

Living Within Hyphenated Paradoxes – The Canadian Adolescent Refugee Experience

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ABSTRACT

In 2018, the Canadian government admitted 46,500 refugees. This followed a remarkable record resettlement of Syrian refugees in Canada from 2015–17, with just under half aged 17 or younger. This dissertation addresses how adolescent refugees negotiate the issues and aftermath of living in civil unrest, war, migration, transitory states, refugee camps, and resettlement. I analyze published memoirs and vlogs by Canadians who were adolescent refugees when they arrived in this country. By highlighting the life stories of ten Canadians who experienced varying degrees of “refugee-ness,” I argue that these asylum seekers contend with paradoxical claims to their subjectivities. While witnessing conflicts and camps traumatizes these young people, they successfully achieve independence and greater stability after settling in Canada. Shifting cultural practices informed by their native and host countries are factors that influence refugee’s sense of identity liminalities: being too young, too old, not westernized enough, not native enough, lacking schooling and wanting academic accolades.

Readings of their narratives informed by psychoanalysis and postcolonial theory show that young refugees employ ancestral coping mechanisms, intellectualization, and sublimation to make meaning from their experienced losses and grief. Fanon’s and Said’s theories address the violent colonial context of exile and alienation. Anna Freud and Winnicott explain the internal mechanisms of resistance. In the native land, children inherit epistemologies of coping to survive and make sense of the atrocities they witness. During escape plans, young asylum seekers come to face their greatest fear and reality of losing their loved ones and voices. The disorganized and inhumane conditions of refugee camps further develop an inferiority complex. For the fortunate ones who make it to Canada, they must navigate through refugee boards, schools, and formalities that position them as outsiders. Ultimately this dissertation provides a platform for the various socio-political complexities and challenges (acculturation, enculturation, racism, sexism, relationships, learning) that adolescent

refugees must bring to a functional cohesion as they form a sense of self and stability from the chaotic marginal world they are emerging from.

DEDICATION

*In loving memory of the Muhajirin children of Salih Noor & Mariam Mohamed Ali and the Ansar
who helped these children establish homes away from home.
May all your love and sacrifices be accepted and rewarded with countless returns in this life & the
hereafter.*

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A Preface Afterwards

A girl is born into a family with a long history of anticolonial, socio-political participation. Her father's organizing against the Soviet-led military invasion wins him a position on a blacklist and makes the family move underground. A few months after the birth of his daughter, he receives word that the family is at risk of being found out. This time, they make arrangements to leave the country. The infant child goes with her mother and grandmother on a bus across the border and he travels separately across the mountainous terrain, on foot. The girl's parents reunite at a family friends' house in the neighboring country, several weeks later. The husband and wife work tirelessly as educators to support and develop the refugee camp schools for the next three years.

The little girl grows very fond of schooling and after the family migrates to Canada, they enrol her in a full-time kindergarten class. Her parents raised her and her siblings to love learning, remain faithful, and always stand on the side of justice. Her birthday is a day to participate in antiwar protests. She grows up in "towns" where crime and poverty are rampant. The girl is fair skinned, scholastically accomplished, and adheres to the hijab. She is an anomaly. Her father wants her to go to a middle school that is more academically rigorous because she shows "potential." The racist bullying begins in her adolescence when she transfers away from the neighborhood school to this more affluent middle school, marking the most difficult and impactful phase of her life.

As a teen, she feels pressured to demonstrate her loyalties to particular identifiers. She grapples with having to defend all the things that make her different: the religious symbol she covers her head with, the unknowing of her native land and then the over-knowing of her native land in the post 9-11 era, not to mention why she is so articulate and does not have an accent. Complete strangers ask her with a look of curiosity, reverence, and even anger, "What are you?!" She hates responding to the barrage of assumptions everyone makes about her identity:

you must be a “____hyphen____” are among the more polite presumptions. She understands quickly that her demeanour represents something far greater than who she is and spends the remainder of her youth fulfilling the obligations of what it means to be a “good Muslim girl.”

Assimilation and acculturation are in constant negotiation. Her siblings on occasion jokingly tease her for being “too white” and her parents want her to stay true to her roots. Becoming fully literate in the native language is necessary and going back to the native land to help the less fortunate is aspirational. Her parents sponsor their brothers and sisters. She meets these people for the first time in her adolescence and realizes that she is not like them. The people from the native land do not understand her broad, progressive worldviews or her conservative dress code at such a young age. She quickly feels marginalized by them too. By the end of her adolescence, deep into her university career, she comes to the conclusion that she is a sedentary nomad in this world: not belonging in the native land or the one she is a settler in, but having to exist in both, nonetheless.

This autobiographical account is an attempt to capture my personal refugee story in words. Writing it was difficult and very painful. I feel that I am divulging a secret. I create further distance from my lived reality by retelling the story in the third person. I need space away from the trauma, tragedy, and loss that still trouble my parents today. Writing this means that I am leaving a paper trail, evidence and admittance of knowing what my parents chose to stand for, sacrifice for, and live for – things considered criminal in their native land. Two pages in and I still cannot write the name of the native country, Afghanistan. I realize how deep rooted this fear of repercussion and vulnerability is, especially when my best friend of almost a decade exclaims, “I didn’t know you were a refugee!” I ponder how this is possible, but how could it not be? I have a lifetime of stories imparted to me of how we lost members of our family to the Soviet-backed army by informant “friends.” So, while my family’s political views are widely known and there is security under Canada’s laws of free speech, freedom of expression, and assembly, why do I

not share my story with ease? These paradoxical conditions are forever my challenges to deal with intellectually and emotionally.

It is important to me that I make clear that this dissertation neither starts from nor centres my personal narrative. In late 2013, I was sitting in my supervisor, Professor Livy Visano's office discussing my interest in national policies in the global south and international human rights discourse imposed by the global north. He pushed me to narrow in on a topic that I was passionate about. I started to inquire about why refugees were irrelevant to the then-ruling Conservative federal government. We also discussed the challenges of newcomer youth living in Toronto. Many have turned to crime, and we considered delinquency as an outcome, for some refugees, of succumbing to the pressures of attaining wealth and achieving the Canadian version of the "American dream." I began to reflect on ways I could bring attention to the voices of this population and highlight their stories in this dissertation.

I quickly learned that a prevailing nationalist discourse shape the Canadian public's engagement with migration and youth development. Within months of my discussion with Prof. Visano, the election campaign began in Canada and politicians were competing for votes. The Syrian refugee crisis was at its height and social media was full of images and hashtags demanding a response. In 2015, there were large demonstrations, and human rights organizations using Facebook and Instagram to bring increased public awareness. At the same time, a populist rhetoric around increased securitization and the closure of international borders was making news headlines. Many Canadians wanted to respond favourably to the desperate cries of civilians fleeing the civil war in Syria on humanitarian grounds. While doing the preliminary literature review for this dissertation, I found an overwhelming volume of Canadian media representations of refugees, and stories about activism and the various political parties' responses to the crisis. What was missing, and what I wanted was to hear, were the voices of refugee youth. The political chatter about them was much louder and more insistent. Much of the discourse revolved around exclusionary policymaking internationally. My critical mind

equated the narrative involved in this preoccupation with moral responsibility to another case of the 'white man's burden.' Again, the western world portrayed its states and citizens as superior, generous givers and saviours of the barbaric, conflictual, and primitive Middle Easterners. At the time, the other prevalent discussion in news and public commentary was around the need for security and avoiding any possibility of terrorists penetrating western borders.

The paradoxes were starting to show as officials and Canadians came to reconcile their positions on the refugee crisis. The general understanding seemed to be that humanitarian responses must be impartial and directly target those who are in immediate danger. The new Liberal government began granting refuge to people already living in camps neighbouring Syria. Politicians and most citizens believe that accepting refugees strengthens Canada's economy and populates many less inhabited areas in this country. These asylum seekers had to demonstrate that their values aligned with Canadian ones. The Conservatives continued their opposition, relying on a language of threat prevention and demanding exclusionary practices. Ultimately the Canadian government found a position that maintained external conflict and internal harmony by not getting involved with the root cause of the refugee crisis – the war in Syria. Immigration officials selected the healthiest, youngest, and most ambitious families to resettle less-populated towns. In order to pacify any suggestion of possible insurgents entering Canada, young single men were not welcome. The context of a five-year conflict, exile, and the ongoing humiliation of the Syrian people unnerved me, while European and Canadian diplomats opted for band-aid solutions like accepting a dismal number of refugees on the grounds of "humanism."

My research design for this dissertation focused on bringing forth the voices of adolescent refugees. Initially I felt an in-depth interviewing approach would be best, because I could turn to my colleagues at the Toronto District School Board for assistance in accessing the population of young people who had recently fled conflict zones. However, the nature of my research involves war trauma as a necessary topic of discussion. The ethical concerns

surrounding the need to protect adolescent refugees from further emotional distress were and are paramount. As such, I turned my attention to narrative analysis, choosing to look specifically at memoirs. These memoirs provide a retrospective look at the lives of young refugees from the vantage point of now-middle-aged citizens. Their autobiographical accounts highlight key people and world events that impacted their lives as asylum seekers. They divulge their thoughts and feelings about how they felt and responded to their external conditions and inner dialogues.

My searching in 2015 led me to three published Canadian life-stories. These memoirs, written by three very accomplished females, shared their refugee stories, but with varying degrees of expression and detail. As I read the memoirs and continued my research, I found an archive of vlogs put together by a Concordia University research group. They, too, wanted to create public spaces and displays where young refugees' narratives are accessible. The team of refugees and academics curated an online forum of film interviews with different asylum seekers, retelling their stories. I focused strictly on the narratives that portrayed refugees and immigrants who fled war zones. The combination of vlogs and memoirs gave me a sizable sample of ten life stories from which to draw data regarding the refugee experience in Canada over the last four decades.

In various academic presentations, scholars often ask why I did not conduct interviews with human subjects, if my desire is to hear the adolescent refugee's voice? As mentioned, trauma survivors have a higher risk of emotional distress during in-depth interviews. The recollection of war memories could potentially trigger flashbacks, nightmares, or a "re-living" of very mentally and emotionally painful situations. Had I interviewed adolescent refugees, I would require training in counseling or have professional therapy tools to respond to distressful outcomes. Very specific recruitment of research personnel protocol and other safety measures would need to be set in place to deal with the potential risk of re-traumatizing these young people. After deliberation, my committee decided against interviews to avoid any unintentional

emotional harm and I turned to the unique approach of doing theoretically based analysis of memoirs and vlogs.

My research focuses on the formative years of adolescence, because during this phase of development, young people are playing with ideas and passions and are often unrestricted by the fears that most children and adults have. They are emerging physiologically, neurologically, emotionally, and subjectively with strength. Adolescents begin to negotiate the relevance of different ideologies, identifiers, kin, friendships, and material objects to themselves and their lives. I have been an educator to adolescents in different community, school, college, and university settings. I find their vitality, development, and self-management fascinating! The scholarly discourse around adolescents and refugees, in my opinion, needs to shift in a more positive direction, focusing on their ability to be resourceful and successful despite their inner and outer struggles. I have devoted the last decade of my life to better understanding these marginalized communities' struggles and accomplishments, and making their stories known. I hope to shift the narrative away from hopelessness, helplessness, and humiliation to one of strength, success, and resilience.

This research has had many personal benefits. As I became fully invested in the writing phase, I started to see the parallels between the young refugees' stories and my own. I came to realize that, like them, my inner and outer self co-habit a complex body of paradoxes. Ordinarily, so much of who we are seen as is opposed to norms of subjectivity: split loyalties to east-west, traditional-modern, conservative-progressive, insider-outsider, traumatized-resilient. I am mindful of my personal sensitivities in approaching very difficult discussions around identity politics. Like Professor Bokore (2016) says, "In many ways, my story is the story of other refugees who also encounter issues of race, religion and geopolitical locations as they migrate and resettle in a new country" (p. 76). I now appreciate my parents' tumultuous untold but understood narratives. I have become more compassionate to my mother's deep anxiety about nightfall and her mistrust of strangers. With time and perspective, I recognize that my father's

anger and sense of despair stem from his loss of an ideal political system that he so desperately wished for his motherland. Approaching the end of the writing phase, I see myself as a product of colonialism, exile, dislocation, marginalization, and generational trauma more than ever before. Through it all, I have exemplified resilience by being functional, optimistic, empathetic, dependable, and fearlessly myself. I came to these reflections after writing the entire first draft of this dissertation. Formulating words to explain my learning from the trauma of adolescent refugees and what I knew of my parents' stories has brought my idealizations, rescue fantasies, and desire to truly understand their pain to the limits of my personal tolerance.

Acknowledging my position and privilege, I chose not to centre or begin the first chapter of the dissertation with my story. I prefer that the adolescent refugee voices emerge as the primary subjects of their own refugee epistemologies, authors of their (intergenerational) suffering and their sense of resilience. I use this dissertation as a space for engagement and for identifying moments of shared struggle and success. Moving forward, I call for creating more social and political terrain given to dialogue, and resisting the ongoing exploitation and domination of these people and their histories.

From the start, I wanted to avoid the dominant understanding of refugee-ness and the parameters, mostly silences, that confine the people and concept. I fear that my position as a researcher carries the potential to further empower the power asymmetries that already exist. There is a real risk of crafting the refugees' narratives instead of allowing the youth to freely relate them. I want to challenge the ways of conducting research and other pedagogical practices "that fix migrants as objects of research, management, care, advocacy, etc." (Casas-Cortes et al., 2014, p. 10). I am critical of my use of binary (he/she) pronouns, acknowledging that some may feel excluded, especially the growing number of young unaccompanied minors who are fleeing persecution because they do not subscribe to dominant sexual and gender norms. As an author creating in a knowledge market, a scientist who tries to maintain an impartial distance, an advocate who speaks for – or dare I call myself an activist-scholar who

wishes to act on behalf of refugee youth? – I admit my helplessness, inadequacy, and vulnerability in each attempt. As I approach the final stages of my revisions, I’m starting to wonder if I am feeding the pleasure that comes with powerlessness, self-punishing, and attraction to pain?

I find myself constantly between hope and despair. Adam Philips (2011) describes the “pleasure of being as limited as one is, the relief of being able to acknowledge that not only do we not have the answers, because there often aren’t any; the pleasure of not trying to be something one can’t be” (p. 192). As academics whose work makes us feel alive and worthy of living, we are simultaneously making fear – our personal fear and the fear of our population of interest (here, the adolescent asylum seeker) – “bearable by making it pleasurable” (p. 192). Professor Britzman (2012) explains that as creatures of learning, compounded by a profession in teaching adolescents, we are curious about what we cannot completely know. We are limited to our research and we are “subject to breakdowns and the need to believe against all odds” (Britzman, p. 276). With all that I am and have become through my personal journeys, I am vulnerable to my desires, fears, weakness, and other aspects of the emotional world; but like the adolescent, I choose to believe, have hope, and dream. I trust in the possibility of acknowledging, respecting, listening, witnessing, responding, positively transforming the inner and outer world of *les damnés de la terre*.

ABBREVIATIONS

App	- Internet 2.0 based applications
CBSA	- Canada Border Services Agency
CIC	- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CSIS	- Canadian Security and Intelligence Services
ICT	- Information and Computer Technology
IMF	- International Monetary Fund
IRB	- Immigration and Refugee Board
IRCC	- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
IRPA	- Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
SAP	- Structural Adjustment Programs
UAE	- United Arab Emirates
UN	- United Nations
UNHCR	- United Nations High Commission for Refugee
YMCA	- Young Men's Christian Association (also known as "The Y")
WB	- World Bank

Chapter 1: Opening to Refugee-ness' Hyphenated Paradox

Who are adolescent refugees? What do they say about their war, migration, and resettlement experiences? Refugees, according to the UNHCR (1951) are displaced people who cannot return to their native states due to realistic fears of persecution, war, and violence. Their race, religion, nationality, and political beliefs also set them apart from the dominant ruling elites of their country of origin. Since 2014, over 65,000 asylum seekers received refugee status in Canada after fleeing war zones (Schwartz, 2015; Sachedina, 2015; Government of Canada, 2018). Of these, 40% were adolescents between 13 and 20 years of age (Chapman, 2014). As I develop in this dissertation, young people's specific experiences with war, threats, and displacement (e.g., escape or life in refugee camps) affects their identity formation process or subjectivity. Once landed in Canada, they face additional stressors such as marginalization at school (Ali et al., 2003), limited access to health care and related services (Evans et al., 2014), misunderstandings of the dominant culture and their plight within it (Albanese, 2016). Bland assumptions are made about refugee resilience, even where they contend with high levels of cumulative stress (Fantino & Colak, 2001). Researchers have understandably called for further investigation of the adolescent refugee identity (McCabe & Brewer, 2014). In this dissertation, I add to this scholarly discussion of youth by emphasizing the influence of paradoxical and oppositional ideas on the process of reaching an integrated sense of self and identity.

Forced migration impacts the psyche in ways that are rich with contradictory ideas and identity fragments. Particular hyphenated identifiers (i.e., native-citizen, child-adult, dependent-dependable, etc.) must be meaningfully navigated if a coherent sense of self and belonging is to be discovered. The adolescent refugee grapples with bridging multiple 'hyphenated' identifiers when answering personal identity questions that revolve around how they will develop and whom they wish to become. Subjectivity can become particularly confused when the question "Who are you?" has various responses: Haitian-Canadian, Vietnamese-Canadian, Canadian-

refugee, refugee-youth, female-Canadian-refugee, and the like. The hyphenated identifiers are not easily combined. Adolescent refugees must decide which hyphenated markers are worthy of what level of attention and attachment, as their beliefs about self evolve. While identity is partly a matter of personal choice, whereby individuals may emphasize certain race, gender, religious, or economic identifiers, society also dictates the appropriation of labels and their use through legal, social, and political processes. A hyphenated identity indicates a metaphoric bridge that enables one to trek back and forth, symbolically and pragmatically coping with internal strife and the often-mystifying distance between and chaos of identifiers.

The hyphen represents and links the distance that adolescent immigrants must travel to become recognized by others and to understand themselves as having an integrated identity. Hybridity, a concept introduced by postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha, represents a more positive space in which constructed culture and identity take into account the influence of both colonizer and colonized. For adolescent refugees adopting Canada as their new home, hybridity means they must rethink their native identities and the dominant white settler identity they are encountering. To maintain an authentic or pure ethnicity or essentialist culture is unsustainable (Bhabha, 1994, p. 83). Likewise, those who dictate and produce Canadian cultural norms and practices must consider the influence of minority groups. The constructed “in-between” space Bhabha theorizes is meant to be an area of non-prejudice, a *mélange*, open to hybrid formations. Hybridization occurs both in the self and in society (p. 163).

Bhabha explains hybridity as “a difference of ‘within’, a subject that inhabits the rim of an ‘in-between’ temporality that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 19). My understanding of the hyphen departs from Bhabha’s description of hybridity where he states that an “inscription of this borderline existence inhabits a stillness of time and strangeness of framing” (p. 19). The hyphen, while a “borderline of existence,” is not inert but seesaws in its fluctuating movement. The subject dynamically creates discursive and inner world cohesion in attempts to bridge the self with images and ideas

of home, society, and the world. As Stuart Hall (1988) argues, identity is an ongoing travelling process, never truly reached.

I use the term “refugee-ness” to connote the living situation of forced migrants as well as a mental attitude that asylum seekers, exiled, and internally or externally displaced people develop due to their experience of being othered. Politically, the hyphen represents bridging from the moment of seeking permission to enter the adopted nation’s consciousness as an equal human, to actually feeling and being viewed in this way. That journey occurs in various environments, where the common factor is how the hegemonic structures of the host nation operates in the language, body, and identity of the adolescent refugee. Žižek (2016) points to the paradoxical nature of forced migration, which typically involves individuals moving northwards from the global south in hopes of a better life, but finding poverty, distress, and danger instead. Žižek concludes, “they will learn to censor their dreams: instead of chasing them in reality” (p. 59). Their arrival in a “settler state” is associated with the stark realization that (the consciousness of) the adopted state is unprepared to receive refugees as equals.

Adult scholars, like politicians, generally superimpose their understanding of identity formation onto the adolescent experience. It is not accidental that sentiments towards and depictions of adolescents in North America are very similar to discussions of refugees (Griffin, 1993; Britzman, 2011; Visano, 2006; Kristeva, 2007). Most policy makers and the public view refugees as “second-class migrants” and “helpless victims” who existentially endure “bare life” needs much like children’s dependence on their adult caregivers (Agamben, 1998; Nyers, 1999). Support for refugees tends to mix with policies that seek to control, contain, detain and exclude them (Shakya et al., 2014). The state, media and other extensions of dominant culture use the hyphen to mark the (adolescent) refugee, like many other immigrants, as not fully integrated, developed, or settled, and as therefore somehow in queue to becoming.

This dissertation brings to light the life stories of young refugees so that readers can have a greater appreciation of their maturity and dynamic formulations of subjectivity. It uses

two kinds of self-expression: memoirs and electronic video logs (vlogs, from here on). Memoirs are autobiographical accounts of past events, informed by personal knowledge accumulated throughout the writer's life. My interest in the postcolonial era limited my research to post-Second World War victims of war and mass dislocation. The vlogs are approximately five- to ten-minute recordings of young refugees speaking about their native lands, the reasons for their departure, and resettlement issues in Canada. I explore the representation of these memories using analyses that are attentive to the aspirations and agencies of adolescent refugees. Employing postcolonial and psychoanalytic frameworks as analytic tools, I focus on how the adolescent refugees' experiences impact their complex inner dimensions or psyche and how they work through identity challenges caused by negative feelings like fear, anxiety, and despair. I emphasize the intersection of the ways in which young refugees remember, cope with, and make meaning from difficult circumstances throughout their developmental evolution. One of the dissertation's central contribution is its exploration of potential outcomes of experienced trauma (cemented in melancholia or emerging resilience) by tracing coping mechanisms that derive from epistemologies of the original country, relatives, and previous generations' experiences with colonial wars.

After a brief review of international refugee-ness and its historical ties to the Canadian state, this first chapter addresses major themes in the dissertation, including important gaps in the literature and key debates related to refugee adolescent subjectivity. A discussion of the purpose of employing psychoanalytic and postcolonial lenses follows.

2015: A Turning Point

Since the Second World War, Canada has admitted 1.2 million refugees (Barton, 2015). The vast majority of asylum seekers have been applying for refugee status in the immediate aftermath of state repression in their native lands. These included 37,000 Hungarians who escaped Soviet tyranny in 1956 and joined another 250,000 from central and eastern Europe

who resettled in Canada between 1947 and 1952 (Government of Canada, 2017a). In the mid-1970s, 7,000 Chilean refugees came to Canada after a military coup and the overthrow of Salvador Allende's democratically elected government. In 1976 the Immigration Act recognized refugees as a distinct class of immigrants. The act further established private sponsorship, which allowed citizens and nongovernment organizations to offer personalized local support in the resettlement of asylum seekers from the global south. In 1979, another 60,000 "Boat People" sought refuge in Canada due to the Communist takeover of Vietnam. In 1985, the United Nations awarded Canada the Nansen Medal for its humanitarian approach to the resettlement of refugees (Government of Canada, 2017a).

Since the 1990s, with the establishment of Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), Canadian officials begun to screen hundreds of thousands of applicants from all over the world. If asylum seekers do not hold documentation supporting their political claims, IRB review boards deport them. In addition, to ensure that claimants pose no danger in terms of security, criminality, or health, all resettlement cases must undergo an intense screening protocol that includes fingerprinting, medical screening, and intense background checks. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) works with its security partners, such as the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and the Canadian Security and Intelligence Services (CSIS), to process refugee claims. Bureaucratic protocols are anxiety-inducing and time-consuming for most refugees. In many cases, families or particular organizations privately sponsor asylum seekers. These sponsors take on the responsibility of assisting newcomers in finding housing, filing for health coverage, looking for work, enrolling children in schools, and other resettlement formalities.

In 2002, the Federal government agreed to grant greater protective measures pertaining to refugee admittance, as outlined in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA). This law passed in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States and the public outcry in Canada for greater security protocols as a preventative measure (Government of

Canada, 2017b). A side effect of the IRPA was a slow-down in the process and a reduction of refugees successfully achieving permanent resident status. Then in 2011, the Conservative led government expanded its refugee resettlement programs, seeking to increase acceptances by 20% over three years (Government of Canada, 2017b). However, by 2015, as federal elections were approaching, many Canadians were discontented with Prime Minister Stephen Harper's response to the Syrian refugee crisis. The civil war in that country had produced the largest exodus since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Afghan civil war thereafter, two decades prior (Malikyar, 2015; UNHCR, 2014). The year 2015 was a turning point in Canada's national narrative and foreign policy regarding the admittance and treatment of refugees.

Social media played a profound role in raising Canadians' awareness of the plight of Syrian refugees. Most notable was the image of Alan Kurdi's corpse washed up on the shores of Turkey, which ignited extraordinary sympathy. The photo of this child's lonely, lifeless body lying with his face down on a beach went viral on social media platforms. The response was undeniable. What was originally a Middle Eastern problem had reached the banks of Europe and the global public. Outrage made Canadians go knocking on 24 Sussex Drive demanding a resolution. Canadian awareness grew with the #welcomerefugees hashtag on social media platforms in addition to several public demonstrations that supported humanitarian relief and granting asylum to forced migrants (Mackinnon, 2015). Discussions of the refugee crisis traveled from dinner tables to headlines across the country and landed in front of political candidates to debate during the 2015 election campaign. Investigators found a connection between Alan Kurdi's family and the Canadian state; the family had applied for asylum, but Canadian officials denied the application due to inadequate proof (The Globe and Mail, 2015).

The Liberal Party, under the leadership of Justin Trudeau, won the elections, guided by his pledge to resettle 25,000 refugees by 2016. The quick timeline and associated tax burden of the new prime minister's plan for getting refugees into Canada occasioned media and parliamentary debates again after the elections ended. In order to curb the \$250-million cost of

resettling Syrian refugees, the government highly encouraged private sponsorship, a method recent studies have found to be more successful than government sponsorship, because refugees can obtain jobs and pay off flight debts faster (Malcolm, 2017; Friessen, 2016). Prioritizing families over single young males was an effort to avoid the entrance of possible terrorists or terrorist sympathizers. Xenophobia thus continued under the guise of “security” rhetoric (Malcolm, 2017).

The national narrative around Syrian refugees has since shifted to discussions about the assimilation of asylum seekers, reminding us of Žižek’s settler-refugee paradox. In 2017–18, the public and government began assessing how well the newcomers had adjusted to Canadian life and customs. Citizens are divided in their feelings about asylum seekers. There are those who are optimistic that Syrians, like the thousands of refugees before them, will become active contributing members of Canada’s cultural mosaic (Arbour et al., 2016). Another group of citizens continue to voice concerns about safety and social and financial burdens. These Canadians fear that non-European asylum seekers will challenge dominant cultural norms (Friscolanti, 2016). The influx of Haitians and other undocumented peoples from the United States since 2017 has further stressed sentiments and the taxonomy of asylum seekers entering Canada through formal and informal channels (Grant, 2018ab; K. Harris, 2018).

Within this historical social and political context, I provide a nuanced reading of the experiences and growth of adolescent refugees who have made their life stories public. I consider how individual, institutional, and ideological arrangements factor into the resettlement and inclusion of young asylum seekers, ultimately discussing how these processes influence their subjectivity. I analyze the memoirs and vlogs for the articulated fantasies, pains, and desires of people who have come to Canada from the global south as refugees in the post-WWII era. The parallels and diversity of their life stories can help inform our current understanding and future treatment of the growing number of young asylum seekers. In the next section, I draw out the formulations of “the adolescent refugee” by summarizing literature on the

main concepts in this dissertation: adolescence, refugee-ness, trauma and resilience. Then I discuss my theoretical and methodological use of postcolonialism with psychoanalysis to explain the inner world and external factors that inform adolescent refugee identity formation.

Literature Review

In this section, I focus on critical concepts that can be used to pragmatically deconstruct and transform established epistemologies within studies of migration and the cognitive development of young people, opening them to socio-political thoughts that will better serve the specific needs and challenges of adolescent refugees. Generally, the categories “adolescent” and “refugee” remain separate in academic research. Identity formation during adolescence is a complex process, but it is further complicated when young people have experienced abnormal life trajectories: instability, persecution, conflict, internment, and malnutrition. Linked to the discussion of identity formation is how adolescent refugees cope with, make meaning from, and ultimately work through some of their tragic experiences. First, I provide summary of current knowledge about adolescence.

Adolescence

Beginning at puberty, adolescence involves gradual physical and mental maturation. Neurologically, a “pruning out” of grey matter occurs, as weaker, less used pathways in the brain are eliminated and the ones used more often are strengthened (Spear, 2012). The brain at this stage is plastic and flexible. Changes in the prefrontal cortex in particular mean that young people develop emotional intelligence (Gopnik, 2009). Physical strength, hair growth, skin oil, and odour become obvious. Then there is the development of sexual organs and the amplification of sex hormones and sexual urges, which demarcate menarche and spermarche. Physiological changes in the mind are also at play as inner thoughts flex extremes. Normal development involves a psychosexual inner conflict that leads to ambivalent behaviour, where

the adolescent oscillates between emotional polarities. The increased sexual drive associated with puberty equates to enhanced aggressiveness, inquisitiveness, and egocentricity (A. Freud, 1969). Clinical research confirms that inner turmoil presented as feeling miserable, self-deprecating, and depressive is commonplace for this group (Rutter et al., 1976).

Growth and change also contribute to frustration, and new tensions arise from giving up old ways of understanding oneself, relations, and the world (Britzman, 2011). One reason for pain and confusion is the adolescent's detachment from the world of the child, a separation that prompts a natural mourning for what was (Winnicott, 1961/1965). Anna Freud (1958) describes "normal" adolescence as "an interruption of peaceful growth" or "disharmony." During adolescence, young people devote themselves to new loved objects, people, and ideologies (Kristeva, 2007). A period of questioning and exploring various identity markers and their interactions with the self often leads to certain identifiers remaining for longer than others. Sometimes there is more inquiry and confusion, without a solid commitment to a particular marker. Formulating a personal identity and defining the values by which one lives has consequences in terms of future partnerships, academic achievements, establishing careers, and adopting worldviews (Erikson, 1968).

An identity crisis epitomizes adolescence (Erikson, 1968). Young people are trying to answer the question "Who am I?" Winnicott (1960/2012) in *Deprivation and Delinquency* charts the development of uniquely personalized adolescent identity in terms of movement between the "False Self" and the "Real Self." That is, adolescence moves towards more genuine sense of self whereby integration is complex, and "I AM" statements are achieved (Winnicott, 1960/2012, p. 171). Erikson (1965) provides a map of identity integration where discovery of real self-experiences presumably happens. Failure to develop a generative use of fragments within or projected from society leads to "identity confusion" (p. 253). Certainly, the inner struggle to determine who one is can be distressing and anxiety inducing.

The adolescent also naturally develops new unconscious defense mechanisms to deal

with the inner turbulence. Anna Freud (1969) explains that defense mechanisms which often appear as intellectual and artistic strategies are meant to direct sexual impulses into more socially acceptable endeavors. I study the adjustment success of adolescents who use such strategies to manage the physical, mental, and social instabilities caused by refugee-ness. Additionally, young people sway to and fro in “imitation and identification with others while searching unceasingly for her/his identity” (A. Freud, 1958, p. 165). Achieving maturity means having less reliance on the expectations and plans of the adult world. The functioning or failure of the ego cannot be understood in isolation; the strength of biological and environmental elements greatly influences the ego’s self-curative mechanisms and generative outcomes in identity development. Taken together, the emerging paradox is that adolescents are disconnecting from infancy, but without claim to complete independence.

Adolescents represent the largest global demographic, numbering 1.6 billion (United Nations, 2012), yet a lack of significant and reliable corpus of research on adolescence is disconcerting (Boyden, 2004; Fazel et al., 2012). As critics have pointed out, in dominant western renditions adolescents appear as being deficient and needing education; delinquent and requiring control; or dysfunctional and necessitating remediation (Griffin, 1993; Frankel, 1998; Visano, 2006; Kristeva, 2007; Britzman, 2011). Researchers emphasize that adolescence is not neurologically or emotionally complete at 18 and can easily extend well beyond 21 (Waddell, 2018; Frankel, 1998; Read, 2002). Prolonging childhood allows educators, policy makers, and state officials to continue to infantilize and belittle adolescents and to bunch them with children. Adolescents’ physical and mental strength allows them to wield a certain degree of agency, thus they are capable of effecting some change in their own lives. Research modalities and practices seem to be shifting towards a greater willingness to engage with adolescents as subjects of knowledge rather than simply as objects of adult expertise (Hart, 2008; Visano, 2006). Power relations between adults and adolescents are complex, since there

continues to be justification for maintaining authority (i.e. competency, responsibility, and protective function).

