduring image of that event for many people, but that event also contains the narratives of the people who experienced it and Bui is pointing to the story of her own family and how that offers an alternative to the story of people lining up to try to board a helicopter on a roof.

By way of comparison, graphic narratives offer something different in terms of the representation of violence and trauma. Brushwood Rose and Low (2014) write about the

importance of the *craftedness* of digital stories in their work documenting stories of women impacted by refugee and immigrant experience. They discuss how the craftedness of digital stories emerges, "not as direct or transparent reflections of experience, but as products of a creative and often imaginative process, which involves acts of invention, aesthetic choices and a significant amount of editing" (p. 38). This description also applies to graphic narratives, and while we may think of crafted narratives as "unreal," they can allow the artist to craft a story that more fully represents her experiences (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014). Brushwood Rose (2009) suggests that multimedia narratives offer a space that can hold both what we know and what we imagine. She writes, "while the storyteller can never tell the whole story or perhaps even the true story of herself, I am convinced that the act of telling *one* story remains powerful, often transformative, and fundamentally helpful" (p. 219, emphasis in original). In telling one story of her life, there are things that Bui does not understand and contradictions she cannot reconcile, and she expects the reader to hold those contradictions open along with her.

Displacement narratives.

In 1978, three years after South Việt Nam's surrender, amidst disappearances and rising inflation, Bui's parents decide to escape the country. At this point, Bui's mother was eight months pregnant with her younger brother and her parents did not think their children had a future in Việt Nam. After they made their escape via a small boat, Bui and her family end up in a refugee camp in Malaysia. While only occupying most of one chapter in her narrative, Bui's description of her time in the Malaysian refugee camp provides a compelling and important counter-narrative to dominant ideas of what refugee camps are and the experiences of the people who occupy them, some of which were discussed in the previous chapter. While some of the images from the previous chapter showed refugees and forced migrants in still poses or looking

distressed, Bui chose to focus on the agency of the people in the camp and how the everyday experiences of life continued even amidst unordinary circumstances.

The family register themselves soon after arriving to the camp, and Bui includes her family's registration photographs as the only part of the narrative that she does not draw herself (Image 4 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Bui, 2017, p. 267. Bui and her family's refugee camp registration photos). She surrounds the actual photos with drawn photos to represent the "hundreds of thousands of refugees flooding into neighbouring countries, seeking asylum" (Bui, 2017, p. 267). After having drawn famous historical photographs, Bui includes the actual, personal photographs of her family that were taken at the time. In an interview, Bui states that she thought long and hard about when to include these photos in the narrative, and that she did not want to introduce the reader to her family with these photos (Inshassi, 2018). She goes on to state,

> I think that's actually what makes it emotional for people—they spent the greater part of the book not seeing refugee photos. That was me thinking about how we encounter refugees today. We see the refugee photos first. We see them on a boat escaping from Syria or looking very impoverished in a refugee camp, and I think while those photos are meant to pull at our heartstrings, they also can divorce the person from their entire history. So you only see that person as a refugee and not the person that they were their whole lives up until that moment. (Inshassi, 2018, para. 11)

Here, Bui recognizes the ways in which photos of refugees get taken up both as part of (important) fund-raising efforts on their behalf and as a tool for flattening their experiences. In response to this, she insists that the reader see her family in all its complexity – while they were

asylum seekers at the time these photos were taken, they were also fully formed individuals with histories, goals, and plans for the future. This highlights Bui's stated goal of creating something that shows forced migrants as complex human beings (Stauffer, 2017), and she does this by presenting aspects of both her family's history and their present before showing the reader the photos taken in the refugee camps. In contrast to her drawings of photographs discussed earlier, where she draws the photos to contextualize them and to undermine their authority, here she reproduces the family photos to give them authority, having already provided the reader with some of the context of their lives that is often missing from photos of forced migrants. The caption in the middle of the page proclaims them boat people (Bui, 2017, p. 267). Was this a phrase that she knew of at the time, or did it come after relocating to the US? Was she resigned to it, reclaiming it, or did it sting as a pejorative? Either way, Bui insists on the reader's attention to her family here by including their registration photographs.

After having registered, the family settle down into everyday life. To represent this, Bui draws people talking to each other, an older child walking with a younger child, Bố walking through the camp holding firewood, and Ma´standing and speaking to someone while holding a can of oil (Image 5 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Bui, 2017, p. 269. A snapshot of everyday life in Pulau Besar Camp). Although it housed 3000 people at the time of their arrival (Bui, 2017, p. 268), she does not draw it in a way that suggests that it was horribly crowded – in fact, it almost looks like a suburban neighbourhood, where people are chatting with one another and going about their day. In contrast to the images that show refugees and forced migrants looking distressed, as discussed in the previous chapter, Bui provides a counter example that shows people working together and helping each other, even amidst a difficult experience. As part of her discussion on the expected gratitude of refugees, Nayeri

(2018) writes that her time in refugee hostels after escaping the Iran-Iraq war was somewhat peaceful – a reprieve from all the noise, for which she was told to thank God in her prayers. Like her description of the events of the Việt Nam War and its impact on her life, Bui pushes the reader to re-imagine refugee camps as places where people have space to live and breathe while making important decisions about their lives.

In the midst of their everyday lives, Bui's parents also had to decide where they would go from here. While they ultimately decided on America, Bui notes that "any choice was a gamble. My parents decided our futures on very little information" (Bui, 2017, p. 268). She also notes that people in the camp made strategic decisions about how they presented themselves to their interviewers in ways that would benefit them. For example, people either listed themselves as older (in order to eventually retire sooner) or younger (in order to have an easier time finding a job) (Bui, 2017, p. 269). This could be interpreted as justifying the bogus refugee narrative (Esses, Veenvliet, Hodson, & Mihic, 2008; Johnson, 2011; Marfleet, 2006) since they are making false claims in order to make themselves appear more desirable to potential receiving countries. In the novel *What is the What*, Dave Eggers (2006) writes about this same scenario when the "Lost Boys" of Sudan arrived at the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Many of the boys lied on their application forms and in their interviews about any past affiliation with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), because to admit it would mean they would not be allowed to leave. Similarly, once they arrived in America, they realized that

> sponsors and newspaper reporters and the like expect the stories to have certain elements, and the Lost Boys have been consistent in their willingness to oblige. Survivors tell the stories the sympathetic want, and that means making them as shocking as possible. My

> own story includes enough small embellishments that I cannot criticize the accounts of others. (Eggers, 2006, p. 21)

In describing these strategic choices to benefit themselves, Bui, like Eggers, communicates an agency that is often denied to refugees and forced migrants. In relation to dominant narratives about refugees, Powell (2015) writes that "while the homogeneous narrative that is rendered is that of victims, abject, and pathetic, many autobiographical narratives reveal adaptability, resilience, and resistance, upturning what we assume might be happening in the spaces of resettlement" (p. 103). Johnson (2011) notes a shift in the representation of refugees over time from a political figure to victims without agency, and this is borne out in my earlier discussion of widely circulated images of women and children in mostly still poses (see chapter three). In contrast, Bui depicts people helping one another and children playing, even writing that "for children, camp was, in many ways, a wonderful vacation. No school…an escape from regular life" (p. 270). Insisting on the possibility of fun inside a refugee camp is one way to work on creating counter narratives of resistance, particularly because images of refugees and forced migrants in distress are so visible on NGO websites.

While the narratives of children having fun and people helping one another are important to consider in terms of the complexities of refugee camp experiences that sometimes get over-simplified, it is also important to realize that this does not entirely replace or negate the difficulties and challenges of life inside a camp, and Bui does cover this later in the same chapter. She writes about the lack of proper facilities, having to dig ditches for water, which then had to be boiled, and gathering wood (Bui, 2017, p. 274). Perhaps most importantly, her younger brother Tâm was born while they were still in the camp, which is far from an ideal place to either give birth or take care of an infant (Bui, 2017, pp. 272-273). Eggers (2006) addresses this same

tension through the narrator, Achak, who spent ten years in Kakuma, one of the largest refugee camps in the world. He writes that in Kakuma, refugees created a life for themselves that resembled other lives – people ate, talked, laughed, grew, got married, traded goods. Babies were born, sick people were healed or died, and young people went to school. There was life in Kakuma, but Achak wonders if it actually is life – they are alive, but they are nowhere. In fact, Kakuma means "nowhere" in the Swahili language that is spoken in Kenya, so he felt that they were living in a kind of purgatory (Eggers, 2006). Importantly, both experiences exist side by side, every day, as part of the complexity of their lives. Bui's decision to include these aspects in her narrative highlight the complexities of the forced migrant experience, emphasizing that it can be difficult and traumatic, while including moments of fun and usefulness all at the same time.

Assimilation experiences.

Throughout her narrative, Bui details some of her early experiences in America, giving the reader a sense of the challenges, struggles, and triumphs of a newly arrived refugee family. While her refugee identity is only one part of herself, Bui narrates two incidents that explicitly examine how people in the receiving country perceived Bui and her family as newly arrived refugees and how her life's early experiences continued to shape her even after many years had passed. These experiences highlight the complexities of the category of refugee, how it can be both a burden and lifesaving, and how the trauma that comes with refugee experience does not end with a "successful" resettlement.

"Don't be such a refugee!"

Bui and her family received asylum from the United States and when they first arrived, they stayed with the relatives who had sponsored them in Indiana - Bui's aunt and uncle, their

five children and one dog, all in a two-bedroom house (Bui, 2017, p. 284). She describes how her cousins had been in America for three years already and that they must have been embarrassed by the "fresh-off-the-boat appearance" of her and her siblings. In order to show the contrast between the two groups of young people and using the strategy of showing contrasting views side by side, Bui draws her five cousins in one panel next to herself and her sisters in another (Image 6 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Bui, 2017, p. 285. Bui's cousin scolds Bich for eating cereal straight from the box). The cousins stand in a confident line and look well put together in their American clothing. Bui also draws herself and her sisters standing in a line to make the contrast apparent – their clothes look older, shabbier, and both her sisters are barefoot. They are shorter than their cousins and much thinner, all arms and legs, with short, utilitarian haircuts. Bui has also drawn herself and her siblings as darker skinned, perhaps commenting on how refugee identity is racialized despite a shared racial background. Underneath these panels on the same page is a larger panel that shows Lan and Bich sitting on the front steps of the home, with Bui playing in the yard. Bich is eating cereal directly out of the box and they are confronted by one of their older cousins, who exclaims "Don't be such a REFUGEE! Eat it in a bowl with some milk!" Bich replies "I don't like milk! And who doesn't eat cereal out of the box?" The cousin ends the encounter, stating "Well, at least don't eat like that in front of my house where everyone can see you!" (p. 285). This encounter implies that refugees do not understand how to do simple things like eat cereal, or that every eccentricity a refugee has is because of their refugee identity. This behaviour is also coded as embarrassing to people of the receiving country (hence the cousin's concern that "everyone" can see her). Bich's response provides good reasons why she has made the choice she has, which does not have anything to do with her refugee status. In fact, eating cereal directly out of the box strikes me as

a common thing that young people do. I remember doing it myself, but this might be considered more acceptable behaviour from a white, western, upper-middle class child who was doing it inside their house than from a newly arrived refugee who was doing it outside where people outside of her family could see her. This confusion around the "correct" way to behave in a new country is one of the many things that they adjust to as newly arrived refugees in America, and their cousins were likely their first instructors in assimilation.

The cousin's words – "Don't be such a REFUGEE!" – struck me as an important indicator for when and where the label of refugee might be applied. In some scenarios, the term "*refugee* is a sought-after label, an identity that marks for its holder an advertised chance for safety from violence, an opportunity for education, and material resources for a better life" (Powell, 2015, p. 98, emphasis in original). Having been granted refugee status while in Malaysia, Bui and her family emigrate to America, where they are able to build a life without the kind of fear, violence, and oppression that they were experiencing. Eggers (2006) writes about this in *What is the What*, where Achak spends a lot of time carefully writing down his autobiography in the hopes that it will be well-received by the UN officials for a chance to be resettled in America. However, in accepting that label, one is marked as displaced, as the other, and that brings with it certain expectations to fulfill the "refugee story" (Powell, 2015, p. 89). After a UN official took a picture of him for his file, Achak reveals that he "stared at this photo for hours and held the folder close for days, debating with myself whether or not this picture, these words, were truly me" (Eggers, 2006, p. 486). In her narrative, Bui explores the use of the word refugee as a pejorative, as something to be ashamed of, even though that label is the reason they were able to arrive in America in the first place. What part of her is a refugee? How much of her identity does this consume? And when does one stop being a refugee?

Refugee reflex.

Towards the end of the narrative, Bui describes an incident that she believes highlights the inheritance that she has received. There was commotion in the apartment downstairs, followed by a loud explosion caused by their downstairs neighbours' oxygen tanks exploding, starting a fire (Bui, 2017, p. 302). On the next page, Bui draws her response in nine equally measured out squares, grafted on top of what is presumably the scene outside. These nine panels feel very carefully drawn, as if to impose some order on the chaos outside. She suggests that a normal 14-year old would "freak out," but that "a switch flipped in [her] brain" and she "acted purely by reflex" (Image 7 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Bui, 2017, p. 303. Bui's response to the fire in her apartment building). One panel shows her nose, mouth, and chin drawn close-up, with the word "EVACUATE" written beside her open mouth. She does not draw any panic on her face as she goes to her room, gets her file marked "important documents," gets a cloth soaked with water to help her breathe, puts her shoes on, and gets out of the apartment (Bui, 2017, p. 303). The last panel in this sequence shows her shoes on her feet, indicating that, even during an emergency, she has the presence of mind to neatly tie her shoes. She suggests this was her "refugee reflex," which she describes as "the inexplicable need and extraordinary ability to RUN when the shit hits the fan" (Bui, 2017, p. 305). "Refugee reflex" was Bui's original title for this work, indicating the importance of this event and her sense of its impact on her life (Tisserand, 2017). She claims that this was her inheritance from her parents, more so than any aspect of her Vietnamese culture (Bui, 2017, p. 305).

At the time of this incident, approximately ten years had passed since they moved to the United States. Bui provides lots of evidence of their hard work - her parents taking college courses, her sisters being named valedictorian or salutatorian, the awards they won - as if to

prove the success of her and her family (Bui, 2017, pp. 297-299). Regardless of her family's success in a new country, even after ten years, those early experiences impacted how she reacted in an emergency. Bui covers quite a few years in about ten pages, so I did not initially realize that ten years had passed after their arrival in the US when the fire broke out downstairs. Once I did, it made me think about the impact of those early experiences and how they come out at times when you must act quickly without thinking. In an interview, Bui describes this as her fight or flight response, and notes that being constantly ready to run is not a healthy way to live. She has had to consciously choose fight over flight and assert her right to be an American and put down roots (Tisserand, 2017). Nguyen (2018) writes that, for the UN, a person stops being a refugee when they have a permanent home, even though they are receiving support, but Grande (2018) notes that trauma does not end simply because one has crossed a border. How long do refugees receive support for issues like post-traumatic stress disorder? And how quickly do the people of the receiving country expect them to adapt to their new country and forget the experiences that shaped them before they arrived? Bui's narrative provokes these kinds of questions by sharing some of her experiences of assimilation with the reader through her graphic narrative.

In an interview, Bui states that "the historian in me wants to give people a foundation that gives people a story that is more accurate, more representative of what people actually went through, instead of learning from the bad Việt Nam War documentaries made by Americans" (Bui, 2018, para. 14). She wanted to create a narrative that showed the complexity of refugees and forced migrants, allowing them the space to be extraordinary, good, bad, ordinary, or all of the above, and to suggest that there are other stories to be heard other than the immigrant success story, where first generation immigrants work hard and sacrifice everything for their children

(Bui, 2018). Through her focus on providing alternative perspectives and insisting on the complexities of her family's experiences, Bui directs the reader to pay attention to the tensions of her narrative, calling into question some of the dominant ideas around refugees and forced migrants. While different from Bui's approach, Marjane Satrapi also complicates the image of the forced migrant in her work *The Complete Persepolis*, which I will address in the next section.

The Complete Persepolis

The Complete Persepolis is a graphic autobiography by Marjane Satrapi that was first published in French in two volumes, in 2000 and 2001 (Chute, 2010). It details her time growing up in Iran after the 1979 Revolution, being sent to Vienna by her parents at age 14 during the Iran-Iraq War, her return to Iran at age 18 and then leaving Iran again a few years later as an adult. The principal characters of this narrative are Marjane Satrapi (the author and narrator) and her parents. Written as a more linear narrative than Bui's work and using a flat black and white style, it focuses on Satrapi's growing consciousness of the repressiveness of the fundamentalist Islamic regime that came to power after the Shah was deposed, and her rebellious behaviour before and during the Iran-Iraq War that concerned her parents so much that they decided to send her abroad in order to keep her safe. Chute (2010) writes about Satrapi's graphic style, commenting on the simple, ungraded black in the frames that "shows not the scarcity of memory but rather its thickness, its depth; the 'vacancy' represents the practice of memory for the author and possibly for the reader" (p. 144). Persepolis' style references ancient Persian miniatures, murals, and friezes with its simple drawing and flat perspective, but she differs by using black and white, while Persian art is usually colourful (Chute, 2017). Satrapi's time abroad in Vienna coincides with her teenage years and blends the frustrations and joys that they entail with the everyday challenges and triumphs of being thrust into a new culture.

While there are similar themes to *The Best We Could Do*, Satrapi's forced migrant experience is very different from Bui's – she was never granted official refugee status or declared stateless, her parents were able to make the choice to send her to Austria because of connections they had there, and she returned to live in Iran for a few years as an adult before leaving again for good. This demonstrates the blurriness of the categories of refugee and forced migrant – while Satrapi's parents may initially have had a few more options than Bui's parents, they were just as concerned about her safety and what kind of future was available to her as Bui's parents were for their own children, and both sets of parents were worried about the violence of which the state was capable. Powell (2015) writes about the slipperiness of the categories in play here, noting that

> when political dissidents seek asylum, they must show through highly politicized narratives their discursive identities as displaced or refugee…The person is the same, but the identity constructed must fit the 'law' of the UN and at any moment that identity could be taken away. (p. 116)

Parekh (2017) also writes about the categories of refugee and forcibly displaced, arguing that we need to interpret the category as widely as possible, looking at all displaced people rather than just those that fit the somewhat narrow 1951 Convention definition. For example, those fleeing generalized war, violence, or extreme poverty are sometimes, although not always, excluded (Parekh, 2017). In this section, I will examine how Satrapi documents her growing sense of frustration with the Iranian government, resulting in rebellious and subversive behaviour, some of her assimilation experiences in Austria, and how she uses this graphic narrative to witness to her experiences and keep alive the memory of those people who were impacted by the turmoil of the regime change and the war with Iraq. While they are different in nature, Satrapi's narrative

insists that the reader hold tensions together, just as Bui's does. She does this by providing the reader with alternative perspectives on historical events, detailing the complexities of trying to assimilate, and taking on the active role as witness to her experiences.

Subversion and rebellion.

One of the major themes that runs throughout the entirety of Satrapi's journey in *Persepolis* is rebellion and subversive behaviour – this is the catalyst that prompts her parents to send her to Austria to escape the war and the Guardians of the Revolution, those charged with defending Iran's Islamic laws. The emphasis on her acts of rebellion, as both a teenager and a young adult, draw links between the personal and the political, forcing the reader to confront their own ideas of what protest is and different ways to resist oppression. Early in her life, her parents participated in traditional protests against both the Shah and the religious government that followed, so she grew up in a house that encouraged political involvement. In this section, I will look at how Satrapi's rebellious behaviour plays out as she grows more aware of the state's repressiveness, and how, like Bui, she links the historical and the personal to insist that the reader pay attention to the tensions and counter narratives that she is offering.

You'll be safe in the basement.

Satrapi (2004) includes many moments of subversion early in her narrative – she draws herself and her classmates using their veils as props in games of make-believe (p. 1), going to a demonstration when her parents had forbidden it (p. 38), making fun of the public mourning sessions that became part of their everyday lives during the war (p. 97), and skipping school (p. 111). But one of the more important moments of rebellion in her narrative takes place in the basement of their home where she does the narrative work of explaining how the Iran-Iraq war

was playing out (Satrapi, 2004, pp. 114-117). Following a fight with her mother over skipping class and lying, she walks down the basement stairs to have some time to herself. During this walk, she breaks the fourth wall and speaks directly to the reader (Chute, 2010). Starting at the top of the stairs, she explains that, after the Iranian army re-took Khorramshahr, Iraq proposed a settlement and Saudi Arabia was willing to pay for the reconstruction. However, Iran refused this offer, plunging the country deeper into war (Satrapi, 2004, p. 115). During this explanation, she draws crowds of people protesting the peace settlement and graffitiing walls with slogans about becoming martyrs, interspersed with herself walking down the basement stairs – far too many stairs for a regular basement. This suggests to me the seeming endlessness of war, how Iran was "plunged deeper into war" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 115) without an end in sight. Walking down into the basement to address the war is symbolic because of its importance as a place of relative safety when the city was being bombed. It also could be a reference to another theme from this narrative: looking underneath the dominant narrative in order to see an alternative, just as the basement is underneath the house.

As she stands on the stairs and discusses the war, a teenage Satrapi surveys a scene of destruction and death, somewhat reminiscent of Picasso's (1937) *Guernica* – soldiers holding rifles, dying or already dead, body parts separated from bodies, and huge clouds of smoke rising from all the commotion and violence (Image 8 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Satrapi, 2004, p. 116. Satrapi discusses the Iran/Iraq War). This whole-page panel is difficult to look at, forcing the reader to confront the horrors of war, and it is especially jarring in terms of where the violence appears to be located – at the bottom of the basement stairs in her house, the domestic sphere that is supposed to be a safe haven from this kind of state-sanctioned violence. On the same page, Satrapi has drawn her teenage self in two places. The

first is standing on the stairs, telling the reader that Iran "eventually admitted that the survival of the regime depended on the war" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 116). Chubin and Tripp (1988) agree, writing that Iran viewed the war as a test for Islam and that any compromise was the same as a defeat, so the only course was continuing until they achieved victory. They go on to write that, the longer the war lasted, the more the leaders' authority was invested in it, and the more difficult extraction became.

Satrapi's second appearance in this panel is at the bottom right, presumably after walking through all the violence that is taking place in between each of her selves drawn on the page. She is opening a door while talking about all the lives that could have been saved if the peace settlement was accepted. This panel takes up the whole page, indicating its importance, perhaps representing the soldiers whose lives could have been saved if the peace settlement was accepted. Here we once again see narratives in tension – the Iranian state initially insisted on fighting in order to push back against Iraq and take Karbala (a holy city in Iraq). Satrapi explains to the reader that the state eventually admitted that the war was necessary for its own survival (Satrapi, 2004, p. 116) "and in the name of that war, they exterminated the enemy within" (p. 117). Satrapi forces the reader to confront the clashing narratives and imagine the deaths of the soldiers who bore the brunt of the state's narrative of the importance of re-claiming a holy city in Iraq.

She concludes this scene by smoking a cigarette that she had stolen from her uncle two weeks earlier (Image 9 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Satrapi, 2004, p. 117. Satrapi declares herself a grown-up). She chokes on the cigarette, coughing, with tears rolling down her cheeks, but continues anyway. She declares "It was awful. But this was not the moment to give in" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 117). She again speaks directly to the reader, saying

"with this first cigarette, I kissed childhood goodbye" and the narrator finishes off the scene with "now I was a grown-up" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 117). Satrapi places her childhood self and her present-day narrator self on the page together, using the perspective of her youth to return to the historical events of her childhood, constructing an ordinary experience as political and "claiming a space in public discourse for resistance that is usually consigned to a privatized sphere" (Chute, 2010, p. 141). This provides an alternative to the de-politicized way in which children with forced migration experience are often represented, as Johnson (2011) notes – instead, Satrapi is insisting on her experience as political, linking it with the personal. She emphasizes this by placing this single act of normal teenage rebellion directly beside a whole-page panel of war and violence, positioning herself in opposition to the regime and announcing that she is now a grownup. Chute (2017) writes that "in *Persepolis*, the personal is always political: girlhood reminiscences overlap with chronicles of war, and are articulated through momentous historical events" (p. 300). For myself, this was part of the complexity that Satrapi asked me to hold while reading this narrative – that the subversive acts she was engaging in were indeed political and important, even though they might appear to be normal acts of teenage rebellion.

Public vs private.

Upon her return to Iran from Austria, Satrapi is 18 years old and, after difficulties re-adjusting to life in Iran, including some heavy medication and a suicide attempt, enters college to study graphic arts. During this time, she once again breaks the fourth wall and speaks directly to the reader to explain how things have changed in the years since she was a child, noting that the large-scale demonstrations that happened when she was younger did not occur anymore. Now, in 1990, the ways in which people protested were much more subtle because "between 1980 and 1983, the government had imprisoned and executed so many high-school and college students

that we no longer dared to talk politics" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 302). A panel in the middle of this page demonstrates some of the more subtle ways in which they showed their rebellion - "showing your wrist," "a loud laugh," or "having a walkman" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 302).

Chute (2010) notes that, while the second part of *Persepolis* may be less overtly political than the first part because Iranians were less political in the early 1990's, Satrapi makes public and visual some aspects of private experience, particularly female experience. She draws herself as a young woman, both walking away from, and addressing the reader directly (Image 10 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Satrapi, 2004, p. 302. Satrapi explains how the regime impacts the way that people think). She writes,

> The regime had understood that one person leaving her house while asking herself: Are my trousers long enough? Is my veil in place? Can my makeup be seen? Are they going to whip me? No longer asks herself: Where is my freedom of thought? Where is my freedom of speech? My life, is it livable? What's going on in the political prisons? It's only natural! When we're afraid, we lose all sense of analysis and reflection. Our fear paralyzes us. Besides, fear has always been the driving force behind all dictators' repression. Showing your hair or putting on makeup logically became acts of rebellion. (Satrapi, 2004, p. 302)

These questions appear in thought bubbles all around her, as if they follow her around. Here, she once again connects the personal and the political, and emphasizes how the smaller questions of individual dress, such as trouser length, impact people's ability to engage or not engage with the larger political questions. She also emphasizes the different ways that rebellion can occur – the narrative opens with a focus on larger protests, but as the regime became more repressive and people were jailed or executed, they had to find different ways to protest. This works to

complicate the idea of rebellion, as what seems insignificant, such as deciding to wear makeup, an act that is associated with femininity, becomes a political statement. This part of the narrative also underlines and explains what Satrapi was doing earlier in the narrative – her acts of teenage rebellion, which could be interpreted as both insignificant and unnecessarily dangerous for herself and her family, are brought into focus. Read alongside this commentary of how she and her university friends resisted the oppressiveness of the regime, it offers the reader a chance to perhaps re-think their initial assumptions.