Refugee

Adolescent refugees are a unique group of individuals in that their sense of self is not only determined by the transitory life stage in which they find themselves, but also by experiencing transitory living conditions. They are in-between liminalities: old world and new world, native and settler, childhood and adulthood. They may be part of the broader social realm of youth and perform in similar ways to the dominant adolescent settler populations, but their “new-ness” to the dominant post-industrial society sets them apart. Inevitably, displacement and forced migration have a dramatic impact on altering adolescents’ identities and expressions. Transformations of sense of self, thoughts, and emotions occur through interactions with parents, relatives, teachers, and immigration officials. Parents play an integral role in shaping who adolescent refugees are and how they express themselves, primarily because they are usually the only constant factor throughout the child’s journeys. An integral part of this dissertation is looking at how these youth use creative process to push back adult institutions, work through their traumas, and determine who they are.

Refugee experiences and labels complicate adolescent subjectivity. Nyers (2006) describes refugees as human subjects caught up in a more generalized crisis of human political subjectivity. The innate paradox is that on the one hand refugee-ness is the purest expression of humanity (through vulnerability, survival, and resilience), and on the other hand refugees constitute the limit of humanity (organized and regulated by another nation’s policies or multinational bodies). Exclusionary expressions or othering towards refugees begs the question of what it means to be “human,” especially within the moral community of “humanity” (Nyers, 2006, Hyndman & Giles, 2016, Bhabha, 1994). Governments and scholarly taxonomies create epistemic partitions that define forced migration with differences between “asylum seekers,” “refugees,” and “economic migrants” (Casas-Cortes et al., 2014, p. 7). For the purposes of this

dissertation, I use the terms exiled, refugees, and asylum seekers interchangeably.

To be a refugee means that one is defined by the immediate loss of political identity or citizenship and community or belonging to a nation-state (Nyers, 2006). Without citizenship, asylum seekers cannot acquire equivalent socio-political rights as neutralized citizens (Balibar, 1988). Political geography governs and defines the institution of asylum (Hyndman, 2000). Consequently, refugees are people deprived “not of the right to freedom, but of the right to action; not of the right to think whatever they please, but of the right to opinion” (Arendt, 1968, p. 174). Prominent migration scholar Peter Nyers argues that systemic disorders and not having a sovereign voice to intervene on their behalf in the political sphere render refugees voiceless. In this dissertation I discuss many other mechanisms that contribute to the silence of asylum seekers. Socio-political deficiencies make refugees consider their position in the world as reduced to bodies in a state of survival. Characteristics of this population are invisibility, dependency, and passivity, all of which are antithetical to the sovereign identity of citizens and settlers (Nyers, 2006). Scholars have yet to fully investigate the way young refugee immigrants respond or cope with the adopted nation’s construction of who they are.

Trauma

When the abject rendition of refugees negates the relevance of their subjectivity (Kristeva, 1982; Butler, 1993; Hyndman & Giles, 2016), it becomes excruciatingly difficult to imagine how healthy development and identity formation will occur for adolescent refugees. Experiencing military or political conflict can interfere with creative identity integration and can radically influence the individual’s psychosocial condition, as well as her/his outlook on the future (Almqvist & Brandell-Forsberg, 1995; Giacamen et al., 2007; Erikson, 1965). Another site of inquiry guiding my research is how adolescent asylum seekers who have escaped war work through and make meaning from their despair after resettlement in Canada.

Trauma is a shocking event caused by dangerous situation(s) that provoke(s) an over-stimulation in the psyche. More specifically, the term “complex trauma” describes either

repeated episodes or sequences of trauma that have cumulative effects (Kira, 2001, p. 78). Trauma transmitted from parent to child is “cross-generational” in a single step. The other method is transmission across generations. In such cases the impact comes to affect a group of people that have specific identifiers or affiliations to ethnicity, color, national origin, or religion (Hamburger, 2018). Similarly, social trauma or “collective complex trauma is related to macro-level understandings of the self, because of group identity and its associations. Large populations demarcate themselves as “we are American,” “we are communists,” “we are Protestants,” etc., and thus position themselves against another group of people who do not ascribe to that identifier. Manifestations of violent clashes between such large groups of peoples include socio-political exclusion, segregation, loss of particular civic or human rights, and even genocide. In cases of collective complex trauma, personal treatment may depend on community progress and social acknowledgement.

When trauma happens, the psyche represses a barrage of stimuli by pushing the details of the event into the unconscious in order to prevent its own collapse (S. Freud, 1916/1989; Blum, 2001). Sigmund Freud (1916/1989) explains that trauma can be too “powerful to be dealt with or worked off in the normal way, and this must result in permanent disturbances of the manner in which the energy operates” (p. 275). The terror of the lived experience can register as nonverbal manifestations, fragmented memories, nightmares, and flashbacks (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1974). In particular, children affected by war, abuse, and disaster have little recourse to symbolize their feelings, especially when extreme shock transfers into the unconscious (Mishra-Tarc, 2017). Disjointed recollections and reversals of sleeping and waking images make the subject feel anxious, scared, and insecure. Conscious elements of the traumatic events are sometimes vivid memories. Re-telling these episodes may involve descriptions of sensations and images rather than linear narratives (D. Harris, 2009; Caruth, 1996). I extend our understandings of trauma’s aftereffects to include a “shattering of the self,” whereby fragments of the survivor’s psyche, personality, and other facets of subjectivity must reintegrate

homogenously for generative and curative results. Researchers and clinicians consider adolescent refugees to have high mental health risks on account of prolonged exposure to stressors and identify them an important group for further study (Eisenbruch, 1988; Rousseau et al. 1997; Blum, 2001).

The paradox of trauma occurs with the proliferation of the word and the tormenting silence surrounding its nascence. Hamburger (2018) suggests that one of the most regrettable and lasting consequences of social trauma is collective denial. He explains, “Silence is an unequalled way of persevering mental pain, and thus, denied atrocities cannot be mourned and overcome” (p. xxiii). While the native state may not acknowledge its history of political turmoil, conflict, or trauma, images of collective trauma from around the world are brought virtually into homes through televised and multimedia broadcasts. The response to the image of Alan Kurdi is an example of the consequence of mass audiences empathizing and being moved by the fallout of war. In the last decades trauma has become a public and media-dictated discourse. However, scholars warn that the entrance of trauma into popular psychology and discourse diminishes its political relevance (Hacking, 1995; Neocleous, 2014).

Adolescent refugees come from the global south where societies are more communal in nature, so young people often have difficulty drawing boundaries between their individual's private sphere and the social domain (Aviv, 2017). Millions of survivor children and adolescents inherit stories, images and feelings from their parents. Often times young people shoulder the responsibility of reversing the dehumanizing processes of past generations and carrying their societies to psychological recovery (Volkan, 2018). In the developing research of what Caruth (1996) describes as “a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (p. 3), my analyses of memoirs and vlogs provide additional information on how adolescent refugees internalize and respond to inherited or experienced trauma.

Resilience

In recent years, the concept of “resilience” has been encroaching on and usurping “trauma” as the focus of enquiries into refugee psychology (Lee et al., 2003; Skomorovsky, 2013). Resilience appears in the research literature as a personality trait or a mental health outcome (Klasen et al., 2010). Other times, it refers to a “bounce back” to a form of normalcy or pre-trauma state (Walsh, 2003). A more appropriate expression would be “bouncing forward,” since trauma inevitably exerts a profound impact on the individual (Walsh, 2003; Brody & Baum, 2007). Most scholars view resilience as a person’s positive adjustment to a context that has high levels of adversity (Klasen et al., 2010; Masten, 2001). Conceptually, it is a dynamic process whereby pre-existing protective factors within the individual control the impact of traumatic experiences on the psyche (Klasen et al., 2010). One must keep in mind that resilient does not mean “invulnerable” or “unscathed” and it is possible for a young person to be resilient and still suffer from the residual effects of trauma (Masten, 2001). I extend resilience to include the work of grief, making use of coping mechanisms, and arriving at a state where traumatic experiences are verbalized in intersubjective parlance as an integral part of the process.

The role of bearing witness as a researcher involves bringing awareness to lived tragedies. War and genocide victims struggle in “naming and claiming the experience of abuse and survival as their own story” (S. Rose, 1999, p. 6). It is also important to provide a space to where the significance of these events is reworked in order to prepare for survivors’ expressions. Herman (1992) emphasizes the need to reciprocate by bearing witness, listening, and sharing the burden of pain. My study works from the premise that resilience is not a final stage arrived at by the war-inflicted refugee. Like the hyphen of identity, trauma and recovery are opposing sides of resiliency, or the movement away from the melancholic state of trauma to a more healed state.

I take resilience as a process of striking a balance, which occurs after having worked through the loss and having re-worked the meaning of trauma. As active agents, adolescent

refugees are reflexively shaping their subjectivity through all their tangible and intangible interactions. Young people negotiate and reconstitute the meanings of interactions with institutions, individuals, and ideologies (Visano, 2006). Refugees oscillate mentally or “seesaw” between the spaces they mourn (childhood, native land, safety, stability, etc.) and spaces they newly occupy (adulthood, settlement, instability, etc.). The adolescent psychic state is not rigid and assists in calibrating a sense of emotional homeostasis and identity integration. It is important in most cases that adults intervene and support healthy development, particularly in the context of traumatic events (Brody & Baum, 2007). Here is another nexus of adolescent refugee subjectivity; the paradox of experiencing refugee-ness and coping with its impact while creating a new home and life in Canada, a process riddled with additional stresses and anxiety-inducing events.

The existing literature demonstrates that adults (i.e., specialists, mostly in the fields of psychology and medicine), especially ones residing in the global north, create the definitions, parameters, and outcomes of resilience, just as they previously did for “trauma” and “refugee.” Giving words and significance to traumatic events may in itself influence the adolescents’ life. How are such situations communicated, discussed, publicized, or perceived by kin, loved relations, peers, and the immediate community? The answer has a tremendous impact on the way an adolescent refugee gives significance to and works through experiences of political conflict and post-war situations. I am curious about resistance or adherence to dominant liberal notions and language pertaining to successful assimilation and achievement, as this will inform and develop my interaction and teaching of adolescent refugees.

The main concepts – adolescents, refugee, trauma and resilience – addressed here provide the foundation for this dissertation. This summary of debates and gaps pertaining to each lead to these questions: What are the different sites of trauma? How do adolescents remember and what defense mechanisms do they bring into play to cope with difficulties at various points in their refugee experience? How do they work through and make meaning from

the losses, melancholia, and struggles they endure? And ultimately, how does the adolescent refugee's family and personal interaction with war, displacement, and minority status influence her/his subjectivity? In the next section, I outline the theories that undergird my approach to these questions.

Psychoanalysis and Postcolonialism

I use psychoanalytic and postcolonial theories to situate adolescent refugees' sense of self and belonging. The study of trauma from the vantage of refugee-ness encourages a fundamental rethinking of perceived categories across disciplinary boundaries and demands acknowledging the cataclysmic impact of individual suffering on the overall fabric of societies (Antze & Lambek, 1996; Hamburger, 2018). In order to explore and analyze personal memory narratives in relation to forms of collective memory and amnesia, it is important to consider how psychiatrists like Frantz Fanon explain the "inferiority complexes" internalized by inhumanely treated adolescent refugees. Anna Freud's and Julia Kristeva's theories explain how the adolescent psyche has the capacity to thwart alienating psychological internalizations and demand agency in unique ways. The works of Homi Bhabha, Erik Erikson, and Donald Winnicott provide theoretical understanding regarding positive development and healthy subject formation after traumatic situations. I have chosen postcolonial theory and psychoanalysis as promising alternatives to traditional structural or sociological methods because these approaches extend considerations of historical context and mental development to the formulation of subjectivity.

Psychoanalysis and postcolonial discourses are often seen as completely different and even contradictory (Bhabha, 1994, p. 19; L. T. Smith, 2012), but they bridge several phenomena that adolescent refugees must contend with. It only seems fitting to use paradoxical frameworks to study the hyphen between the liminal spheres of life of the adolescent refugee: private-public, adulthood-childhood, past-present, individual- social, traumatized-resilient. I urge my readers to

join me in my curiosity in observing and unpacking the ways young asylum seekers coming to Canada integrate these seemingly oppositional spaces of being. Do these parts of the self form homogenously or heterogeneously, or remain fragments cohabitating in the person?

The two bodies of theory reinforce a methodological overlap in some instances. For example, both psychoanalysts and postcolonial theorists demand that we listen to and recognize the voices of marginalized people. In other instances, one theory can inform a position by addressing gaps within other theoretical understandings. My method of analysis uses both theories to critically engage with how the identity formation of adolescent refugees comes to exist at the intersection of adolescence and migration experiences, as presented in memoirs and vlogs.

Conducting narrative analysis with postcolonial and psychoanalytic readings showcases adolescent refugees' active and creative uses of discourse. Language is a tool to accomplish social actions and demand agency for adolescent refugees. People are agents in mediating between discursive and cultural change as they negotiate their language and its applications (Foucault, 1973; Jørgensen et al., 2002). Deborah Britzman's (2003) examination of pedagogical tensions in *Practice Makes Practice* provides us with a method of moving away from traditionally expressed dichotomies to a more nuanced understanding of subjectivity, through what she calls a "dialogical discourse." She takes into account that binaries are messy, and that relationships between identifiers shape one another because the subject – here the adolescent refugee – is continuously in the process of coming to know. For Britzman (2003), dialogic relations determine the very nature of subjectivity, since it is "produced because of social interaction, subject to negotiation, consent, and circumstance, inscribed with power and desire, and always in the process of becoming" (p. 26). Identity formation after war and displacement is situated in biography and current circumstances, as well as affective investments and conflicting discourses about what it means to be a refugee.

However, autobiographies of refugees living in Canada are hard to find. There are few memoirs, and even fewer authored by ex-colonial subjects. The written memoirs I interpreted and analyzed in this dissertation are: *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter* by Carmen Aguirre (2012), *A Thousand Farewells: A Reporter's Journey from Refugee Camp to the Arab Spring* by Nahlah Ayed (2013) and *Ru* by Kim Thúy (2009). The first two share the theme of returning to a native land from Canada. While Nahlah lives as a refugee during her childhood, Carmen joins her mother and partakes in the Chilean resistance. Thúy's story is not one of return (although she does go back to Vietnam as an adult); rather, she has a more familiar narrative of witnessing war, living as a refugee in a camp, and receiving asylum in Canada. The lack of memoirs indicates that refugee stories are not part of mainstream cultural production, nor are they represented much in the literary mosaic of this diverse country.

All the vlogs used for my research were electronically archived by the *Mapping Memories* project. They are seven significant stories specifically related to contemporary wars in the global south. Youth tell their stories in order to bring awareness to their personal life struggles, and by extension their difficulties and experiences of resilience as refugees coming to Canada. All the stories I have chosen come from postcolonial countries, although the colonial conditions that led to exile, return, and resistance are unique for each individual. Their identity formation comes to bloom as they arrive in Canada. While the *Mapping Memories* site includes a number of narratives, I selected and focused on vlogs of individuals who escaped war and genocide. Former adolescent refugees, now in their twenties, share their experiences with researchers during videotaped interviews.

The empirical chapters, chapters 3 to 6, focus on the life stories of adolescent refugees who settled in Canada after having witnessed war and/or experienced displacement as children. I must stress that in no way is the thematic structure of this dissertation meant to draw a uniform linearity of refugee lives or development; I hope to showcase the diversity of their narratives, some experienced events that others did not. For the purposes of clarity and organization, I

have chosen to subdivide the chapters according to common themes of refugee narratives. It is worth noting that the empirical data focus on refugees who were adolescents upon entry into Canada. This means that at the time of political conflict, escape, and living in camps, the subjects were pre-pubescent.

Central Arguments

Adolescent refugees come to know themselves through their unique exposure to various forms of alienation and conflict, as well as through transient, unpredictable living conditions and intimate relationships. There is no universal response to highly stressful events of political and military strife. Adolescents also have diverse responses to violence in the homeland and xenophobia in the newly settled country. The outcome of experienced trauma can fall anywhere within a spectrum: from young refugees remaining in a state of melancholia due to their losses, to refugees working through their despair and demonstrating resilience in the face of challenges.

Successful adjustment will depend on how much the adolescent learns to effectively use internal defense mechanisms and external resources in order to cope and respond to the struggles of refugee-ness. I argue that children of war inherit anticolonial epistemologies as methods for dealing with the losses caused by war. The transmission of oral history provides insight into how memories of past atrocities transform and get handed down in different countries, reflecting diverse histories and political factors. I suggest that war, trauma, and coping with them are not only generationally inherited, but that feelings of exclusion and dehumanization are commonplace before they arrive in Canada. I argue that (young) asylum seekers tolerate high degrees of humiliation before settling in Canada and that those past situations prepare them to respond graciously to issues that arise in the host country.

Further, I argue that refugees who give new significance to their war experiences during adolescence have the psychological flexibility to continuously make meaning from their pain.

The malleability of their psyche gives them the ability to negotiate and sometimes dismantle past learning, beliefs, and complexes. These youth learned from their past experiences, ingeniously creating a hyphen or bridge from their future goals to where they came from. Some adolescent refugees living in Canada express their resistance to intolerance and their inner identity conflict through very creative, artistic mediums. They employ dialogical discourse to make new meanings from past tragedies and work through to achieve a more integrated identity. Theoretically, such initiatives lead to healthier and contributing citizens.

I also examine three institutions in which adolescents find themselves negotiating their belonging, subjectivity, and voice: at school, in the family, and at the refugee review board. Although these institutions are perceived as inclusive, conciliatory, and even safe, they have the potential to deepen feelings of isolation, marginality, and abuse. Resettlement frustrations in host countries compound existing war- and displacement-induced anxieties. For instance, in schools, asylum seekers must progress academically and manage language barriers while adjusting to unfamiliar social norms. With family, adolescents negotiate traditional and modern cultural factors, all the while having inherited secondary trauma from parents. Among these stressors, the IRB can take years to finalize responses to the claimants' applications. As a result, these institutions play an integral part in both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic refugee subjectivities.

In coping with these stressors, some adolescent refugees have an ability to disconnect from and critically engage with terrifying ordeals they survived in order to further a "successful" or "resilient" outcome. Contemporary liberal ideologies identify success as independence, financial stability, responsibility, etc. (Stahl, 2018). I believe resilience should be self-determined and not necessarily based on dominant western and adult-dictated benchmarks. Young people arriving from the global south have the right to identify success in terms of their own criteria too. In this dissertation, the term resilience describes the ways in which adolescents make meaning from the traumatic experiences they have endured and their personal expressions of success.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth analytical framework for evaluating adolescent refugees' identity formation processes, drawing on psychoanalytic and postcolonial theories. I depend on a combination of existing literature about each subgroup in order to create a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of the adolescent refugee population. Psychoanalytic contributions to this discussion are mainly from Anna Freud, Winnicott, and Erikson, while I employ the work of Bhabha, Fanon, and Said to illustrate the experiences of othering and the impact of exclusionary practices. Together, these scholars provide theoretical bases to make sense of the adolescent refugee's inner and outer worlds. Chapter 2 also presents summaries of the life stories analyzed in this discussion, which demonstrate the uniqueness of each adolescent's journey.

In Chapter 3, "Birthing Refugee Subjectivity," I discuss the conditions and context of modern wars in the global south that are extensions of previous anticolonial wars against imperial political interference. I provide an analysis of the trauma experienced by grandparents who have suffered war (including wars of independence), and parents who go through loss, homelessness, or both as a result of war and displacement. I draw out the current generation's epistemology of coping and survival. Children and adolescents learn about their native culture through emotionally charged memories and oral stories. I address the influence of such generational and sometimes secondary traumas on the subjectivity of children from theoretical and existential angles. I trace the ways asylum seekers are treated as second-class citizens in their own native lands because of differences in political opinion, race, tribal affiliation, and/or sex. The subject starts to develop tolerance of neglect and misconduct because the alternative is often ostracism, imprisonment, or worse. Ultimately, fear of ongoing persecution for these differences defines a person as a "refugee" according to UN conventions. This fear and the associated loss of humanity over time develop an inferiority complex in the adolescent refugee.

A significant coping mechanism for refugee children is to create a nostalgic point of reference – when remembered, the native land was a place of peace, stability, and hope.

Chapter 4 focuses specifically on the effects of contemporary wars in the global south. I explain the many ways conflict impacts the inner world of the child and the external conditions of life and his/her subjectivity. Many asylum seekers come to learn the numerous ways their (native) governments render their lives dispensable. There are many effects on the psyche of children who witness war: shock, melancholia, resistance, tolerance, resilience, silence, grief. I unpack the relationship between melancholia and its working through and trauma. In this chapter, description and analysis of life events shows how political conflict directly impacts the subjectivity of young refugees.

Chapter 5 dissects the effects of escape, migration, and the transitory stage of living in camps. Fleeing one's native land can be extremely terrifying and life threatening. Being statelessness means receiving protection under international refugee laws. I emphasize that at this stage young refugees begin to strongly internalize their dehumanization, which furthers an inferiority complex. All this has an immense impact on displaced people, especially in terms of internal and self-other relations. I argue that the initial comprehension of inferiority deepens in the degrading state of refugee camps. Parents' socio-economic status and foresight of an impending war can buy an escape that bypasses the refugee camp and the experiences of that environment. In many cases, these individuals are classified and define themselves as "immigrants," and the concept of refugee-ness is further complicated. Coping mechanisms, like looking beyond the immediate circumstances of the camp, lead to working through trauma and demonstrating resilience in these deplorable transient living spaces. Young people start to develop psychological methods of coping and demonstrate resilience as "refugee" labels are enforced, and their dignity is eroded.

Chapter 6 "Paradoxical Spaces for Paradoxical Subjectivities," is the last of the empirical chapters. I examine the various challenges that adolescent refugees face upon entering

Canada: providing documentation, the interview process, and dealing with customs along many other institutional dilemmas. Young asylum seekers are now inside the dominant Canadian context but find themselves alienated by the (white) settler population. In their attempts to adapt, learn a new language, deal with financial setbacks, and make a living, these adolescents have to take on more responsibility, thereby entering adulthood at a faster pace. Adolescents are constantly negotiating their identity even after becoming adults. They establish a hyphen in their identity creation to bridge from who the former asylum seeker was to who they are. Even though these individuals are Canadian citizens, they are constantly “seesawing” to the adolescent psychic state due to their racial and ethnic differences. Hybridization is an option for successful integration of native and citizen identity markers.

The second half of Chapter 6 brings to light some of the adolescents’ experiences with learning and healing in general as they formulate more integrated subjectivities. Adolescent refugees employ self-curative processes like writing, storytelling, art, music, and other cultural expressions in order to deal with their identity crisis and previous exposure to trauma. The role of postsecondary education is undeniably significant to these individuals as it gives way to dialogical discourse and critically reflect. Sublimation and intellectualization allow for mental and creative expression of the experience of crossing the hyphen back and forth between the adolescent refugees’ various dichotomous identifiers.

In Chapter 7 the hyphenated identity is problematized as a marker of ongoing racism, exclusion, and lack of acknowledgement in the Canadian national consciousness. The potential for new digital technologies and social media for transcribing narratives is considered. I question structures of silencing and exclusion that continue to challenge adolescent refugees from exposing more of themselves on such public platforms. I also present the theoretical contribution of my research as a hybridization and hyphenation to existing postcolonial and psychoanalytic scholarly works.

Chapter 2: Subjectivity – Analytic Approaches & Designs

This chapter discusses the legal and political perimeters that define subjectivity in adolescent refugees, and describes the methodology used in this dissertation to study their stories. My approach, informed by postcolonial and psychoanalytic perspectives, insists on attention both to the details of how young asylum seekers describe their subjectivity, and to the way it is shaped and limited by the historical and discursive factors that define their existence as refugees.

Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, part of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, is at the core of international refugee definitions and protections. The post–World War II policy was originally limited to Europeans fleeing events prior to January 1951 (UNHCR, 1967). The 1967 Protocol removed these limitations and gave the Convention worldwide coverage. International laws specify that a refugee is “someone who is 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, 1967, p. 3). A refugee is thus socially and politically constructed based on three criteria: an identity of difference, departure from their place of origin in order to survive, and a mortal threat if they remain or return to their home country. Identifying people according to such parameters is interrelated with several highly politicized questions: “Who can legitimately claim a need for protection? Against which dangers shall protection be offered? Who is supposed to do the protecting? What are the terms and conditions of the protection provided? And whose voice is heard in debates stirred by these questions?” (Casas-Cortes et al., 2014, p. 17)

The mass movement of citizens creates both governmental and scholarly taxonomies. Epistemic partitions define and contest the ways that migration confronts radical civil challenges, often blurring the lines between “asylum seekers,” “refugees,” and “displaced peoples.” In its 2017 *Global Report*, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees

(UNHCR) identified 67.7 million “people of concern” worldwide. Of this number, 19.6 million fit the above legal definition of “refugee.” Altogether, another 39.1 million are *internally displaced* people (who fit the definition of refugee but have not crossed a nation-state border, although many have left their homes), while 3.1 million are *asylum seekers* (who fit the definition but have not been granted legal asylum in the country to which they have fled), and 667,000 are *returned refugees* (who have returned to their country of origin, but may not be safe). Finally, there are 3.9 million stateless persons and 1.3 million who have various refugee-like claims but have yet to meet any of the legal definitions mentioned above (UNHCR, 2018, p. 59).

International law and political patterns thus profoundly influence refugees’ subjectivity in addition to their movement. According to Kunz (1981) there are three distinct groups of refugees: *majority identified refugees* strongly oppose the government, but remain patriotic and feel their sentiments are shared by their fellow countrymen; *events-alienated refugees* are discriminated against by their government despite their loyalty to the state, and their survival requires exile; and *self-alienated refugees* hold beliefs and ideologies that pit them against the mainstream to such an extent that they become victims of persecution in their country of origin. When the refugee crosses the border out of his/her native land, he/she exchanges the advantages of citizenship for safety in the neighbouring country. These host country governments and related international organizations including humanitarian agencies then determine the kind and quality of asylum granted (Hyndman, 2000).

All countries that are signatories to the 1951 Convention on Refugees and the subsequent 1967 Protocol are obligated, by law and not just by moral conscience, to comply with their substantive provisions. That is, 142 countries, including Canada and the USA, must offer refuge and protection to people fleeing political violence or other forms of persecution (UNHCR, 2015). These obligations initially fall upon the country where refugees first enter. The contemporary state of mass forced migration to other developing countries indicates that many of them can no longer provide the necessary provisions (adequate food and shelter) to war-

fleeing asylum seekers. As such, they have loosened border restrictions to allow refugees to travel to less affected, richer nations. Further removed or distant states that are signatories of the Protocol, like western European nations, Canada, and the USA, are under increasing pressure to reconsider their response to the world refugee crisis. Governments want to balance the needs of labour markets, demands for rights, and the projection of securitization and humanitarianism (Walters, 2011; Casas- Cortes et al., 2014). Relocating displaced peoples provides an opportunity for such balancing, but there are several issues related to citizenship, anxiety-provoking circumstances, and historical context that policy makers and scholars must consider.

In the following pages, I focus on the impact of colonial legacies on state creation, refugee policies, and developing psyche, as these relate to the identity of young refugees. Identity formation of an asylum seeker involves a young person coming to terms with orientations to knowledge and power, and association to particular markers of the people around them. They experience identity through an unequal distribution of power with respect to adults, their definitions, and the dominant culture. Postcolonial theoreticians show us how asylum seekers as citizens of the global south become entangled in oppressive structures locally and through migration. In the context of a modern, postcolonial world, the refugee is negotiating with others in multiple social worlds – family, native states, host countries or camps, the final place of resettlement and various intermediary institutions like schools and immigration and refugee boards. Psychoanalysts advocate for a talking cure, which requires us to consider how language shapes meaning. Creating an integrated identity requires healing or working through stressful experiences. The adolescent refugee's talk is contingent on the shifting practices, speech, and perspectives of the communities and the languages they learn, hear, make use of, and resist. An appropriate methodology to approach these identities in formation thus needs to be attentive to the particularities of their status both in terms of adolescent development and in their particular situation as displaced asylum seekers. Combining insights

from postcolonial and psychoanalytic theories offers a more effective approach than either body of literature on its own

The Refugee as a Colonial Other

The contemporary experience of asylum-seekers is in many respects an outcome of centuries of colonization by European powers. A postcolonial framework addresses the residual effects of European colonization and provides a theoretical basis for revealing epistemic state structures that influence the construction of the existential nature, concept, and articulation of the “refugee.” Large populations move out of the global south due to territorial conflicts, ethnic disputes, and economic dispossession resulting from direct western military intervention and economic policies that some scholars have argued are related to past colonial practices (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Brewer & McCabe, 2014; Žižek, 2016). Contemporary international policies such as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) make for additional economic and political dependency. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) provide loans to countries experiencing economic crises. To ensure future borrowing privileges, impoverished states must implement certain policies that create further desperation (Žižek, 2016; George, 2010; Lall, 1995). Postcolonial scholars argue that former imperial superpowers continue to influence local political situations in the global south through modern exclusionary practices and policies devised by the UN, IMF, and WB (Said, 1978; Hyndman, 2000; Stein, 1981; Crosby, 2006). The impact of the colonial legacy on the identity formation of young refugees today occurs through various mechanisms such as borders and the milieu of refugee camps.

European colonial powers defined the perimeters of the majority of nation-states in the global south (Young, 2001). The entire African continent was territorially divided amongst the dominant European countries at the 1884/85 Berlin Conference (Pesek, 2007). The 1916 Sykes–Picot Agreement divided Middle Eastern states along the lines we recognize today (L. V. Smith, 2016). These borders establish national identities, which become markers of ‘us’ and

‘them’ – distinguishing insiders from outsiders, migrants from natives, and non-status residents from citizens. Western and European politicians and scholars have imposed the narrative of the nation and its institutions on the non-European ‘Other’ (Bhabha, 1994). Historically, these border regions were location of banishment and, in the modern era, they are the place for immense aggregate of displaced people; that is, a space of not-belonging (Said, 2000). The “legitimate” and acceptable identity of a person is dependent on her/his proximity to a political affiliation or citizenship. Borders symbolize the vestiges of imperial land claims and consciousness. Bodies that cross these lines of fortification become outsiders and are ultimately othered, acquiring “refugee” status (Haddad, 2003, p. 297; Agamben, 1995, p. 115). At the same time, asylum seekers reaffirm the borders they cross.

Crossing through specific official points at the border and traveling through legitimate channels, at sea or on land, may determine merits for asylum. For the host state to grant legal status, the asylum seeker must produce papers or other proof to claim refugee status. Denial of entrance, lockdowns, and deportations are performances of the sovereign state’s power and enactment of its prerogative to control its territories (Casas-Cortes et al., 2014). Borders effectively become associated with territory identification or ethnicity, governing, and criminalization. While governments are fully within their legal rights, what do such securitization measures do to the psyche of those who are stressed from flight and conflict? Preliminary research shows that the modes of transportation, preparation time, and migration conditions contribute to high levels of fear and anxiety among refugees (Colic-Piesker & Walker, 2003; Ahmed & Aboul-Fotouh, 2012).

Losing citizenship after crossing borders compromises the asylum seeker’s claim to territory and identity associated with their native land. Post–World War II refugees are in an unenviable situation: their native governments cease to protect their rights as citizens, and the minimal guarantee of “human rights” is unenforceable by host governments (Arendt, 1968; Hyndman & Giles, 2016). Without an ontological home or a state to protect their rights, refugees

are referred to and considered as the “scum of the earth” (Arendt, 1968, p. 287). Displaced people (re-)claim being “someone” or an ethnic identity either by repatriation to their native land, integration in the host country, or gaining citizenship from a more benevolent host state. The aim of utilizing nationalism as a method of providing protection ultimately transforms an anomalous refugee subject back to the normalcy of nation-state citizens (Casas-Cortes et al., 2014).

Those who manage to flee war and genocide by crossing borders arrive at overcrowded border towns that sometimes provide makeshift housing facilities. From their nascence at the end of World War II, refugee camps serve to maintain power over desperate populations. Two and a half decades ago the camps were seen as:

The segregation of nationalities; the orderly organization of repatriation or third-country resettlement; medical and hygienic programs and quarantining; perpetual screening the accumulation of documentation on the inhabitants of the camps; the control of movement and black-marketing; law enforcement and public discipline; and schooling and rehabilitation were some of the operations that the spatial concentration and ordering of people enabled or facilitated. (Malkki, 1995, p. 498)

Recent descriptions of camps are comparable and now add infestations, sicknesses, and lack of nutritious foods (Boyden et al., 2002; Beiser, 2005; Hadfield et al., 2017). In such “temporary” border settlements, young asylum seekers also contend with having their legal status as refugees challenged and questioned continuously (Colic-Piesker & Walker, 2003; Ahmed & Aboul-Fotouh, 2012). Host countries that place greater restrictions on the movement of undocumented migrants are more likely to inflict greater abuse on claimants (Stein, 1981). Hyndman (2000) describes refugee camps as “operated akin to Foucauldian youth reform colonies” and part of a “colonialism of compassion” (p. xvi). The UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies’ reports show that they standardize, control, and maintain the division of camp inhabitants (Hyndman, 2000). At the same time, there is a sense of insecurity in refugee camps, with certain populations being under increased threat.

The inhumane treatment of young refugees in camps challenges normal development and subjectivity. Asylum seekers are sometimes held at detention centres where names are replaced with numbers, they reside in cells – sometimes prisons – and their clothes and other possessions are removed or confiscated (Chak, 2018). They are considered criminal and pathological until they prove otherwise through background checks and medical exams. Regular “security checks” on site ensure that feelings of exclusion are routine (Boyden et al., 2002). In circumstances of denied refugee status, forced migrants are considered “illegal aliens” and treated with even more hostility (Nyers, 1999; George, 2010). It is common for parents living in refugee camps to marry their daughters off at puberty in order to protect them from sexual advances and abuse (Boyden et al., 2002; Hart, 2008). Asylum seekers are victims of an international system that creates their circumstances and constructs them, then fails to take responsibility for them (Haddad 2003, p. 297).

Asylum seekers must adjust their subjectivity to perform their identity in “good enough” ways. Nyers (2015) explains, “The refugee in the globalized age is akin to the native of the colonial period where the native was evaluated for qualifying as a “good” or “bad” subject and had to demonstrate how s/he qualified as the former” (p. 131). Refugees must follow particular protocols and codes of conduct to be considered for permanent residency: enter at designated checkpoints, have written legal documents to support their story, have valid identification cards, and be in good health and innocent of any criminal wrongdoing (Government of Canada, n.d.). In cases when refugees put forth claims to other host countries, they experience long, impersonal bureaucratic procedures that further reinforce negative feelings. Asylum seekers are to “fully cooperate with authorities, accept their decisions irrespective of their outcomes, and leave voluntarily in case of a rejection” (Casas- Cortes et al. 2014, p. 17). The rewards for being a “good” colonial- refugee- subject is receiving legal status.

These environments, circumstances, and demands have impacts on the emotional health of the asylum seeker. Young people who grow up in unstable, life-threatening conditions

experience isolation, insecurity, and the dissolution of social structures (Shore & Kinzie, 1986; Sack et al., 1996). Said (2000) addresses the emotional ramifications of forced migration and non-return on identity formation in his essay "Reflections on Exile." He connects the impact of becoming exiled or losing a national identity with mental health effects. Said argues that for those living in exile or as a refugee, the options of choice and return are non-existent. He states that asylum is "terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift ... between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (p. 173). As immigrants and expats do not experience being "banished," they do not have the emotional scars of estrangement in the way that refugees do. He compares refugee-ness to death, as "it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography" (p. 173). He criticizes contemporary writers for muting the voices and mutilating the feelings of this vulnerable population. Literature about exile objectifies the anguish and the predicament of those who experience refugee-ness firsthand. Said's writing counters past renditions of forced migration by drawing on his own personal life and those of several fellow exiles. From his research, it is evident that Palestinian refugees and displaced people from any other part of the developing world share a common experience in the crippling sorrow and the inability of the voice, no matter how eloquent, to express these deep-seated negative emotions. Regardless of whether the refugee is a successful intellectual, professional, or poet living comfortably in western cities, or a man and woman who lives on ration cards and is dependent on the good will of agencies in slums, there are destructive outcomes that result from years of miserable loneliness.

Host countries benefit from the work of refugees. Said (2000) writes that "in the United States, academic, intellectual and aesthetic thought is what it is today because of refugees from fascism, communism and other regimes given to the oppression and expulsion of dissidents" (p. 173). However, displaced people feel their difference, find themselves misunderstood, and resent other immigrants who look like they belong to their adopted surroundings. Their anguish

is part of an existential “orphanhood” that makes young asylum seekers choose careers that place importance on mobility and skill (Said, 2000, p. 184). Said observes that refugees solve their disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule. He warns that “the exile’s new world, logically enough, is unnatural and its unreality resembles fiction” (p. 187). Fantasy and imagination act as a balm to counter feelings of alienation even though the asylum identity stubbornly insists on her/his right to refuse to belong.

The Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon is another postcolonial theorist who discusses the importance of imagination. He wrote at a time when European imperial influence was overt and all-encompassing in the global south. For him, postcolonial world-making requires a complete break from the past, structurally and intellectually. Fanon desires to unshackle modern man from the alienation and dichotomous outcomes of past colonial conditions and encounters. He writes, “The Black man is not. No more than the white man. Both have to move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that authentic communication can be born” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 206). Since Fanon’s time, nearly all colonies have achieved political independence, but the mental sentiments that see particular races as superior to others still linger (L. T. Smith, 2012; Creary, 2012; Bhabha, 1994; Wa Thiong’o, 1992).

Fanon’s examination of race thinking and prejudice on psychological development is important for my project, as I question psychological tolerance for xenophobia and how it informs the adolescent refugee subjectivity. Fanon argues that the shared neurosis of colonization is the internalization of racism and acceptance of the superiority of the colonizer. He admits that “the juxtaposition of black and white races has resulted in [a] massive psycho-existential complex” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. xvi). The inferiority complex is the outcome of a double process – both economic and the epidermalization of inferiority – meaning that the racialized other feels and is positioned in lower socio-economic strata. The other, in this case the adolescent refugee, may aspire to win admittance into the dominant white world through various methods, including participating in inter-racial sexual relations, perfecting diction in the

dominant language, and working to achieve high academic accolades (Fanon, 1952/2008, pp. 23, 29, 5).

It is a shock for minorities to come to face their racial difference and the glass ceiling phenomenon during resettlement in the global north. Fanon says, about his immigration to France, “I had rationalized the world and the world had rejected me on the basis of color prejudice. Since no agreement was possible on the level of reason, I threw myself back toward unreason” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 102). The irrationality of racism strips and reduces the colonized other to his/her epidermis, even if s/he achieves a medical degree and has perfected the dominant (colonizer’s) language. The ability for Europeans to pass as the universal subject is supported through “capitalist societies, education, whether secular or religious and the teaching of moral reflexes handed down from father to son” (Fanon, 1961/2007, p. 3). The inferiority complex applies twice over to immigrants from the developing world: first through the epistemology of racist stratification due to an imperializing dominant culture, and again in metropolitan white settler states of the global north when they tragically come to face their racial difference. Like Said, Fanon (1952/2008) implores for empathetic exchange as he asks, “Why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself?” (p. 206) The discourse of political and psychological liberation is necessary for progress and a positive turn towards a new world.

Adolescent State of Mind

While the postcolonial framework enables understandings of the pressures associated with refugee identity formation, psychoanalytic theory provides additional insights about how the pressurized socio-political conditions of adolescence are internalized cognitively and emotionally. Psychoanalysts assert that normal adolescent development involves struggling through sexual urges, coming into conflict with unconscious and conscious prohibitions. According to Sigmund Freud (1905/1989), the objective of this life stage is to fulfill the aim of

genital maturity, with the “fore-pleasure” of erotogenic zones rearranged to achieve an “end-pleasure” at the genital zones (p. 279). Eroticism is brought into the service of reproduction, and these physical changes are coupled with an inner world of turbulence. Adolescence is therefore characterized by a natural “psychological disequilibrium” resulting from sexual maturation disrupting pre-existing defense mechanisms (A. Freud, 1968). Puberty necessitates new bridging structures between childhood and adulthood and requires making sense of the “internal self” in an external world that often appears uncertain and unsafe. During this instinct-driven and affectively intense stage, an individual begins to explore and construct multiple identities based on decisions that incorporate social norms and values.

Anna Freud (1958) furthers the characterization of adolescence by emphasizing the extreme fluctuations between opposites. She writes,

it is normal for an adolescent to behave for a considerable length of time in inconsistent and unpredictable manner; to fight her or his impulses and to accept them; to ward them off successfully and to be overrun by them; to love his or her parents and to hate them ... to thrive on imitation and identification with others while searching unceasingly for her/his identity; to be more idealistic, artistic, generous and unselfish than he/she will ever be again, but also the opposite: self-centered, egoistic, calculating. (p. 275)

This extreme fluctuations between opposites is unique to the adolescent stage. The adolescent psyche is also special because it plays more with abstract objects, ideas, or beliefs. Youth generate strategies and utopian systems without being weighed down by the accountability that limits adults. Winnicott (2005) describes adolescence as “the most exciting features of creative thought, new and fresh feelings, ideas for new living” (p. 146). Society, in his view, needs to be shaken up by the aspirations of those not yet responsible enough to realistically carry out their aspirations. Young people are demanding, while they personally struggle to better understand who they are and their position in the world (Winnicott, 2005, 2012).

Parental guardians are the primary medium through which social demands are internalized and become part of a common personality trait (S. Freud, 1905/1989). During

adolescence, the individual develops the courage as well as the mental and physical strength for an onslaught on their parents' norms, and on societal norms more generally (Winnicott, 2012). A great deal of healthy adolescent development depends on the relationship with, and detachment from, parents. Winnicott (2016) considers a "normal child" as someone who has "confidence in his mother and father and pulls out all the stops. In the course of time, he [i.e., the normal child] tries out his power to disrupt, to destroy, to frighten, to wear down, to waste, to wangle and to appropriate" (p. 45). Under the conditions of this normative conflict, Winnicott emphasizes "good enough" parenting. To be "good enough" means having the patience to tolerate the child's emotional expressions and being receptive to engaging with them (Winnicott, 2012). He urges adults to engage with the aggressive rhetoric and ideas of adolescents, as it will lead to healthier individuals and a healthier society (Winnicott 2005, p. 199). Adults do not need and cannot expect to entirely understand their adolescent offspring. The transitory state of infancy ends with knowing the physical separation from parents; the separation of personal ideas, beliefs, and practices is integral to the state of adolescence.

Kristeva (2007) furthers Winnicott's discussion on adolescents and their preoccupation with idealistic extremes by writing about youth confronted by psychological crossroads. The adolescent looks for new objects of desire, separate and distinct from what was shared with parents during early childhood. Accordingly, adolescents are prone to become convinced about the ideal object, thereby becoming "a believer" in it. The ideal loved object can be a partner, profession, sport, artist, celebrity, or political or religious ideation. As maturation proceeds, the loved object succumbs to the pressures of reality, and the once infallible ideal belief loses force and legitimacy. With the inevitable disappointment, the adolescent may become rebellious or fall into a nihilism expressed through self-destructive or even suicidal tendencies. Although the young person may become temporarily caught up in a fixation on the perfection of the object, there remains the mental flexibility to be inquisitive and alter strict beliefs.

Like Winnicott and Kristeva, Erikson (1968) argues that young people, being relatively free of mature obligations, aim to gather experiential understanding about themselves through multiple and divergent social interactions. There is a “psychosocial moratorium” where space and time are allocated to the young person to freely explore “self” and surrounding social environments (p. 143). But the adolescent “must detect some meaningful resemblance between what he has come to see in himself and what his sharpened awareness tells him others judge and expect him to be” (Erikson 1959, p. 12). Erikson also points out the importance of polarities during adolescence – the needs for freedom amidst the capacities for discipline; the excitements about novel adventures amidst the enjoyment of tradition; a concern for individuality while forming social cliques that entail stereotypes of self and other. Similar to Anna Freud, he admits that healthy adolescent development involves working through an inevitable set of emotionally provocative conflicts.

Looking at the birth of postcolonial states, in *the Wretched of the Earth* Fanon (1961/2007) stresses, “In underdeveloped countries the youth represent one of the most important sectors. The consciousness of the younger generation must be elevated and enlightened” (p. 162). He emphasizes the contributions of youth to newly emerging postcolonial states and their efforts to overcome the self-hate they internalized under colonial domination. He describes youth in developing countries as idle and says that various national ministries must collaborate to orient the youth to fields and schools in order to “elevate the people, expand their minds, equip them, differentiate them and humanize them” (p. 137). As youth are critical to social change, they need education to actively diversify the current workforce and other social practices, ultimately creating a more just and non-prejudicial “new” world (Fanon, 1952/2008).

Nascence of Subjectivity

During adolescence, a person’s identity is consciously constructed through actively negotiating different factors and identifiers associated to her/his sense of self. There are

elements of identity that are fixed by circumstances of birth or biological inheritance, but subjectivity also involves reflexively responding to the power relations s/he is exposed to and comes to choose, experiment with, or discard entirely. Identity is neither transparent nor unproblematic. In the case of refugees, state institutions, civil society, and social practices produce the discourses through which refugee identity construction happens. There are pre-migratory factors that impact and influence identifiers. These include and are not limited to family history and connection to colonial conflict, epistemologies of war and survival, family socio-economic status, and the education level of parents (Shakya et al., 2014). After resettlement in Canada, factors like settler-citizen backlash, sex and gender, and relations to family, friends, and finances influence how and what adolescents internalize as part of who they are and want to become. Expressing a genuine sense of self requires a stable family, various community structures, and circumstances that nurture accomplishing a stable identity (Winnicott, 2012).

Adults and governments attempt to regulate refugee identity, but fail to recognize that these individuals are grappling with complex and competing identity markers in addition to “natural” dilemmas (Nyers, 2006). Fanon (1961/2007) attributes the question, “Who am I in reality?” as belonging to the colonized (p. 182). Systematically negating of those who are othered as refugees and denying them human attributes renders what should be a self-affirming question into one of alienation and objectification. Psychoanalysts consider the questions, “Who am I?” and “Where do I come from?” as a key aspect of healthy adolescent development, often referred to as an “identity crisis” (Erikson, 1968; Kristeva, 2007, p. 717). Throughout this dissertation, I explore how asylum seekers hoping to make Canada their new home answer these questions. I must emphasize that each adolescent refugee is unique in language, class, culture, as well as in their attitude to assimilation, religion, degree of privilege, sexual orientation, educational level, and family structure. At the same time, they are all similar in that they have to grapple with viewing themselves through the lens of mainstream western culture and through their native cultural lens (Lobban, 2013, pp. 555–56). One major resettlement factor

that asylum seekers contend with is their ethnic and racial difference from the dominant group.

Scholars agree that racism and hate are taught at an early age to children (Fanon 1952/2008; Said, 1978; Memmi, 1969/2001). Fanon believes that prejudice is intentionally established in society through the use and production of cultural elements that reinforce it. He states that “the books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio – work their way into one’s mind and shape one’s view of the world of the group to which one belongs” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 152). Pedagogical tools in schools, such as “literature, the plastic arts, songs for shop girls (or schoolgirls), proverbs, habits, patterns, whether they set out to attack it or to vulgarize it, restore racism” (Fanon, 1963/1988, p. 36). For most of the last century books and other academic resources have been created for the consumption of the dominant group, or as Fanon (1952/2008) puts it, “they are written by white men for white children” (p.124).

When children read stories and novels, they generally want to identify with the protagonist and desire to personally match up with the main character’s description. According to Fanon, the young (racialized) reader identifies with the hero even though her/his people are portrayed as the antagonist, savage other. The psychiatrist writes, “the identification process means that the black child subjectively adopts a white man’s attitude” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 126). When children are immersed in these kinds of narratives, myths, and other pedagogical resources, the inferiority of their people and who they are takes precedence. The consumed bias about the racialized other creates an “inferiority complex” in their minds. The developing world’s “native is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absences of values but also the negation of values” (Fanon, 1961/2007, p. 6). The imagination of children in both the native land and in the white settler states becomes filled with coloured bodies possessing little or no values; they exist as dehumanizing images, detached from emotional feeling or the psychological effects of racism.

One major site of resettlement trauma occurs when the coloured adolescent refugee comes to learn s/he is not the white protagonist who s/he used to identify with (Fanon,

1952/2008, pp. 122, 127). As Fanon describes, “at the first white gaze, he [colored youth] feels the weight of his melanin” (p. 128). The displaced youth must now grapple with the added layer of racism-induced shock when interacting with the dominant Canadian settler population and western cultural production. Learning English and French languages and cultures contributes to their symptoms of neurosis and “inferiority complex” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 100). The core of the problem is that there is no escape from one’s skin color or other phenotypic variation from the dominant group. The psychological consequence of internalizing an inferiority complex can be very severe for a developing mind and his/her sense of self. Fanon (1952/2008) states,

If the person is overwhelmed to such a degree by the wish to be white, it is because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex, in a society that proclaims the superiority of one race, to the identical degree to which that society creates difficulties for him, he finds himself thrust into a neurotic situation. (p. 80)

Fanon argues that the regime of imperialism translates non-whites as colonial subjects and transforms them internally to desire whiteness. His project is to find ways to translate them back, because such a desire can never be fulfilled. He describes many of the social dysfunctions and psychological problems facing natives of the global south living in North America as stemming from the colonial process. Many scholars agree with him that the incomplete resolution of those tragedies and divides still currently propagates feelings of alienation, anxiety, and mental issues (Gayle, 2010; Dei et al., 2010; Said, 1978). Fanon’s (1952/2008) observation that “the Blackman is enslaved by his inferiority, the white man by his superiority,” and they both “behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation” (p. 73). A significant part of my project here is to reveal how the adolescent encounters trauma caused by an imposed “inferior” racial identity. How does s/he recuperate a subjectivity and a cultural affiliation that is independent of the racist project?

Young asylum seekers move through what Bhabha calls “liminal” spaces of being and territory. Bhabha (1994) considers refugees to hold an uncanny “alien territory” on the edges of borderlands like camps or tent towns and to not have a complete social category because they

are officially stateless (p. 56). I extend Bhabha's notion of the liminality that is evident in refugee subjectivity to the adolescent mental stage. What I call refugee-ness during adolescence means that the young person's psychological flexibility allows for play with liminal identifiers like old and new, native and immigrant, novice and expert. The movement of displaced people from the border towns inward to metropolitan centres forces the settler citizen to consider refugee belongingness and subjectivity. Asylum seekers cross borders as well as imaginary boundaries. Being in the state of liminality also means being in a situation of in-between-ness. Bhabha's metaphor of the hyphen tracks elements of adolescent refugee subjectivity from birth and travels (i.e., their liminalities) to become obvious and practiced in the final host state (i.e., the centre or Canada).

Bhabha also provides a solution to the colonial curse of Manichean dichotomies with his idea of hybridity – that is, a mixing of practices between colonizers and colonized, the translation of texts and practices from the colonies to the metropole, and vice versa. He explains, “hybridity reverses the formal process of disavowal so that the violent dislocation of the act of colonization becomes the conditionality of colonial discourse” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 163). Considering the mutual effects of the refugee on the settler state and of Canadians on asylum seekers shifts the dualistic epistemology of insider–outsider to consider the mutual effects between all people involved. Even though historically both the colonial project and western states have managed identity in binary forms, our conceptual framework and resistance to the neurosis of racism must reflect a movement away from dualism and the purified discourse that compartmentalizes people as ontologically and epistemically separate. The adolescent refugee subject finds her/his self negotiating multiple identifiers, whereby what is “disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid ... between mother culture and alien culture” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 159).

In bringing together past lives with present realities and countering discriminatory identifications, the process of hybridization allows for some shifts in the self without tearing the

young person completely apart from her/his condition. As a social and political process, it offers a place for an encounter between a multiplicity of personal identification process, moving away from liminalities to a shared in-between-ness that permits a comfortable transition. Methodically, this connects with what Britzman (2003) calls dialogical discourse, in which a relationship takes hold between the personal and social identities. With this in mind, the adolescent who holds “refugee” as a marker and status brings the characterizations of stateless, non-citizen, exiled, non-adult, qualified by silence and dependence. The asylum seeker simultaneously reconstitutes the boundaries between nation-states and the stratification of their inhabitants. This dialogical discourse continues throughout the young refugee’s life and the nation’s narrative.

Subjectivity is a life-long process for Erikson (1968), as he outlines in his seminal text *Childhood and Society*. He begins with reinterpreting Freud’s psycho-sexual stages as psychosocial stages, which depend on a person’s needs, the people surrounding her/him, and the emotional problems s/he encounters. At each of the “eight stages of man,” the individual experiences a crisis which manifests as two conflicting ideas that have to be resolved or integrated adequately for positive development. In the first stage, an infant navigates through trust and mistrust. The baby learns who s/he can trust and who or what to fear. In these two first years of life, the key to human development is the relationship of the baby with the mother. In the next two years, a child discovers her/his body and determines the limitations to her/his autonomy, or shame and doubt. Here, both parents play a major role in developing the toddler’s self-confidence and sense of self-discovery. Erikson (1968) writes, “For as he gets ready to stand on his feet more firmly, the infant also learns to delineate his world as ‘I’ and ‘you’ and ‘me’ and ‘mine’” (p. 108). He cautions, “with parental overcontrol comes a lasting propensity for doubt and shame” (p. 109). The third phase is the phase of “initiative vs. guilt.” That is when the pre-schooler takes initiative and experiments with her/his limitations in terms of appropriate actions and words. A coherent development ensures a capacity for purposefulness – that is,

“the courage to envisage and pursue valued goals uninhibited by the defeat of infantile fantasies, by guilt and by the ... fear of punishment” (Erikson, 1965, p.121). Although the first three phases are closely linked to Freudian theory, Erikson attempts to link the sequences of development to society, which is very important in this study, as circumstances of war and uprooting influence the health and development of young refugees.

The fourth stage and onward are very different, as the family no longer only manages the child. The phase of “industry vs. inferiority” happens as the child goes to school. Their sense of “inferiority” is the result of feeling inadequate at doing tasks, and this may lead to further deterrence from finishing assigned jobs. Completing tasks with competence means receiving recognition from teachers, neighbours, and peers. A danger at this stage is that the child may identify too much with the world of skill and become a “thoughtless slave of his technology and of those who are in a position to exploit it” (Erikson, 1965, p. 252). The next stage is adolescence, defined by the conflict of “identity vs role confusion.”

At this time, the lasting formation of identity is “more than the sum of childhood identifications” (Erikson, 1965, p. 253). There are multiple identities and roles (son/daughter, friend, student, citizen, etc.). A psychosocial “moratorium” allows adolescents to explore various markers before permanently settling on who they want to be (i.e., what they are associated with, occupations, fads, trends to follow, etc.). Achieving stable subjectivity means reworking past identifiers, current abilities, and a vision of oneself in the future. The young person adopts a “defined world image,” that makes her/him more susceptible to the exploitation of totalitarian forms of thinking and governance. Often times their views exclude those who do not share them. Erikson classifies some youth as “identity confused” when they cannot make a commitment and express anxiety about their uncertainty. “Identity achievement” occurs when there is comfort regarding internal uncertainty, and the adolescent’s exploration leads to strongly held norms, occupational choices, and beliefs. In late adolescence and early adulthood, there is the “intimacy vs. isolation” stage. Intimacy is the “capacity to commit ... to concrete

affiliations and partnerships and to develop ethical strength to abide by such commitments, even though they may call for significant sacrifices or compromises” (p. 255). If the individual cannot form intimate relationships, s/he will feel isolated and lonely. According to Erikson, the young person must have a strong sense of identity before entering this phase, because subjectivity informs the kinds of relationships we engage and destroy in order to move forward.

The next two phases are central to adulthood, but have great implication on the world of youth. Most refugee parents coming to Canada are at “generative vs. stagnation,” or midlife crisis stage. Generativity is “primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (Erikson, 1965, p. 258). While most may interpret this to mean merely adults raising children, generativity includes creatively contributing to community and the world at large. A strong sense of identity equates to perceiving what one does as significant to social roles and purposes. Failure to develop interests and positively influence the next generation will lead to a “pervading sense of stagnation and personal impoverishment” (p. 258). The last stage is “ego integrity vs. despair.” During this last stage, humans often slow down and reflect on their lives, assessing their “participation by fellowship as well as the acceptance of the responsibility of leadership” (p. 261). People are fixed in their ways and are “ready to defend the dignity of [their] own style against all physical and economic threats ... developed by [their] culture or civilization” (p. 260). Lack of integrity creates a sense of despair “expressing the feeling that time is now short, too short for the attempt to start another life and try out alternate roads of integrity” (p. 260). At this point, elders fear death more than ever before. Erikson uses integrity to bring the stages full circle by saying that “healthy children will not fear life if their elders have integrity enough not to fear death” (p. 261). The assumption in the “eight stages of man” is that society generally provides context for healthy negotiation of subjectivity. In the case of refugee-ness and its influence on adolescent identity formation, my research shows what individuals do when faced with (several) settings that are hostile to their developmental needs.

How does the adolescent refugee integrate dichotomous and plural identifiers in a

coherent way so that s/he can be and express genuine subjectivity? To answer this question, I turn to Winnicott's (1960/2012) theoretical concepts of True and False Selves. The True Self holds itself open to constant metamorphosis. The False Self, in contrast, is immobilized into a dead psychic organization that closes off the self. Contrary to common sense, "well behaved" adolescents who are compliant or good externally are actually exhibiting the False Self. In fact, they suppress feelings of hate, anger, selfishness, and greed (p. 195). Winnicott argues that the False Self goes unfulfilled, takes cover in imitating others, and lacks imagination (p. 191).

The adolescent accomplishes a sense of True Self in an environment where the parents provide the freedom, openness, and patience for spontaneity, curiosity, and creativity. The goal is that their children will not put up a façade of inauthentic assimilation and compliance. Winnicott (1960/2012) asserts that there is "little point in formulating a True Self idea except for the purpose of trying to understand the False Self, because it does no more than collect together the details of the experience of aliveness" (p. 148). To have "aliveness" means to live generatively and with an existential satisfaction in the individual's ability to remain true to him/herself. As Winnicott states, "The spontaneous gesture is the True Self in action. Only the True Self can be creative and only the True Self can feel real" (p. 148). Human beings oscillate between True Self and False Self, and this begins to clearly manifest through language at adolescence. Winnicott (1971) explains, "In a tantalizing way many individuals have experienced just enough of creative living to recognize that for most of their time they are living uncreatively, as if caught up in the creativity of someone else, or of a machine" (p. 65). The level of creativity represents the adolescent's sensitivity to expressing her/his individual uniqueness.

In short, for adolescent asylum seekers the experience of refugee-ness and the processes of resettlement occur during a crucial phase of their formation as subjects. This review of theories of adolescent development has shown that the realities these youth face differ strongly from the ideal conditions envisioned by psychologists. An understanding of their conditions and subjectivity requires factoring in the effects of trauma of war, dislocation and

racism.

Compounded Trauma – Since the Wretched don't Speak

Research and theorization of trauma took a turn during the Second World War as medical professionals discovered the impact of war on the psyche. The horrors of the Shoah, the Gulags, and concentration, labour, and refugee camps around the world bring a new dimension to the discussion of earlier writers and medical personnel called “shell shock.” Anti-colonial liberation movements across the global south revealed trauma rooted in structural oppression, persecution, devaluation, and official indifference to the suffering of subordinated and powerless groups (Fanon, 1952/2008; Said, 1978; George, 2010). As anti-colonial movements gained momentum, colonized peoples voiced their need for political recognition and official denunciation of the unjust societal hierarchy and violence caused by superpowers. Giving expression to silenced memories became imperative for social healing. Contemporary conflicts in the developing world suggest that natives are still working through past atrocities and there is a magnitude of complex traumas that still needs acknowledgement.

Counter-discursive attempts are successful in showing the power of language that represses others in the name of an advanced culture. For example, Bhabha (1994) points out, “There is a conspiracy of silence around the colonial truth ... it is a silence that turns imperial triumphalism into the testimony of colonial confusion and those who hear its echo lose their historic memories” (pp. 175–76). Forgetfulness and muting horrific experiences are state strategies for social control that continue today (Leydesdorff et. al., 1999; Di Paolantonio, 2000). Spivak (1994) explains silence as a form of repression “that affirms non-existence ... a violent aporia between subject and object status” (p. 102). She brings attention to subaltern subjectivity, especially women from the developing world whose voices continue to be muzzled (Spivak, 1994). Georgis (2006) suggests “that a voice that cannot be heard collectively or supported institutionally is not a voice that can speak politically” (p. 173).

To complicate the matter, dominant society constitutes refugee youth as dysfunctional and in need of medical aid not because of ascertained trauma or neurosis but because of their membership in the category “refugee” (Malkki, 1992). Despite traumatic experiences, most asylum seekers are not mentally ill in a clinical sense, and those who do need medical attention often do not receive appropriate care (Simich & Andermann, 2014). Historically, populations have been diagnosed with PTSD by humanitarian organizations working in the name of, or on behalf of the west (Howell, 2012; Pupavac, 2001).

Complex trauma refers to exposure to multiple traumatic events that are generally invasive and interpersonal in nature. Scholars, psychologists, and physicians have reached a consensus that such traumas impact memory processing and neurological functioning, changing the way survivors think (Belau & Ramadanovic, 2002; Agaibi, 2005; Dannon & Hammond, 2007). Trauma links a somatically shocking external event to specific after-effects on an individual's psychic reality, and these effects can be long term. Altered thinking processes sometimes produce unusually clear yet shattered memories (Levi, 1986; Leydesdorff et al., 1999). Trauma can be compounded by numerous social and political constraints (George, 2010). Caruth (2014) explains traumatic events as “not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on” (p. 4). Responses to living in contexts of violence, homelessness, and fear are not universal and can manifest in a range of mild-to-severe diagnoses, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression (Ellis et al., 2008; Brownlee et. al., 2013). My research weighs these competing arguments of subjectivity in relation to the social impediments of refugee-ness and young asylum seekers' experiences with trauma.

Some refugees experience trauma directly from war, caused by emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and other young people experience its impact second-hand. There could be a single traumatic event or a series of situations. For some peoples the horrors of armed conflict

span over generations, as in the case of Palestinians, Kashmiris, and Afghans. There are also secondary traumatic effects from witnessing torture of loved ones or others. Young asylum seekers may have escaped direct exposure to armed conflict and may not have witnessed atrocities firsthand in the native land, but lived in fear with excessive anxiety due to perceived or actual threats of violence, instability, and deprivation of basic needs (food, shelter, security etc.) in neighbouring or adopted host countries. Some scholars argue that trauma is part of the shared refugee identity (Ahmed, 1999; Said, 2000).

Hamburger (2017) introduces social trauma to the discussion in *Trauma, Trust, and Memory*. Social trauma means that an individual is part of a targeted and persecuted social group. He argues that victims and perpetrators are part of the same overarching society, which means that “reparative social networks” are destroyed as positive communicative mechanisms are no longer available (p. 82). It is society and culture as a whole that have to deal with the historical scars and traces of ethnic wars and genocide. Creating a new identity involves commemorating and openly addressing the past while progressing into the future (Hamburger, 2018, p. 10). Each generation of youth has the task of resolving past injustices and grieving atrocities in ways that are healthier and dignifying.