Having met like-minded people at university, together they find a way to express themselves and support one another to work around the restrictions that have been placed on them. For example, instead of having a nude model to draw in drawing class, the model was entirely covered, making it impossible to practice drawing bodies (Satrapi, 2004, p. 299). Working around this, the students posed for one another in their homes in order to give them some practice. As she meets more like-minded people, Satrapi notices a difference between what she calls the "official representation" (p. 304) of Iran and the lived experiences of people's lives. She illustrates this by drawing herself and her group of friends in two large panels on top of one another, using a similar technique to Bui that shows contrasting images side by side. The top panel shows 13 women all dressed in abayas and hijabs, looking directly at the reader with a variety of facial expressions – some unhappy, some smiling, some mischievous (Image 11 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Satrapi, 2004, p. 305. Satrapi illustrates the difference between public and private life). The bottom panel shows presumably the same women, but in their private lives. They are sitting together and looking at the reader as above, but you can see the individual differences more clearly – different hair styles, different clothing, no veils, some wearing makeup. Satrapi has captioned these images: "Our behaviour in

public and our behaviour in private were polar opposites…this disparity made us schizophrenic" (p. 305). This must have caused a lot of stress for the people who are living these double lives – Satrapi writes that "to find a semblance of equilibrium, we partied almost every night…" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 306). Through her emphasis on alternative narratives and an insistence on linking the personal and the historical, Satrapi provides a more complex reading of the events that led to, and followed, her forced displacement, focusing on her agency and the ways in which she worked to undermine the oppressive regime under which she was living.

Assimilation experiences.

Although her narrative of displacement is very different from Bui's, Satrapi also faces her own challenges. Upon arrival in Austria in November 1984, she was meant to stay with her mother's friend. In describing her wishes for this time in her life, she writes "I had come here with the idea of leaving a religious Iran for an open and secular Europe and that Zozo, my mother's best friend, would love me like her own daughter" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 155). The next panel shows her looking directly at the reader, confused and surrounded by four nuns wearing habits and crosses. She goes on to explain "Only here I am! She left me at a boarding house run by nuns" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 155). In this section, I will examine some of the struggles and triumphs of Satrapi's time in Austria as she deals with the challenges of assimilating into a new country. Some of the challenges are part of a normative teenage experience – for example, experimenting with drugs, dating, and rebelling against authority. However, Satrapi's status as a migrant who has arrived from a war zone adds layers of complexity to these experiences, particularly feelings of guilt about feeling safe while her parents are experiencing war at home in Iran.

Balancing act.

Although Satrapi begins her time in Austria in a convent, she is soon kicked out for telling off a nun and goes to live with a friend from school. Like Bui, she describes some of the experiences she had while trying to assimilate, and, in her case, also keep her parents happy. One panel shows her standing with her legs very far apart, her hands out to her sides, and a look of uncertainty on her face (Image 12 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Satrapi, 2004, p. 193. Satrapi tries to perform a balancing act between her old life and her new life). Behind her, drawn in shadow and without detail, are two figures, likely her parents – perhaps the lack of detail suggests that she is forgetting what they look like? The distance between her feet suggests that she has one foot in her past with her parents and another foot in her new life. This position is difficult to hold for any length of time – she might balance like this for a little while, but eventually, she must either step forward or step back. Satrapi captions this image, "The harder I tried to assimilate, the more I had the feeling that I was distancing myself from my culture, betraying my parents and my origins, that I was playing a game by somebody else's rules" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 193). I think this image sums up Satrapi's time in Austria: the complexities of assimilation, her guilt at being away from her parents while trying to figure out what her possibilities and constraints are. This gives the reader a sense of what it is like for people to live their lives in one place while knowing that their loved ones are in danger somewhere else, and how it might affect them on a day-to-day basis, shattering the illusion that once someone has left a violent or dangerous situation and arrived in a safe third country, their difficulties are over, as illustrated in the study by Gifford & Wilding (2013) discussed in the literature review.

Her struggle with the guilt of being safe while her parents are in a war zone and trying to balance assimilation with her identity as a young Iranian woman comes to a head when she

attends a party with some of her friends. When a boy she has just met asks her name and where she is from, she responds “Marjane” (which he hears as “Marie-Jeanne”), and then says that she is French. She explains: “I should say that at the time, Iran was the epitome of evil and to be Iranian was a heavy burden to bear. It was easier to lie than to assume that burden” (Satrapi, 2004, p. 195). Satrapi understands the pressures placed on immigrants and forced migrants to represent all the people of their nation or ethnicity, something that people who are born in western countries or who are not racialized typically do not experience. In *What is the What*, Achak recounts a meeting that he and some other Sudanese refugees had with Manute Bol, a famous Sudanese American basketball player. Bol urges Achak and his fellow refugees to be model migrants, to work hard and go to college. If they conduct themselves with dignity, restraint, and ambition, the Americans will like them, and their success will encourage the US government to bring more Sudanese refugees to America (Eggers, 2006). Minh-ha (2011) echoes this, describing how, after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, members of the Afghan or Arab communities who shared stories online or among friends related how they put up American flags to show their patriotism and connection to America. She writes how they were “collectively made to bear the burden of representation like other marginalized communities, [and] they went out of their way doing things deemed ‘American’ in order to (re) gain acceptance” (p. 6). This is a lot of pressure for immigrants and forced migrants to bear and partly removes the burden of responsibility from western countries who can take in forced migrants, placing it on the people who have just arrived.

She resolves this issue a few days later, when she overhears some of her classmates talking about her behind her back. One girl states, “She lies when she says that she’s known war. It’s all to make herself seem interesting. Anyway, her parents clearly don’t care about her, or

they wouldn't have sent her alone" (Satrapi, 2004, 196). This is too much for Satrapi, who reveals herself by yelling "You are going to shut up or I am going to make you! **I AM IRANIAN AND PROUD OF IT**!" (Image 13 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Satrapi, 2004, p. 197. Satrapi tells off the people talking about her). She has drawn a close-up of her face, with a very large mouth and an angry look, and the three people sitting in the booth at whom she is yelling are all recoiling from her with frightened looks on their faces. After initially feeling upset, she realizes that she has taken back her identity that she denied earlier, giving her a better understanding of her grandmother's parting advice about staying true to herself (p. 197). It is normal for adolescents to do identity work at this time in their lives, trying to figure out who they are and where they fit in. On top of this "regular" work, Satrapi also must deal with being in a new country, hearing her narrative disbelieved, and guilt about her parents experiencing a war.

This response of disbelief to a forced migrant narrative is not uncommon. Powell (2015) writes about two frequent responses to the narratives of forced migrants: If they appear too pathetic, it is hard to imagine them as productive citizens. In this response, their narrative is rejected because it is too far outside of common experiences. But if they are not presented as pathetic enough – if they appear too familiar, or if they are not visibly wounded or impoverished – then they might not be considered a "real" refugee, as noted by Mannik (2012) in her discussion of the photos taken by Estonian asylum seeker Manivald Sein. Grande (2018) writes about this idea of a "real" refugee, discussing how poverty is not listed as a criterion for asylum. This means that those who are fleeing general extreme poverty get listed as "economic migrants," a term which does not generate compassion (Grande, 2018). In this instance, Satrapi

refuses to submit her previous identity to the receiving country (Nayeri, 2018), standing up for herself and her identity as an Iranian person.

While faced with many challenges, there were people who stand up for Satrapi and help her to feel connected and loved while she is in Vienna. For example, her first roommate Lucia invites her to spend her first holiday season in Austria with her family in Tyrol (Satrapi, 2004, p. 170). She writes "Lucia's family had never seen any Iranians. I was therefore invited over every day by an uncle and an aunt who wanted to get to know me" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 172). This was a happy experience for Satrapi and seems particularly important given that she had just arrived and did not have a support network in Austria. She writes that they "spoke of everything," but "as opposed to [her] school friends' favourite subjects of conversation, we never touched on war, or death" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 172). This was not the only thing that defined her, but perhaps her friends were vulnerable to dominant ideas about it as the defining characteristic of the forced migrant experience. Here, Satrapi is complicating stereotypes that perhaps her friends believe – that people who experience war and violence take that on as the dominant aspect of their personalities. This may be the case for some people, but, like all stereotypes, it does not allow individuals their own narratives, which Hemon (2018) calls a crime against humanity and history. Assuming a particular narrative and expecting people to behave in a certain way because of experiences they have had is another way in which refugees and forced migrants are dehumanized (Hemon, 2018).

Testimony and witnessing.

Simon (2005) identifies the transportation of stories to another time and location as important to the work of witnessing, and Satrapi has done this by emphasizing that she will *not forget* her story and experiences, demanding that the reader pay attention and keep the

experiences that she is writing about alive in their minds through the use of this phrase at important moments in the book (Chute 2008, 2010). In the introduction to this work, she writes that she does not want the Iranian people who died in prison or in the war against Iraq, who suffered under repressive regimes, or who were forced to flee their homes to ever be forgotten (Satrapi, 2004). She experiences firsthand the importance of keeping stories alive when her uncle Anoosh, a political prisoner under the Shah, comes to stay with her family after he was released from prison. Satrapi is suitably impressed with her uncle's revolutionary pedigree, but Anoosh emphasizes the importance of keeping those stories alive. He says, "I tell you all this because it's important that you know. Our family memory must not be lost. Even if it's not easy for you to understand, even if you don't understand it all," to which Satrapi replies "Don't worry, I'll never forget" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 60). In an interview, Satrapi recounts the importance of this conversation and how it helped inform her writing, even if she did not understand it at the time (Emma Watson interviews *Persepolis* author Marjane Satrapi, 2016). In this section, I will detail some of the ways in which Satrapi's narrative acts as a work of witness to her experiences, and how this challenges the idea of refugees and forced migrants as passive victims with no agency.

Don't forget.

Right before she leaves for Austria at age 14, there are several important goodbyes at which the words "don't forget" occur. When her parents tell her that they are sending her to Austria, her father hugs her and says, "Don't ever forget who you are," to which she replies, "No. I won't ever forget" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 148)**.** As she prepares to leave, she takes down her posters and invites her friends over. She says to them, "Here. I'm giving you my most precious things, so that you won't forget me" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 149). She spends the night before she leaves with her grandmother, who offers her this advice: "Always keep your dignity and be true

to yourself" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 150). The next day, as she leaves for the airport, her grandmother hugs her and says, "Don't ever forget what I told you" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 151). Finally, when her parents say their final goodbyes to her at the airport, they end with "Don't forget who you are and where you come from" (Satrapi, 2004, p. 152). These pivotal moments of the narrative, right before she embarks on a life-changing stretch of time on her own in Austria, are peppered with the words "don't forget," suggesting their importance to Satrapi's narrative as a project of witnessing.

Satrapi's role as a witness continues into her adulthood during her return to Iran. When a person is granted refugee status in a refugee camp, one of three things may happen: they may resettle in a safe third country, they may integrate into the country housing the camp or they may repatriate back to their home country (Parekh, 2017). Even if it is physically safe to do so, returning home after fleeing war, violence, or persecution is fraught with challenges and complexities that can complicate this decision. Although Satrapi was never officially declared a refugee, she was still displaced, and after four years in Austria, she returns to Iran. In an interview where she discusses the challenges of choosing what parts of different cultures to take in and wanting to integrate where you are, Satrapi notes that "it's the problem that when you leave and then come back, you are a foreigner anywhere. I am a foreigner in Iran" (Tully, 2004). Her foreignness is underscored by the very city itself, which she explores the day after she returns. She notices physical changes to the city, such as huge murals on the wall and streets re-named after martyrs from the war. One panel shows five different versions of herself, looking all around, and all five versions have worried expressions on their faces (Image 14 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Satrapi, 2004, p. 251. Satrapi walks around the city upon returning to Tehran). Surrounding her are street signs depicting the changed

street names against a black background, which she describes as “very unsettling” (p. 251). Satrapi’s father notes later in the chapter that the name changes took place to flatter the families of those killed in the war, perhaps allowing them to find some meaning in what happened (p. 253). Street names help people find their way around a city and finding them changed will certainly contribute to Satrapi’s disorientation upon returning home, but she could also be hinting at the larger confusion of her life. She feels out of place and unsure about where to go in her life, so perhaps the strange street names mirror an uncertainty about which direction she should go now that she has returned home.

As disorienting as they are, the newly named streets also remind Satrapi of the war and how she was away for most of it. The largest panel on this page shows an outlined silhouette of Satrapi, standing above a ground full of buried skulls and skeletons. The skulls are larger than Satrapi herself, perhaps indicating how they are looming in her mind. She writes “I felt as though I were walking through a cemetery” (Satrapi, 2004, p. 251). Beside this panel is a smaller one that shows Satrapi being accosted by ghosts or corpses. She has a frightened, uncomfortable look on her face as they stand all around her, some reaching for her, “surrounded by the victims of a war I had fled” (p. 251). Her guilt at having been able to leave, while so many thousands were killed and impacted by the war, is made very clear here – she feels the ghosts around her on the street, so she goes home. Although she experienced some difficult times in Austria, including living on the street for more than two months and nearly dying, she does not think that compares with what her parents and others went through, trivializing her own experiences as “misadventures” (p. 257). This disorientation and guilt illustrate a small part of the difficulties of returning home, and even though it is safer because the war with Iraq is over, there is still an

oppressive regime in place. Satrapi disrupts the idea that repatriation is simple, witnessing to the fact that returning home might not be the end of the discomfort of feeling like a foreigner.