Moving from the former colonies to an imperial metropolis is also ridden with potential episodes for trauma (Fanon, 1952/2008; Bakore, 2012; Shakya et al., 2014; Streeck-Fischer, 2015). The settlement phase has the refugee facing issues like cultural shock, ableism, racism, sexism, and ageism that manifest in difficulty finding work and opportunities to study. Xenophobia is a psychic pattern in the west (Bhabha, 1994, p. 90). There is a history of racism through colonialism, state politics, and capitalism that has created conditions of silence, surveillance, and denial of the multiplicity or plurality of those who originate from other parts of the world (Žižek, 2016; Fanon, 1952/2008; Bhabha, 1994). Besides observable differences in physical traits, racial attitudes also play out through values, hygiene, health, and moral worthiness. Movement from native land to global north causes a narcissistic wound that

punctures the imaginary “I” (Fanon, 1952/2008). According to Bhabha (1994) there is a shift from the politics of nationalism to the politics of narcissism. Canadian settlers challenge who the adolescent refugee thinks s/he is. The identity of the refugee is a “depersonalized, dislocated, colonial subject [who] can become an incalculable object, quite difficult to place” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 121). Some scholars describe the immigration process as a cumulative trauma because of its associated stresses and pressures (Streeck-Fischer, 2015; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1990). During these moves, adolescents feel the pain of uprooting and what Bhabha calls “delocation” that blocks normal identity development.

The death, disappearance, or dismemberment and health problems of parents and other caregivers can compel young people to take on adult roles earlier, without being over eighteen years old (Boyden, 2004; Shakya et al., 2014). Adolescents can go from being students to soldiers, peers to political leaders, or dependents to heads of households in an instant due to the conditions and aftermath of war. For others, the inability to carry out conventional rites of passage due to war and resettlement is an obstacle to achieving adult status (Fazel et al., 2012; Hart, 2008). Refugee youth in Canada take on responsibilities like translating, tracking resources, and providing financial and family support (Shakya et al., 2014). Adolescent asylum seekers generally learn quickly and adjust in ways that adults may not be able or willing. Despite being given more accountability at a younger age, however, their non-citizen status and age renders them voiceless, politically insignificant, or problematic (Nyers, 1999).

Adolescent asylum seekers share a number of psychological traits with their settler peer group: exploring who they are, what their position is, and their potential contribution to the world (Winnicott & Rodman, 2010; Frankel, 1998; Freud & Burlingham, 1973; J. Rose, 1993). Because of their youth they are stereotypically adjectivized as “incompetent” and “immature” (Lesko, 2001) by a socially and culturally constructed adult world that espouses “anti-youth racism” (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 99). Thus, their experiences and feelings are often unheard and ignored, and their sense of agency deteriorated. For adolescent asylum seekers, the added

pressures of living under conditions of prolonged war, socio-political instability, and constant threat interferes with normal identity development, radically influencing the subject's social interactions, as well as their outlook on the future that is very different from their settler counterparts (Giacaman et al., 2007; Almqvist & Brandell-Forsberg, 1997; Sack et al., 1996).

For the past few decades, there has been a proliferation of research in the field of refugee studies due to many host countries' inability to adequately meet settlement needs (George, 2010). Psychologists have recently considered how pre-migratory factors like exposure to trauma, social support, and family connections may enhance or diminish the relationship between settlement stressors (i.e., poverty, family separation, discrimination, language acquisition) and adaptation (Staudenmeyer et al., 2016). Others argue that social and cultural determinants may play a larger role in refugee health and assimilation outcomes than do biological factors or pre-migration experiences (Simich & Andermann, 2014). There are enough studies that make it clear that regardless of the cause, meeting the needs of asylum seekers continues to challenge Canadian officials. At 53%, poverty among immigrant and refugee children in Canada is second only to Aboriginal children (Campaign, 2000, 2013). Lack of economic preparedness and social support (e.g. lack of access to resources, facing various prejudices) incurred during resettlement means that many refugees accumulate stressors that lead to difficulties working through their experienced trauma (Fazel et al., 2005; Paludan, 1981).

The psychoanalytic conceptualization of traumatic neurosis includes compulsive repetitions that reveal an obsession with the shocking episodes, as well as an attempt to discharge excessive tension in an incremental way. Sigmund Freud (1914/2006) says the patient "reproduces [the repressed past] not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (p. 394). Such repetitive manifestations are an unconscious way of working through the episodes. The adolescent refugee's search for voice or agency is compounded with the original experience of trauma's cognitive residue, unexpressed through language or assigned meaning immediately (Caruth, 2014; Kaplan, 1999).

Then the function of nightmares and flashbacks is to express the anxiety that was absent at the time of that first incident (Tarc, 2017; Neilson, 2017).

The adolescent refugee is rendered voiceless by virtue of her/his powerlessness and not because s/he does not have something meaningful to say. Healing involves listening to pasts and people rendered insignificant. Britzman (2003) explains voice means “to signify something unique in the individual, such as finding one’s real voice, but it also meant encountering even more contradictory realities on the way to self-definition” (p. 17). She lists sites of the struggle with language: “finding the words, feeling heard, understanding one’s practical constraints, learning from negative experiences, speaking one’s mind, and constructing a new identity from speaking differently” (p. 18). There are tremendous external pressures to voice experiences in an understandable way, but this is challenging when the young person also has to cope with proving her/his self worthy, so as to forget feelings of helplessness and not being in control. A current event may bring revision and new mental or environmental importance to the already constructed narrative (Freud & Burlingham, 1943; S. Freud, 1899; D. Harris, 2009; Khamis, 2005).

Another characteristic of trauma is the collapse of symbolism. Caruth argues that within the literary dimension we can bear witness to some forgotten and painful wounds. Essentially, stories of trauma tell us the reality of the violent event and, paradoxically, also give us access to the un-understood and unknown reality of the violence. Caruth (2014) calls this double telling both impossible and necessary for historical witnessing (p. 7). The translation is not just from one language to another or from one culture to another. Even the movement from emotions to the linearity of logics becomes a site of loss, of knowing and understanding for both the survivor and the those bearing witness. Laub (1995) still finds talking valuable, because it “reasserts the veracity of the past and to build anew its linkage to and assimilation into, present-day life” (p. 62).

A paradox of non-verbalization is evident for refugee populations. Silence is a defense mechanism as well as a survival strategy (S. Freud, 1914/2006, 1917/1989, 1930/2004). Both survivors and abusers deploy it to minimize or disavow pain (S. Rose, 1999). The refugee does not speak about the harm, loss, and sadness he/she has accumulated in her/his journey, due to fear of being perceived as ungrateful, disruptive, or hostile by host citizens. Refugee mental health research, while productive since the eighties, is arguably too focused on mental disorders and problems rather than solutions (Simich & Andermann 2014). There is research that suggests learning English facilitates acculturation and protects mental health of refugees (Alemi et al. 2014; Ahmad 2020). For the purposes of coping and healing, refugees also must have a shift in thinking, coming to feel that speaking up about their tragic experiences will help them and not take away from the gratitude they feel towards the Canadian state for its hospitality.

From Melancholy to Resilience

This dissertation's engagement with ten stories of Canadians who experienced varying degrees of refugee-ness is also a means of seeing larger concerns with appropriate listening; that is, with knowing and representing the actual crisis (Caruth, 2014, p. 4). It is critical for healing that victims interpret their trauma stories and that we learn how such interpretations aid in their healing (Mollica et al., 2001). Since we know that traumatic experiences resist thought and language, Georgis (2006) stresses, "what it means to survive cannot be understood through what is said but what is unsaid" (p. 169). Doctors, social workers, therapists, and teachers play a critical role in guiding survivors as they navigate through and voice horrifying details (Mollica, 2006). When discourses are successfully internalized, they become part of the individual's subjectivity (Butler, 1993).

Confronting and giving words to the repressed episode allows the subject to break out of a narcissistic identification, to choose between renewal and regression and to formulate more integrative identity. A very powerful way of reaching mourning and healthy grieving is to commit

to retelling one's story that in a way that "finds meaningful purpose in life, believe that one can influence one's surroundings and the outcome of events and trust that one can learn and grow from both positive and negative life experiences" (Daniels et al., 2012, p. 327). As Georgis (2006) explains, "the stories we construct to survive are the provisions we need to go on living" (p. 166). By listening to subaltern narratives, "we enter the space of woundedness, and thus it provides the conditions for working through, or a mourning of loss and trauma, as incomprehensible as that may be" (p. 169).

Refugees who experience various sociological, national, and emotional losses at a young age, they are susceptible to melancholic or depressive episodes. According to Freud's (1917/2006) article "Mourning and Melancholia," healthy recovery from loss involves finding a replacement for the lost object. Melancholia is more of a narcissistic response in which the individual identifies with the loss and subsumes the lost object. The subject grieves for a loss that she/he has not been able to fully accept or completely understand. To enact mourning, the individual must distinguish the self from the lost object and acknowledge the uniqueness of the loss.

For Freud, the work of mourning is the work of memorializing the loss, of not just allowing the loss to become a part of one's memory but permitting its force to reconstitute the very transcription of memory. In the process of *working through* loss, there needs to be collective engagement, and learning from the loss (S. Freud, 1917/2006; Britzman, 2000; Georgis, 2006). Adults expect adolescents to have developed some capability to deal with or work through the loss of childhood. However, compromised adolescents like refugees may respond differently. Learning by working through remembrance as a "difficult return" aids in uncovering and facing a horrifying abject past. As Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert (2000) explain, remembrance "endeavors to bring forth into presence specific people and events of the past in order to honor their names and to hold a place for their absent presence in one's contemporary life" (p. 4). Even compulsive repetition or re-telling occurs with urgency, "thereby

invoking an absolutist moral demand that one must listen ... [with] no guarantee of a redeemed society” (p. 4). This leads us to a key pedagogical question of what it means to be taught by the experiences of others and, even more uncomfortably, what happens when we are “wounded by others’ wounds” (Simon, 2000, p. 20). Learning from loss and healthy grieving provides the basis for hope in political reconciliation and social consolidation practices.

At the individual mental level, a series of internal adjustments ward off displeasure and anxiety, outlined in Anna Freud’s (1968) *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*. She expands on ten defence mechanisms: repression, regression, formation, isolation, undoing, projection, turning against one’s own person, reversal into the opposite, and sublimation. I focus on the use of fantasies, intellectualization, and sublimation as they allow the psyche to return, repeat, and retell trauma in a safer manner. Fantasy entails imagining the problem away and finding comfort in another place and time as the individual distances her/himself imaginatively from immediate (troubling) realities. My work shows how the adolescent refugees uses fantasy in the form of nostalgia to cope with colonial dominance, state narratives, and the realities of violence. In a similar manner, intellectualization also allows for emotional detachment. This defence mechanism is “not the product of fantasy like the fairy tales enjoyed in early childhood, but something which has an actual physical existence” (p. 159). These unconscious psychological defenses are meant to reduce the anxiety that may result from unacceptable urges or harmful stimuli.

Sublimation is the most productive and creative manner of redirecting abhorrent thoughts of sex, violence, or other traumatic episodes. According to Anna Freud (1968), this process of “displacement of instinctual aims in conformity with higher social values, presupposes the acceptance or at least the knowledge of such values” (pp. 44, 52). Put differently, sublimation is indicative of maturity as it allows people to behave in civilized and acceptable ways. These defense mechanisms help protect the mind from threat and disharmonious emotional state of adolescence.

Tying sublimation to healing of trauma implicates various actions and language forms that encourage compulsive repetition in the form of personal narratives. They can be expressed as visual arts, lyrics, and theatrical productions. We can consider altruism, dreaming beyond setbacks, and mobilizing various artistic expressions as methods of working through and extended to talking to power and against past wrongs. These ways of making meaning involve creating spaces for a dialogue between what is inside the self and what is inside the work. Additionally these creative endeavors provide a contrast to dominant perspectives and silence around refugees in Canada.

Spivak (1994) cautions against speaking for the subaltern – here the adolescent refugee – because it runs the risk of essentializing and discounting the heterogeneity of the colonized other. All refugees are multifaceted in their experiences and plural in their expressions of subjectivity (Rizvi et al., 2006, p. 252). Britzman (2000) warns against identifying with the narrator's trauma, as "to be receptive to the difficulties of the other is not the same as feeling the other's pain" (p. 38). This requires the listener to challenge her/his own understandings and other boundaries that until then have served to protect her/him from pain. In working through loss, learning from trauma, and ethically listening we are challenging our mental, emotional, and national understandings of self–other relations in the context of refugee subjectivities.

Narrative Methodology

I study the adolescent refugee experience through life stories, now available and shared through electronic media and a slowly expanding collection of refugee memoirs. These autobiographical accounts look back at particularly significant events and how they influenced the trajectory of that individual's journey. Life stories, written as memoirs or verbally expressed in videos available online, are useful in understanding the relevance of trauma and other emotional responses. Critically engaging with these life stories allows room for contradiction, complexity, and exploration of the relation between personal and collective experiences. In this

section, I discuss this method and the strengths and challenges of narrative analysis, using psychoanalytic and postcolonial frameworks.

My method of looking at real stories brings to light the relationship between the narrator and their narratives. Georgis (2006) points out that “this relationship, however, is hardly a literal one, and requires that the learner read stories as enigmatic expressions of difficult experience” (p.167). The goal is to provide an ethical witnessing of the other’s story by listening, while informing the reader of the episodes’ complex nuances through theoretical similarities and differences. Georgis (2006) eloquently describes narratives as “designed to teach those who wish to listen that surviving difficulty and trauma is a creative act, and that we must construct our survival, seek ‘the better story,’ so that we may live more ethically with others” (p. 169). The utilization of nostalgia, intellectualization and sublimation to articulate traumatic and resilient events is demanding. Art and storytelling are vehicles that mobilize perception and some emotional realities. Canadians who are former refugees voice their injuries and difficult return through creative use of language captured in memoirs and vlogs. Personal and cultural codes that survivors develop to convey the unspeakable and to name emotions that defy communicative expressions still have linguistic impact (Caruth, 1991).

For these individuals, the creation of memory and narrative is riddled by historical conditions of war, emotional residues of loss, and newly acquired knowledge or skills of overcoming the original experiences. The roles of societal and institutional structures in producing and reproducing discourses, identities, and knowledge act in the interest of the state (Said, 1978; Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Post-colonial theorists identify marginalized groups like adolescent refugees as needing to be the subject of their own experiences and histories (Memmi, 1969/2001; Fanon, 1963/1988). Minority subjects can “articulate their condition in terms of their own geography, history, culture, language and spirituality” (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). In turn, the adolescent refugees can produce language that demonstrates the significance of their experiences, given that voice challenges, ruptures, or resists imperial

relations of domination (Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1994; Ahmed, 1999). The adolescent refugee is capable of producing unique meanings, social relations, and identities by integrating temporal and territorial markers.

Locating trauma's impact on adolescent subjectivity involves intimately engaging with narrative. Employing psychoanalytic readings of memoirs and vlogs, I draw the reader's attention to instances of silence, vividness, and fragments in order to identify moments that evoke residues of trauma. When working with written texts, this can manifest as a separation in the passage, a change of time or story without any precursor, or a very vivid description of certain experiences. For videos, psychoanalytical and postcolonial methods of analyzing place attention on words, repetitions, and intonations, in addition to breaks and jumps. Watching survivors as they tell their stories in the vlogs, we can read the expressions of curiosity, anger, joy, and other feelings that they re-enact in their retelling.

In seeing what is said and left unsaid, I draw on the potential for learning and making sense of the complex losses and compound trauma. Postcolonial methods rely on the inherited epistemology of land, people, history, politics, and the refugee's personal position in the native, host and resettled states. I address how the refugee articulates the legacy of colonialism in the creation and progression of war and survival.

Looking for manifestations of defense mechanisms helps us better understand when and how young people escaping conflict zones effectively used such methods. In this dissertation I offer some ideas about the emotional transmission of fantasy, intellectualization, and sublimation as responses to stressors and anxiety caused by refugee-ness. Such expressions also operate as linguistic apparatus for making meaning from despair. Knowing the innate paradoxes in the existential nature of refugee-ness, I explore ways youth may be both at risk and resilient throughout their lives. Bridging this gap through the metaphor of hyphenating subjectivity allows engagement with the integration of, and resistance to binaries during subjectivity.

Textual Analysis vs. Interviews

Given the need to better understand structural constraints and other existential obstacles to identity formation in young asylum seekers, I utilize a subject-centered approach. To date, the majority of research regarding adolescent refugees has prioritized the perspective of adults who have contact with them. These “experts” are generally adult teachers, social workers, and clinicians from the global north who rarely have diversity training. Selimos (2015) suggests the importance of “a methodological approach that captures the complexity of young immigrants’ lives, their biographical agency, their complex social development processes and the emotional depth of their migration and settlement experiences” (p. 175). My focus on autobiographical accounts of adolescent refugees provides insight into the intricacy of identity negotiation, pressures, and resistance to remaining helpless “victims.”

I began my research for memoirs through a series of search engine pursuits. The parameters of the search were: post–World War II until 2017 (time frame), wars in the global south (locations of interest), refugees who resettled in Canada and refugee or resettlement experience during adolescence (population of study). I made use of Google, Amazon, Yahoo, and various university library catalogues to find life stories with such foci. The result of this quest for autobiographical accounts were: *Something Fierce- Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter* by Carmen Aguirre (2012), *A Thousand Farewells* by Nahlah Ayed (2013), and *Ru* by Kim Thùỵ (2009). These women’s written accounts are from memories of early childhood up to adulthood. There are numerous biographies of refugees who settled in the USA and those who survived the Shoah. Life stories written by refugees who choose Canada as their home are few, even though Canada is known as and prides itself on being a place of refuge for asylum seekers. In the concluding chapter, I postulate some potential reasons for this lack of social- political space to express stories of dissidents and exiles.

To capture the sophistication of the refugee's lived experiences, online video proved fruitful, and vlogs coincidentally surfaced in 2016. Vlogs, a new medium of communication, highlight recent daily experiences and issues that adolescents encounter. They require minimal rehearsal and introspection. Vlogs capture a natural retelling of relevant moments of forced migration and resettlement process. There is no voice-over and the youth use their own words to describe their experiences of war, refugee-ness, migration, and resettlement. The videos include fragments from the refugees' personal life: photos, videos of performances, cited poems, and social symbols.

The vlogs I analyze in this dissertation come from the website *Mapping Memories* (2015). Concordia University professor Liz Miller created it to showcase the diversity of once-refugee youth and their experiences coming to and living in Montréal. It is publicly accessible online and captures the ethnographic present. Working with new technologies contributes to a deeper understanding of identity construction (Weber & Mitchell, 2008). Production is made more feasible by availability and access to relatively inexpensive equipment (digital cameras, cell phones, microphones). This five-year collaborative media project used personal stories and a range of media tools (video, sound walks, mapping, photography). That research initiative also involved presentations on tour buses and an exhibit that has since been displayed in various museums (Project Spotlight 2014). Digital media provides a different space for participants to revisit their pasts; to reflect on events' multiple meanings to different audiences, including themselves; and allows for revisions (Weber & Mitchell, 2008). The main goal for the research team was "to build understanding about refugee rights and the diversity of refugee experiences in classrooms, with decision makers and with the larger public" (Project Spotlight, 2014). The *Mapping Memories* project culminated in a report publication under the same title. Only particular chapters are accessible online. The publication even includes the interaction between the young participants and the researchers (Miller, 2012).

Mapping Memories provides an exchange between refugees and settler citizens in an unprecedented way. The adolescents in conjunction with “media production invite other people’s feedback and readings, sparking a dialectic that is inherent in mediating and reshaping how we see ourselves and how we think others see us” (Weber & Mitchell, 2008, p. 41). I share with *Mapping Memories* project the objective of bringing awareness to the plurality of refugee life experiences and voices, and a deep seated interest in the role of education in creating identity after war trauma. How do adolescent refugees make meaning from such situations and work through towards coherent subjectivity and resilience? And how do they define their personal success? From the very important points raised in their life stories, readers come to know how native state politics, conflict, family, camps, and settlement issues influence the way youth cope and create their True or False Self.

Limits to Voicing

There are deep-rooted ethical considerations and dilemmas involved when conducting a narrative analysis as a researcher in the field of refugee studies. I am in one way or another speaking on behalf of young refugees, even though my intention is to allow the colonized-other-subaltern to speak for themselves. The assumption of a collective minority group risks an ethnocentric essentialism. Scholars suggest refraining from:

reinscribing, coopting and rehearsing neocolonial imperatives of political domination, economic exploitation and cultural erasure through the agency of First World, male, privileged, academic, institutionalized discourse that classifies and surveys the East in the same measure as the actual modes of colonial dominance it seeks to dismantle (Rizvi, 2006, p. 252).

My work is an attempt to move towards decolonizing refugee research by avoiding othering and “presencing,” to use Bhabha’s (1994, p. 13) word and expanding the dominant hegemonic understandings of this growing population. In this approach, the therapist, researcher, or reader listens and, at the least, acknowledges the histories and the emotions tangled up with events. In this manner, the hope is to initiate healing of young refugees.

Both media, written autobiographies and vlogs, have limitations. Each writer and vlogger has her/his own intention and purpose to fulfill. As a result, I scour them to find the statements that allude and respond to the key inquiries of interest to my study. Looking back and writing about one's past is riddled with inconsistencies, fragments, and, sometimes, complete omissions. Each author negotiates the amount and significance of details to disclose regarding their immediate families and themselves, knowing full well that their stories will be publicly available for decades to come. They must also consider how their families and friends may be implicated, how these associations will respond, and if they prefer that certain details go unmentioned. The author's family and friends may demand re-writing some details according to their personal recollections. A memoir's editors may ask for content changes according to length limits and the focus and marketability of the narrative. This may lead to further separation and revision of story plots to make them feasible and accessible to readers. These changes take away from the rawness of the original story, but the facts remain; and it is up to the reader to make meaning from it and as a witness to ethically engage with the story (Georgis, 2006).

The multimedia *Mapping Memories* project brings together refugees and immigrants' narratives to the public via the world wide web. Several youths tell parts of their life stories pertaining to their journey to and resettlement in Canada. They are in their late teens or twenties. Some videos showcase the young person telling her/his personal story and others are in the form of interviews in which the interviewer is not part of the video, visually or audibly. The vlogs capture animated expressions and tones of voice. Unlike the memoirs, the vlogs are less edited, more unrehearsed, and closer to the time of the adolescent refugees' experience. They are also different from memoirs in that they obviously do not present the entire life story of the refugee. The narratives on *Mapping Memories* also provide insight regarding refugee boards and community establishments, that young newcomers must engage with, and how they too influence their sense of self and belonging. Examining life stories welcomes researchers to explore historical contexts of trauma within various stages of the refugee's experience (Bokore,

2016). Reading, witnessing, and writing about these stories breaks the intertwined silence, stigma, and feelings of humiliation knotted up in refugee-ness.

By analyzing written and video texts that present adolescent refugees in their own words, through a lens informed by psychoanalytic and postcolonial theories and attentive to detail and silences, this dissertation attempts to understand the impacts of asylum and resettlement processes on their nascent subjectivities. While these sources and my analysis of them are limited and cannot provide direct access to their inner lives, this approach offers a needed extension and correction to state and organizational perspectives that approach adolescent asylum seekers from the outside.

The ten adolescents whose stories I highlight come from very diverse backgrounds; their ethnicities, races, the political turmoil that forces their exile, transitory states and camps, even cities of resettlement in Canada are very different. Despite the numerous challenges this raises, these young people have comparable elements in their coming of age narratives. In the following paragraphs, I provide brief biographical accounts of each refugee's life story.

Biographies

Carmen Aguirre

In the mid-1970s, 7,000 Chilean refugees came to Canada after the military coup and overthrow of Salvador Allende's democratically elected government. *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter* is a memoir outlining Carmen Aguirre's story from age 11 to 21. She is born in Santiago, to socialist activist-teacher parents. Carmen's family is accepted as refugees in 1973, and they settle in Vancouver. They do not remain in Canada for very long. Even though Carmen's family enters Canada legally and enjoys the benefits of citizenship, her mother insists that her daughters travel to Chile's neighbouring states in order to assist attempts to bring social democracy to the region. Her mother chooses to participate in the "Return Plan," an attempt at revolution in Chile. Carmen and her sister Ale join their mother on the trip back to

their native land. The family participates, supports, and strategizes with other revolutionaries to dismantle Pinochet's dictatorship.

Carmen spends the next decade of her life crisscrossing South America. She chronicles political, economic, and social issues in all the places she travels – Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, and Peru. Carmen's participation in the struggle gains her the status of "revolutionary daughter." She dispels romanticized notions of what it means to be part of a movement. She writes extensively on moments when she experienced extreme fear, anxiety, and alienation and found herself in life-threatening circumstances. Carmen returns to Canada and pursues a career in acting and screen writing. *Something Fierce* received several nods from critics, including winning the CBC Canada Reads Award in 2012, and has been a #1 national bestseller.

Nahlah Ayed

A Thousand Farewells: A Reporter's Journey from Refugee Camps to the Arab Spring by Nahlah Ayed is a journalistic memoir examining the author's experiences in the Middle East. In the beginning third of the memoir, Nahlah re-examines her family's sudden move from her Winnipeg home to Amman, Jordan, when she was six years old. She describes the experience of living amongst other Palestinian refugees. After seven long years away, Nahlah returns to Canada and faces the challenges of adolescence while readjusting to customs in the Canadian west. Although Nahlah is legally a Canadian citizen, when she comes back to Winnipeg she is seen and treated like any refugee child trying to belong. She has a great deal of academic accolades, including a degree in genetics and two master's degrees (in journalism and interdisciplinary studies). The remaining two thirds of the memoir offer intense recollections of her journalistic coverage of conflict zones across the Middle East as an adult. Nahlah's journalism and memoir have also earned her various award nominations.

Nguyen An Tinh

Ru by Kim Thúy is a collection of stories about Nguyen An Tinh, one of the thousands of Vietnamese “Boat People” who came to Canada after escaping war in her ancestral land. Thúy was born in Saigon. Her poetic autobiography describes a risky escape plan, a treacherous boat expedition across the South China Sea, and living in an inhospitable refugee camp in Malaysia. *Ru* is shelved under “fiction” in most libraries and bookstores. Thúy chooses to create distance from her personal story by giving the protagonist a different name, Nguyen, which I use when discussing her stories. She narrates the memories in a poetic style, and her stories flow back and forth between past, present, and future in a non-chronological manner. She speaks candidly about her personal life and the experiences and people that most informed her identity. *Ru* tells stories of the young refugee’s pressures to conform during childhood in Vietnam, strong family influence, and the lasting impact of Canadian teachers. Thúy is a trained lawyer and a restaurateur. The memoir has received great critical acclaim, including the Governor General’s Literary Award.

Ayanda Dube

Ayanda Dube arrived at the Montréal airport from his native Zimbabwe as an “unaccompanied minor.” In his vlog, he speaks frankly about his initial settlement experiences, particularly at a residence for refugees run by the YMCA. He is a key organizer, social educator, and participant in the *Mapping Memories* project at Concordia University. Ayanda is a political science and economics graduate from the same university.

Stephanie Gasana

Stephanie learned about her family’s refugee experience after a provocation by her teacher in middle school. She lacked any knowledge pertaining to her native Rwanda and the genocide there until that pivotal question period. She interviews different members of her family and pieces together her narrative in her vlog. She describes her sister Solange as the most

influential person in her life and someone who experiences refugee-ness very differently from her. Stephanie is not only a participant, but also part of the recording and videography group in the *Mapping Memories* study. She is a Concordia University Communication Studies alumna.

Deeqa Ibrahim aka Empress Deeqa

Deeqa was born in Mogadishu, Somalia. At the age of four, her mother enrolled her in a children's choir that traveled for performances. During one weeklong excursion, the civil war in Somalia broke out. Deeqa, unable to return home due to a roadblock, was forced to flee to Kenya with the choir. She resettled in Saskatoon after living in a refugee camp for some time. In her vlog she explains her adolescent years learning English and what inspired her to successfully complete a degree in education. Recently her family in Somalia saw a video of her performance at Montréal's Nuit Afrique festival on YouTube. She reconnected with her biological family after 20 years!

Meryem Saci

Meryem Saci came to Canada from Algeria as a refugee at age 13. She and her mother escaped the civil war in their native land, forged papers to go to France, and eventually landed in Canada. In her vlog, she speaks about the hardships of being a refugee, financially struggling and finding her identity. She makes music that is firmly rooted in North America – hip-hop, soul, R&B – but she fuses it with African rhythms and sounds. She has a degree in commerce, a license in real estate, and a bachelor's degree in political science.

Vox Sambou

Born Robins Paul, Vox was raised in Limbe, a town in Northern Haiti. Vox left his native country in the early 1990s, when Haiti was going through intense political turmoil. At 19, he moved to Winnipeg to be with his older brother. He studied in Winnipeg before moving to

Ottawa to attend law school. Eventually he settled in Montréal and created the hip-hop group Nomadic Massive. He uses his music as a vehicle for self-expression and to build social and political awareness. His vlog showcases the Côte-des-Neiges Centre, a place he cofounded, where youth come to use the arts as a way to (re)present and connect to the various facets of their identities and narratives.

Leontine Uwababyeyi

Leontine is originally from Rwanda. She is the sole survivor of the genocide from her family unit. She came to Montréal as a refugee and created a strong family network with other genocide victims. Through her participation in the *Mapping Memories* project, Leontine shares her tragic experiences in a variety of settings, including various public forums like school assemblies, bus tours of Montréal, and news broadcasts. The process gives her self-esteem a boost and develops her communication skills. She now holds a degree in psychology from the Concordia University.

Sundus Abdul Hadi

Sundus Abdul Hadi was born in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Iraqi parents. In her vlog, she does not identify as a refugee, but rather as an immigrant who lives in Montréal. Sundus considers herself very privileged because she had a happy childhood in the UAE and a very strong family unit. In her *Mapping Memories* vlog she explains moving to Quebec was meant to solidify a better future. Her family escaped the dictatorship and the subsequent wars of Saddam Hussein. After the American invasion and occupation of Iraq (2004-9), Sundus travelled to Iraq and took photographs documenting the carnage of that war. In April 2010, Sundus exhibited her multimedia series “Warchestra” in Toronto and has since shown it in urban hubs internationally.

Yassin Alsalman aka The Narcicyst

Yassin Alsalman was born to Iraqi parents in the UAE. His parents left Iraq due to the political turmoil caused by Saddam Hussein's dictatorial rule. Since the age of five, Yassin zigzagged to and from Canada and the Middle East. He received a BA from Concordia University in Political Science and Communication. During this period, he took to the stage as an MC and rapper, using his stage name "The Narcicyst." Through music and hip-hop, he voices the complexities of the immigrant experience, particularly the challenges Canadian-Arab Muslims face. He provides commentary on how he fuses the different parts of his identity in the *Mapping Memories* vlog.

The next three chapters provide psychoanalytic and postcolonial analyses of these memoirs and vlogs. As the overall biographies are not repeated in those chapters, it may be beneficial to refer back to these summaries of the adolescent refugee life stories.

Conclusion

There are many reasons to blend postcolonial and psychoanalytic theories and methods to study adolescent refugee subjectivity and narratives. In combination, these theories tackle the individual psychic and social contexts that influence the process of identity creation. They demand voicing life stories and ask for non-refugees to bear witness, while lending a compassionate ear and a helping hand to a disenfranchised population. Using postcolonial and psychoanalytic approaches in this dissertation provides space for potential challenges to and perhaps disruption of long-held beliefs, stigma, and dominant conceptualizations of who and how the adolescent refugee subjectivity comes to be. These theoretical approaches together provide an angle on the adolescent refugee subjectivity which neither framework directly nor completely develops. This analytical methodology is appropriate to bear witness to the complexities of the adolescent refugee's subjectivity, trauma, and resilience, in order to draw out paradoxes and locate where hyphenation occurs.

Chapter 3: Birthing Refugee Subjectivity

(Grand-) parents overcame colonial wars and massive political and military disruptions in the global south. My research findings show how much children in conflict zones know about the historical context of the wars that lead to their exile. In addition, I explore how oral family narratives provide knowledge about maneuvering through conflicts, physically and emotionally. This chapter focuses on the importance of remembering the native land in a positive light and the subject's use of it as a place of reference. Here, nostalgia becomes a form of working through and making meaning from exposure to the generational or secondary trauma that adolescent refugees inherit. The fantasy of a native land, sometimes even utopian, is employed as a defense mechanism that enables the refugee to maintain emotional homeostasis.