Perhaps her most painful act of witness takes place one evening during a party, which was forbidden at the time, and to which the Guardians of the Revolution arrived. The panel that follows does not contain any written words. Readers tend to pause when they come to wordless panels, and I certainly did here, as

> a longer sequence without text demands some scrutiny. Without language acting as a 'timer' or contextual cue for understanding the image, every visual change causes the reader to stop and assess what exactly is happening, and how long it's supposed to take. (Wolk, 2007, p. 129)

When a silent panel does not offer any clues as to its duration, it can produce a sense of timelessness, causing such a panel to linger in the reader's mind (McCloud, 1993).

At the arrival of the guardians, panic ensues, and some people ran up the stairs to the roof of the building, followed by the guardians. On the last page, the people are drawn as outlines – there is no detail, no features, and only the outline of guns to distinguish the guardians from those they were chasing (Image 15 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Satrapi, 2004, p. 309). Satrapi uses motion lines to indicate that everyone was running, and the buildings were drawn simply, with nothing to distinguish them – these could be any buildings, anywhere. People run across the rooftops, jumping from one to another, but one of her friends does not make it – he falls into the space between the buildings and dies. In this sequence, the space between the buildings mirrors the space between frames in a comic, where the reader must fill in the blanks as to what has happened. Satrapi draws herself and her friends

watching from a window, helpless witnesses to this death, and the moon hangs in the upper right corner of each frame, a silent witness to what has taken place. Bui (2017) employs a similar section of wordless panels when describing her family's final journey from their landing spot in Malaysia to the refugee camp. She does not employ this device very often, but like Satrapi, uses it to perhaps suggest what we all know already – sometimes, words fail us, and so Satrapi uses her art to witness to her friend's death in the way that was available to her at the time. She leaves Iran for good shortly after this happens, and with that, her project of bearing witness is over (Chute, 2010). His name was Farzad.

Conclusion

> The act of narrating a life, creating an alternative archive, resists dominant narratives and creates a different narrative space in which to consider processes and consequences of displacement. (Powell, 2015, p. 154)

Both Bui and Satrapi's narratives are complex and nuanced – they contain love, trauma, confusion, growth, and happiness. By their nature, the graphic narrative allows for refugees and forced migrants to tell a fuller, more complex story than the singular news image or website photograph, since the creators can take their time, provide context and perspective, and craft a story of their experiences. Although photographs have status as evidence that drawings do not, and therefore their power and reach to communicate ideas about forced migrants cannot be ignored (Chute, 2016), Hemon (2018) writes that literature can allow for "individual narrative enfranchisement," (p. 92) giving attention to each person's history and set of stories. I think it is important to look at works like these two graphic narratives alongside other kinds of images, like photographs, for two reasons: first, because graphic narratives can offer a place where alternative narratives can be crafted and shared, as is the case with these two works, and second, because looking across different kinds of visual media can provide for rich analysis and interpretation.

This can widen your perspective and expand the field from which you draw information, learning, and thoughtful representation. Through their focus on alternative perspectives, their emphasis on linking the personal and the historical, and a refusal to flatten the experiences that they are describing, Bui and Satrapi offer their narratives to the reader, insisting that they pay attention to how those narratives complicate dominant ideas about who forced migrants are and how they might experience different aspects of life as a forced migrant, including war, violence, settling in a third country, assimilating, and repatriating. The next chapter will continue the discussion of examining creative works by people with forced migrant experience, this time looking at a photography project and an online collection of children's artwork and writing.

Chapter Five: Arts-Based Projects

Around the world, there are several arts-based workshops, activities, and projects taking place with displaced people, both in refugee camps (Adnams Jones, 2018) and newly arrived to safe third countries (Giritli-Nygren & Schmauch, 2012; Guruge, Hynie, Shakya, Akbari, Htoo & Abiyo, 2015; Ramirez & Matthews, 2008). At first glance, this might seem superfluous – with the refugee crisis at such a fever pitch, and the number of displaced people at an all-time high, why are resources, time, and energy being diverted into art projects for displaced people? While it remains true that participating in an art project might not put food on the table or a roof over their heads, the power of art continues to draw both artists and participants into spaces where art can be practiced and produced. In her work with asylum seekers, participatory research and community, O'Neill (2010) writes that some benefits for participants in community participatory arts projects include producing new knowledge, making connections, raising awareness, and challenging stereotypes. This chapter will look at two projects where forced migrants produced images and words and asks: How do the participants represent the subject of the forced migrant in these images? How do these images work to complicate how forced migrants are pictured? I will begin with a brief discussion of some of the literature around forced migrants and art, and the important work that participating in these projects can do, focusing on young people authoring and making visible their own experiences, and providing a more complex narrative of forced migrant experience. I will then move on to discuss the two projects that I have chosen to analyze – *Waves of Childhood* by Another Kind of Girl Collective and *We Are Here Now* by the Surrey Welcoming Communities' Refugee Myth Busting Project.

Representing ethnographic data in artistic form can allow for a richer understanding of the complexities of lived realities, and this can shed some light on wider social structures (O'

Neill, Giddens, Breatnach, Bagley, Bourne, & Judge, 2002). Works of art have the potential to help us see things that we may not have been able to see before, “the 'sedimented stuff' of society – what is normally unseen/hidden/overlooked” (O'Neill et al, 2002, p. 78). As Dewey (1934) writes,

> if all meanings could be adequately expressed by words, the arts of painting and music would not exist. There are values and meanings that can be expressed only by immediately visible and audible qualities, and to ask what they mean in the sense of something that can be put into words is to deny their distinctive existence. (p. 77)

Representing what is normally hidden or outside of language can connect us with reality in new ways that can counter dominant ways of knowing that are re-presented in some of the media discourses covering refugees and asylum seekers (O'Neill et al, 2002; O'Neill & Harindranath, 2006). Finding a way to re-present their story through a creative process can provide recognition for participants, as well as a way to share identity (O'Neill, & Hubbard, 2010). While there are many examples of projects that work with forced migrants to produce images, such as *The Refugee Art Project*, *The REALI Art Program*, and *Mapping Memories*, this chapter will explore two – *Waves of Childhood*, a photography and writing project produced by Another Kind of Girl Collective (AKGC) with young women living in the Za’atari Refugee Camp in Jordan and *We Are Here Now* (WAHN), a collection of drawn images and text from an arts-based workshop for newly arrived refugee children in Surrey, British Columbia. These two projects share a similar ethos – one of the stated goals of both projects was to challenge stereotypical representations of people with forced migrant experience and both use visual images and words in order to represent their experiences.

I am also interested in how these projects differed and one of the major differences between the two projects is that they represent two different groups of people in both age and experience. The participants in AKGC were adolescent girls and young women and were working with the medium of photography after having received some basic instruction in photographic technique (Guo, 2018). Their project took place across a longer period of time, giving them the opportunity to think about the images they wanted to capture and how to frame those images. Conversely, the participants in WAHN were younger children and were mostly working with the medium of drawing and painting. Their project took place on one day, capturing the experiences, thoughts, and feelings that they wanted to express on that particular day. Finally, the AKGC project took place inside a refugee camp with people whose status was unclear and WAHN took place in Surrey, BC with people whose refugee status was determined. These differences make visible a range of experiences that add to the complexity of how forced migrants are pictured and imagined.

Forced Migrants and Art

> Cultural activity and creative expression are key to the formation of identity, both at an individual and a community level – it is vital for refugees to be able to engage in creative acts. Such participation brings benefits to them as individuals and communities and can also contribute to social inclusion. (O'Neill, 2010, p. 227)

Espiritu and Duong (2018) conceptualize refugee artwork as "a crucial site of new forms of knowledge that would otherwise not be produced or shared" (p. 589), and examine how refugee artists produce knowledge, challenging and reconfiguring ways of knowing. Taking seriously art produced by forced migrants means recognizing that it is not an exhaustive representation, but a glimpse into their lives, illuminating the complexities of what it means to insist on the right to belong (Stabile & Linderman, 2012). While engaging with and creating works of art might not be the first thing that is normally associated with forced migrants,

Andemicael (2013) provides a number of reasons why participating in artistic activities are beneficial for people living in refugee camps, some of which include, 1) helping to cope with the stress of living in a camp and providing an opportunity to express both painful and pleasant emotions and memories, 2) reinforcing a sense of power and agency, affirming the possibility of joy, even in a refugee camp, 3) creating a bridge between the refugee and host community, helping to create mutual trust and challenge stereotypes, and 4) helping children learn. Having the opportunity to express oneself, and to be able to choose to share pleasant or painful memories, or both, is an ordinary part of daily life that is often denied to forced migrants, leaving their narratives and experiences to be told by other people.

Beyond these four reasons, another impact that participating in artistic projects might have for displaced people is that they feel seen or reflected. In her graphic narrative *Drawn to Berlin: Comic workshops in refugee shelters and other stories from a new Europe*, Fitzgerald (2018) recounts how she drew portraits of the refugees who came to her art workshops while volunteering at a temporary refugee shelter in Berlin. While they usually left their own drawings behind, they almost always took their portraits with them and she thinks that this is because of their desire to be reflected. She writes that "being seen, and the attendant sensations of power and agency, were regularly denied to asylum seekers in the crush of their new lives" (p. 64) and that they waited in long lines to be issued numbers, forms, and IDs, "the contours of their personhood hidden behind paperwork and headlines" (p. 65). Alternatively, creating art can provide a different experience, one that provides an opportunity for self-expression in a way that is meaningful and that leaves a trace of their lives through what they have created. In a similar vein, Evans (2017) writes about a time of chaos in the refugee camps in Calais, France where she volunteered, and a man who came into the art space, but claimed he could not draw. Sue, the

woman who ran the art space in the camp, traced his hand on a piece of paper and "he writes his name across the palm. Now, more than ever, he needs to make a mark. To know he still exists" (p. 161). Participating in artistic activities and workshops can give participants the opportunity to represent themselves, staking a claim to their space, and asserting their presence (Kurgan, 2013).

Young people authoring their own stories.

As opposed to the projects discussed in chapter four, which feature two women looking back at their childhoods from adulthood, the young people in the two projects explored in this chapter are representing their experiences in the present. Authoring or representing their own stories in the present can give young people the opportunity to see themselves as agents who can remake or reposition themselves through storytelling (Vasudevan & DeJaynes, 2013). For example, in their photovoice project with street children in Lima, Peru, Joanou (2017) stresses that taking photos allowed the participants to both document their history and create memories, demonstrating the complexity of their identities beyond "street children" while offering images that humanize a population that has been routinely dehumanized. Taking pictures of themselves and their friends allowed them to play an active role in creating their histories, as well as constructing how they view themselves and their friends, providing another narrative to counter the view of street children as undesirable people who leech off society (Joanou, 2017). The two roles that producing these images play: 1) providing a counter narrative that can impact how other people view this population and 2) shaping how the participants see themselves and their friends, work together to emphasize the agency of the participants.

Authoring their own stories and representing their own experiences can also provide opportunities for young people to express themselves and narrate their identity. In her work on visual methodologies and working-class children's visions of care, Luttrell (2020) suggests that

young people use cameras to combat invisibility and, in her work, their visual narratives offer an alternative to "dominant versions of individualism" (p.3). She goes on to write that the images and accounts of her participants "offer a radically different vision of themselves in which they are…creative agents making powerful claims about the value of care, belonging, dignity, and an ethos of creativity" (p. 16). Although they may use photography or another form of visual media to express something about themselves, this does not mean that they are expressing all of who they are or that what they choose to express today represents some fixed aspect of themselves, but that they can play around with different parts of who they are and choose to express themselves in a way that underlines what they think is important at that particular time. Of course, identity is not static – it is a lifelong process, and identity construction and representation are more complex than a simple dichotomous relationship between a group of marginalized people being represented by those in power and that same group of people resisting those in power (Powell, 2015). Powell (2015) goes on to note that, because of the complexities of hybrid and liminal identities, we can examine where and how representations of identity intersect and interact with discourses of power, disrupting the easy dichotomy of powerless people being acted upon by powerful people, and then resisting.

While listening to young people share their experiences is very important, media production that represents these experiences is not an expression of their "true" voices (Soep, 2006). They may be expressions that fit the moment, or they may represent some aspect of their identity that the creator wishes to highlight, but this does not mean that they are a representation of a whole person or a whole person's story or identity. In her work on the (im)possibilities of self-representation, Brushwood Rose (2009) discusses how the meanings of stories produced in a digital story-telling workshop often seem to go beyond what the creator consciously intended,

and that this reflects the impossibility of telling the whole story. Instead of using visual media to gain direct or transparent access to their experiences, participants use visual media to actively structure what is represented of the self (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014). For example, in their work on *craftedness* (p. 31) in multimedia narratives, Brushwood Rose and Low (2014) write that "understanding the meanings contained in a photograph requires an attention to the aesthetic qualities of the image and the choices participants make in the crafting of that image, not just the content depicted" (p. 30). Following Brushwood Rose and Low (2014), I explore both the content depicted as well as the aesthetic choices made by the creators from both AKGC and WAHN in order to draw meaning from the images.

Contesting the single story.