Delinking Empire

Modern migration is determined by states' policies and capital flow. Superpowers or old colonial powers established the origin of nations and economic structures. Their legacies continue to haunt the realities of current postcolonial states and populations. Designating people with "refugee" status in post-WWII Europe was a humanitarian response to statelessness and a lack of political protection for displaced people on the continent. The term was already in circulation in the 1920s at the League of Nations. The fight for political and economic freedom from empires during the same era did not afford most in the global south the same provisions until the 1967 protocol. By that time, the mass exodus of civilian populations had become extraordinary. Studies indicate "colonial expansion and imperial histories have forged a geography of migration whose effects continue, while modern capitalism has been structurally linked with labour mobility and faced with the problem of its control since its inception" (Casas-Cortes et al. 2014, 7). My argument stems from the presumption that if one generation has dealt

with conflict and civil unrest, then they must have learned survival and resiliency tactics that will assist current populations dealing with contemporary wars.

The last majority identified refugees fled conflict often caused by unresolved issues linked to past colonial territorial land claims (e.g., Palestine-Israel, Iraq-Iran-Kuwait), ethnic hierarchies (e.g., Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Rwanda), or usurping populist governments (e.g., the CIA's Guatemala operation). Massive trauma becomes part of the identity and life stories of such war survivors. Volkan, Ast, and Greer (2002) argue that members of victim communities must resolve the harmful and negative psychological manifestations of political unrest. Thousands or even millions of victims "deposit" their traumatized images into their children through emotionally charged narratives (p. 36).

Sometimes adult family members or shared heritage from the native land informs youngsters about the political circumstances that led to their exile, homelessness, and how they defined themselves as a people. Carmen's memoir is unique in that it provides a critical postcolonial, anti-imperialist, Marxist interpretation of the social and political events taking place in Latin America. She elaborates on the direct relationship between the colonial past and contemporary experiences of disillusionment and civil unrest in that region. For instance, she examines the way Bolivia became landlocked due to "The war, fought for five years over who would control the mineral rich Atacama Desert, [which] had been started by the British as part of their divide-and-conquer tactics in South America" (Aguirre, 2012, p. 41). Carmen not only understands the political situations of the past, but also traces the impact of these historical and international events on the lives and bodies of other South Americans.

Many unfortunate living conditions were created as Bolivia's natural resources were handed to multinational corporations to pay off its credit to the WB (Aguirre, 2012, p. 37). For example, she describes the way young women toil as maids in return for room and board, often discarded like trash when impregnated by males of the house or the shoeshine boys who hitch a ride on the back of buses without paying the fare, and cannot attend school

regularly because they are accountable for making ends meet (pp. 37–39). When the majority of people chose a coalition of left-wing parties through an electoral process, an American-trained military general usurped the highest civil office in Bolivia. Carmen remembers of 1979 that “Bolivia was a powder keg, my mother said, and nobody knew what was going to happen” (p. 37). Whenever there was some unknown at the macro-level political arena, Carmen says, “Bob [her stepfather] and my mother filled us in on the details” (p. 36). Her mother was the most influential in developing her children’s critical thoughts through discussions and travel.

Bolivia was not alone, as several South American governments shared similar relationships with the United States and international actors like the WB and the IMF (Aguirre, 2012, pp. 14, 23, 32, 36). Conflict, civil unrest, and anger towards state corruption and austerity measures adopted by various dictators in the Latin states show that political leaders worked more for the interest of larger imperial bodies than their own citizens. Reading Carmen’s life story one learns that the colonial interference in Latin America is profound and ongoing. The majority of what she knows regarding the inequalities in the region came from her grandmother, uncle, aunt, and parents through one-on-one conversations and the books they give her.

She also observes realities across the South America in her travels to various countries. It is clear that Carmen is most critical of the Pinochet dictatorship, in her native Chile. This sentiment is predominantly due to her family’s affiliations to the resistance, which is rooted in anti-capitalist, left wing politics. She learns the disastrous effects of this dictator’s implementation of laissez-faire economics. She comes to understand policies and practices derived from the Chicago Boys and Milton Friedman’s theories. Here is her summary of the devastating outcomes:

The social cost is huge and the model runs entirely on giant amounts of credit doled out by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. That has raised Chile’s foreign debt to exorbitant heights while multinationals are making a killing, answering to no one. Pinochet and his cronies hold the country in a perpetual state of martial law while pocketing millions in dollars of funds and

building a \$12 million bunker for themselves in case the Russians drop the bomb. The unlimited amount of credit that suddenly became available has driven thousands of Chileans into bankruptcy (Aguirre, 2012, pp. 111–12).

Carmen learns this information during “revolutionary” classes with her family members, who lead discussions throughout her childhood and early teens. Her writing demonstrates that she recognized the catastrophic effects of a military dictatorship in her native Chile at a very young age. Her family wants her to be more aware of the issues that challenge her native state and they inform her critical outlook on global politics as well as her positionality.

Like Carmen, anti-imperialist intervention impacts Nguyen’s family. Nguyen provides details regarding Vietnam’s history of colonial invasion by the French, Soviet, and American governments. For example, she writes,

Before the French left Vietnam, before the Americans arrived, the Vietnamese countryside was terrorized by different factions of thugs introduced there by the French authorities to divide the country. It was common practice to sell wealthy families a nail to pay the ransom of someone who’d been kidnapped. If the nail wasn’t bought, it was hammered into the earlobe or elsewhere on the kidnap victim. My grandfather’s nail was bought by his family. (Thúy, 2009, p. 64)

This story provides the reader with some context regarding the French colonial impact on Vietnam. Citizens felt “terrorized” due to ongoing lack of personal safety and security (Thúy, 2009, p. 64). Nguyen’s paternal family has no alternative but to pay for her grandfather’s life. The event leads to the displacement and separation of the entire family. This all occurs prior to the American-Soviet intervention that Nguyen herself faces as a child.

Native populations under colonial rule become desperate and the implications of insecurity caused by such conditions play out on the bodies of civilians like Nguyen’s grandfather. After her grandfather’s release, he made sure all his children went abroad to study. Many of Nguyen’s paternal aunts and uncles remained in those distant lands permanently. Through these family narratives, Nguyen, like Carmen, learns about colonial methods of disuniting families and peoples.

Nguyen expresses some comprehension of imperialists' competing interests over Vietnam. This is also predominantly due to her family's political connections and service. She explains that her oldest maternal uncle was a Member of Parliament and leader of the opposition. "He belonged to a political party made up of young intellectuals who situated themselves in a third camp, daring to stand between the two lines of fire" (Thúy, 2009, p. 46). This third party tried to appease the anger and turmoil of young idealists who did not necessarily side with Vietnam's ruling elite or with the emerging communist party. Immediately after the Second World War, many postcolonial populations in the global south struggled not to align themselves with any one superpower. Young intellectuals tried to reconcile opposing parties and ethnic groups that had larger colonial loyalties. Nguyen describes her uncle as "A charismatic happy-go-lucky young man [who] had taken down the frontier between the Chinese and Vietnamese families" (p. 46). Her uncle and his associates were able to bridge some of the political polarity between the ethnic factions in the native land. As a child, Nguyen sees her uncles' efforts and understands that there were ethnic divides in Vietnam. She understood that peoples' identity markers splintered national interests and methods of achieving a sense of unity. Nguyen, like Carmen, learns about the political situation of the ancestral region and the influence of international actors from her family's strong political perspectives and involvement.

Nahlah outlines colonial history of Palestinian lands, rooted in the British occupation of Arab territories, and how this political situation directly led to generations experiencing homelessness, displacement, disappearance, loss, and refugee-ness. For example, she writes about her paternal grandfather "Abdullah's family settled in Annabah, a tiny farming community, just west of modern-day Tel Aviv ... Annabah's families had Jewish neighbours with whom they got along. Then war came and everything changed" (Ayed, 2013, p. 14). Nahlah generally avoids naming the specific politicians and leaders whose actions caused generations of people to lose lives, homes, and any sense of security in Palestine. Recall that trauma resists thought and language and is understood through the unsaid (Georgis, 2006). Nahlah's not naming the

stakeholders may indicate that there is unworked trauma that will likely take longer to address in her literary journey. Others might argue that there are ongoing political tensions around Palestine. Speaking about colonial power relations beyond the atrocities of the British and French could hinder Nahlah's movement and credibility as a journalist, rendering her work biased.

Nahlah's positionality brings to mind Hamburger's (2018) argument that generations to come must deal with the unresolved socio-political tensions of their parent's and grandparent's eras. I take narratives of war as mechanisms that link older and younger generations in the postcolonial south. The older generations have not come to terms with the cause of their suffering and harm and they continue to live in despair. They task their offspring with reversing the humiliation they feel, taking revenge, or doing the work of mourning (Hamburger, 2018, p. 10). Bigger problems arise from each member of the population associating with one group or another – perpetrator or victim. Hamburger emphasizes, "Societies do not choose to be devastated; they unconsciously 'choose' to make historical events significant as large-group identity markers" (p. 12). Appropriately grieving here means giving a different meaning to the past events in order to reach a healthier societal consciousness regarding the initial injustice and healing a divided people. Asylum seekers inherit unresolved problems of colonial interference and usually do not have agreeable methods for reconciling generational and social trauma. The responsibility to mourn the ancestors' loss and soothe the schisms of society impacts the subjectivity of young refugees.

Nahlah explains that storytelling is an important part of transmission of knowledge, especially from the older generation to the children. In Palestine, children experience cruel political conflict firsthand in addition to realizing they share comparable tragedies with parents and grandparents. Nahlah writes, "No child grew up in Al-Wihdat [a Palestinian refugee camp in Amman] without knowing their family history, the name of their ancestral village, and how and why the family left" (Ayed, 2013, p. 31). Admittedly, "The culture, the very air, was one of

remembrance: at weddings, at funerals, especially in the graffiti that often adorned the camp's concrete walls" (p. 31). Memorializing the past, survivors and those who have passed on, is a shared narrative that is symbolically showcased on all kinds of mediums. Nahlah's reflection of her childhood was that "Someone, somewhere in our circle, was mourning" (p. 41). It is clear that sadness and grief are a constant in Nahlah's and other Palestinian children's lives as much as they were for her parents and grandparents: "Memories, good and bad, were passed on to children like family heirlooms. So was melancholy" (p. 41). At a very young age, Nahlah realizes the relevance of generations of victimhood to the lives and stories of her relatives. She carefully and intricately outlines how both her mother and father's families came to be internally displaced and suffer due to various Zionist and Arab conflicts. Nahlah's autobiography describes Palestinians identified with and by the tragedy and grief of homelessness and desperation caused from several generations experiencing war.

Nahlah, Carmen, and Nguyen have adult family members who inform them of the wars in their native lands. They also learn that the wars that caused their personal exodus are not new, but are a continuation of the past generations' struggle with political and military interference. One of the strengths of reading the memoirs is that they detail the impact of foreign intervention on the respective author's families. The vlogs do not provide a lot of information on transmission of intergenerational knowledge or trauma. Was the demand for freedom from oppression, recognition of past atrocities, and a return to humanity also an inherited responsibility of each generation in the way melancholy passed down? The next section will attempt to address how child asylum seekers learn resistance and resilience through narratives of parents' and grandparents' life stories.

Overcoming Crippling Estrangement

The historical context of colonial wars spanning generations means that there are epistemologies of dealing with war, surviving and learning to cope with its disastrous

implications. In young refugees' intergenerational dialogue about past atrocities, a return of the repressed occurs. Dina Georgis and R.M. Kennedy (2009) explore new opportunity for new interpretation and learning, because the "past opens to reveal its darkness and then covers it over again with new translations" (p. 26). The memoirs provide details regarding how parents and grandparents deal with and respond to violent conflicts. Each retelling provides emphases on aspects relevant to that generation's experience of "darkness." If older generations are discussing the history of elements lost, they are simultaneously accounting the re-creation of life, voice and home through methods of resistance and narratives of survival. Epistemologies for dealing with and overcoming trauma also tell us how children caught in war and displacement postulate some practical ways of working through devastation and shock.

Deracinated by Degrees

One method of dealing with political instability and insecurity caused by living in colonial conditions is simply to leave the location under threat. For example, Nguyen's grandfather "sent his children to urban centers to live with cousins, thereby ensuring their safety and their access to education" (Thúy, 2009, p. 64). Her father's ten siblings ended up eventually living in ten different international cities (p. 66). The patriarch was unable to assure any peace for himself, so he did what was necessary to ensure the security of his children by making them leave the family home. He encouraged them to further secure their personal futures through higher education, away from Vietnam. This also demonstrates that Nguyen's family accepts uprooting and losing their 'home' as a means to avoid any further direct infliction of terror on the family.

Nguyen's father internalizes his separation from his father and siblings as not only necessary for survival but more deeply as a way of accepting the immediate present. Nguyen's father models for his progeny how to live without attachments to the past and how this strategy aids in dealing with loss. Nguyen elaborates, "Very early, my father learned how to live far away from his parents, to leave places, to love the present tense, to let go of any attachments of the

past” (Thúy, 2009, p. 64). Nguyen actually adopts her father’s desire to live for the moment and to prevent the past from influencing her current conditions. She expresses her deep desire to live life to the fullest, with all its pleasures (p. 59). Detachment from the cruelty of an acknowledged past sets into motion tolerance for change and better adjustment to new conditions.

Nahlah also provides details on the aftermath of territorial conflict in Palestine, particularly the impact on her immediate family. Her grandparents’ reaction to political and social unrest was also further displacement – “With two cows and few belongings, Abdullah and his family walked away on foot to escape the fighting” (Ayed, 2013, p. 14). His children and grandchildren experience similar escape decades later. They carry the bare minimum, accepting the misfortunes of life and continued losses. Surviving through migration is the only option for many Palestinian refugees. Nahlah continues to tell her grandfather’s story: “They reached what would later be called the West Bank and with some relatives, they moved into a cave on the side of a mountain to wait out the cold and what they still believed was a temporary displacement” (p. 14). Like many refugees, Nahlah’s grandparents believed that their homelessness and despondence were short-term. However, the reality is that such conditions can last decades or even generations. In her own words, “People on both sides of the family grew up on a collective memory of displacement and the sagas of refugeehood” (p. 41). The process develops grit. Living in exile and achieving refugee status defies the death sentence for Palestinians. Sometimes existing is more than just surviving, it is a form of resistance to the oppressive governments that desire the annihilation of these people. Survivors of the colonial wars in the global south pass down their stories of challenges as well as strategies to remain alive. Living in exile and letting past attachments go is the most immediate course of action.

Dreamers' Desires

Sharing fantasies and putting into motion imaginative faculties can avert further melancholic catastrophes or lessen the effects of experienced trauma and loss. Anna Freud (1968) explains that a developing imagination allows the subject to overcome displeasure (p. 81). David Harris (2009) says that created fantasies, “defend the child against serious psychological damage and suggests the value of interventions that emphasize symbolic representations” (p. 101). Flexing the imagination is crucial for healthy mental and emotional development, especially for children of war (Gopnik, 2009; Winnicott, 2005).

Nguyen learns from her family to envision a brighter, bigger, and more successful future. In particular, the ability to dream makes for immense possibilities beyond the immediate circumstances of conflict. Nguyen writes about her mother: “Thanks to the extravagant life she lived, she could dream all the dreams she wanted, especially those she dreamed for us [her children]. She was preparing my brothers and me to become musicians, scientists, politicians, athletes, artists and polyglots, all at the same time” (Thúy, 2009, p. 13). Nguyen attributes her mother’s ability to be future oriented to her upper-class upbringing. Money and status provided her the time to invest in fantasies that she was later able to turn to when in dire circumstances. As Viet Cong military officers confiscated Thúy’s family home during the war, her mother drew on those dreams when she felt excessive anxiety and fear. Fantasizing about a successful future for her family allows Nguyen’s mother to push through her stress-inducing experiences. Nguyen’s mother demonstrates what Erikson theorized as “generativity” by continuing to think about and work towards whatever was necessary for her children to realize the dreams she had for them. She models for Nguyen how to dream; how to safely retreat into an inner world removed from the carnage and sounds of bombs and destruction. Dreaming lends itself to feeling more hopeful and a stronger sense of optimism about the future. Fantasy is an imagined source of protection and strength (A. Freud, 1968; D. Harris, 2009).

Nostalgia

A notable finding from my analysis of the memoirs and vlogs is that young refugees resort to a nostalgic response when discussing the native land. Nostalgia is sometimes a fictive and often intensive interplay of memory, imagination, and emotion. It is the longing for an idealized past. Refugees recall their ancestral homeland in a very positive way. It becomes a utopian point of reference. There was an irreplaceable peace and happiness that they experienced in their childhood and pre-war era. Sigmund Freud (1899) explains this kind of early childhood memory as “the operation of memory and its distortions, the importance and *raison d’être* of phantasies” (p. 301). He goes on to describe nostalgia as, “a number of motives, with no concern for historical accuracy, had a part in forming them [childhood memories], as well as in the selection of the memories themselves” (p. 322). Freud conceptualizes childhood nostalgia as related to the defence mechanism of “screen memories.” Theoretically, the refugees’ recollections of the native land come from falsehoods because the adult mind colours and re-interprets what happened during childhood. These mental misrepresentations of the past can be used and manipulated as the foundation for future behaviours.

I expand this psychoanalytic perspective to consider nostalgia as a way of working through experiences of war trauma and loss. If one considers that nostalgia is a method of playing with memory of the past while being in the present, then this kind of return to the past requires self-reflection. In this critical reworking of difficult episodes, remembrance takes on new significance. Contrary to the explanation that such memories are complete fabrications of an imagined past, I consider the qualitative elements as unquestionably present. Nostalgia considered as a return, a repeat of the past, and a fantastic narrative could become a resource not only for political imagination but also healing. The young refugees work through the loss of home, heritage and familiarity through this positive recollection. The native land becomes a

point of reference for having consistency and a strong sense of belonging and association that they later negotiate in the process of subjectivity.

Part of nostalgia is reworking memories by giving them new meaning. This sort of storytelling, according to Georgis (2006), “provides us with the meaning necessary to live with loss” (p. 168). I agree with her that narratives about difficult life circumstances make for resilient outcomes. In her words, “how the stories we construct to survive are the provisions we need in order to go on living” (p. 166). The asylum seeker needs the nostalgic narrative for his/her survival especially when experienced during childhood. The autobiographical accounts connect us to “unthought spaces, to spaces that thought refuses” (p. 166). The initiation of contemporary war destroys the ancestral homeland, which will never be the same again. However, the native cannot stray from the childhood fantasy of the joy, beauty, and peace attributed to the native land. Holding onto a positive past, resists modern renditions of such places and homelands.

In Deeqa’s case, her description of her native Somalia is almost equivalent to a paradise on earth. Watching her vlog, we see her bright eyes, lit face, and huge grin when she says there “was sunshine every day, beautiful beaches and shells. I used to collect little shells when I was little. And the water is so blue, that you could drop little coins and then go and find the little coins from in the water” (Ibrahim 2014). She acts out how she looked for shells and into the clear water. She admits, “I remember only good things about Mogadishu.” This description of a utopian Somalia counters the images of hunger, destruction, and the devastation of war that grace television screens worldwide and come up as connotations when mentioning the country’s name. The geographical conditions Deeqa candidly describes forces the viewer to witness the pre-war beauty of that nation-state.

Boym (2001) takes the concept of nostalgia a step further by suggesting that because nostalgia formulates within history, it counters positivist, linear narratives. Remembering the native land can cross the temporalities of the past and present and even at times extend to the future. In such a manner, nostalgia can be a rethinking of personal history while looking to

recreate it in the future. It infuses the adolescent refugee with an unwavering sense of optimism and love for the native land. The imaginary native home is beautiful, peaceful, and stable. Such thoughts become a counter-hegemonic, anti-colonial practice of resistance.

Deeqa's fantasies extend beyond the borders of her native land to the continent. She goes on to say, "I will say I am a girl who loves Africa. It's like my lover. I love my continent to the bone. That's why every time I heard that name, I work 20% harder when I hear that [word] Africa" (Ibrahim, 2014). She pulls her hands and arms close to her heart. Her perception of her native land influences the kind of work and art she produces. She confesses, "I think I performed *Nuit d'Afrique* better than I performed any other festival because they [others] don't have anything to do with my continent." Not only does Deeqa see her past in Mogadishu as positive, but also her nostalgia motivates her feelings and work ethic in future decision making, pushing her forward in her personal and professional life. Nostalgia gives Deeqa purpose and a deep-seated desire to give back to the African communities she identifies with.

Postcolonial writers like Said (2000) express the healing nature of nostalgia. He states, "While it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement" (p. 137). Asylum seekers are ultimately looking to "lend dignity to a condition legislated to deny dignity – to deny an identity to people" (p. 139). While appearing to be full of fantasy or adventure, the life stories these refugees tell us are narratives that help them overcome feelings of alienation and cope with the inhumane treatment and trauma they encounter at many other stages of their refugee experience. As such, the recollection of native land as once utopian, for people like Deeqa, is a means of making meaning from cataclysmic events that rupture their deep sense of rootedness and sense of self.

Meryem is another vlogger and artist who definitely misses the communal nature of her native Algeria. She says, "We were just pretty much growing up in pretty much a humble way. You know what I mean? You don't have much, you know? And what you have, you had to

appreciate it” (Saci, 2014). Larger groups of people like extended family, friends, and neighbours shared small portions of food. Meryem describes the ways in which families demonstrated kindness with one another as “very beautiful, like the country.” The caring nature of her humble beginnings gives Meryem pride. She describes her oncoming in Algeria as having humility and humanity.

It is interesting that throughout her recollection, the phrase “You know” repeats more than any other in her vlog. Meryem is asking the viewer to know while understanding full well that we do not know. She is informing us. She is attempting to draw a mental link and association of her life story with the viewer. This compulsive repeating “you know?” indicates working through the loss of homeland (S. Freud, 1914/2006). By psychoanalytically analysing Meryem’s speaking, the viewer sees the variety of ways she performs her story (through storytelling in the vlog or through song in her performances). Meryem recalls a past with new meanings and this helps heal the pain of the loss she experienced as a child.

However, Meryem’s recollection is critical and not simply utopian. She addresses the economic disparity of her native country and in doing so is creating a more realistic image of her native land. She confesses “So I guess poverty didn’t hit me until I started seeing the richer neighborhoods of my country and then I was like ok, yea, we don’t have it that good. But it definitely was a beautiful place” (Saci, 2014). In this quote we witness the intellectualization of the childhood fantasy. Yearning for an idealized emotional state has not made her blind to the inequities that exist in Algeria. She capably returns to the native land in her imagination, open-eyed. She is working through her past and making new connections to the circumstances she lived in. She engages with her memories joyfully. Meryem’s nostalgia does not seem to have the same yearning for an idealized past or association that Deeqa’s story had. Mourning appears to have gone a step further for Meryem, whose memories are more reflexive and critical, and is a learning from the return to better understand Algeria. A realistic look back allows the native land to be more of a place of beginnings than a source of melancholia.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the ways in which adolescent refugees understand their native land in the pre-war era and how, with nostalgia for home, they work through the loss of it. Canadian refugee life stories provide a site to explore the ramifications of colonial violence, as evident in the political and economic turmoil leading up to contemporary wars inherited by this younger generation. Children and grandchildren are heirs to epistemologies of past conflict, tales and ways of working through the symptoms of trauma from oral narratives shared by adult family members. Inherited knowledge becomes integral to what later generations do, how they perceive themselves, and sometimes the futures they create in their communities. Some of the information they acquire includes visualizing a future beyond their immediate insecurities and learning to detach from the past and the losses it carries. The use of psychic defense mechanisms, nostalgia, and intellectualization prove relevant for resilience, as young asylum seekers are making meaning from beautiful stories of past geographies and family histories in tandem.

Chapter 4: War

War can have an insurmountable influence on the developing psyche, sense of self, belonging, and self-other relations, as well as weigh on one's view of the world. My focus in this chapter is on the impact of military force, political strife, and gross violence on the young refugees' description of war. I explore how the refugee learns and makes meaning from these events in order to work through losses, shock and pain. There is a deep-rooted connection between mass conflict and subjectivity, since it is actually identity markers (race, sex, gender, political views, religion, etc.) that marginalize and make certain populations targets. Minority identity is part of the definition of "refugee" according to international laws (UNHCR 1951/1967). I argue that these school aged children's experience of exclusion in their native lands leads to the initiation of an inferiority complex.

... in the Streets

The first stage of war trauma begins with political instability within the native country, with fear of an impending war (MacDonnell et al., 2012). Many of the refugee stories start with the sounds of onslaught. Nguyen, for example comes "into the world during the Tet Offensive... when the long chains of firecrackers draped in front of the house exploded polyphonically along the sound of machine guns" (Thúy, 2009, p. 1). Her poetic rendition and juxtaposition of the ugliness of war with the celebration of her birth tells us that beginnings can be joyous as much as they are terrifying. She writes,

I first saw the light of day in Saigon, where firecrackers, fragmented into a thousand shreds, coloured the ground red like the petals of cherry blossoms or like the blood of the two million soldiers deployed and scattered throughout the villages and cities in Vietnam that had been ripped in two. (Thúy, 2009, p 1)

This return to the beginning of life is also a reiteration of the atrocities of the Vietnam War expressed in metaphors. The image describes weapons, and their use for taking life and

dividing a nation. More significantly, it attests to the trauma of war: vivid yet fragmented memories expressed through figurative language.

Nguyen makes meaning from the death caused by war. As she explains, “The purpose of my birth was to replace lives that had been lost” (Thúy, 2009, p. 1). Nguyen describes her birth as a paradox of rejoicing through the pain of so much bloodshed. Although there is death and destruction surrounding Nguyen from the time she is born, procreation and celebration strongly demonstrate the life instinct and offer a positive interpretation of the devastating facts of war. Her grandparents survived the French colonial-sponsored thugs, and her parents’ generation healed enough only to split along communist and American interests. To counter death’s bloodshed, there is the new blood of birthing – Nguyen’s nascence. Generations in Vietnam, like many other developing nations, take (new) approaches to resolve issues the previous generation struggled with. Resilience during misfortune and melancholy means seeing the beauty of the world in expressions of renewal – like the oxymoronic description of cherry blossom petals.

Like Nguyen, Leontine witnesses the horrors of civil war in her native Rwanda. Leontine’s childhood episode begins with her excited about the hustle and bustle of a gathering of neighbours at her home. Her house’s destroyed doors and windows indicate that the family is a target, but as a child she seems none the wiser. The gathering receives a terrifying warning from a “mad” woman screaming, “they’re coming!” and people running away hysterically (Uwababyeyi, 2014). Her father insists the children run and hide. When the little girl and her brother return the following day, they find an empty house and remain awake all night. There is an eerie pause in Leontine’s recollection. Then she briefly describes the third day that changed her life, April 11, 1994, when a passerby told her and her brother that their mother was no longer alive. After this, Leontine describes taking refuge with her older brother in a banana plantation for three months. She describes, “This bush is our bed, our salon, our toilet, it is

everything.” The impact of the three days and three months on her developing psyche is immense.

It seems like the eight-year-old lacks any comprehension regarding the ethnic cleansing. Leontine as a little girl asks why she and her family are the target of the killers. She elaborates:

I ask my brother “Why are we here?”
He tells me “because we are Tutsi”.
I ask him “why are we Tutsi?”
I ask him, “Why can’t we go home?”
“Our home is demolished,” he answered.
“Why can’t we go to our neighbors?”
Sometimes he has no answers.
I have so many questions. (Uwababyeyi 2014)

It is obvious that even Leontine’s brother does not completely understand or cannot articulate the irrationality of the violence his family is facing and the real-time trauma they are experiencing. Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham (1943/1973), analyzing children’s behaviour and mental state during the Second World War, write that “children meet the usual psychological difficulties of grasping the significance of death at such an early age. Their attitude to the happening is completely a matter of emotion” (p. 3). As a young adult, Leontine is still attempting to make sense of a senseless act. Her attitude to the episode continues as a matter of emotion, perhaps due to the unresolved nature of refugee-ness and the hardships of a lonely life since becoming an orphan. The genocide forces children to come to terms with not only death, but the cost of being ethnically different. Leontine and her family cannot escape their tribal affiliation, ultimately many pay with their lives for it. It is inevitable that Leontine’s Tutsi lineage becomes an integral part of her identity.

Leontine was too young at the time of the genocide to understand the societal structure of her native land and its psychological control mechanisms. Rwanda’s political drama sustained itself through ethnic lines: Hutu and Tutsi. Since the days of European colonization, Rwanda’s state operated by holding the Hutu to a higher esteem because of their “native” status (Mamdani, 2002). As Fanon (1952/2008) theorizes, an “inferiority complex is possible in a

society that draws its strength by maintaining this complex ... a society that proclaims the superiority of one race over another" (p. 80). The genocide in Rwanda had a profound impact on the subjectivity of children like Leontine. These survivors experience collective trauma when shock and pain include and extend beyond the corporal threat. Through the lens of hate, victimization, and dehumanization, Leontine comes to learn and recognize her positionality in Rwanda. Ethnicity is a distinctive marker of Leontine's subjectivity, even if during her childhood she does not understand the distinction. Rwandan state encouraged an inferiority complex milieu over their citizens, and the most horrifying manifestation of that collective mental state became a reality during the genocide of the Tutsis.

Leontine recounts the deadly consequences of being a member of the victim group. The plantation where Leontine and her brother find refuge becomes unsafe: "One day the owner of the plantation comes and tells us that now the killers are hunting with dogs, that it's better to go away" (Uwababyeyi, 2014). So, the siblings attempt to leave several times over the next few nights, until eventually they meet "a man with a ball of blood and a knife in his hand. He sees us and screams out to the others. They have knives. They chase us. I fell down." Leontine speaks slowly and clearly with short simple sentences. She pauses after each period. It gives us time to fully picture her words in our minds. Captured by her voice and only seeing her face in the vlog, the audience bears witness to the horrors of her recollection. Perpetrators use everyday objects like knives or machetes that make imagining the cruel act vivid and very real.

There are important details missing from the account, breaks in the story, and scant details. In the follow-up part of her vlog, Leontine admits, "When this happened, I was so confused by the bad things that I saw and I couldn't tell what happened" (Uwababyeyi, 2014). Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham (1943/1973) bring our attention to the different way that the "talking cure" occurs for children based on her observations at the wartime nurseries. They write, "speech does not serve as an outlet for the emotion which is attached to the happening... The child begins to talk about the incident when the feelings which were aroused by it have

been dealt with in some other manner” (p. 17). Leontine articulates incredibly horrific memories about her childhood in the *Mapping Memories* vlog after she reviewed her thoughts and words with many others, including the Concordia research team. She explains, “It takes time. It took me fifteen years to share my story” (Uwababyeyi, 2014).

Giving language to a life catastrophe of this magnitude creates moments of holding breath, stopping to find words, and silences in the telling of gut-wrenching narratives of multiple losses. Leontine’s story abruptly ends with “They chase my brother and three weeks later, he is gone also” (Uwababyeyi, 2014). The unimaginable becomes imagined. The gap in the story makes us wonder what happened in the three weeks between her brother’s capture and death. What caused him to die? The listener attempts to fill in the blanks. Knowing previous days’ accounts leaves us petrified by the possibilities. As viewers we become emotionally engaged witnesses.

Like Leontine, Meryem also experiences civil war in her native Algeria. Both young women verbalize the experiences of their lives in disarray, a non-chronological order of events. Meryem’s tone is more sarcastic and filled with aggression compared to Leontine’s sombre recollection. She describes the armed conflict in Algeria: “Bombs were exploding all over the place, people were getting kidnapped all over the place. I got to experience a situation when I was 7 or 8 years old, seeing guns very young, hearing bombs very young” (Saci, 2014). Even as a child, she is cognizant of what is happening around her and she understands that she is living through extraordinary circumstances. She says, “You have to be aware of it. People are dying all around you. Bombs exploding around you [rolls eyes] ...No matter what age you are, you have to recognize and notice that something is up.” Meryem is very passionate and animated as she recalls the Algerian civil war. She draws the audience in by saying “you” even though she is the one with the firsthand experience.

Whether a young person is a direct target because of their ethnicity, like Leontine, or an indiscriminate target of bombs like Meryem, these events leave an impression on the

developing psyche and sense of self. War children like Leontine express their confusion because they are still trying to make sense of the events, even over a decade later. Meryem becomes externally angry about the inhumane treatment she observes and receives. An inferiority complex begins to take hold in children's minds when they and their families are dispensable to war machines. These vloggers perhaps have not had as much time as Nguyen had in writing her memoir, which let her look back on the entirety of her life with a wide lens to visualize the beauty alongside the horror.

Carmen's interpretation of the civil unrest in Latin America as an eleven-year-old is consistent with the preceding war children's accounts. Carmen is in Lima for only a few days when suddenly and unexpectedly she experiences "crowds pressed into us full force. Mami, knocked off balance in her platforms, screamed out our names as we slammed against a wall" (Aguirre, 2009, p. 13). Carmen and her sister Ale are separated from their mother, and "There was smoke everywhere, something like acid in my eyes, a cougar in my throat clawing it raw. Explosions, breaking glass, sirens so loud our ears popped and a stampede of feet...liquid poured from our eyes and noses" (p. 13). The protest crowds' faceoff with government forces engulf Carmen and Ale. Carmen says, "I knew I was going to puke any minute... when we stopped, I swallowed the puke that was sitting in my mouth and it burned my insides all the way down" (p. 13). Carmen does not realize the extent of what is happening around her until she is completely away from the crowd: "from the windows we could see hundreds of teenagers, boys and girls both, fighting with the paramilitary, the militarized police force commonly deployed against protesters" (p. 13). Carmen finds the political circumstances and the efforts of other adolescents in the streets of Lima her greatest source of inspiration. The events convince her that she too should stand in solidarity in whatever capacity possible with the young protestors.

The effects of macro-level socio-political conditions greatly influence Carmen's subject formation, especially as she becomes a true believer in the revolutionary cause and active in the left-wing underground resistance movement. The escalating prices of basic supplies and

destructive military rule leave the civilian population with no choice but to protest. Carmen's mother instills in her the revolutionary identity that she herself espouses. On the way to Lima, Carmen finds out to her surprise that her family is already part of the resistance. She soon admits, "I was glad my mother had chosen to take us along, because I wanted to fight for the children, for the people of the world" (Aguirre, 2009, p. 8). However, once Carmen sees the revolutionary teens who "just kept getting up from the ground when they fell, adjusting their bandanas and firing another stone with their slingshots" (p. 14), she loses her self-confidence. She confesses, "I was scared.... I didn't have the balls those teenagers had. I never would" (p. 16). From this moment onward, Carmen describes the constant psychological and physical terror she lives in.

The events, carnage, and weapons of war have implications for the lives and language of children and adolescents to witness and survive them. This population verbalizes trauma with gaps in details, jumps from point to point, metaphors and chilling recollections. Carmen, Leontine, Meryem, and Nguyen reflect on the violent conflicts they lived through as children. War becomes a defining point in how these girls see their lives and subjectivity. Events like those described above make these young survivors realize they are targets of hate and violence, and that there is widespread disregard for humanity. These girls understand the expendability of their lives; they internalize an inferiority complex that causes a loss of self-esteem (Fanon, 1952/2008; S. Freud, 1917/2006). The ill treatment they receive at this stage in their native lands push the girls' mental processes to do whatever possible to avoid neurosis.

... on Family

One of the most demoralising side effects of war is the loss of loved ones, especially family. Depending on what life stages the individual disconnects from his/her family, it can be very devastating to his/her psyche and emotional development. A disruption to the family institution can also affect the manner in which refugee children handle relationships later.

According to both early psychoanalytic texts and later formulations of attachment theory, infants seek a feeling of security and love from their primary caregiver (S. Freud, 1920/1989; Gopnik 2009; Winnicott, 2005).

In the first months of life, the child has a strong affinity not only for the mother, but more specifically for her breast. The strong affective bond continues in early childhood, providing nourishment and a sense of security. The baby develops an expectation about the reliability of caregivers to keep them safe. Giving and removing the breast establishes for the infant a mental representation of self and other based on the mother's responsiveness, sensitivity and abilities. If the guardian is indifferent, harsh, or unpredictable, the infant judges his/her caregivers as insecure, anxious, or disorganized (Benoit, 2004, Gopnik, 2009). The child's initial attachment to her/his mother impacts his/her psychological representations of close relations, especially friendships and romantic partners, during adolescence. Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham (1943/1973) observe of children during war, "If these bombing incidents occur when small children are in the care either of their own mothers or a familiar mother substitute, they do not seem be affected by them" (p. 4). The caregiver can give the child the necessary emotional protection so that "their experience remains an accident, in with other accidents of childhood."

As a child, Deeqa lost all connection with her family while touring with her choir group. She was unable to return to Mogadishu due to roadblocks. When the war broke out in Somalia, she explains, "Nobody from my family looked for me. Nobody knew I was still alive. Nobody in their right mind thought I got away from Africa to go to Canada. Twenty years I've been looking for them. I never give up" (Ibrahim, 2014). The choir leader takes four-year-old Deeqa to Kenya. The child does not know her way back home, and never sees her mother again. She says, "There was sometimes as a little girl, in the back of your head [thinking], ok when am I ever going to find them? I may be a normal person, but my life was not normal." She had no connection with her mother – the primary love object – for two decades. Deeqa admits that she is mentally and emotionally "not normal" because she lost her family as a child. Even though

Deeqa admits there are many who try to make her feel close to them, it was never the same: “But still, there is a big hole, that I needed to refill” (Ibrahim, 2014). Her statement describes what occurs when one loses one’s primary support structure, and the negative impact detachment has on the life of the refugee child.

Losing parents and siblings is very common in war. Not only is the institution of the family compromised, but also the psychic reference point to the original loved object disconnects instantly. For many children experiencing war, “home” is where their parents are and the safe place to return (Freud & Burlingham, 1943, p. 5), but for refugees who lose their entire families, like Deeqa and Leontine, the lingering sense of emptiness is never completely “filled.” Leontine admits, “It’s difficult to be alone and know that no one else has the same blood as you” (Mapping Memories, 2014a). The absence and disconnection of their parents and relatives make refugee youth feel an unbearable amount of pain that is challenging to mourn. One goal of adolescent development is to transform the polymorphously perverse child into an adult with a stable sexual identity outside the parent (S. Freud, 1905/1989; Kristeva, 2007; Winnicott, 2005). However, losing parents in the pre-pubescent phase forces the child to look for that loved object replacement earlier, with less security and guidance. These young war survivors become more self-reliant and responsible, depending more on the good will of others. Their psyche adjusts to the increased independence at very early and vulnerable stages of life.

... on Dress

Anticolonial wars and their successful outcomes in creating new political governments have caused ruling elites to impose particular dress codes as a counter-hegemonic response to imperial symbolism, colonization, westernization, or even modernity. The politics of aesthetics mirrors the power structures and spatial order of a local culture and how it is performed on the body of its citizens. Such strategies lead young people to social isolation or internal conflict, because they feel out of place and restricted to how they express themselves. My observation

from reading the memoirs and watching the vlogs is that the war on dress is predominantly on the female body and her choice of aesthetics.

Young people experiment with the way they modify, dress, undress, and adorn their bodies. In most cases they “treat or read appearance as the very substance of identity” (Weber & Mitchell, 2008, p. 42). For the young Nguyen, political representation through clothing during wartime and after in Vietnam is profoundly influential as it is a vehicle for her feeling left out. She says, “I had made that symbol [red scarf with yellow star] of communist youth part of my wardrobe. I even envied friends who had the words *Chau ngoanc Bac Ho* embroidered in yellow on the triangle jutting out from the neckline” (Thúy, 2009, p. 95). Nguyen desperately wants to fit in with her peers. As a child she understands that her heritage bars her from ever achieving “beloved children of the party” status. The detrimental effects of her deep desire to assimilate go unfulfilled, and still remaining externally compliant creates a false sense of self (Winnicott, 1960/2012). She suppresses feelings of hate and anger by working hard to gain praise based on merits.

During this early school age phase, children experience the conflict of ingenuity and inferiority. Erikson (1968) explains that play, no matter how imaginative, eventually gives way to youngsters’ desire to have a “sense of industry.” They enjoy making things and making them well, even perfectly, to get the recognition of parents and teachers. He explains, “the advancing child forgets, or rather quietly ‘sublimates’ – that is, applies to concrete pursuits and approved goals – the drives which have made him dream and play” (Erikson, 1968, pp. 123–24). The danger at this stage is having a “sense of inferiority.” We observe Nguyen giving up: “I could never attain the status because of my family background, even though I stood first in my class or had planted the most trees while thinking about the father of our peace” (Thúy, 2009, p. 95). Here, school life fails her because nothing she has learned to do well so far seems to count. Erikson (1968) concludes that this stage is when the child “finds out immediately that the color

of his skin or the background of his parents rather than his wish and will to learn are the factors that decide his worth as a pupil” (p. 124).

Children also learn there are hefty consequences for not abiding by the cultural regulations of authoritarian governments. Nguyen, like other females in North Vietnam, abandons her traditional clothes and replaces them with khaki outfits during the war. This gesture symbolizes the values of the communist party’s military members. Young girls “had to wear black pants and dark shirts. If not, soldiers in khaki uniforms would take us to the station for a session of interrogation and re-education” (Thúy, 2009, p. 94). Un-learning traditional ways of life is denying the multiplicity of identity expression, including through dress. Intense propaganda is another form of state-sponsored re-education, “enormous billboards at every street corner [with women] in khaki shirts with sleeves rolled up on their muscular arms” (p. 115). These techniques of identity repression are also misogynistic. The other justification given for the national female uniform is male soldiers having difficulty concentrating when they catch a glimpse of a young girl’s waist. “So, wearing the *ao dais* [traditional Vietnamese dress] was soon forbidden,” explains Nguyen (p. 115).

These narratives related to dress bring our attention to the reproduction of colonial structures of inequalities, with the postcolonial elite playing a major role in their recreation with different bodies but not dissimilar socio-political hierarchies. For Fanon (1961/2007), winning political independence from colonization does not mean complete liberation when the “national consciousness” fails to sever bourgeois sentiments and there is a simple replacement of one dominant group by another. The same forms of coercion, surveillance, and alienation of sectors of the population continue to be maintained after the dismantling of imperialist-backed governments. Even if the socio-political ideology has shifted, the methodology of aggressive enforcement and denial of cultural plurality is actually a regression.

Authoritarian representations of the female body, and its degree of covering in particular, are a recurring theme in contemporary conflict zones (as seen later in Nahlah Ayed’s difficulty

adhering to the hijab in Palestinian refugee camps). These school aged children have not reached adolescence to ask, “Who am I?” but already understand who they are not based on exclusionary state practices. Nguyen understands that she does not belong to the ruling communist elite and will never feel that privilege because of her ethnic Chinese lineage. Dress codes enforced in public spaces alienate children in the native country, a side-effect of alienation based on identity markers like lineage, ethnicity or parent’s political affiliation.

... in School

Schools are primarily places of knowledge acquisition, but are also renowned as sites of bonding, reconciliation, and even working through. For some children, school “seems to be a world all by itself, with its own goals and limitations, its achievements and disappointments” (Erikson, 1968, p. 123). In *War and Children*, Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham (1943/1973) argue that essential needs like personal attachments, emotional stability, and permanency of educational influence must continue through times of war in order to avoid “psychological malformation.” Schools and teaching resources in conflict zones may increase children’s feelings of alienation based on their communal identity markers.

Nguyen reflects on the change in the curriculum documents from pre-war to post-war Vietnam. Since textbooks are generally the primary resource and teaching tool in classrooms, they often reflect practical changes in the state’s pedagogical ideology, and are also significant to students’ social and mental development. Nguyen describes how schooling reflects the armed conflict: “The classroom was turned into a huge game of risk with calculations of dead, wounded or imprisoned soldiers and patriotic victories, grandiose and colourful” (Thúy, 2009, p.94). The mathematical examples and formulae calculate weapons and combatants from the war, causing Nguyen to feel disconnected, especially when “we no longer learned to count bananas and pineapples” (p. 94). Students’ problem-solving skills evolved by counting human bodies as objects for calculations as opposed to politically neutral objects. Such educational

strategies also normalize the carnage of conflict and further increase feelings of inferiority for marginalized youngsters.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1952/2008) elaborates on the impact of popular pedagogical tools like reading resources on the subjectivity of school children. The epistemologies they carry further the colonizer's ideology in an effort to shape the subordinate student's "vision of the world" (p. 131). For Fanon the identification process means that Nguyen will adopt the characteristics of the books' protagonists. Removed from the textbooks, she realizes that she is not part of the powerful ruling communist elite. Recognizing that one can no longer be or associate with the protagonist of books or textbooks is traumatic for the child's psyche (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 126). She experiences alienation due to inferiority constructed by the ruling elite and the exclusion of her ethnic group from power positions, which seeps into educational resources that further othering (pp. 122, 127, 128).

Rebelling Against...

Having a sense of purpose and assigning significance to particular actions develop resistance to the internalization of the inferiority complex imposed by the dominant elite. Resistance can further enhance coping mechanisms in order to work through war trauma. Actively socially engaging during wars is an adaptive mechanism and a source of resilience (D. Harris, 2009, p. 95). Carmen, for one, manages some of her biggest challenges with her strong sense of social justice. When Carmen is eleven years old, her mother reminds her that the family's move to Latin American is part of a greater objective: "In the resistance, we agree to give our lives to the people, for a better society" (Aguirre, 2009, p. 7). Carmen's mother admits, "I'm asking a lot of you, but you must remember that the sacrifices you'll have to make are nothing compared with the majority of children in this world" (p. 7). Carmen does not spend too much time reflecting on her mother's "request." Before boarding a plane in L.A., Mami says, "many of them [children] die of curable diseases and work twelve-hour shifts in factories without

learning to read and write. We are fighting for a society in which children have the right to a childhood. I'm so proud of you girls for being a part of that" (p. 7). Adopting these views and values is an integral part of Carmen's strong sense of self and her inner resistance to the inferiority complex.

The following year, when Carmen enters adolescence, her ideal loved object is a successful overthrow of Pinochet in Chile and relieving its neighbouring countries from totalitarian rule. She adopts the objective of the Return Plan. In defense against the possibility of losing the loved object, the adolescent psyche, well known for its flexibility, becomes rigid in the manner it perceives the loved object (Britzman, 2011). Carmen reacts by bravely accepting traumatic occurrences and unhealthy circumstances as part of the price to pay for participating in the struggle of freeing oppressed children of the world (Aguirre, 2009, pp. 211, 259). As Kristeva (2007) describes, a true believer like Carmen has a psyche that tolerates all forms of onslaught. Enthralled by the absolute, the girl accepts extreme psychosomatic distress. She conceptualizes her personal struggles as miniscule in comparison to the plight of others her age in the same way her mother originally described (Aguirre, 2009, p. 194). Carmen tries to maintain thoughts of hopefulness by being optimistic regarding the outcome of the resistance movements throughout Latin America (Aguirre, 2009, pp. 48, 91, 248, 272). Carmen believes in the cause so much that she gives up the opportunity to pursue fully funded medical education and a career (p. 197). Kristeva's point that the ideal object must be totally satisfying, true, and unchanging is something that corresponds to the position the Return Plan holds for Carmen.

Carmen uses other external adaptive mechanisms to calm her nerves and cope with the disturbing events of her adolescence. One method is remembering time with her family in Canada, reframing her thoughts to moments of carefree joy and love (Aguirre, 2009, pp. 13, 16). Other times she turns to eating comfort foods like chocolate (p. 16). Play, sports, singing, and dancing are strategies that Carmen employs to stay connected to a truer expression of herself while she maintains fake identities as a revolutionary daughter (pp. 61, 82, 83). She has several

male love interests during adolescence, without loyalty to any. One wonders if they too are distractions from the high-stress life of living under cover and participating in the Return Plan. These boys may also be temporary replacements for her family's affection and attention while they too are busy contributing to the revolution in more formal ways. Psychologists suggests that playing an active role and exerting "some control over one's individual responses to war stressors may be critical to survival and mental health alike" (D. Harris, 2009, p. 95; Jensen & Shaw, 1993, p. 702).

Carmen also attends underground informal educational sessions run by resistance fighters before and during her adolescence. This is the most unique aspect of her "schooling" experience. Carmen's double life gives her strength, as it allows her to act and perform in ways that are (dis-) connected from the dangers that come with participating in the Return Plan (Aguirre, 2009, p. 113). She learns how to "read" people who would be sympathetic to the cause, others who could be a helper, those who might be a possible informant or even an enemy (p. 191). Carmen and Ale learn various techniques to keep their true identities hidden after they take an oath of allegiance to the movement.

At the same time, Carmen becomes so obsessed with the cause that she trains her body to react to extreme conditions. She does these things in order to better equip herself for labour or concentration camps as a consequence for participating in the resistance. Ironically her parents were saved from that fate when they were granted asylum in Canada just years before. Carmen essentially starves herself in preparation, "Tea with five spoons of sugar kept my stomach full, energy up and palms warm. I secretly patted myself on the back, for all this meant one thing: I could survive in a concentration camp" (Aguirre, 2009, p. 162). Psychologists working with political prisoners agree that that political idealism coupled with preparedness for potential outcomes like torture, starvation, and exhaustion reduces the severity of experienced trauma if the individual comes to eventually experience imprisonment (Basoglu, 1992; Basoglu et al., 1994, 1996). Carmen understood the importance of mastering "backbreaking physical

labour and hard mental work (there were fourteen subjects at school, with four hours of nightly homework) while I was near starvation,” and that stress would allow her to survive Pinochet’s camps (Aguirre, 2009, p. 162). She writes the only thing that remained was to overcome her fear of rodents because “Horrific tales involving rats and mice ... [in] many concentration camps were making the rounds” (Aguirre, 2009, p. 162). These quotes demonstrate Carmen’s deep desire and belief in the Return Plan. Her obsession with the Marxist resistance movement in Latin America at the time takes her to extreme physical and psychological states in preparation for any outcome. At the same time, this kind of training actually solidifies her sense of altruism and develops grit for difficulties to come.

Carmen occasionally demonstrates critical thinking, especially when she secretly questions her superiors. They are privy to information like her original name and address and the fact that her parents are often away. She does not have access to the same details pertaining to those training her. Yet she does not question the uncertain and precarious nature of the Return Plan nor the potential failure of the Chilean Revolution. Carmen mentally separates the struggle from its cell leaders as a method of safeguarding her ideal. Kristeva (2007) describes this behaviour as “the urge to destroy oneself-with-the others” or “the kamikaze syndrome” (p. 15). Exposure to the other side of “the passion in search of an object” heightens defence mechanisms to allow Carmen to separate her ideal loved object from the people controlling it.

Undergirding Carmen’s situation is her struggle with appropriately working through the major loss of her young life: her relationship with her mother. Instead, she desperately holds onto a powerful idealization of the revolution when she does not have access to her greatest role model. Carmen becomes a devout “revolutionary daughter,” initially informed by her family ideology and later by sharing their desire to improve the living conditions of children worldwide (Aguirre, 2009, p. 249). Working through the loss of childhood and her ever distancing relationship with her mother brings her to a transitional object that ultimately helps Carmen

bridge the frustration of her experience of parental unavailability (Winnicott, 1948, pp. 229–34). The transitional opportunity for Carmen is the revolutionary praxis – internal because it carries a subjective meaning and external because peoples and plans exchange. The deeply intellectual discussions and critical perspectives of the revolutionary classes provide Carmen with the opportunity to externalize her internal images and make her shared family ambitions available for conversation and play with other revolutionaries, especially when her parents were unavailable (Winnicott, 2005).

Carmen's life mission to aid in the overthrow of dictatorships in her native region aligns with Fanon's dedication to anti-oppression, anti-colonial resistance, and creating a "New World" that does not subscribe to Manichean binaries. For Fanon, the only way to combat the inferiority complex caused by colonization and racism is to actively participate in revolutionary change that dismantles the dominant power structure. Inadvertently, Carmen is actively resisting the internalization of an inferiority complex that many colonized others from the global south already subscribe to by the times they reach adolescence. By participating in revolutionary classes, reading primary reports, and having meetings with an organized network of people, Carmen is fully engaged mentally in understanding the impact of neocolonial objectives in the global south, and by strategizing she avoids an inferiority complex and the state of existence it brings.

Conclusion

I examined the legacy of war and the trauma it inflicts upon the body and minds of young people in this chapter. They are at risk of internalizing an inferiority complex due to inhumane treatment by their native states. In most cases they internalize the worthlessness of life propagated through laws and pedagogical tools, especially if they do not share the same ethnicity as the dominant elite. They see and understand themselves as part of the minority victim group. Home and school play a pivotal role in maintaining a sense of constancy as they

are spaces of belonging, but war easily destroys, separates, and kills families and any sense of stability. The response to war is to flee, thus causing an “unhealable rift” and a “hole” in the life of refugee. An alternative is resistance, demanding autonomy and agency. A “true believer” adolescent may take up arms and devote their lives to the revolution as a means to fight against the inferiority complex.

Chapter 5: Escape and Homelessness

This chapter provides a critical analysis of the process of becoming war refugees, asking what it means to be stateless or homeless due to ethnic, racial, or political differences. I identify the ways in which nonconventional escape plans and deplorable refugee camps influence a child's sense of self and identity formation. Leaving their native land means the refugee faces perpetual loss: loss of familiarity, economic stability, support structures, and even a sense of humanity. Young people internalize such losses very deeply as unworthiness and self-blame. I argue that the refugee feels increasingly humiliated because of her/his political vulnerability and the deplorable conditions of the camp. Asylum seekers accumulate more feelings of inferiority due to disrespectful treatment in such spaces. Feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, distress, distrust, frustration, and anger are commonplace in camps. Those who leave their native land early and safely enough further complicate "refugee" status and identity by living in camps or gaining "immigrant" status. Young asylum seekers learn to lie and keep family secrets in order to survive, but eventually these practices make it difficult for them to be authentic witnesses or express their True Self. This chapter ends with asylum seekers detailing ways of coping, making meaning, and demonstrating resilience in the context of escape and in camps.

Wade in the Water

Under the 1951 United Nations' Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, reasons for discrimination and threat are based on elements of the asylum seekers' identity: race, religion, nationality, or membership to a particular social group or political opinion. The identification "refugee" is applicable when the asylum seeker is "outside the country of his nationality and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of protection of that country" (UNHCR, 1951/1967). In other words, the threat of remaining in the native land is

so grave that the asylum seeker must, for the sake of surviving, remain in exile. Structures that give most people a sense of belonging, like family, friends, community, career, and school, are uprooted. Asylum seekers typically flee their homes at a moment's notice in order to avoid further harm and life-threatening situations (McCabe & Brewer, 2014, p. 32). The stories shared in this chapter demonstrate how the voyage out of war influences the identity formation and mental state of young people.

Children must have a trustworthy caregiver to rely on because at the pre-pubescent age their own internal resources still need to fully develop to cope with the threats of war and escape (Freud & Burlingham, 1943; Winnicott, 2005). Most refugee children, like Nguyen, depend on their parents to make a concerted effort to keep them safe. The connection of her wellbeing to subjectivity occurs when her parents highlight one side of their ancestral lineage in order to escape the carnage of the Vietnam War. Nguyen says, "My family and I became Chinese. We called on the genes of my ancestors so that we could leave with the tacit consent of the police" (Thúy, 2009, p. 44). By highlighting their ancestry, Nguyen's parents fix the family's ethnic identity and simultaneously make clear the justification for political opposition and social condemnation in Vietnam. Having Chinese ethnicity carries with it the notion that the family is also capitalist and, therefore, anti-Communist (p. 44). This puts Nguyen's family in direct opposition to the ruling elite. The official order to the police is to give the ostracized Chinese-Vietnamese clearance to leave on boats.

However, the escape requires monetary bribes and evidence of heritage, and even then, there are no guarantees. The process of forsaking loved relations and loved spaces is difficult enough, but officials being disrespectful and degrading worsens negative feelings. Nguyen understands, "the inspectors were allowed to search them [Chinese Vietnamese], to strip them of everything they owned till the very last minute, to the point of humiliation" (Thúy, 2009, p. 44). The communist officers treat these asylum seekers with contempt, as objects to take from and to discard into the unruly ocean when done. This kind of dehumanization becomes another

painful reminder that loss and disgrace are necessary parts of survival, especially for refugee children like Nguyen.

Hope and despair mar Nguyen's journey out of Vietnam. Her parents' financial stability provides the means to buy a way out of their native land. However, it does not promise to be a safe or a fearless journey, even with the best intentions and planning possible. Nguyen eloquently describes the terrifying nature of the sea voyage:

Heaven and hell embraced in the belly of our boat. Heaven promised a turning point in our lives, a new future, a new history. Hell, though, displayed our fears: fear of pirates, fear of starvation, fear of poisoning by biscuits soaked in motor oil, fear of running out of water, fear of being unable to stand up, fear of having to urinate in the red pot that was passed from hand to hand, fear that the scabies on the baby's head was contagious, fear of never again seeing the faces of our parents, who were sitting in the darkness surrounded by two hundred people. (Thúy, 2009, pp. 3–4)

Parents and children undergo a terrifying sea voyage hoping it will lead to a more positive future. Experiencing trauma as a child involves a greater vulnerability to compulsive repetition (S. Freud, 1914/2006). Nguyen expresses her trauma recovery with her reiteration of the word "fear." The reader hears the feeling of helplessness and the subjective sense of having no control. Nguyen, like many asylum seekers, experiences deep paranoia and alienation when discarded to the elements of nature. The inferiority complex develops further in young people who experience several episodes of uncertainty under dangerous conditions.

The traumas of crossing seas come with potential catastrophes that make the death drive prevalent. Nguyen explains that her father "had made plans, should our family be captured by Communists or pirates, to put us to sleep forever, like Sleeping Beauty, with cyanide pills" (Thúy, 2009, p. 6). Nguyen's father is prepared to take the lives of his own children. As a ten-year-old, Nguyen is seeing connections between her identity and ways of dying. Her father believes that those captured by communists and pirates fare worse than death. Nguyen's boat voyage further numbs her. She says, "We no longer closed our eyes when the scabious little boy's pee sprayed us. We no longer pinched our noses against our neighbour's vomit. We were

numb, imprisoned by the shoulders of some, the legs of others, the fear of everyone. We were paralyzed” (Thúy, 2009, p. 5). The journey is traumatizing. Her repetitive rhythmic words allow for truth telling, drawing her readers to witness the ordeal. Here, she illustrates the paradox of escaping death only to come closer to it at sea.

For other young refugees travel by air is just as memorable as by boat. For example, Deeqa recalls being an unaccompanied minor traveling from Somalia to Kenya. and then to Holland by plane, before coming to Canada. She hysterically laughs in the vlog at the absurdity of being alone. She says, unreservedly, “I remember being in Holland at the airport and eating and running around and having a big sign that says my name [hand gesture across her chest] because I was alone. [Laughing loudly] Like a nerd, this big sign says I’m going to Canada, my number whatever it was” (Ibrahim, 2014). She is actually a moving breathing parcel, air delivered to Canada. Her recollection suggests that she is a child who is unaware of the angst and potential sites of trauma. As children mature, they acquire new cognitive schemata to frame life experiences. Deeqa’s retelling of her refugee story with laughter and making light of her displacement lift the discomforts of her tragic situation.

The refugee child’s caregivers’ reactions and emotions surrounding escape highly influence the young asylum seeker’s perception and internalization of what escape means to them. For Nguyen, the clear terror of the voyage is pronounced, and she relies on her parents for comfort and support. Deeqa has no protective family force and does not elaborate on the unsafe nature of her travels through various airports and checkpoints as an unaccompanied minor. Now as a young adult, her cognitive schemata have expanded and her reliance on caregivers for soothing has decreased. Her laughter is an attempt to resolve the impasse. Like other children who experience trauma, refugee youngsters must mourn their innocence and face the dangers of the unknown world. The external circumstances of conflict and escape can evoke hysteria later in life. Asylum seekers often arrive at refugee camps where their sense of self and sense of belonging continue their negative shift.

Pretoria

The erected refugee camps during the Second Anglo-Boer War transformed into concentration camps when the British passed the “scorched earth” policy (Cloete, 2000). While refugee camps generally do not become concentration camps as they did in Pretoria, their lack of safety and residues of colonial management styles continue to make them inadequate spaces for living. The expectation is that refugee camps are safe havens: locations of decent housing, nutritional sustenance, and healthcare. Camps generally provide shelter for thousands of asylum seekers, organized and administered by the local governments and international organizations like the UNHCR. The accounts provided in the memoirs and vlogs paint a grim picture of refugee camps. These spaces immensely impact and transform the residents’ thresholds and tolerance for discomfort. Here, the asylum seeker learns to further accept their wretched second-class conditions and position in the world.

For example, Nahlah is horrified by what she sees in the Amman camps. She had lived in Winnipeg for the first five years of her life and has a very hard time accepting the move to the Palestinian camp. Based on the vividness of her recollection, the camp is a nightmarish place to be. Until that move, she says, “I knew nothing of refugeehood and displacement; of grimy UN tents, kerosene lamps and powdered milk” (Ayed. 2013, p. 12). The foul smell of the place immediately repulses her, especially at the marketplace where animals eat garbage and children line the streets for food (pp. 23, 24). The overcrowded concrete dwellings naturally feel claustrophobic. It is a muddy place with trash everywhere. The population is serious and melancholic, with laughter frowned upon by the residents and gossip being the favoured pastime (p. 29). Then there are the kids, “who always had dirty clothes on and half an inch of mucus hanging from [their noses], no matter the time of day or the weather” (p. 31). Not to mention, the laundry hangs next to them while bold insects swarm by (p. 37).

Nahlah wonders the purpose of living in such a place but learns to cope with losing the comforts of Winnipeg. She rhetorically asks “how bringing us to a rat-infested, cockroach-ridden and cramped refugee camp was for our own good?” (Ayed, 2013, p. 26) She is aware that she deserves better than what the camp facilitates. Even as an adult, Nahlah’s writing richly captures the discomforts she experiences as a child. In her own words, “Moving to a refugee camp had been as traumatic and as dramatic an upheaval as any. Nothing though compared to watching your father leave you behind” (p. 37). The sudden, uncontrollable loss of attachment bonds, especially to parents, is a major factor in post-traumatic stress syndromes. Nahlah remembers her father’s face only from a photo in their living room. The deplorable camp conditions compound the trauma of losing a parent.

The asylum seeker is susceptible to many diseases because of bad diet and unsanitary living conditions. Severe malnutrition is not uncommon at these camps (Hyndman, 2000, Malkki, 1995, Boyden et al., 2002). The surviving Vietnamese boat people eat rotting fish flung at them every afternoon and the Palestinian camp children rarely get more than what the UN ration card allocates (Thúy, 2009, p. 17; Ayed, 2013, p. 24). Going to the bathroom is another very awkward occurrence at the Malaysian refugee camp, as Nguyen “had to crouch down above a gigantic pit filled to the brim with excrements, in the blazing sun of Malaysia” (Thúy, 2009, p. 26). Like Nahlah, who avoided losing her shoes in the mud of the Amman camp, Nguyen “had to look at the indescribable brown colour without blinking so that I wouldn’t slip on the two planks behind the door of one of the sixteen cabins” (Ayed, 2013, p. 24; Thúy, 2009, p. 26). The fear and angst caused just by using the bathroom makes these everyday occurrences shocking to the child too.

Nguyen’s detailed descriptions of the camps for the Boat People also speak to their filth and overcrowdedness. She says, “as refugees in Malaysia, we slept right on the red earth, without a floor. The Red Cross had built refugee camps in the countries adjoining Vietnam to receive boat people – those who had survived the sea journey” (Thúy, 2009, p. 14). Vietnamese

survivors did not have blankets and “slept pressed so close together that we were never cold” (p. 15). International organizations like the UNHCR and the Red Cross failed to fund or appropriately prepare for the huge influx of refugees escaping war and entering the neighbouring states. The management strategies did not satisfy the basic needs of Vietnamese asylum seekers. The refugee child questions her/his life worth and invisibility in the world, and what a life stripped to basic needs really means, especially when such large multinationals fail them (Hyndman, 2000; Nyers, 2015). Camp policies, management, and lack of resources degrade the quality of life for asylum seekers. They are at the mercy of the host country and the international community. Time and time again, since the Vietnamese exodus, the UNHCR has been unable to appropriately prepare for large populations escaping war to neighbouring states (Hyndman, 2000; Ayed, 2013; Thúy, 2009; Nyers, 2015). Displaced children and youth’s self-esteem, in addition to their health, takes a hit. They feel unworthy of basic necessities and facilities that settler citizens take for granted.