The importance of young people authoring their own stories means that they can tell a narrative or construct an image in the way that they want, focusing on the things that are important to them, rather than being presented in a particular way by someone else. In their work on using photography with young people with immigrant and refugee experience, Shadduck-Hernandez (2006) writes that creating visual narratives offered an alternative to written text and that using photography gave the students an opportunity to tell stories that were often rejected or silenced. The participants in this study were passionate about their creative potential and the possibilities of sharing their photography and art in order to learn more about each other and to influence their audiences' views on refugees and immigrants (Shadduck-Hernandez, 2006). Speaking more broadly, O'Neill (2010) also writes that it is important to recover and re-tell people's lives and experiences in order to better understand our world, with the aim of transforming that world. She writes that

> representing social research in art forms can help audiences access a richer understanding of the complexity of lived experiences, and representing research using photography, poetry or creative writing we reach a wider audience, beyond academic communities, that may encourage people to think differently. (p. 107)

Of course, simply because there are opportunities for people to represent themselves artistically in a participatory way does not mean that it always works or that it will lead to great social change. Bishop (2012) is particularly critical of participatory arts, writing that it is seen to "channel art's symbolic capital towards constructive social change" (p. 13), leading to all collaborative practices as being perceived as equally important gestures of resistance. In that they are all seen as essential to repairing the social bond, there cannot be any failed, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art (Bishop, 2012). While it is important not to over-state what participatory art projects can accomplish, I do not think it is naïve to remain optimistic about their potential. Even in "failed" projects of participatory art, there will have been important moments or spaces created by the combination of participants, facilitator, and the process of creating that, if not germane to the present, might lead to something new and as-yet imagined in the future.

In an interview with CBC about her book *Story Boat*, author Kyo Maclear notes that the fundamental flaw in our conversations about refugees is that it is seen as someone else's story. She categorizes this as disingenuous, noting that we are all interconnected, and that what happens in one country today will determine who is displaced tomorrow (Abraha, 2020). The narratives of forced migrants are often presented to people in the receiving country as a story about an other, and Powell (2015) writes that naming individuals as displaced is a way to mark them as the other and binds them with westernized expectations of a particular displacement

narrative. This helps keep the other at a distance, and "the displacement story thus remains not our story but the story of the other" (Powell, 2015, p. 18). This insistence on displacement as the story of the other is one way that people in potential receiving countries maintain this distance - these experiences are so far outside of my own that I could not possibly relate and therefore the narrative remains outside of myself. I am not suggesting that people in potential receiving countries try to take on the narratives of forced migrants as their own in order to imagine that they know them, but rather that projects that interrupt this distancing can be a point of connection for people whose experiences are vastly different, doing solidarity work across borders and differences to address social wrongs.

The projects discussed in this chapter provide an interesting comparison to the images examined from the NGO and news media websites. I began this project wondering why there was so much coverage of the settlement of 25000 Syrian refugees in Canada and I was getting most of my information from the news media, so in addition to looking there, I wanted to look at other sources for images to expand my own understanding of the issue of representation of forced migrants. While there was not uniformity between or among the UNHCR and RI, I did observe a focus on images of women and children, and people in still poses (see chapter three). These were images taken by photographers for use by NGOs and media outlets and I was interested in how images produced by forced migrants themselves that spoke to their current experiences would compare and contrast. This is not to say that the mainstream images are wrong or unimportant, or that they do not tell part of the narrative, but, like all images, they both include and exclude. The image of the vulnerable woman or child refugee is one that is familiar to many in the global north – this is what has been included over time and I wanted to look elsewhere to see what has mostly been excluded. The potential to represent their current

experiences through the use of visual means can share experiences that tell a different, more nuanced narrative.

While the images from chapter three tell a particular narrative about forced migrants through dominant media outlets such as news media and NGO websites, there are other avenues through which their experiences can be represented. O'Neill (2010) calls for alternatives to dominant media messages "that construct refugees as a problem or threat and engage in a particular form of policy agenda setting" (p. 133), and that the alternative media could be a space for supporting and reinforcing cultural identities. There is a need to personalize stories and highlight the differences in cultural, gender, and age-based differences between and among forced migrants, and smaller media, such as pamphlets, podcasts, or websites can provide forced migrants with opportunities to display narratives that highlight their experiences (O'Neill, 2010). In the next section, I will discuss the photography project by AKGC and how the participants used their photographs to represent their experiences and insist on their own discursive space.

Another Kind of Girl Collective

Another Kind of Girl Collective (AKGC) was founded in 2014 by documentary filmmaker Laura Doggett (Trent-Gurbuz, 2018) and can be found online at https://anotherkindofgirl.com/. It is a media arts collective that works with young women in displaced, migrant, or transitory communities around the world with the aim of "building solidarity, understanding and collective power among young women" and determining how their own stories are told (https://anotherkindofgirl.com/about). It is important to note that this project does not have the same fundraising needs as larger organizations, such as the UNHCR or RI, and as such, the goals of the project do not need to be tied to attracting donors or raising large sums of money. While not entirely free of oversight,

this does provide more freedom to engage in this kind of work. In 2014, Doggett ran her first photography workshop with 20 girls at Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan and she was there as a Felsman Documentary Fellow paired with a Public Policy Fellow to conduct research for two months on girls' access to education ("Laura Doggett," 2017). After the first round of workshops, the girls expressed a desire to learn more of the technical side of things so they could continue to do more creative work, and AKGC was born out of this ("Laura Doggett," 2017). In the workshops, the participants were given some technical instruction on photography and filming techniques, such as framing and cropping, but they were mostly encouraged to explore (Guo, 2018), using the cameras as a way to develop a visual language to express their inner and outer worlds ("Laura Doggett," 2017). The participants' films have been shown at the Sundance and Cannes film festivals (Guo, 2018).

According to Doggett, the impetus behind the workshops was to give cameras to the participants so they could tell their own stories – when she arrived at the camp, 3500 journalists had come and gone, telling largely tragic stories in black and white terms ("A Voice," 2015). "Laura gives the girls an opportunity to take back their stories from the hands of journalists who, as outsiders, are sometimes ill equipped to see the nuances of life in the camps, instead focusing solely on disruption and tragedy" (Guo, 2018, para. 6). It is important to note that, just as photos taken by journalists do not reflect some kind of absolute truth, neither do the photos taken by the participants in this project – images captured by a camera are not simply a transparent recording of reality, but a representation of a particular framing and other choices made by the photographer (Wissman, 2008). That being said, the perspectives of forced migrants themselves have historically been overlooked, so this project represents an intervention into the conversation about their representation.

Waves of Childhood.

In this section, I will discuss two themes that were prevalent in the depiction of forced migrants in the photographs taken by the participants for the project entitled *Waves of Childhood*. The first is how children were pictured and the second is how people were pictured in still versus active poses. I chose these two themes not only because they were prevalent in the photos, but also because these were themes that emerged from the analysis of the images from the NGO websites discussed in the previous chapter and I am interested in how the representation of children and the poses of people in the photographs compare and contrast between the two different types of photographers.

A (different) focus on children.

> I looked through the window. I saw the children playing, celebrating their childhood and their beautiful lives. How beautiful their days are, the beauty of their lives and our childhood. I remembered God's great power. His wonderous human creation. (Fatima[1], 2014, p. 10)

Of the images that I examined from this project, 53 out of 115 featured children. This is not surprising, as the photographers were girls and young women, so it makes sense that they would photograph people who were close in age to them and to whom they may have had easier access than people much older than them. In chapter three, I discussed how children and young people played a role in depicting the vulnerable refugee for the consumption of potential donors. While this may have been part of a strategic move for the UNHCR and RI to fund their life-saving work, one of the consequences of this strategy is that it positions refugees as always and only vulnerable, making it difficult for those viewing the images to imagine them as agentic subjects. The images of children from this project show refugee children in a different light, participating

[1] Pseudonym

in the life of the camp, playing, doing work, and hanging out. One such image features a young person of about 11- or 12-years old crouching down as she holds something above a little box of flowers (Image 1 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Unidentified Photographer. (2014). *Girl crouches to feed flowers.* [digital image]. Retrieved from https://anotherkindofgirl.com/waves-of-childhood-photos on August 29, 2019). Behind her is the expanse of the camp that shows the dirt and gravel ground that features in nearly every photo in this project which does not look conducive to growing flowers. Instead of being photographed in distress or looking sadly into the camera for fundraising purposes as many of the children pictured in the previous chapter were, this young person is engaged in a simple gardening activity.

The aesthetic choices of the photographer here are interesting – the focus of the photo, the young girl, is crouching down and not looking directly at the viewer. This absence of a direct gaze at the viewer is called an *offer* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 148) and could be read as an invitation to participate in the activity with her. The choice of distance, medium-close, also signifies that the details of this photo are important – the photographer wants the viewer to see what the girl is doing. The relationship between the girl and the flowers perhaps mirrors the relationship between the photographer and her artform. The girl is taking care of the flowers, performing a traditional nurturing role that girls and women are often encouraged to take up, but she is also gaining something from it – a hobby, something interesting to do, perhaps learning a new skill and growing something beautiful. The photographer has shaped the image for the viewer, producing an interesting work of art that helps to narrate both her own life and the life of the girl in the photo. As residents of the camp, both the photographer and the subject of the photo have a stake in how the camp and the people who reside there are represented. One of the things

she appears to be emphasizing is an experience of calm, which is in direct conflict with dominant ideas about what it means or looks like to be in a refugee camp – the only other people pictured in this image are very far away. Both Szczepanikova (2010) and Szörényi (2006) write about how NGOs can position forced migrants as simply passive objects of assistance, but here, she is actively participating in the care and survival of another living thing. This mirrors the role of the photographer – she is not simply accepting how the camp and those who reside in it are being portrayed but is producing her own version of what life looks like.

The idea of flowers as representing growth and new life is poignant here – the people in this camp have left dangerous and potentially deadly situations and have been transplanted to a refugee camp, just as the flowers in this box have been transplanted from where they would normally be to a new place. Much like the flower in the box, the people in the camp are also living in a finite, limited place with fixed boundaries drawn around it. In her graphic narrative discussing her work doing comics workshops with refugees in Berlin, Fitzgerald (2018) writes that "flowers are the opposite of stasis, they are movement and meaning – hope that can't be stymied. A dancing rose, a secret garden, a tiny patch of forest" (p. 164). This is significant for refugees, who are often positioned as stuck in limbo, waiting for either the situation in their country of origin to be safe enough for them to return or to be resettled in a safe third country. Parekh (2017) notes that 17 years is the norm for the length of displacement and less than 1% of official refugees are permanently resettled in a new country, while the majority remain in refugee camps for years, even generations. Countering this idea of stasis with an image of growth provides another way to view forced migrants and their lives inside refugee camps.

Another photo that features children shows a girl skipping. (Image 2 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Unidentified Photographer. (2014). *Child skipping*.

[digital image]. Retrieved from https://anotherkindofgirl.com/waves-of-childhood-photos on April 2, 2018). She is photographed from the shoulders down and in mid-skip, with both feet off the ground, and her sweater is either too big for her or she is using it to warm her hands. She is skipping on a ground that is largely gravel, and there is a UNHCR tarp visible in the background. The photographer is positioned directly in front of the skipping girl and appears to be sitting or crouching down. Similar to Bui's (2017) account of her family's time in Pulau Besar Camp, this photo shows the possibility of children playing and having fun in a refugee camp.

This photo is both in dialogue with and in conflict with some larger narratives about childhood and refugee camps. First, this image shows a playful child subject engaging in an activity that is fairly common for young children, particularly girls – as it is normal for children to play wherever they are, this is not something that should be surprising. Although children will find ways to play wherever they are, the punctum, or the details from a particular image that "prick" the viewer (Barthes, 1981), reminded me that she is a forced migrant in a refugee camp. For example, she is playing with a skipping rope, but she is using it on gravel, which makes a simple activity more difficult. The punctum for me in this image is her sandals, which are not conducive to either walking or playing on gravel. It could be that these are her only pair of shoes, in which case she has no choice but to wear them, but it could also be that she chose to wear these sandals for a variety of reasons – perhaps they fit her better than her other shoes or she prefers their colour. It is important to take into account multiple meanings within a single photo, as young people make deliberate choices about how to represent themselves and others, sometimes in ways that resist dominant constructions (Luttrell, 2010; Luttrell, Dorsey, Shalaby, & Hayden, 2011).

Secondly, this image is in conflict with the idea that refugee camps are only dreary, miserable places where people are only engaged in day-to-day survival. Children engaged in play was not a prevalent theme from my examination of the NGO photos, but it is a common theme from this project. The participants of the AKGC project set out to create photographs that show aspects of their lives as they experience them in order to add their perspective to the conversation of who refugees are and what it is like to live in a refugee camp. The photographs that feature children and everyday life in the camp provide a window into their lives that challenge some of the assumptions related to refugees – that they are always in distress and unhappy or that their lives are only filled with trauma. In her book *Art on my mind: Visual politics*, hooks (1995) describes using photography as a way to "resist misrepresentation" (p. 60) and to produce alternative images that combine resistance, image production, and fun. In the writing section of this project, one of the participants, aged 15, writes that they

> wanted to show the people how we are living in camp. We get dressed up, we eat, we drink and we use perfume. Not as they might imagine…It's true, when we first came it was really hard for us and we were missing our country very much. And we still do, but thankfully, just like we are remembering moments back in Syria right now, tomorrow when we go back to Syria we will remember a lot of moments from here. (Yara[2], 2014, p. 12)

Like the different kinds of images of children produced by the photographers of this project as compared to the mainstream images produced by NGOs and the news media, there was also a

[2] Pseudonym

difference in how people were positioned in the photographs. In the next section, I will discuss how the subjects of these photos more often showed people in active poses.

More active poses.

The two images above show children in a different way than the children pictured on NGO websites or in news media websites that I examined in chapter three – as young people engaged in activities, doing things "normal" children do, with the photographer offering to the viewer a different slant on what the possibilities are within a refugee camp. In that chapter, I discussed how forced migrants were pictured in active vs still poses, and the images I analyzed showed men in still poses only twice and women in still poses 11 times. Because of these findings, I was interested in how the young women from this project chose to photograph people living in the camp in active vs still poses. Overall, there were many more people photographed in active poses than in still ones. Out of 115 images examined, 43 showed people in an active pose and ten showed people in a still pose, unengaged in any activity such as reading or talking to someone else. There was not the same gender disparity between how people were featured in images, as roughly the same number of females and males were photographed in both still and active poses. In this section, I will look at some images from this project that show people in still and active poses and examine how producing more images of people in active poses contributes to a more complex picture of forced migrant subjectivity.

One image that shows a certain "joie de vivre" offers a downward shot of the legs and feet of three women on concrete and gravel ground (Image 3 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Unidentified Photographer. (2014). *Women's shoes*. [digital image]. Retrieved from https://anotherkindofgirl.com/waves-of-childhood-photos on April 2, 2018). This is an interesting photo, as it is not uncommon for women to take and post pictures of their shoes

in this way and from this angle on social media platforms like Instagram. Their shoes are pretty, not meant for walking long distances, or particularly practical for wearing on gravel, but they are wearing them anyway. This could be because they only have the one pair, but like the girl skipping rope in sandals, they might also have chosen to wear them because they are pretty and want to be wearing them. Women with forced migrant experience are highly visible on NGO websites for fundraising purposes, as discussed in chapter three, and recall that Johnson (2011) notes that women have carried much of the load of appearing as depoliticized victims. In the above image, the representation of women's bodies that normally does this work is mostly absent, and instead, the photographer provides the viewer with a different perspective, one that shows the women as showing off, feeling desirable and worthy of the camera's gaze. Writing about her experiences as a young woman who had fled Iran with her mother and brother, Nayeri (2019) notes that, while they were in the United Arab Emirates, a man befriends their family, and she notices that walking through the streets with him is both different and easier. She remarks that "it made people look at us, and, after months as a displaced person, an invisible girl without even a school where I could distinguish myself, I loved being looked at" (p. 84). Perhaps this same desire to be looked at is what prompted the photographer to take this photo.

The photographer's choice to focus on their shoes, clothing that is stereotypically associated with women and traditional femininity, should not be overlooked as unimportant. In the previous chapter, I note how Satrapi (2004) discusses the importance of making a political statement with the few choices that were available to her at the time of her return to Iran, such as showing her wrist or having a Walkman (p. 302). Here, the women make their shoes the focus of the photograph, perhaps not something that appears political on the surface, but part of an insistence on picturing what is important to them and resisting the construction of themselves as

always and only vulnerable. Like the other images from this project, this one is both in dialogue and in conflict with larger social narratives, forcing the viewer to hold both in tension. It underlines the idea that women are associated with femininity, frivolity, and the pleasure of dress-up, but it also challenges the idea that women in refugee camps should not have pretty shoes or that owning such shoes might even preclude someone from making a refugee claim because to be a refugee means you cannot own anything beautiful.

Another such active image is a photo of two men working (Image 4 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Unidentified Photographer. (2014). *Men working*. [digital image]. Retrieved from https://anotherkindofgirl.com/waves-of-childhood-photos on August 29, 2019). This close-medium shot of two men shows them both crouched down and facing each other, while one man is holding down two wooden boards of a frame for the other man to hammer a nail in place. At first glance, it looks like it could be a regular scene from a work site, or maybe at someone's house, but on closer inspection, their clothing gives away that this is not the case – they are not wearing any kind of safety clothing, such as a hardhat, and they are especially not wearing safety footwear, so this work is also a bit dangerous. The photographer looks to be standing quite close to these two men, which is also a bit dangerous in that it is not necessarily safe for someone to be on a work site when they are not involved in the work. This means she risked something to take this photo. Like the photo of the women above, this image both reinforces and challenges dominant narratives about gender and people with forced migrant experience. On the one hand, it reinforces the idea that men are the ones who perform this kind of physical labour and that it is important for them to be seen doing this work. On the other hand, it shows that people living in refugee camps are not simply passively sitting

around, waiting for aid – that instead, they are contributing to the life of the camp in ways commensurate with their skillset.

Showing images of people working and creating could be a strategy on the part of the photographers to show both ordinary aspects of life and forced migrants displaying agency in their lives. Agier (2008) writes that inactivity dominates the background of camp life and refugees often express feelings of impotence and uselessness, so being involved in a building project might be one way to alleviate that boredom and contribute to the life of the camp. Additionally, one of the dangers of only drawing attention to narratives of trauma and displacement is that "such narratives can reduce the displaced person to the status of an object, a victim of larger powers who lacks her or his own agency or creative capacity" (Coleman, Glanville, Hasan, and Kramer-Hamstra, 2012 p. xxii) and that this plays out in the media representation that portrays refugee-ed people as only dependent on humanitarian intervention to survive. Although they were discussing the involvement of refugees in public debate and civic life, I would argue that seeing refugees involved in the maintenance of the camp is also important because it challenges the idea that they have nothing to contribute because of their forced migrant status.

In the previous section, I examined some of the photos from AKGC that provided a contrasting look to how forced migrants were depicted in the photos examined in chapter three. In the next section, I will look at a collection of pictures and stories from the project entitled *We Are Here Now* and how these participants also contribute to the work of constructing a more complex picture of forced migrant subjectivity.

We Are Here Now

We Are Here Now (WAHN) is a collection of art and words by former refugee children living in Surrey, British Columbia and can be found online at http://bcrefugeehub.ca/art-stories-by-children-refugees-in-surrey/. It was part of a larger project by the Surrey Welcoming Communities' Refugee Myth Busting Project that worked to raise awareness about the reality of refugees living in Surrey. This collection came out of a series of training sessions for educators in Surrey where refugee children told their story and produced a large tree of their artwork and thoughts (Hedley & Khalid, 2013). The children, who came to Canada as refugees from Burma, Burundi, Eritrea, Honduras, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and Syria, used drawing, clay, painting, and storytelling to share their experiences and to explore ideas of home, displacement, belonging, and integrating into Canadian society (Hedley and Khalid, 2013). The work is documented in an online book edited by Hedley and Khalid (2013), who state that

> the aim of the project was to let the children share with each other and with their Surrey community in order that their stories may be heard, and so that those of us involved in their lives have the opportunity to question some of the myths that exist, so that we may bear witness and listen. (p. 3)

These works of art and the stories that accompany them offer windows into the children's lives, losses, and longing, as well as their strength and resilience (Hedley & Khalid, 2013).

My analysis of the art made in this project falls under two major themes: representations of home and refusal of a single story. In the first section below, I explore one child's conceptualization of home, both in Canada and their country of origin, and how this representation is an example of authoring their own narrative in relation to their experiences of forced migration. Home was one of the main themes in these drawings and writings, and out of 21 images, 17 wrote or drew something to do with home. The importance of home for refugee

participants is not unique to this project – in their participatory photo project conducted with migrant women in Sweden, Giritli-Nygren and Schmauch (2012) found that, along with school, home was described as the most important space. The second section looks at different children's artwork that demonstrates a wide range of experiences and feelings about forced migration, insisting on the complexities of their experiences and refusing a flattened, single story (Adichie, 2009).

Home.

Drawing houses as a representation of home was quite common throughout this project - in total, seven of the images featured houses. One such image was created by a grade six student who arrived in Canada from Burundi. They painted a house with four smiling people inside it and a smiling tree out front (Image 5 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: We Are Here Now, 2013, p. 5). Outside the house, about half as tall, is a tree that is drawn in the traditional way – brown trunk and green circular top. However, to this traditional representation of a tree, they have added two dots for eyes and a smile in yellow paint with the caption "In Africa trees can talk" (p. 4). The smiling people and tree indicate to me that this child was happy in their home, with happy memories of both the people and the place, which pushes back against the idea that the lives of forced migrants were always and only miserable before they are resettled in a third country. The size of the house dominates the image, taking up most of the space from top to bottom and left to right, perhaps indicating that the memory of it looms large in their mind. The smiling tree strikes me as something that is fairly typical of children, which is giving human features to inanimate objects and imagining them as alive in the same way that humans are alive, but their assertion that trees can talk in Africa is particularly interesting because it provides a distinction between trees in Africa and trees in Canada. This

image sparked many questions for me – what do the trees in Africa say? Are they happy, like this tree seems to be? Or is the tree happy because of its proximity to her happy family? Perhaps it signifies a close connection to the land and to nature that they felt in Burundi, but do not (yet) feel in Canada.

It is not particularly surprising that children drew houses to signify home – drawing my house is one of the first things I remember learning how to draw and was one of the themes that the children explored during this workshop (Hedley & Khalid, 2013). As discussed in the previous chapter, home can be quite complex for refugees to consider – on the one hand, their home was unsafe for them at the time they left, so there are likely negative memories associated with it, but it is also a place where they had, and have, family, friends, and good memories. A project that tried to represent this ambivalence about home, and the co-incidence of loss and longing, is an art project called *Ground Plan Drawings* by the Foundland Collective. In this project, white tents in which Syrian refugees lived in Za'atari Camp in Jordan were used as screens to project memories of the homes that forced migrants had left behind (Espiritu & Duong, 2018). The participants sketched their houses and then projected what they thought their houses would look like if/when they were able to return. Not unlike the pictures drawn by the children in *We Are Here Now*, this installation also demonstrated "the complex temporalities and spaces that refugees inhabit" (p. 605). Perhaps drawing their house from before they came to Canada is one way for this child to hold onto their ideas of home – in this way, their house acts as a placeholder for their lives, waiting for them to return in the hopes that their home might also be safe enough to one day return.

The second image by the same grade six student shows a painted Canadian flag with some of their own additions (Image 6 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original

source: We Are Here Now, 2013, p. 20). The left-side red strip is bare, but the middle white stripe has a lot going on – there is a representation of the red maple leaf that is present in the centre of the Canadian flag and black diagonal lines striking out from points in the maple leaf to the edge of the picture. Beside this image, the child describes how they are happy in Canada, but also that their family is experiencing difficulties with money and learning English. They go on to write that "I think here people have many things and much money but I think people don't have family with so many people so they don't care if someone goes away or somebody dies. In my country we care more about people" (p. 20). Drawing both Canadian flags and flags of their countries of origin was fairly common throughout this project, so it must be an important symbol for the participants. Their observations about Canada as compared to their country of origin, written next to their rendering of the Canadian flag, are interesting – they remark that things in Canada are "easy," and that people have more money and possessions, but that socially, they do not think that things are better. They note that families are not as big, perhaps meaning that people have fewer connections that they can rely on, and that people do not care as much about each other as they do in Burundi. Their earlier picture of their house in Burundi was full of smiling people and a tree that can talk – here, they are making explicit their claim that they were happy at home in Burundi and that having a large family meant there was always someone to care for them. This observation also questions the national narrative that Canada is a caring, compassionate country that looks after people who need support.

This image also responds to the narrative of gratitude that insists that refugees and forced migrants should be thankful for where they are and not be critical of the receiving country, what Ahmed (2010) calls the *happiness duty*, which I discussed in chapter three in relation to refugees being perceived as a social threat. In her book *The ungrateful refugee: What immigrants never*

tell you, Nayeri (2019) writes about her experiences dealing with the expectations of the happiness duty. She notes that people in America liked to hear her mother recount the story of their life in Iran when it featured the moral police and her arrests, the underground church and the brutal teachers, but tended to become bored or confused when they spoke of schnitzels from Hotel Koorosh, sour cherries, and pleasant hikes. She became incredulous when a woman at a church suggested she must be happy now that she has a better life, remembering that, while it had its difficulties, life in Iran was also good, whereas in Oklahoma, "life was a big gray parking lot with cigarette butts baking in oil puddles, slick children idling in the beating sun, teachers who couldn't do math…a better life? The words lodged in my ear like grit" (p. 7). Like Nayeri, this artist insists on her happy memories of home, offering her observations on the social connectedness of people in Canada as compared to Burundi, and a criticism of their new country. While this could be interpreted as "ungrateful," I think it offers a window into the complicated relationship between the first and current home that forced migrants might experience, and this child's artwork is one way to express that complexity. In the next section, I will continue to explore how the children expressed the complexities of their experiences through their artwork and writing.

Refusing the single story of forced migration.

The pictures created by the children from WAHN express a range of experiences and emotions, such as sorrow, joy, confusion, and longing for people and places. In this section, I will examine some images that demonstrate this complexity, beginning with pictures and text that express fear, death, and difficulties with integrating into a new country, and ending with an image that demonstrate happiness and hope at arriving in Canada. These images interrupt the narrative of progress from unhappiness to happiness that is associated with forced migrant travel

to a safe third country while also allowing the children space to express both the difficult and traumatic things that have happened to them and their hopes for the future and the present.

Fear, death, and integration.