Refugees are sometimes able to transform their inhumane living situations into a more bearable existence. They attempt to gain some of their lost sense of dignity that the refugee process stripped from them. The ingenuity of refugees is necessary to keep camps functional, and many residents are actively involved in maintaining their personal and communal wellbeing. In the case of Nguyen’s family, they design and build new shelters:

For weeks, twenty-five members of five families working together, in secret, felled some trees in the nearby woods, then planted them in the soft clay soil, attached them to six plywood panels to make a large floor and covered the frame with a canvas of electric blue, plastic blue, toy blue. We had the good fortune to find enough burlap and nylon rice bags to surround the four sides of the cabin, as well as the three sides of the bathroom. Together, the two structures resembled a museum installation by a contemporary artist (Thúy 2009, 15).

This description demonstrates the ways asylum seeker try to solve the desperate housing conditions of the camps. The structures the Nguyen family builds are defective because during the day, the plastic absorbs heat and being inside the structure suffocates them (Thúy, 2009, p. 15). Taking accountability aids in battling the internalized dehumanization process refugees

experience along the way. Similarly, when Nahlah goes back to Hay Nazzal as an adult (the refugee neighbourhood she grew up in), she finds the transformation incredible. Now new buildings, restaurants, and drive-through coffee stands line the streets (Ayed, 2013, p. 86). Inventiveness and investment by inhabitants to camps create opportunities and a sense of hope and resiliency.

The refugees living in these camps have less than the bare minimum, but manage to survive. Those who do well take it upon themselves to creatively construct the environment and their homes to be more conducive to living and thriving. This grit counters the negative feelings of desperation, humiliation, and other manifestations of the inferiority complex. The pleasure principle postulates that human beings will avoid pain and seek desirable outcomes in order to satisfy their needs (Freud, 1920/1989). Bhabha echoes this sentiment in his forward for *The Wretched of the Earth* when describing what nourishes our desire for freedom, “Forceful and fragile ‘psycho-affective’ motivations and mutilations that drive our collective instinct for survival, nurture our ethical affiliations and ambivalences” (in Fanon, 1961/2007, p. xviii). The desire to live with dignity allows the refugee to overcome many of the disappointments of camp life.

Money Matters

The economic stability of refugee families often determines the level of discomfort they have in the migratory process. In many war-torn states, some citizens have the opportunity to escape well before the fighting begins. In such cases, parental economic and social stability play an integral role. When they have the insight and assets to make a safe exit from the home country early enough, they are “immigrants” rather than “refugees.” This section further problematizes the complexities of labeling young people migrating back and forth from places of home and strangeness.

Sundus, for example stresses that she had a very comfortable and happy childhood (Abdul Hadi, 2014). Her parents secured the family's passage out of Iraq before militarization consumed the country, but this does not mean that she has severed her links to the native land. Sundus did not live in a refugee camp, nor does she consider herself a war refugee (Abdul Hadi, 2014). As she comes of age, Sundus obsessively prints and collects thousands of articles about Iraq, the wars, and the state of existence there. Sundus, like the war survivors of the past that Felman and Laub (1992) describe, "relentlessly holds on to, and searches, for what is familiar to her from her past, with only a dim awareness of what she is doing" (p. 78). She visits Iraq during the American occupation and witnesses the horrors of war firsthand (Abdul Hadi, 2014). Although she is not a war survivor or asylum seeker in the conventional sense, Sundus presents refugee-ness through her obsession with the native land and painful occurrences there both past and present. Because people like Sundus and her parents choose to exercise "the right to escape" and "autonomy of migration," they are challenging defined boundaries of migration and subjectivities through their unique means of witnessing and testifying (Casas-Cortes et al., 2014, p. 8).

Sundus and Narcicyst's stories validate studies that portray asylum seekers with higher levels of education as more likely to seek and obtain access to social support throughout the migratory phases (Colic-Piesker & Walker, 2003; Ahmed & Aboul-Fotouh, 2012). Narcicyst's parents foresee the upcoming devastation of war and take the necessary precautions to avoid the catastrophe. He explains, "You know my parents were Iraqi and it was '87, you know? and my father knew that the country was plagued with a dictatorship and successive wars would come to the country" (Alsalman, 2014). His father, a trained engineer, believed the military and political conflicts that often emerge under totalitarian rule would adversely impact his children. Narcicyst's father deliberately chose to bring his family to Montreal because of the educational and bilingual opportunities that city offers.

Like Sundus' parents, Narcicyst's father secures the family migration from the UAE to Canada, specifically Montréal. Narcicyst's parents' educational, financial, and practical opportunities are the prerequisite for an escape from the horrors of war, refugee camps, and other impactful circumstances that often define refugee-ness. As Casas-Cortes 's et al. (2014) elaborate, "the motivations for movement are always mixed and in excess of such simple dichotomies" (p. 18). These Iraqi-Canadians' life stories demonstrate that the clear-cut distinction between forced and voluntary migrants is empirically untenable. As Said (2000) explains, expats are not "banished" the way refugees are and therefore do not have the emotional scars of estrangement in the same way. Political unrest and re-emergence of war in the native land make the "immigrant" also feel banished. Socio-political conditions impact the self-self, self-other and self-world relations when they are living in Canada. Adult family members and media create the connection and drive the young person's attention to the native land. Having a Canadian passport and a peaceful upbringing with some financial stability allow these youth to return to their native lands and bear witness to the devastation of the war that refugees experience.

Alternatively, in the case of Stephanie, her family's economic stability allows her to have a relatively peaceful stay in Ethiopia. Although Stephanie has refugee status, she lives in an urban dwelling rather than a Rwandan refugee camp. She integrates so well in this community that she identifies with Ethiopian culture more than her native one. In her own words, "having grown up in Bole, which is my neighborhood in Addis Ababa, I feel Ethiopian. I'm happy when I speak the language, when I eat the food, listen to the music and recognize Ethiopian people" (Gasana, 2014). Stephanie speaks of the host country with nostalgic sentiments, comparable to how other refugee children described their native land in Chapter 3. Having the financial means to physically remove the family from the catastrophes of war offers displaced children distance from various trauma-inducing triggers. At the same time, children living in the host society may

have more ethnic, territory, and other identity markers to consider when negotiating their subjectivities.

However, being from the top echelons of the native society does not always completely safeguard children from the experiences of refugee-ness. Nguyen's family's influence and financial riches pay for their freedom and passage out of Vietnam, but her refugee experience remains extremely uncomfortable. Refugee-ness is a stark contrast to Nguyen's stable upbringing, where "meals were always on time, the maids in attendance, homework supervised" (Thúy, 2009, p. 39). Sharing the family property with military officers, carrying out the escape plan, the boat travel, and the camps in Malaysia are nothing like the luxurious Vietnamese lifestyle they had earlier experienced. Nonetheless, Nguyen and her family "felt blessed to be among the two thousand refugees in a camp that was intended to hold two hundred" even if it came at the cost of an entire sack of gold taels (pp. 14, 90). Her story provides evidence of the high price asylum seekers pay for escape plans, basic needs, check points, bribes, getting back confiscated items, and replacing lost and destroyed belongings, amongst many other expenses needed to survive (Yousaf, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2018; UNHCR, 2016). This points to the classism that many refugees must also contend with.

Most refugees remain desperate and dependent on external aid to survive because there are very few employment opportunities in the camps and their surrounding neighbourhoods. Nahlah explains that in the Palestinian refugee camps, "Many families – most – relied on UN rations, which helped ease the poverty. Medical care was scarce and expensive" (Ayed, 2013, p. 31). The laws and policies of host governments also sometimes limit refugees' access to work permits and their ability to meet their own needs independent of external aid. Nahlah explains, "Life in the camps was one of surviving hand to mouth, basic needs were unaffordable and seeking assistance was an embarrassing ordeal" (p. 42). The poor circumstances of Palestinians mean fathers work in other Gulf States or internationally to support their families in the camps (p. 35). The amount of money a household has determines

how many children go to school or get married, if any (p. 42). The lack of financial means makes refugees look like beggars, and feel humiliated asking for handouts. Such conditions do not only influence the physical health of the young refugee, but also her/his mental state as she/he must accept his/her inferior positionality.

Nahlah's father works in Canada and sends whatever amount he can to pay for necessities in Amman. Nahlah's mother works very hard to prioritize expenditures, eventually supplementing with income from sewing (Ayed, 2013, p. 43). Although her parents are able to muster up enough cash to move the children to a dwelling outside of the refugee camps, they still sleep in one room, depending on each other's bodies and a kerosene heater to remain warm (p. 37). Nahlah elaborates, "there were times when we were penniless. I always knew things were tight when all we had to eat for dinner was cheese melted on bread on the lone *sobba* that heated our collective bedroom" (p. 43). From these accounts, it is apparent that many refugee parents prioritize the needs of their children when dealing with finances, no matter how devastated or humiliated they feel. Also, children become aware of their plight through their parent's patterns of behavior and remember this well into adulthood.

This section has provided examples of migrants who avoid life-threatening escape plans and deplorable camps due to their parents' means and foresight. In many circumstances, the postcolonial mindset accepts dependency and remains at the mercy of bourgeois elites in order to survive (Fanon, 1961/2007, p. 55). As a disenfranchised population, they develop an inferiority complex due to their lack of health, educational, occupational, and institutional opportunities. All this is in addition to camp processes that involve consistently pleading for and depending on the goodwill of the host nation's population and government. The innate paradox of refugee-ness is most evident in the camps; refugees can be seen as the purest expression of humanity by virtue of their vulnerability, while at the same time the population shows the limit of humanity in terms of their corporeal mismanagement and exclusion. Children living in unsanitary

and inadequate camps learn to have greater tolerance for ill-treatment and their inferior position as refugees and outsiders.

Secrecy

Sometimes escape plans necessitate asylum seekers engaging with some kind of unethical or criminal activity. In order to leave, survive, and maintain a sense of safety, refugees resort to forging documents, creating new identities and moving under the radar. Truth telling becomes difficult when one must keep secrets and protect the identities of all involved. Felman and Laub (1992) discuss the “imperative to tell” as part of the refugees’ survival mechanism. They explain, “one has to know one’s buried truth in order to be able to live one’s life” (p. 78). Unfortunately, asylum seekers who resort to illegal methods to fortify their safety and residency fear losing their freedom or jeopardizing someone else’s life if they speak up.

Some young refugees, like Meryem, partake in criminal activities to secure their future. In many countries, minors need written permission from both parents to cross borders and checkpoints. Meryem confesses to having falsified these: “I had to fraudulently sign like my dad. I practiced for months. I had to sign like my dad in order to get permission to get out of the country because until you’re 19 you need the permission of your father” (Saci, 2014). She acquires false French passports to come to Canada with her mother. Meryem testifies in her vlog that she and her mother did not have the appropriate papers to prove that her family’s life was under threat and to legally claim refugee status. Like most claimants, she is aware that without documentation to support their story, deportation is highly likely (George, 2010). Meryem does whatever is necessary to survive in the immigration process in order to evade a death sentence in Algeria and imprisonment in France.

Holding secrets also impacts future expressions and the willingness to share one’s story as a refugee. Keeping silent fuels helplessness and other negative emotions, especially when entrusted adults coerce already petrified children to remain quiet. Solonge, Stephanie’s sister,

receives parental training to deny and not discuss her refugee status. Stephanie says that Solonge “remembers being told that she had no identity, that our family was stateless. ‘Don’t tell anyone we’re from Rwanda,’ my dad said” (Gasana, 2014). To keep one’s identity, places of travel, and even ethnicity a secret on a daily basis is excruciatingly painful. Solonge’s life is further complicated because “she never knew how long she would stay in one place. She has moved with my family to Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Libya, Tunisia, France and finally Canada, which is the place she’s been the longest” (Gasana, 2014). In this case we see refugees denied a sense of origin. Continued uncertainty and secrecy lead to feelings of never having a place of one’s own and intense distrust. The sisterly exchange between Solange and Stephanie provides the necessary comfort and space, or adequate internal and external conditions, needed to express the trauma she experienced, thus fulfilling the initial part of the imperative to tell (Felman & Laub, 1992).

In a similar way, Carmen’s personal and family identity is entirely based on secrecy while they move across Latin America. She tells us that the resistance remaining hidden is necessary for its success (Aguirre, 2012, p. 5). Carmen spends years avoiding certain people, terrified that she will slip up and paranoid that someone she trusts will turn out to be “secret” police (pp. 27, 194, 230, 262, 257). Young people learn to suppress and censor their feelings in order to protect their loved ones. Carmen says, “we lived in a state of terror, and it was unrevolutionary to feel it, let alone to speak of it. I tried to be a hero, but I was just the opposite” (p. 272). An essential part of keeping such a big secret is hiding one’s emotions and what Winnicott calls the True Self. Instead, adult family members of asylum seekers like Carmen’s and Solonge’s encourage a False Self. Winnicott (2012) describes this inauthentic existence as involving imitating others and destroying imaginative process (p. 191). So, these young people learn to conform and behave as is expected of them.

These traumatized children desire to remain in control of situations even as they age. This desire for agency comes from feeling powerless for so much of their development. Having

control allows them to feel safe especially because the world they experienced growing up was unsafe and scary. If something terrible happens to her family, Carmen is likely to blame herself for outing their story. Opening up about the Return Plan, Carmen questions, “Was it safe to tell the story? Would it hurt my family and community? Would I put my life – and hence my son’s life – in peril?” (Aguirre, 2012, p. 286). She is aware of the multifaceted threats from within the community and from those opposing the leftist struggle.

Even in later adolescence, she is very sensitive about discussing her story, especially because it is not just her story and the implications are not solely hers to bear. Assuming responsibility for the safety and protection of so many superiors gives the adolescent a false sense of control. In the book’s acknowledgements, Carmen thanks her mother for letting her reveal the family secrets. And at the end of her memoir she admits there is significant data she continues to conceal in order to avoid endangering others involved in the cause. In this I can hear the same concerns that she had as a young person who first joined the revolution. This kind of self-blame and false responsibility helps the story remain internal and so prevents feelings of helplessness during adolescence.

Carmen’s intention in exposing her family’s secret is to open up the larger Canadian story and dialogue to include peoples’ struggles. She waits for decades and then, after many elders have died, she makes public the events of her adolescence. Many who participated in the Return Plan smuggled arms, plotted against military dictatorships, aided and abetted resistance fighters, and stood in solidarity with protestors against unjust authoritarian regimes – all criminal acts in Latin America at that time. In another revolutionary act, she writes the book to fulfill her desire to expose “this secret story, which is the story of so many people who call this country [Canada] their home, to enter the public consciousness” (Aguirre, 2012, p. 280). The process of working through trauma, requires learning from the episodes. Here Carmen gives new meaning and purpose to her participation and writing.

She reframes romantic notions of revolutionary work by bringing an international audience to witness all the terror that underlies it. The emotional cost of her grueling writing experience and reliving those extraordinary days includes crippling insomnia, cold sweats, heart pounding, and enough anxiety for her to want to stop the process altogether (p. 276). Carmen's adult life in theatre and therapy allows for a return to that fearful childhood and self-blaming adolescence with the necessary internal and external conditions to testify. Her bravery in writing the memoir and speaking publicly creates a schism in Canadian literary and political consciousness.

It is common for refugee children and adolescents to promise their parents not to say anything about the illegality of their travels, lack of citizenship, or fraudulent documents. To deny who they are in order to survive further complicates a normal trajectory in identity formation. The legacy of epistemic violence on the subaltern subjectivity, especially women from the global south, includes the muzzling of voices (Spivak, 1994). The trauma of violence and potential backlash render oppressive conditions and even resistance unknown and unspeakable.

Overcoming extreme paranoia and terror of voicing is not only part of a return to a past tragedies, but a traumatic occurrence in itself. To be mere beings, disconnected from a higher state of protection, fertilizes compulsive repetition of past crippling feelings. These narratives show that secrets are a personal and community defense mechanism. It is only with connectedness, encouragement, and time to mourn the past that the imperative to tell can become a reality for survivors (Felman & Laub, 1992). Carmen and Meryem show their commitment to-truth telling and authenticity by bravely speaking up about their involvement in illegal activities. By giving language to these episodes they acknowledge the past and its impact on their being and psyche as survivors. Taking responsibility by openly discussing their family's secret stories, these young refugees are learning from their pasts and assigning new purposes for their experiences. The readers come to have new understandings of courage and revolution. They are healing and breaking the unhealthy cycle of silence.

Honor Thyself

Refugee camps not only regulate the bodies of their inhabitants through their living spaces and conditions, but there also appear to be customs in certain camps that further dictate the daily lives and movements of their inhabitants. A refugee culture of “honour” is prevalent for Palestinians living in the Amman refugee camps. As Nahlah and her sister enter their early adolescence, they become more excluded due to their sex. No longer are they allowed to attend particular circles or gatherings, whereas their brothers are (Ayed, 2013, p. 45). When they visit the homes of friends and family, females and males sit in separate quarters (p. 46). The eldest patriarch approves all final decisions, as customs are based on etiquettes and a culture of shaming (p. 29).

Similar to Nguyen abiding by a dress code in wartime Vietnam, Nahlah has a social and cultural obligation to follow the dominant dress code in Amman. The Ayed sisters wear hijab, but the journalist does not recall who forces it upon her. She divulges, “We were on the verge of becoming teenagers and under the ‘circumstances’ – the fact that Dad didn’t live with us – it was expected that we cover up because people would otherwise ‘talk’” (Ayed, 2013, p.44). Nahlah has a difficult time with the head covering, especially because the expectation is that her tomboyish behaviour and rebelliousness must simultaneously diminish. She writes, “I was told repeatedly that my family’s reputation depended on it” (p. 44). Nahlah’s mother never wears hijab until she settles in this refugee camp and adopts the social custom to avoid further shaming and humiliation (p. 44). For Nahlah, wearing the hijab prevents her from expressing her unique personality or True Self (Winnicott, 2012, p. 191).

Nahlah clearly undergoes a destabilization of existing childhood psychic process and then a re-establishment of sorts through negotiation of her personal circumstances as an adolescent. She asks, “Why am I expected to carry the entire weight of family honor on my bony teenage shoulders?” (Ayed, 2013, p. 44) Like other scholarly findings about daughters accepting preventative and protective cultural measure against sexual advances and abuse

(Boyden et al., 2002; Hart, 2008; Yousaf, 2017), the women of the Ayed family accept wearing certain attire in order to avoid isolation and maintain an acceptable reputation.

Nahlah's adherence to the hijab is trying, and its effect on her developing adolescent psyche and subjectivity are profound. She complains endlessly: "I got itchy, I couldn't hear, it obliterated my peripheral vision and it was unbearable in hot weather" (Ayed, 2013, p. 44). She is in constant internal conflict regarding the customs of the camp and her personal nature to be and feel freer. Her experience is in conjunction with Akhtar's (1999) clinical findings. When discussing his psychiatric interaction with immigrant women, he finds they feel more liberated in western societies because they no longer feel forced to conform to dress codes, especially veiling (p. 29). Nahlah begrudgingly assimilates to the customary norms of the refugee state for her mother's sake.

Winnicott (2012) advises adult guardians to nurture relationships with youth that encourage questioning, challenging, and experimenting with rules or set limitations. In the case of many youth, including Nahlah, parents dominate and strategically employ emotional blackmail or "weapons" in order to force conformity. "When family honor was everything" (Ayed, 2013, pp. 44–5), it is difficult to venture too far from conventions and traditional norms because the community punishes parents of delinquents through shaming and ostracizing. The interesting point about Nahlah is that she resists creating a False Self by staying true to her tomboyish and mischievous ways (p. 44).

Like Nahlah and her sisters, Carmen must navigate her personal expressions and desires in more socially acceptable ways. At the onset of puberty in Bolivia, Carmen goes on kissing sprees with boys in the area and the neighbours take notice (Aguirre, 2012, p. 83). They disapprove of her disregard for Catholic values by such unconventional public displays of affection. Eventually, the concerned adults of the community come to Carmen's house to alert her mother and provide her with a notice of eviction. Carmen's "promiscuous" behavior is unwelcomed. The townsfolk see Carmen as an instigator of nonchalant expression of sexuality

and say she is a negative influence on the other girls in the neighbourhood. In the notice, the allys' "kissing queen" is portrayed as a prostitute, so her eviction is necessary for maintaining the ethical values of the area (p. 84). Both she and her family feel embarrassed and deeply saddened by the neighbours' reactions.

As a young teen Carmen also begins to be more self-critical and concerned about her appearance. Conceptualizations of beauty that she inherits are further complicated by racism in Latin America. A hierarchy of skin tones determines preference and attractiveness. Carmen elaborates, "Indian, or darker skin, is considered ugly, Spanish is considered beautiful and white is gorgeous" (Aguirre, 2012, p. 106). Her breakdown of skin tones and their correspondence to beauty and desirability is common amongst women in postcolonial states who have cognitively internalized the western or colonizer's conception of beauty: lighter or white skin correlates to privilege and power (Fanon, 1952/2008). Here we witness the remnants of colonization on the psyche and body with respect to understandings and practices of beauty in the global south's postcolonial states and their people. The inferiority complex sinks deeper into the psyche.

The colonized is not always an innocent bystander, either. Carmen, for example, understands the imperial impact on brown skin bodies, their conceptualizations of beauty, and the hierarchy of epidermal shades. As an adolescent she is unable to completely dissociate from the colonial epistemology of beauty. Looking at her face, Carmen says, "For the first time in my life, I saw that I wasn't pretty. Mami had always told me that I was the most beautiful girl in the world, but my mother lied, I realized now" (Aguirre, 2012, p. 106). Carmen is extremely self-critical of her appearance, as most adolescents are: "My teeth were bigger than a horse's, my lips were chapped and I had a unibrow and a moustache" (p. 106). The ways in which adolescents express themselves is through dress, conduct, and appearance, and these are relevant to who they are and their performances.

The life stories of adolescent refugees examined here do not address their romantic relationships to a great extent apart from Carmen's memoir. Her coming-of-age stories suggest

that she has intense sexual desires that she struggles to repress or express in manners appropriate to traditional customs when she is staying with her grandmother, or the more liberal ways that her mother encourages. The way Carmen characterizes most of her romantic relationships is devoid of deep emotional connections; she rather chronicles several series of make-out sessions. Perhaps this is the way that Carmen internalizes her parents' separation and lost love through the trying times of exile.

Exposure to extreme terror causes people to have disparaging responses like anger and grief, and they often turn to the nearest available source of comfort. Carmen's connection to her parents and their relationship to each other informs the young girl's interactions with boys. Her love relationships are mostly fragile and short lived. Her parents' divorce and then her emotional detachment from them during the Return Plan helps her decide to never marry. Like other adolescents, her parents' relationship and her distance from them may have forced her to look for comfort in numerous young men. These people and interactions return her to a state of both psychological and physiologic calm, especially when she is deep into resistance work. The sole purpose of Carmen's eventual marriage at the age of nineteen is to create a cover in order to further the cause (Aguirre, 2012, p. 212). For her the resistance is the main priority as the obvious loved object.

Nahlah learns about restrictions in the family home due to an aunt's brief encounter with a man. Her testimony brings us to witness the secondary trauma based in intolerance for expressing any affection between people within the camp. For example, Nahlah's aunt stops to say hello to a young man, a former classmate who passes her by on the street. The consequences of this interaction are that a family elder confronts, yells at, and slaps the young lady. Nahlah recollects, "It was days before we all recovered" (Ayed, 2013, p. 45). Nahlah quickly understands that regardless of how educated, outspoken, and socially involved a young woman is, her conduct around men has terrifying repercussions. The stark comparison between

the refugee camp in Amman and Carmen's freedom is profound, indicating the diversity not only in refugee life stories but also acceptable traditional expressions of desire for girls.

Unlike Carmen, Nguyen does not inform the reader of any interest in boys until well into her adult life. She does not have to negotiate or follow customary laws or restrictions when interacting with males in the way Nahlah does in Jordan. In the vlogs, not one war refugee discusses sexual or romantic relationships. Because there appears to be no mention of sexual desires or interests, one may concur that adolescent exploration in these ways is not as significant for Nguyen or the vloggers. But the opposite could be true: many adolescents repress significant sexual desires in order to deal with more immediate pressures of growing up in the unsanitary refugee camps, the insecurities of war, or the need to quickly adjust in a foreign society with strange customs. This is most likely because such inquiry is beyond the scope of the *Mapping Memories* project.

Imaginative Retreats

The adolescent depends on their childhood methods of coping and healing that they developed through daily life in camps. Parents who have some insight into how to develop their children's imagination during hard times will employ this strategy to distract their little ones from the horrors of the outside world. As Mishra-Tarc (2017) writes, "children sense that they are the reasons for and targets of adult conflicts and they have no recourse but to go inwards into silence and the protection of their shaken inner world" (n.p.). These youngsters must learn to dream, draw, and retreat, and caregivers provide the resources and knowledge to nurture psychological growth in less than ideal camp circumstances.

Nahlah's mom encourages playing house and other group games. Nahlah explains, "We relied on our imagination: the thin mattresses folded over our knees became trucks careening down a highway" (Ayed, 2013, p. 39). Other times the Ayed siblings use batteries to represent

prizes won at game shows, talking about Tom and Jerry as if they are old friends, and mapping secret escape routes throughout the neighbourhood (p. 38–9). Child psychologist Alison Gopnik (2009) calls play the “living, visible manifestation of imagination and learning in action” (p.14). Nahlah’s mother gives her children “every child’s desire: permission to write, paint and scribble on the peeling paint of one of the ‘living room’ walls” (p. 30). The violence of the place indelibly marks the Ayed children. Mishra-Tarc (2017) explains that drawing is one symbolic activity that betrays the horror of the inner life when children decide to express themselves. An entertaining outlet for most children, drawing and colouring may also articulate some of the traumatic experiences they see around them. The dangers outside the family home include protests, raids, and rough kids, “who could in one afternoon, undo all my mother’s careful rearing” (Ayed, 2013, p. 30). Nahlah’s mother understands the children’s need for safe internal and home space to let out their feelings. Play, both imaginative and expressed, gives refugee children the cognitive strength for resilience and some healthy development in the camp, which otherwise seems melancholic.

In other instances, the child must navigate her/his own internal mechanisms in order to mentally escape their disgusting camp environments. Nguyen pays close attention to the sound of humming flies for comfort. When she arrives at the terrifying cesspool washrooms of the Malay camp, she closes her eyes and listens to the creatures in order “to keep my balance, avoid fainting when my stools or those from the next cabin splattered” (Thúy, 2009, p. 26). In less than favourable circumstances, Nguyen finds comfort in the most unexpected place – the buzzing of flies. As the narrative documented in *Ru* demonstrates, refugee children reconfigure external sounds and sites as nonconventional methods to manage feeling scared during daily activities.

Refugee youth experience obstructions to fully developing their imaginative faculties due to childhood episodes. Feelings of guilt and blame for actions carried out by adults in conflict zones hinders emotional progress. Child asylum seekers are limited in their abilities to explore

through play, develop unconscious phantasies, and be free of repercussion because of adult-imposed restrictions. Erikson (1968) argues that children quietly sublimate when they can dream and play. This kind of healthy psychological state involves setting socially acceptable goals and pursuing them. However, taking on adult roles requires high levels of maturity and retards the imaginative faculties. Other researchers argue that refugee children and youth grow up quickly, become independent, and take on roles as translators, breadwinners, and caregivers (Boyden, 2004; Shakya et al., 2014). Sometimes these young people also shoulder larger social responsibilities of reversing the dehumanizing processes and carrying their communities to psychological recovery (Volkan, 2018). Simultaneously, they give up the ability to act impulsively, experience the world afresh and think freely, or have the very characteristics unique to adolescence (Winnicott, 2005, p. 147).

Girls, especially in their adolescence, partake in household chores, and refugee daughters become caregivers and domestic workers very quickly, often at the cost of their schooling and other learning opportunities (Boyden et al., 2002). Without their parents, the Aguirre sisters travel and live on their own, sometimes with newly met friends, and other times with no adult supervision at all. At one point, Ale decides to run away and live with another family. Her parents have no idea (Aguirre, 2012, p. 3). Meanwhile, across the world at the Palestinian refugee camps, Nahlah manages to escape domestic work as her older teen sister takes on the majority of the cooking and cleaning (Ayed, 2013, p. 39).

Adding to Winnicott's (2012) theory that adult accountability obstructs childhood imagination, Mishra-Tarc (2017) argues that make believe and play provide a "little symbolic space to voice the unimaginable acts [children] experience, witness, take responsibility for and hold inside" (n.p.). In other words, the inner life of the asylum seekers must be a safe place to turn to so that representations of past traumas can reveal themselves in healthier and productive ways. Refugee children are already susceptible to great guilt for the atrocities created by adults. High levels of anxiety during escapes and instability of camps lead to young

people thinking they are responsible for the chaos, violence, and despair surrounding them, and that they are in some control of changing their state. The more “mature” issues and reduced latency period are part of refugee-ness and these factors makes for less creative mindsets and problem solving strategies. Adult caregivers who nourish their children’s imaginations and inner worlds are imparting to them skills to think differently about the various crises they encounter.

Take Half an Onion to School

Schools are primarily places of teaching and learning, but they have also been renowned as sites of discovery, innovation, play, conflict management, and resolution (Rousseau et al., 2005; Ingleby & Watters, 2002). For people of colour, school can cause the re-emergence of trauma, sorrow, and further alienation (Fanon, 1961/2007; Albanese, 2016). Refugee camps have limited resources and parents struggle to enroll and keep their children in schools due to a lack of funds, space, or accessibility (Hyndman, 2000). Host states and the UNHCR (2016) have a hard time building facilities that protect students from natural elements and essential services such as food, water, and sanitation. Lack of security and the inability to stop violence from occurring prevents many parents from sending their children to classes. Socio-political events that occur outside can easily seep into refugee schools and cause chaos. Such crises are often the result of political activists and combatants housed in camps alongside civilians who may have little or no interest in their cause (Boyden et al., 2002). In addition, the normal anxiety-inducing occurrences of schooling like evaluations and receiving test scores are as daunting for refugee students as they are for any pupil.

Nahlah struggles to be true to herself, regardless of the cultural norms in the camp, and finds school to be an outlet. The Ayed sisters are model students, singled out to be teachers’ assistants. However, the classes are very stressful. These girls witness teachers and administrators using large sticks to whip the hands of disobedient students. These abusive occurrences fortify the effects of ranking children according to final grades:

In grade three (grade *three!*), I was confronted with the calamitous prospect of being labelled second-rate and my memory of it is disturbingly clear. It was the last day of school and the teacher read the year-end results out loud ... The girls in third place and second place graciously accepted the applause. Then the teacher uttered the name of the girl in first place and it was not me. I was horrified and humiliated. (Ayed, 2013, p. 34)

Living as refugees in Amman, Palestinians feel “second-rate” by virtue of their statelessness and desperation for basic needs. Nahlah cannot tolerate being thought of second-rate in class, too. She is devastated to find her efforts are unfruitful. In a state of horror and humiliation, she continues, “After what seemed like forever, the teacher announced that I had tied for first. Both the other girl and I had an average of 98” (Ayed, 2013, p. 34). Nahlah feels seen and relevant. Competing for top scholastic positions starts early on and has great value, but it is emotionally trying. In the case of refugee children whose parents emotionally manipulate them to do well academically, it becomes a necessary action and integral part of their identities.

Nahlah’s mom obliged her children to do well. The refugee daughter writes that her mother told them that their father “was the source of our sustenance, the provider of our livelihood and it was to him that we owed good behaviour and good marks. It was a powerful weapon effectively wielded by Mom” (Ayed, 2013, p. 36). Developmental psychoanalysts would say that this form of control and discipline creates a false sense of self. Winnicott emphasizes that parents should aim to be “good enough,” with patience to tolerate their children’s emotional expressions. Well-behaved children, according to Winnicott (2012, p. 195), are emotionally abnormal. They create False Self personalities that look compliant or good externally. However, these children suppress instincts of hate, anger, selfishness and greed. Nahlah’s mother runs the risk of raising children who espouse a False Self. These types grow up unsatisfied with a need to please (Winnicott, 2012, p. 191).

The insecurity of camp schools makes it difficult to break away from ethnic binaries due to group conflict. Strife between factions does not vanish outside of the conflict, because their members travel across borders and reside in new states, while the original conflict remains

unresolved (Boyden et al., 2002; Hamburger, 2018). Host countries take heated violent clashes between refugees, especially along borderlands, as insignificant, reinforcing the disposability of individual asylum seekers. In the experience of young refugees like Nahlah, host state politicians ignore asylum seekers' concerns. Such actions lower school attendance and further violence on campuses.