Like all people with forced migrant experience, the children who participated in this project have widely varying experiences, and one of the most unique visualizations of their narrative was created by a child, aged 12, who arrived in Canada from Somalia. Their artwork is a mixed-media piece that includes art supplies, such as sparkly buttons, and small toys, such as Lego pieces, dinosaurs, plastic animals, and plastic soldiers (Image 7 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: We Are Here Now, 2013, p. 8). The toys are arranged in a tableau on a piece of brown fabric and represent the child's story of witnessing a robbery and act of violence in their home. Part of the accompanying text reads "In my safe place I would have a helicopter to go shopping it is not safe with a car" (p. 8, sic). This is a very interesting arrangement, as unlike the other pictures, which are mostly paintings and drawings, this is a mixed-media piece in three dimensions. Perhaps the experience feels so large in their mind that they were unable to represent it in two dimensions, so they used what was available to create a 3-D representation of it. I wonder if this is a representation of the safe place for which the child is wishing – for example, they included the helicopter that they would like to use in order to safely go shopping. There are also two horses and a plastic figure guarding a treasure chest on the left side of the tableau, which perhaps represents the money that is now safe, impervious to thieves because of its more powerful defenses. Finally, I am especially intrigued by the representations of the violence that the child describes – the soldiers standing around the heart that is lying to the right of the tree, and the toy grenade at the front of the piece. They feel very particularly placed, and I think it is significant that they are standing around a heart – whose heart is this and why

was it included in the piece? Having the opportunity to tell this narrative in this way, as both a visual and a textual story, can allow them to express themselves in different ways, providing the viewer with a rich piece of work from which to make meaning.

Coleman, Glanville, Hasan, and Kramer-Hamstra (2012) write that focusing on displacement is to focus on interconnected and contradictory losses, such as the loss of land, loss of connection to home, language, or culture, loss of citizenship, and loss of freedom of movement, to name a few. Loss of people is another loss that displaced people experience, and some of the children from this project expressed this loss by writing and drawing about people in their lives who had died. One third grade student who had arrived in Canada from Burma created a distinct and interesting piece of art that is different from most of the other pieces created by the other children (Image 8 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: We Are Here Now, 2013, p. 17). This work is more abstract – it has three horizontal stripes and placed in the centre-right of the painting is what looks like the bud of a flower or a dark cloud. The pattern of this picture reminds me of a flag, with its three horizonal stripes and a symbol, which was a recurring theme in these pictures. Accompanying this piece is text that describes the child's home in Burma and how they were thinking of their brother who had died while they were painting it. Writing about their brother's death, they say "I didn't get to see his face. I think about him" (p. 17).

Like other children in this project, they describe some of the positive things about their life before coming to Canada, mixed with the tragedy of their brother's death. Their description of what happened – that he died and they "didn't get to see his face" - is heartbreaking. I wonder if the abstract nature of their picture reflects the difficulty of trying to represent something that is unrepresentable. The background colours of this image are soft, suggesting a lightness, but the

dark shape in the middle is harsher and draws the eye, with the brushstrokes suggesting that the child painted it in an aggressive, circular motion. The soft, light colours in the background could represent the child's happy memories of home and the dark shape on top of that could represent their brother's death, a permanent mark on their life. They specifically say that they were thinking about their brother when they painted this picture, so his memory likely influenced its creation. Creating visual symbols and telling and retelling our stories is a way to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct knowledge, and "through reframing our stories, we include a more coherent narrative that includes the trauma, but that is much larger than the trauma. The trauma is finally seen in perspective: it is not the whole story" (Adnams Jones, 2018, p. 293). In this case, perhaps they are trying to work through some of the trauma of their brother's death while also sharing a fuller, more complex story of their experiences.

Finally, one of the complexities of coming to Canada from another country is integrating into a new culture and language, and even though there are often supports in place to help with this transition, this can still pose difficulties for newly arrived migrants. One sixth grader who arrived in Canada from Sudan articulates this difficulty with their pencil drawing, one of the few in this project that has speech bubbles (Image 9 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: We Are Here Now, 2013, p. 24). There are three people drawn in this picture – I think they have drawn themselves in the middle, with downcast eyes and either hair or a veil hanging down from their forehead. The figure to the right has a mean look on their face and is baring their teeth with a speech bubble saying, "What happened to your face?" The figure to the left is drawn in profile, with a facial expression that is hard to read, and their speech bubble says, "o my god x2." Seemingly in response to these two comments, they have drawn a speech bubble

for themselves, which reads “Its a mask” and the text on this page reads “My teachers know nothing about me” (p. 24).

This picture shows bullying, which is the only picture to explicitly show people in the act of making fun of the newly arrived children. I am curious about their response, “its a mask” – to what are they referring? Is it something literal or more metaphoric? Refugees and forced migrants may feel compelled to wear different masks while they expand their participation in new social discourse communities and develop language resources within their new environments. The text has a devastating quality to it – are these teachers pictured here? Or are they students, and the teachers are not doing anything to intervene? This picture gets at the difficulties that newly arrived children can face in an education system that might have difficulty meeting their needs. Even if they are welcomed and supported during this transition, refugee children might still feel alienated as the teachers and students in their classrooms will still have a very different frame of reference, potentially leaving newly arrived refugee children to feel as if their teachers do not understand them.

Happiness.

While the images analyzed above include some of their negative experiences related to forced migration, one picture that shows a nearly uniformly positive experience was created by a thirteen year old who had arrived in Canada from Thailand, depicting themselves after their arrival in Canada (Image 10 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: We Are Here Now, 2013, p. 22). They have drawn a girl (presumably themselves) in an anime style with large eyes and a wide smile towards the bottom right corner of the page. The figure in the drawing is quite small and there is snow falling from the sky. They have written across the top of the page in pencil: “On my first day, or the first time ever I saw Canada, my first thought was

that it was really cold and the snow was really magical" (p. 22). She goes on to describe her first day of school in Canada, where she did not understand anything at first, but then she "met another girl from Syria and she translated for me. We became friends" (p. 22). I wonder if they have drawn themselves small in relation to the sky because they find Canada very large – their expectation was that it would be smaller, so perhaps the size of it is overwhelming. It also could represent feeling overwhelmed at being in a new country where they do not speak the language. The facial expression of the drawn child shows happiness and wonder, perhaps in response to seeing snow for the first time. They also describe some of the difficulties of adjusting to life in Canada (not understanding anything when first arriving at school) and some of the joys (making a new friend who helped translate what was going on). Being happy in their new home is something that refugees speak and write about – for example, in *Refugee Hotel*, Stabile and Linderman (2012) interview Tsehai Wodajo, an Ethiopian refugee living in Minneapolis. Having lived with a physically abusive husband, moved to Addis Ababa to become a journalist, and then arrived in the United States, she appreciates being in America, where there is more equality and respect, describing her new home as "a wonderful country, in spite of so many things" (p. 107). This seems to sum up the new experiences of this child in Canada – in spite of the difficulties of not speaking the language and missing home, they express their happiness about arriving in Canada.

Conclusion

> A lot of in-between spaces in Berlin have been paved over. Still, the plants grow everywhere - they are restless and unruly. (Fitzgerald, 2018, p. 157)
>
> By aligning ourselves with creation rather than destruction, we confirm that we are alive, potent and part of an ecosystem of energy and intelligence that is self-organizing. (Adnams Jones, 2018, p. 300)

This chapter has examined the artwork by participants from two art projects and has looked at how the images and words that they have produced contribute to a fuller, more complex picture of refugee experience. I would like to conclude with one more image from *Waves of Childhood* that struck me as a great example of the hope that art can inspire. In this image, a girl stands on a tower, facing the sunset (Image 11 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source: Unidentified Photographer. (2014). *Hope stands on a tower*. [digital image]. Retrieved from https://anotherkindofgirl.com/waves-of-childhood-photos on April 2, 2018). She is a head taller than the tower, with her back to the camera and facing a beautiful sunset. She is outlined against an orange and peach sky, and the edge of the clouds are tinged with orange light. The viewer looks directly at her from behind, suggesting that the photographer is also standing on a tower and photographing her from behind.

Like many of the other photos that have documented sunsets from this project, this is a beautiful shot that pushes back against the idea that refugee camps are dingy, unlovely places all the time. The girl in this photo captured my attention from my first look at it. She has climbed the tower, perhaps to overlook the camp, but why? Perhaps she is looking for someone or something? Or perhaps she wanted to get a good look at the sunset? Is this a regular activity in which the young people in the camp participate or is it something daring? Her stance suggests relative comfort – she is holding onto the tower for support, but she does not appear to be straining or uncomfortable. Her presence at the top of the tower strikes me as very hopeful – she is still living in a refugee camp, but she is looking out beyond it, over the camp to something better. While works of art can release the imagination into a more empathic understanding of people with whom we do not share experience, they can also help us to make connections, orient towards the unexplored, and keep us from becoming separate from one another (Greene, 2001).

To me, this photo represents the orientation towards the unexplored that Greene calls for - “that which is not yet,” but that could be.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

> The wind blowing across the British Isles was odorous with fear of asylum seekers, infecting everybody with the panic of impending doom, and so articles were written and read, simply and stridently, as though the writers lived in a world in which the present was unconnected to the past, and they had never considered this to be the normal course of history: the influx into Britain of black and brown people from countries created by Britain. Yet he understood. It had to be comforting, this denial of history. (Adichie, 2013, p. 320)

Throughout this project, I examined different kinds of images depicting forced migrants. Broadly speaking, these images fell into two groups – images of forced migrants taken by other people and images that forced migrants themselves took or created. At the beginning of this project, I was interested to see what, if any, difference there might be between these two categories of images and what these differently created images might say about the experiences of forced migration that they depicted. Perhaps not surprisingly, I am left with more, and different, questions than I began with. For example, how can NGOs walk the line between needing to fundraise to do their important work and posting images that perpetuate stereotypes of forced migrants as always and only abject victims? Why are these images so important with respect to fundraising and what, if anything, can be done to counter the expectation that this is what one should see on an NGO website? How can images created by forced migrants themselves both reject and reproduce stereotypes about who forced migrants are? In this chapter, I will address two limitations of my study and two contributions to the wider fields of visual studies and education, holding open space for these, and other, questions. I will begin with my discussion of the limitations and then move onto the contributions.

Limitations

In this section, I will address two limitations of my study. First, I will discuss the difficulties I encountered in trying to bring the same level of critical analysis to the images

produced by forced migrants (discussed in chapters four and five) that I did to the images posted by the NGOs and news media (discussed in chapter three). Second, and related to the first, I will discuss how this difficulty led (at times) to an overly simplistic reading of the images created by the forced migrants.

A struggle to be critical.

One limitation of this study is that I found it more difficult to read the images produced by forced migrants with the same level of criticality with which I read the images posted to the NGO and news media websites. One reason for this is that it is simply much easier to be critical of a large entity, like the UNHCR, than individuals who produced images of their own experiences. Although I used the same techniques to read the two sets of images, and did not intentionally bring a less critical eye to the forced migrant-produced images, looking back over my reading, I can see now that there were times when I could have read those images more critically. For example, in figure one in chapter five, I examined an image of a young girl taking care of a small plant, which I read mainly as her participating in a hobby and growing something lovely for its own sake, but it was pointed out to me that this could also be read as trying to invoke pathos from the viewer, presumably in order to gain their sympathy. In chapter three, where I discussed the images posted to the websites of the UNHCR and RI, I asked whether the images that overwhelmingly show vulnerability and victimization could be justified by their effectiveness as fundraising tools. I had some understanding that this was a line these organizations were trying to walk, since they do not desire to be exploitative and are doing their best to help in a situation that is truly dire and getting worse all the time. However, I did not fully appreciate the position of organizations like the UNHCR who must rely on governments to contribute to their budget, 86% of which comes from governments and the European Union (EU)

and 10% from private donors (www.unhcr.org). By contrast, smaller projects, like the two I examined for this project, have much less to worry about in terms of fundraising, which allows them more freedom to set the goals for their projects. This does not entirely absolve the UNHCR – they play such a large role in setting the discursive terms of the conversation around who forced migrants are that I think they need to be continually examined – but my thinking about the images that I examined from those websites has become more complex and less cut and dry.

This shift in thinking has led me to another set of questions that have long preoccupied scholars in the field of refugee studies, and with which I have been tangentially thinking about throughout this project – who is responsible for the refugee crisis? And who is responsible for their well-being, once they have fled their homes? While I do not have the space to fully address these questions here, I think my study touches on these questions because of who the images are aimed at and how they are taken up by people, like myself, who view them on a flat, two-dimensional screen on the other side of the world. Schiff (2018) notes that questions arise with regards to responding to the refugee crisis, including who bears responsibility for their suffering and why? This is more complicated than it might appear at first glance, because many people, states, and organizations are implicated as contributing to, or benefitting from, social, political, or economic structures that produce the conditions that work to displace people (Schiff, 2018). The simple answer for who is responsible would be those responsible for the actions that caused the displacement (for example, Asad and his regime in Syria) – this is partly true, but it also obscures responsibilities shared by a broader group of people who contribute to the structures and processes that helped to generate the crises (Schiff, 2018). It is important to look beyond the harm of having to flee their homes and embark on a dangerous journey to how they are pushed

into positions of structural disadvantage that privileges sovereignty over movement and citizenship over noncitizenship (Schiff, 2018).

Schiff (2018) also notes that challenging the structures, processes, and practices that make up our world can "facilitate the acknowledgement of our everyday implication in the suffering of refugees and so enable us to assume our responsibility for it" (p. 746). Indeed, it cannot be otherwise – "the myopic view that the refugee problem is Their problem and one on which Our taxpayer's money should not be wasted is no longer tenable" (Minh-ha, 2011, p. 46). This ties into Greene's (1978) idea of "wide-awakeness," to which I will turn later in this section to help frame my own journey throughout this project, but for now, I will say that I found it difficult to maintain the same level of criticality with the images in chapters four and five as I did in chapter three and, at times, this led to a more simplistic reading than I would have liked, which I will discuss in the next section.

What is concealed and what is revealed.

Another limitation of this study is related to the first one – because it was more difficult for me to read the images produced by forced migrants as critically as the ones produced by NGOs and the news media, I fell into a more simplistic reading than I would have liked. At times, this resulted in a dichotomy between the two groups of images that I was hoping to avoid – a reading of the images from the NGO and news media websites as "bad" and a reading of the forced migrant-produced images as "good" or more authentic. This is a form of Freire's (1970) *malefic generosity* – when people desire to transform that which is unjust, but because of their background, they think they should be the ones to execute that transformation. Writing about this concept, Greene (1978) notes that "not trusting the people, incapable of entering into communion with them, these converts (although they believe they are doing something liberating) do their

part in denying freedom – and in treating those with whom they work as cases, victims, or little more than objects or things" (p. 97). Greene (1978) admits that she does not know if being present to oneself can guarantee authenticity in being present to others or make it less likely that malefic generosity will occur, but she does note that paying attention to one's history and self-formation may open one up to critical awareness of that which is taken for granted. The different techniques that I used to examine the images, as well as the techniques of reflexivity that I described in chapter one, helped me to maintain an awareness of myself and my own positionality as I read the images, but I was not immune to an overly simplistic reading at times.

As Chouliaraki (2012) notes, there are two distinct critiques of representation: a critique of negative representation that focuses on how refugees are constructed as speechless (much like I focused on in chapter three) and a critique of positive representation that focuses on the agency of forced migrants. She goes on to write that two features characterize negative representation of forced migrants – these are their photorealistic imagery that portrays the truth of their destitution and how they lack voice, defining their identity as mostly bodily and devoid of political subjectivity. Likewise, two features characterize positive representation – a photorealistic imagery of optimism that focuses on how forced migrants are active and hopeful, not just masses of destitute bodies, and an attribution of voice that emphasizes that, when they are enabled to speak, they are endowed with a subjectivity beyond just their bodily needs. Chouliaraki (2012) critiques the photorealism of optimism and agency, writing that it masks the truth, portraying the lives of forced migrants as having space for choices when none is actually possible, and that this situates them into a narrative of identity that fits nicely into the western imagination without actually changing anything of the conditions of their existence. She also notes that, while

attributing voice to forced migrants is nobly intended, that voice is often controlled by western aid institutions that give it publicity and use it to serve their needs.

Both of these critiques could, at times, apply to my reading of the images I examined in chapter five – for example, while I am critical of the UNHCR's use of images that highlight the vulnerability of women and children, I am less critical of the *Another Kind of Girl Collective* project which showed films made by participants at the Sundance and Cannes Film Festivals. While the films would have brought awareness to the people living in the Za'atari camps and also provided a much-needed alternative perspective on their lives in the camp, which I write about in chapter five, I should have also considered how these images could have been used to give publicity to the project and whose interests they were actually serving – for example, did showing these films at these festivals improve the conditions of their lives in the camp? While I think that the images and narratives I examined in chapters four and five provide important alternatives to the images that are prominent from NGOs and the news media, particularly because they were chosen by the people whose lives and experiences they represent, I also think I could have applied a more critical eye across all the images, with the recognition that all images, no matter their source, both reveal and conceal.

Contributions

In this section, I will address two contributions that my project makes to the fields of visual studies and education. In the first part, I will discuss how combining different kinds of art and narrative into one project, framed around the same questions, offers a rich approach to visual analysis. Second, I will discuss how this project could potentially be a model for cultivating what Martha Nussbaum (1997) calls *narrative imagination* and why that is important for education and educators.

Analysis across media.

One contribution that my project makes to visual studies is that it looks across visual media, offering a rich approach to visual analysis while addressing the same overarching questions throughout the work over a sustained period of time. This is one way to deeply engage with the arts in a sustained manner and I am hopeful that this project offers a model for this kind of engagement and why it is important within education to do this kind of work. As Greene (1978) writes, "informed encounters with art works can lead those involved in pedagogy to new kinds of self-confrontation, to recoveries of the pre-reflective background, and to fresh understanding of being in the world" (p. 106). For myself, this project has underlined the importance of looking to multiple sources and sites for different kinds of images on one topic because each medium is going to offer different possibilities for reading meaning. For example, while the UNHCR is one of the largest organizations in the world dedicated to helping forced migrants, and it plays a big role in the discursive construction of who forced migrants are, it is still just one image site. Turning to other sources, such as the news media, graphic narratives, and art and photography projects, expands the discursive possibilities as different kinds of images provide different perspectives and opportunities to hear and witness to a fuller expression of people's humanity.

For those examining or teaching works of art, it is important to recognize that one of art's central roles is to challenge conventional wisdom and values by asking us to confront, and be, for a time, people we might not normally meet, or want to meet (Nussbaum, 1997). Moira Von Wright (2002) writes that schools and universities are both "concerned with questions of how best to educate for democratic citizenship and produce citizens who are capable of displaying compassion and understanding of other people's lives and values and who make sound

judgments" (p. 407) and one way to encourage this compassion and understanding for other people is through engagement with the arts. Schools and campuses educate citizens and becoming an educated citizen means learning facts and techniques of reasoning, but it also means "learning how to be a human being capable of love and imagination" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 14). Much as Greene (1995) makes a case for the arts to release the imagination and help us to think about "what is not yet" (p. 19), Nussbaum (1997) writes that the arts play a role in cultivating the powers of imagination essential to citizenship and narrative art in particular can help us see the lives of those different from us with more than "a casual tourist's interest" (p. 88). In the following section, I will say more about Nussbaum's work and how reading it towards the end of my project has helped to clarify some of the questions that I was grappling with respect to my own positionality in relation to the images with which I was working.

Nussbaum and narrative imagination.

> We do not fully respect the humanity of our fellow citizens – or cultivate our own – if we do not wish to learn about them, to understand their history, to appreciate the differences between their lives and ours. (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 295)

Towards the end of the project, as I was writing this conclusion, I read about Martha Nussbaum's (1997) concept of *narrative imagination*, which she defines as

> the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have. (p. 11)

The development of narrative imagination is one of three capacities that Nussbaum identifies in people who respect the humanity of their fellow world citizens – the other two are being able to critically examine oneself and one's traditions and seeing oneself as tied to others by recognition

and concern (M.V. Wright, 2002). I will briefly discuss how seeing yourself as tied to others and narrative imagination have helped me think about my project as a whole and how it might contribute to a wider discussion of democracy and education.

In her reading of Nussbaum's work, M.V. Wright (2002) writes about the importance of seeing yourself as tied to others by both recognition and concern. In this reading, crucially, it is love and compassion, not information and understanding, that binds people from different groups together. She goes on to write that "we should speak about the ability to understand others as like me and yet different in terms of an ability to experience both oneself and others as open selves" (p. 410). This concept of the open self spoke to me and the line I was trying to walk throughout this project – that trying to think from the perspective of another person, as an open self, rather than a closed, egocentric self, made it possible to feel compassion and understanding without "falling into limitless empathy and losing respect for the otherness of the other" (M.V. Wright, 2002, p. 410). Thinking from the perspective of an open self means that we are willing to accept the different aims and needs of others, not simply emphasizing what is common or the same. This ties into Biesta's (2002) distinction between diversity, where we think about ourselves as nearly the same with diverse appearances, and difference, where we do not worry about assigning a common background and accept plurality as reflecting genuine difference. This shift from diversity to difference is an ethical one that stems from the recognition that attempting to describe plurality in terms of a position within that plurality, assuming this tells the "whole" story, does injustice to other positions (Biesta, 2002). This is one way to take democracy seriously – "thinking about plurality in terms of difference is, therefore, a way not to mistake the part for the whole. It is a way not to totalise" (Biesta, 2002, p. 347). This ties into the impetus of this project – I was surprised at the amount of coverage that the resettling of forced migrants was

receiving and once I started to look into it, I was convinced that there were alternative narratives to the ones put forward by the news media or by NGOs and so I went in search of those narratives.

Thinking about the concept of narrative imagination helped me to crystalize my own attempts at trying to be an intelligent reader of images and narratives produced by other people with whom I do not have a shared background. In her reading of Nussbaum's (1997) work, M.V. Wright (2002) writes that, while we cannot know what it is like to be someone else, we can anticipate what the other might feel – she writes that "each individual is still thinking with their own mind, but they are not alone in this process because the force of imagination makes the other present" (p. 413). She argues for the importance of taking the perspective of others by reading their stories because it expands our worldview, giving us opportunities to venture beyond our local settings and transcend our own egocentric positions, much as Greene (1995) urges in her writing on the importance of the arts and the imagination. Doing so will help us to see the lives of those different from us with more than casual interest (M.V. Wright, 2002) and Nussbaum (1997) insists that an ability to consciously and compassionately take the perspective of others is essential for civic responsibility.

Nussbaum (1997) also makes a case for reading widely, not just with those people with whom you might identify. She rejects the belief that only members of an oppressed group could be expected to write well, or even read well, about that group's experience. While there is some plausibility to this – of course, members of marginalized and oppressed groups know things about their lives that other people would not – we must insist that it is possible for us to expand our own understanding, and that one way to do this is to begin with the best of what has been written by members of that group (Nussbaum, 1997). This is one of the reasons why I chose the

works that I examined in chapters four and five for this project - I thought they all represented rich works by people with forced migrant experience and this would be a good place to begin my own journey in this field.

This is also a good place for educators to begin to think about how they might offer representations of difference in their classrooms. How can we engage with, learn from, and learn about the experiences of refugees and forced migrants if all we have are the images and narratives from the news media and NGOs? This project demonstrates that there is a diversity of representation available – what might it mean for educators to take up these representations? What might it look like for students to have access to more and different representations of forced migrants and how might that begin to change how our society thinks about the responsibility of Canada's government and people to address forced migration? As more students enter Canadian schools with forced migrant experience, how might we honour or work with their experiences in a way that makes them feel seen, so that they do not need to shout, "we are here now?" In this moment of political divisiveness, I think it is particularly important to offer narratives of complexity to interrupt overly simplified stories, not just of forced migrants, but of all groups of people who have been historically marginalized. This project offers an example of some of the different kinds of representations that could be used with a wide variety of age groups and one way to work with them to introduce other stories that provide more complex representations. On a smaller scale, I think my project provides a good example of how to be an intelligent reader of images and narratives of people with whom one does not have a shared background, but on a larger scale, I think it offers an example of learning and taking seriously the civic responsibility of engaging with the narratives of other people that is necessary for a

democracy. If it was impossible to cross group boundaries in imagination, we would learn nothing (Nussbaum, 1997).

Conclusion

> I saw the sunset like the eyes of a sad girl. And I saw the birds, travelling wherever they wanted, holding in her luggage the leftovers of a garden filled with flowers. So I began to imagine myself in disguise – the moon is my stage, and the stars are my audience. And I imagine myself laying down on the moon's surface, drawing my pictures and my dreams, and hanging them on the walls of the stars so the whole world can see them (Unknown Author, "Waves of Childhood," 2014, p. 3)

In the above epigraph, one of the participants from the AKGC project articulates a longing to use her artistic ability to make connections with other people – she wants "the whole world" to see her drawings and her dreams. As a vehicle for communication, art can help make these connections between people. Encountering works of art can release the imagination, which is one way to make empathy between people possible – in educational terms, it "is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called 'other' over the years" (Greene, 1995, p. 3). This contributes to Greene's (1978) idea of "wide-awakeness" – the attentiveness and interest to new ideas, traditions, and ways of thinking, as opposed to the bland conventionality or indifference that is characteristic of our time.

Wide-awakeness is where this project began for me – a curiosity about why there was so much reaction to the promise of resettling 25000 Syrian refugees in Canada and a desire to learn more about the issue of forced migration. As Canadians, we take pride in the fact that our country is known for being welcoming and accepting of all kinds of people – in fact, separating ourselves on this matter from the United States is a common Canadian trope. It is important to keep this idea alive and in front of us, even if we do not always live up to it, because in a world where there are more and more displaced people, and more people escaping from desperate situations, a country that rejects indifference and answers to whomever is knocking on our door

is badly needed. Greene (1978) insists that we can overcome the feelings of indifference by consciously keeping ourselves awake, thinking about our condition in the world, inquiring into the forces that appear to dominate us, and interpreting the experiences we are having day by day, rather than simply accepting what is, but this is hard work. In moments of despair, I think that my life is ordinary, my imagination limited, my influence modest, and the problem is so vast, so unwieldy, so ingrained in our normal day-to-day lives that making an impact seems impossible. But I also think that Thi Bui, Marjane Satrapi, and the participants in AKGC and WAHN must also have felt this way at some point and they were still bold and awesome in the telling of their stories and the expression of their experiences, and that gives me hope. I think that the photographers for the news stories believe in the importance of showing these images to the world and that gives me hope. And I believe that, despite the space for critique of the images on the UNHCR and RI websites, these organizations are working hard and doing their best to help people who desperately need it in the face of general indifference from many countries, particularly in the west, and that gives me hope. These moments of hope, small as they may be, have sustained me throughout this process and have contributed to my own sense of being wide-awake in Greene's (1978) terms – the imaginativeness, the awareness, and the sense of possibility that she insists are required to be present to the self. She writes about the discovery that is so important to engaging with works of art, "to go in search of fresh connections, unsuspected meanings, to engage in acts of continuing discovery" (Greene, 2001, p. 42). This project was the beginning of my search and one I hope to continue throughout my life.

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