Nahlah recalls the terror caused by protests. She describes that to her as “a child, [the protests] felt like the end of the world.” In her words, “People seemed to have gone mad, threatening to upset the order of things” (Ayed, 2013, p. 33). Nahlah clarifies that this kind of violence lead caregivers to becoming overly protective. She remembers, “For days afterwards, girls would be missing from our classes, kept home by parents upset by the unpredictability of anger freely expressed, however briefly” (p. 33). Authorities chase down and apprehend “delinquent” youth from schools, especially if they are suspected of being involved in demonstrations (p. 33). The sudden shock of military interference and weapons (including gas) is traumatic. Under such circumstances, “children were made to carry half an onion with us to class – supposed antidote to tear gas – just in case a protest broke out” (p. 33). It is unfathomable that students carry such remedies in order to deal with the aggression of mostly adults. Students risk their mental and physical wellbeing in order to attend classes in camps.

In the narratives set in Amman and Bolivia, children and youth are at risk of having tear gas and rubber bullets launched at them (Ayed, 2013, p. 33; Aguirre, 2014, p. 115). Carmen travel across Latin America and documents the different ways civil unrest hits academic institutions there. For example, at the Northern Institute high school in Bolivia, her classmates included both the country's dictator's son and a cocaine dealer's daughter (Aguirre, 2012, p. 114). The presence of children of opposing and very powerful adults creates an atmosphere of antagonism and fear of an outburst. At one point, youth protestors take over the PA system to play illegal revolutionary music. They also announce the need for political change and distribute pamphlets from the rooftop of the school (p. 115). This occurs while national guards keep

watch. In Argentina, Carmen witnesses military personnel who patrol hallways in order prevent clashes (pp. 157, 159). Schools inevitably become sites of contention when they are situated in volatile environments and in states that do not recognize the hurting marginalized population. There is no mention in the memoir of any school spaces or resources, including teachers or administrators, that provide conflict resolution or healing support.

Many refugee camps lack schools altogether, and it is incumbent on residents to do what is necessary to secure their children's literacy and academic development. In the dire circumstances of Malay camps, Nguyen's mother "still had high hopes for our future," especially when she found an "accomplice" to start English classes. The young girl reflects, "He was young and certainly naïve because he dared to flaunt joy and light-heartedness in the midst of the dull and empty daily lives" (Thúy, 2009, p. 8). Nguyen makes it clear that it is with her mother's efforts that some kind of formal learning occurs for the Vietnamese asylum seekers' kids. She repeats that learning English is not the main goal of the classes her mother organizes. Instead, "we all showed up because he [the teacher] was able to raise the sky and give us a glimpse of a new horizon, far from the gaping holes filled with the excrement of the camps two thousand people" (p. 8). In the terribly unsanitary and malnourishing conditions of the Malaysian refugee camp, this teacher and his classes make a world of a difference. The camp children already feel ostracized for being on the other side of ethnic lineages and for their parents carrying oppositional political ideologies. The makeshift "school" gives the students a sense of hope and optimism.

Ru documents the power of imagination. The teacher encourages the students to visualize a world beyond their immediate surroundings. The Vietnamese children begin to see "a horizon without flies, worms and nauseating smells," a time when "we would no longer eat rotting fish ... when rations were handed out," and the "desire to reach out our hands and catch our dreams" (Thúy, 2009, p. 17). Disguised as English lessons, in reality a young teacher opens up space for fantasy and a way to see a new world. This tool for healing evokes Fanon's

(1952/2008) resolution to the binary conditions of inferiority. Essentially, this cognitive schema momentarily reframes current negative life experiences in the camp with symbols and fantasy to more positive mindset. Children learn to cope with daily camp stresses because they begin to believe there can be a better future. Children can learn to move inwards creatively and positively with the assistance of teachers and other caring adults, so that they develop emotional capabilities to tolerate and even heal psychosomatic responses to traumatic episodes.

Schools are a representation of the societies in which they are located (Murrell, 2007), and educational institutes for refugees are no different. The Malay camps for refugees do not have any classes set up, because the state is ill-prepared for the influx of refugees and the longevity of their stay. By contrast, the Amman camps have been around for decades, and the Palestinians make education a top priority. They manage to establish several institutes for various age levels (Ayed, 2013, p. 34). However, social and political outrage at the ill treatment of refugees and sporadic conflicts affect the safety and mental wellbeing of school goers. As Carmen's narrative shows, Latin American children and youth of the 1970s are also not immune from the political and economic turmoil seen in angry public demonstrations at schools in the region either. While assembly is necessary to denounce oppression, host states ignore refugee voices or any critique. Nahlah points out, "Predictably, state television – the only television available back then – never acknowledged the protests either. Rarely were the camps ever mentioned at all. It was as if they didn't exist" (Ayed, 2013, p. 33). The unrest exemplifies the unrecognized subaltern's screams; when the subaltern tries to raise its voice as a collective, the noise of "opinions" is muzzled (Arendt, 1968; Spivak, 1994).

Upheavals push critically conscious youth to become politically involved in bringing awareness to the struggles of their people. In their late teenage years, both Carmen and Nahlah work through the terrors of dissent they witnessed on the streets of the third world. Both girls experience traumatic situations. They create a sense of self beyond the limits that boxed and

fixed them, especially through family encouragement and academic development. When they return to Canada, Carmen and Nahlah speak out publicly about the need for socio-political reforms in their native lands. Carmen hands out pamphlets, organizes information sessions, and participates in Chilean resistance solidarity work in Vancouver (Aguirre, 2012, p. 79). As a young university student, Nahlah joins the antiwar movement and advocates for an end to American aggression in the Middle East (Ayed, 2013, p. 63). Their vocal repetition and demand for agency in Canada, a safe distance away from the horrors they saw, allows for working through their loss of home, cause, and childhood. Their resilience is evident in their narratives and altruistic socio-political involvement.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the refugee camp experience as described by the memoirs and vlogs, with attention on this environment's impact on the subjectivity of the adolescent refugee. The camps are not free from the political strife of the outside conflicts their inhabitants have "fled." The physical conditions are deplorable and do not meet the needs of the usually large influx of asylum seekers. So, while refugees feel grateful for living in relative peace, their innumerable losses, including safety, freedom of expression, and sense of belongingness, makes remaining in the camps an increasingly dehumanizing process. This is especially true in descriptions of makeshift tents, rotten food, and lack of basic amenities. Ironically, refugees are "pathological", and require medical documentation to support a clean bill of health for settlement applications to get out the camps (Government of Canada, 2019b). Refugees also show resilience through immense resourcefulness and tolerance for their circumstances, adapting by building houses and classrooms.

The effects on the developing refugee psyche and body cannot be disregarded. Young displaced people construct their personal coping mechanisms by learning from adults and self-soothing through play, art, and fantasy. From a very young age they accept responsibility for

their family's protection. Due to the fear instilled from childhood, especially around illegal activities, young people often take decades to work through their traumas by talking about them openly. The talking cure requires refugees to feel safe, trusting, and free from any kind of persecution against themselves and their loved ones. As more asylum seekers break family secrets and give grand meanings to their life experiences, we will learn from their pasts as well.

Chapter 6: Paradoxical Spaces for Paradoxical Subjectivities

This chapter examines adolescent refugees' experiences coming to Canada and how the processes of entry and settlement influence their subjectivity. Here, the internalization of the colonial inferiority complex, which began in the native land and during the war experience, continues to play out. Refugees face further losses and traumatic events. As newcomers, adolescent refugees deal with family, financial, and educational challenges. I argue that previous experiences (such as those discussed in the last three chapters) make adolescent refugees more tolerant of their Canadian resettlement challenges and force them to be resilient in this country – creating the life paradox young refugees live in. Institutions like the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) and schools impact adolescent asylum seekers' behaviour under pressure and their eventual degree of acculturation. These young people find themselves in between old native practices and new western customs, negotiating and creating hybrid identity markers. These young people acknowledge and exist in the worlds of both their parents and their settler peers. Moreover, interactions with teachers, immigration officers, and bosses are very important to their sense of belonging. At this stage in adolescent development, group association and friendships are very important. Parents and caregivers model how to deal with unfairness by sometimes remaining silent and other times visualizing futures despite racist, xenophobic, and other prejudicial treatment. My research findings show that higher education has an especially profound impact, as post-secondary involvement teaches adolescents how to intellectualize and bring their liminality to the centre of their identity formation and how to articulate their traumas. Some turn to unique, unconventional, and artistic expressions like writing, storytelling, art, and music as methods to mobilize their agency. As therapeutic practices, these allow youth to engage with past traumas, all the while becoming increasingly vocal about their current situation.

Judgment

Refugee claimants' first point of interaction with Canadian officials is generally through their meeting with IRB personnel. The IRB is an independent wing of the federal Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). It is responsible for making decisions regarding whether refugee claimants meet refugee status criteria. This Board carries out court-like procedures within and outside of Canada at official metropolitan sites to confirm the validity of applicants' life stories (Government of Canada, 2017b). The main condition that an asylum seeker must meet in order to claim legal status as a refugee according to the Geneva Convention is a "well-founded fear of persecution." There is an obvious paradox present in the IRB's binary logic that manifests in "legal" procedures but simultaneously produces "illegal migrants." Applicants are criminalized, and the IRB holds the power to officially reject claimants on lawful grounds (Casas-Cortes, 2014). If the asylum seeker's presence is no longer authorized it is considered "illegal," and often such individuals are immediately returned to their country of origin (Scheel & Ratfisch, 2014). Several of the adolescent refugee narratives analyzed for this dissertation present details regarding treatment by Canadian officials.

Asylum seekers feel humiliated and violated when they interact with IRB personnel. In addition to criminalized, refugees are often pathologized. Part of the entry process involves refugees undergoing a medical examination conducted by Canadian specialist at certified medical facilities. Nguyen, at age ten, meets a Canadian medical official who objectifies her, reducing her to a basic corporeal shell. Nguyen writes, "The doctor on call didn't speak a word to me. He tugged the elastic of my pants to confirm my sex instead of asking *boy or girl?*" (Thúy, 2009, p. 18). Nguyen both protests and understands her reduction. She excuses the behaviour of the Canadian medical doctor by blaming her low body weight, caused by malnutrition. She says, "the appearance of a ten-year-old boy and a ten-year-old girl must have been much the same, because of our scrawniness" (p. 18). This incident indicates a lack of regard for the

humanity of the pre-teen refugee. Her body is treated like an object, and her sex is determined in the most disrespectful manner, without a care for the living, feeling, breathing being.

In *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon (1952/2008) challenges western racist psychology and its pathologizing of the non-western minds by locating disease in the colonial or neocolonial relationship itself. Fanon writes that the trauma inflicted by racism objectifies and it creates a “suffocating reification” (p. 89). Using Fanon’s theoretical perspective, Nguyen’s experience is an example of a colored person being seen as “an object among other objects.” Fanon describes the shattering that happens due to the gaze of the Other (i.e. white, settler population). He writes, “Locked in this suffocating reification, I appealed to the Other so that his liberating gaze, gliding over my body suddenly smoothed my rough edges, would give me back the lightness of being.”) In a similar manner, Nguyen is seeking a “gaze,” an acknowledgement of her humanness from the white Canadian doctor.

According to Fassin (2001), the body of the refugee is a paradoxical site: the legitimacy of the suffering body, proposed in the name of a common humanity, opposes the illegitimacy of the racialized body, asserted in the name of difference. Fassin explains that “in the first case, the Other comes from outside and the treatment of his/her body depends on the hospitality of the host country. In the second, the Other is already inside and the treatment of his/her body calls into question the social order” (p. 4). Medical doctors and screening processes assist in the body becoming the “site of inscription for the politics of immigration” (p. 4).

Dealing with doctors, border officers, and other Canadian officials as part of IRB or CIC processes exudes feelings of both hopefulness and degradation for the young asylum seeker. More than three decades after Nguyen’s experience, another adolescent asylum seeker specifies a very traumatic experience at the hands of the IRB officers. Ayanda explains what happens as soon as he lands:

For me the YUL [Montréal’s airport code] is a reminder of a moment that is more somber than joyous... I would first have to endure humiliating treatment at the hands of the airport immigration officers who practice police-like authority, taking

mug shots and detaining me in an empty room, fit for a criminal. A water fountain and a bathroom were the only two things I was entitled to. And after thirteen hours of waiting, I would eventually be released at 2 am and left to find my way into the new world. Welcome to Canada! (Dube, 2014)

After this cold introduction, 17-year-old Ayanda navigates his way and creates a stable life in Canada. The Zimbabwean native makes it clear that Canadian officials treated him like a criminal as soon as he arrived by following protocol set in place for convicts. To make matters worse, he was out on the streets in the middle of the night, discarded like trash by the officers. This Canadian welcome occurs at the end of a “long and treacherous journey full of all the obstacles that life throws at you” (Dube, 2014). He excuses the unfair treatment as part of an asylum seekers’ inevitable lifelong struggles.

Ayanda demonstrates resilience through his conviction of a positive outcome from his forced migration to Canada. He explains how he feels in the following way: “Arriving with nothing but one piece of luggage, a ton of hope, a smile, and the belief that one day from the seed of little worldly possessions, I will reap success, love, and a sense of belonging” (Dube, 2014). Adolescent refugees are still capable of an optimistic outlook, even after dealing with IRB representatives and past compounded negative treatments. Research conducted by Daniels et al. (2012) aligns with my argument that working through trauma necessitates creating new meanings about the endured hardships. If the individual believes that he can learn and grow from both positive and negative life experiences, it facilitates a better life after adversity (Daniels et al., 2012, p. 327; Masten, 2014).

Meryem also finds herself having to convince IRB members that if she and her mother return to their native Algeria they will face persecution. At age 13, she sang a song on national television in that country. The episode made her a target and was the main cause of her family’s displacement (Saci, 2014). Meryem describes waiting six months for the IRB trial, dealing with the anxiety of making sure that her mother has their story straight. It is not good enough for refugees to claim asylum, that they are escaping life-threatening circumstances; the IRB

demands evidence of it. As a general rule, the IRB does not question underage asylum seekers, especially when their parents are present (Government of Canada, 2017b). Meryem intervenes at the trial when her mother becomes emotionally distraught because of the intense interrogation:

So, I just told them [IRB members and translators] straight “I don’t even care if you accept us at this point or not because that’s what’s wrong with this system. This is what’s wrong with this system. You’re not human enough. You’re too much into your paper system. Dadadadadaaa which is missing the whole point. You’re going to throw us back into that country and we’re going to die on your conscience.” (Saci 2014)

Meryem makes it very clear to the IRB that their treatment of her mother is not only unacceptable, it is dehumanizing. The push for paper proof and hostile probing takes away from the compassion that the board is supposed to exude. Meryem is fully aware of the possibility of detainment and being branded criminal by IRB members. However, she courageously refuses to accept their harsh treatment of her mother. She strongly articulates that the IRB’s reliance on paper proof is unfair because the majority of asylum seekers, like herself, do not have the privilege of collecting important documents to prove the threats against their lives.

She realizes that the only way to prove the danger that she faces in Algeria is to sing the very political song that put her life in jeopardy. Meryem tells the IRB staff, “if you don’t believe us, then let me sing. Let me sing! Let me sing! Let me sing to show you what it is... I sang the song that I sang in Algeria. The song starts out [sings in Arabic] ‘My brothers do not lose hope. Do not lose faith’” (Saci, 2014). Meryem’s recollection is very passionate. The courage to express herself and perform in front of the Canadian officials impresses the adults in the room. Her body language during the retelling is filled with both anger and hope. She remembers the song was not perfect. She says the prosecutor reacted rudely, saying “it’s not Céline Dion, but yea it’s nice.” Meryem rolls her eyes. However, the judge showed more consideration for the young girl when he received the translation of the lyrics. According to Meryem, “The judge, honestly, appreciated it. The judge said, usually you have to wait a month for this, but yea,

welcome to Canada! You're accepted." Meryem has a huge grin on her face as she tells this part to viewers.

Singing the anti-war melody provides the unconventional, non-paper evidence that convinces the board to grant Meryem's family asylum. Having already witnessed the tragedies of war, escaping with forged documents and finally making it to Canada developed Meryem's strong sense of self and courage. An example of the trauma-resilience paradox plays out when the most vulnerable speak up and return the gaze. The past unravels, and the victim of refugee-ness begins to heal.

Meryem's and Ayanda's stories are not unique, as the CIC and the IRB are very specific about who they admit into Canada and the types of supporting documentation needed. However, the treatment of adolescent refugee claimants, Meryem states, is "not human enough" (Saci, 2014). It lacks empathy and emotional hospitality. Refugees are not only running away from war; they have endured episodes of verbal or even physical violence, precariousness, and humiliation by the time they arrive at Canada's doorstep. Once in front of officials, these youth feel disgrace. The refugee narratives examined consistently display a pattern of mistreatment by the IRB (Saci, 2014; Thùý, 2009; Dube, 2014; Alsalman, 2014). These young asylum seekers are at the mercy of bureaucratic limitations, needing to prove, validate, and verify their victimhood and selfhood. When they arrive with so much hope and desire for betterment, they are reminded of their position as less than and other, and their minority status.

Shattering Silent Racism

While feelings of inferiority are not new to displaced people, as newly admitted refugees they encounter racism in host societies. Adolescent refugees' experiences of racism in Canada in particular shape their subjectivities in potentially damaging ways. Fanon illustrates the bodily fragmentation produced by racism through his encounter with a white child on a train in Lyon. The child repeatedly shouts, "Look! A Negro!" While the exclamatory phrases first appear in the

opening of the chapter, “The Lived Experience of the Black Man,” they repeat multiple times throughout it. Fanon (1952/2008) outlines his personal experience of the shattering:

Locked in this suffocating reification, I appealed to the Other so that his liberating gaze, gliding over my body suddenly smoothed of rough edges, would give me back the lightness of being I thought I had lost, and taking me out of the world put me back in the world. But just as I get to the other slope, and the Other fixes me with his gaze, his gestures and his attitude, the same way you fix a preparation with a dye. I lose my temper, demand an explanation... Nothing doing. I explode. Here are the fragments put together by another me. (p. 89)

At first, Fanon is able to maintain his calmness, but then the child becomes frightened: “The lovely little boy is trembling because he thinks the Negro is trembling with rage, the little white boy runs to his mother’s arms: ‘Maman, the Negro’s going to eat me’” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 93). Fanon experiences the acute shattering of his being; he explodes. The experience of race is formed through the gaze of white people. The gaze of the Other objectifies and fragments the racialized person’s subjectivity.

According to Fanon (1952/2008), there is a dialectic relationship between the body and the spatial and temporal world. He writes “It [the body schema] is not imposed on me; it is rather a definitive structuring of myself and the world – definitive because it creates a genuine dialectic between my body and the world” (p. 91). In other words, the world interacts with the body and vice-versa; connections, dilemmas, relationships, perceptions, and losses are developed and destroyed as the body negotiates through time and its allocated space in the world. Fanon (1952/2008, p. 90) reasons that the racialized other exists in relation to the white man. He describes his experience: “In the train, it was a question of being aware of my body, no longer in the third person but in triple” (p. 92). The reality for many people who belong to racialized communities is, in Fanon’s words, that “the Other, the white man has woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories” (p. 91). Engagement with people in a white settler society like Canada forces the black or racialized person to deal with reactions shaped through history, myths and taught behavior about certain bodies who belong and those who do not.

Carmen explains that her skin colour and poverty made people fearful of her and her family. "In Canada, people had sometimes crossed the street when they saw us coming, just because we were poor and brown" (Aguirre, 2012, p. 50). This episode is very similar to Fanon's (1952/2008) description above about being fixed. Such prejudicial practices solidify the internalization of being othered for a young person navigating her/his subjectivity. The racism Carmen experiences indicates the profound impact of her skin colour and treatment in the decision to return to Latin America for the remainder of her adolescence.

At the store, Nahlah's parents make a concerted effort to work hard and not indulge in any kind of misconduct. However, there are provocations:

[Nahlah's parents] were speaking in Arabic to each other one day behind the counter when a customer, unprompted, roared at them: "How did *you* get here? How did you get into Canada?" My mother tried to actually answer the question. "The same way you did, sir," she said. To that, the man shouted, "You're all baby killers! Terrorists!" and walked out. (Ayed, 2013, p. 57)

When Nahlah cites this story, she admits "My parents were confused and deeply hurt, even though several other customers apologized to them for the man's appalling behaviour" (p. 57). Akin to Fanon, the Ayeds are shattered during such incidents because they realize their otherness. As such, the "camel-jockey," "baby killer," "terrorist" (p. 57) confronts her own alterity and foreignness to the dominant white settler population. Even if the Ayeds stand for all that Winnipeg is conceptually, there are settlers who do not agree with their physical presence in the city because of their Arab heritage.

Keeping silent is a coping and survival method for many refugees. Nahlah's parents set the tone for the children about how to react to the racism they face – remain quiet. Her mother emphasizes, "We didn't want any trouble, it's how we've always been since we came here [Winnipeg]. It's what we've learned to do to survive. So, we didn't tell anybody. Didn't complain" (Ayed, 2013, p. 57). Most often those granted asylum want to be model citizens. To speak up is

to demonstrate ungratefulness to the benevolent state, to create “trouble” or “complain.” What Nahlah’s mother says shows how refugees, no matter how far they have come from the wars and camps, can remain in survival mode. They will avoid taking any actions that will jeopardize the life they created for their families. The multiplicity and diversity of Winnipeg makes Nahlah conceptualize the racism she and her family endure as isolated situations that should not deter them from the life and humble abundance they enjoy (p. 59). Silence is a sign of resigning to subjugation. It can coincide with refusing to speak or the dominant system refusing to listen (Bhabha, 1994).

There are other instances in which the family questions their place in Winnipeg. For example, CSIS officers approach Nahlah’s father and question him about Middle East politics, particularly regarding the first American war against Iraq (Ayed, 2013, p. 63). Like many Arab Canadian families, her parents feel Canadian authorities put them in a defensive position, made to demonstrate their loyalty to Canada or their ethnic origins. The CSIS agents come with many questions. Nahlah explains, “My mother was furious about the insulting idea implicit in the man’s questions – indeed his very presence – that Arab Canadians might pose some kind of security threat because they opposed the war back home” (p. 64). Nahlah is upset for “being singled out.”

By writing her memoir, she brings to consciousness that resettling in Canada, as much as it had been a fantasy since her exile, is not as fanciful as she imagined. Upon reflection she says, “It occurred to me for the first time that it might not be up to us to define ‘home,’ that others would ultimately judge whether we were as loyal to it as we claimed” (p. 64). We hear Nahlah’s shattering self in the dialectical exchange between her body and her world, Winnipeg. Her conceptualization of being a part of the multicultural Canadian identity perhaps “existed only in colourful brochures put out by the government” (p. 65). In reality, her subjectivity is up for renegotiation because of various shattering racist and xenophobic actions carried out by certain settlers and state representatives.

Failure to develop generative use of fragments of the self leads to what Erikson (1968) terms “identity confusion” (p. 131). Negotiating one’s race, gender, and belonging in the world is often a central task for adolescence. For refugees, it appears to be continuous and even more potent as they grow up. For example, Nguyen is aware of her otherness in terms of race when she is an adult: “My employer, who was based in Québec, clipped an article from a Montréal paper reiterating that the ‘Québec nation’ was Caucasian, that my slanting eyes automatically placed me in a separate category” (Thúy, 2009, p. 79). Such actions are devastating. She scrambles to make sense of the event, “even though Québec had given me my American dream, even though it had cradled me for thirty years” (p. 79). Nguyen’s sense of Canadian identity and belonging is erasable because of her phenotypic difference and the dominant populace’s perception of who a “Canadian” or Quebecer ought to look like.

Just as the black Antillean Fanon (1952/2008, p. 189) cannot shed his skin color in France, neither can the Vietnamese refugee Nguyen transform the slant of her eyes. She questions rhetorically, “Whom to like, then? No one or everyone?” (Thúy, 2009, p.79). Here we hear the position of many refugees who feel that they do not belong anywhere, neither in their native lands nor in Canada. They try to claim “everyone” or both identities but when racism fragments their subjectivity, the racialized minority considers the alternatives to integration and assimilation. The identity crisis of adolescence is not entirely resolved for the refugee because even as grown adults her/his body is not entirely accepted in the world, her/his fragments are not fully integrated.

Ayanda contends that the very nature of large Canadian metropolitan cities includes questioning the identity of their residents. His opinion is that “the beauty of living in the city of Montréal is the idea that, almost no one living in Montréal is from Montréal, and because of this we’re submerged in a culture in which we’re forever asking the fundamental question, Where are you from?” (Dube, 2014). To be an outsider is commonplace in urban centres of Canada due to their large immigrant populations. The racist undertones of questioning the ethnic origins

of people becomes neutralized. He goes on to say that the question of identity is quickly followed by “How long have you been here? And why are you here? These questions are the foundation of every Montréal story” (Dube, 2014). The questioning of identity is so basic that it is normal and expected. But it is also a continuous reminder of the adolescent refugee’s difference or otherness, leading to feelings of isolation and disconnectedness.

The greatest sadness about many refugees and immigrants is that they think that these cities are devoid of Aboriginals. The idea that the Indigenous populations of Canada remain exclusively on reserves continues the myth of white settler populations as the legitimate inhabitants of this nation. Immigrants, including refugees, are often complacent in benefiting from colonization. Wider society condones the position of the refugee as outsider; and so does Ayanda by accepting that “almost no one living” here is from here.

The question of subjectivity is a lifelong inquiry for refugees. Narcycist says that, for him, adolescent identity question— like Who am I? Where am I from? What part of my identity should I defend and for how long – “goes on, to this day” (Alsalman, 2014). The refugee’s feeling of otherness and liminality continues into adulthood. In addition, the refugee’s race or ethnicity continues to be a theme and an integral and inescapable part of her/his identity. After achieving citizenship, refugees continuously consider the cultural, social, and political factors that shape who they are. Settlers and host country policies continuously challenge refugee subjectivity well into adulthood. Even when the members of this group feel they have overcome their otherness, something or someone reminds them otherwise, shattering their subjectivity and thrusting them into the thick of the identity crisis. Their past trauma is compounded with that of racism, and they again start to pick up the pieces of who think they are or want to be and who they are labeled as, in order to make “another me” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p.89). As I suggest in the conclusion, the adhesive to bringing together shattered pieces of the past and during the state of resettlement is what I discuss as “hyphenation,” a form of hybridization or cohesively integrating the various fragments.

Janitors

The life stories examined for this dissertation portray socio-economic setbacks as part of refugee-ness. Forced migrants generally escape with just the clothes on their backs and lack language competency in English or French. Most often they take on menial labour jobs to make ends meet (Shakya et al., 2014). Parents often times do not have the necessary means to protect themselves or their children against systemic barriers. They need support to develop strong coping mechanisms and community networking or resources to resettle successfully (Bokore, 2012). The refugee narratives analyzed for this dissertation show that parents and children work together to become more financially stable. The adolescent refugee internalizes a strong work ethic and sense of responsibility to create their own personal sense of socio-economic stability. The biographies suggest that poverty is part of their identity that these young people express it as something to overcome and drop as a marker of who they are.

The impact of prematurely taking on the task of overcoming financial setbacks can be grave. These adolescents generally witness their parents' socio-economic status drop and see the shame their caregivers feel for accepting low-paying jobs. So, the adolescent refugee confronts another factor of her/his inferiority and second-class status in Canada. Fanon's solution for coming out of the colonial inferiority complex is providing youth education, making them aware of their agency, and the collaboration of ministries to develop labour plans for the population (Fanon, 1961/2007, p. 137). I would add that meaningful interpretation of the resettlement saga is also necessary for refugee resilience.

Nguyen's family suffers from severe economic hardships after coming to Canada. For example, "Madame Girard had hired my mother to clean her house, not knowing that my mother had never held a broom in her hands before her first day on the job" (Thúy 2009, 71). Nguyen's parents impart to their children the particular values of pursuing higher education, financial stability, and having a strong desire to be self-reliant. Like many others her age, Nguyen works

during her adolescence. She sews in a garage with her siblings and cousins to make extra cash (Thúy, 2009, p. 113). Despite financial setbacks, they maintain a strong sense of family, and this solid association helps deter immense feelings of alienation for Nguyen.

In the case of Carmen, she expresses her surprise that even with popular support Chilean refugees face a lot of exclusion and economic setbacks. Canadian citizens organized and demanded that Chileans escaping Pinochet's regime be given refuge in Canada (Aguirre, 2012, p. 6). However, these refugees continue to struggle in the long run. Carmen's aunts, uncles, and the majority of "first world exiles were janitors" (pp. 46, 112, 193). Even though her father has a degree in physics and working knowledge of English, he works as a car washer at a Toyota dealership, runs a paper route, and is the caretaker at the university botanical garden (p. 4). Her father eventually pursues a PhD, but remains poor, unable even to pay for his daughters' flight tickets (p. 101). Carmen explains that Chilean refugees have a very difficult time moving up the social ladder and, in most cases, accept their second-class positions. Systemic barriers are tolerable when refugees compare it to life in the refugee or concentration camps they escaped (p. 46).

Similar to Nguyen, Nahlah works hard with her family to pull themselves out of poverty. For Nahlah, this means that the convenience store her father manages is the most important place, where she invests most of her time and effort (Ayed, 2013, p. 54). The store is not only the family's main source of livelihood but also a place where Nahlah and her siblings become reacquainted with an alienating society; they learn to socialize with locals and improve their English-speaking skills. "The Store did us a lot of good," admits Nahlah. "It gave us kids free job training, skills that later helped get our first real job" (p. 56). The family meticulously plans and tirelessly works to buy and pay off their house in record time and put most of the children through university from The Store's income. Poverty pushes young newcomers to take on responsibilities aiding their parents out of financial distress and gaining economic stability.

Refugees must overcome a high degree of poverty, and for some, like Meryem, this is an exclusionary factor and the source of an unforgettably trying time. Asylum seekers are often not allowed to work or to seek alternative accommodations while waiting for decisions on their claims. Meryem describes her family's life in the first phase of their resettlement: "We didn't have the right to work yet, we didn't have a lot of this stuff [pointing to the furniture around the room] we didn't have. And so, it was kinda tough at the beginning. Most of our furniture and all of our stuff was from the salvation army, from donation from Sun Youth" (Saci, 2014). She repeats "didn't have" over and again. Without appropriate documentation or legal status, asylum seekers cannot start applying for jobs, so they feel a sense of dependency, loss, and embarrassment. It seeps into how youth see themselves as outcasts.

Like many adolescents, Meryem's socio-economic status impacts her sense of self and ability to make friends: "It was shameful for me to go pick up the food. How do you want me to fit in and have friends if everybody's going to be like 'eww' [makes a face], you know?" (Saci, 2014) Getting food from the food bank signifies her family's desperate circumstances. Feeling humiliated and impoverished makes her feel unworthy of new love bonds. She goes on to say, "You're living off the street basically, but only you have an apartment to cover it up" (Saci, 2014). Meryem equates her refugee status to homelessness. She connects the structural disadvantage (related to resource constraints including inadequate housing and nutrition) to limited opportunities for upward mobility and diminished socio-cultural capital (Theron & van Rensburg, 2018, p.168). Meryem's first few years of living in Montréal are financially difficult because she is learning about day to day affairs while trying to establish a sense of stability. For youth, finances correlate to the kinds of clothes they wear, the way others perceive them, and the type of peers they can befriend or be envious of. While financial instability is a norm in most resettlement stories, for youth it informs the individual's identity and self-worth.

This material lack is a continuation of feelings of loss that go as far back as conditions in the native land, experiencing war, becoming exiled, and begging entry into Canada. Refugees

accept multiple structural disadvantages in exchange for basic needs met in Canada. However, the trade-off often leads to their remaining fixed in low-income, crime ridden, racialized neighbourhoods for decades (Theron & van Rensburg, 2018; Shakya et al., 2014). Scholars suggest that further trauma occurs due to acculturative challenges as asylum seekers try to adapt to Canadian norms (Fazel & Stein, 2002; Bokore, 2016). They face new “invisible” borders that place them at the edge of resources and access to work opportunities. According to both Casas-Cortes et al. (2014, p. 25) and Žižek (2016), capitalist regimes of labour manage to create different degrees of precarity and vulnerability according to economic, individualizing, and racist rationales. Refugee subjectivities are highly impacted by how they are positioned between skilled and unskilled labour or legal and illegal work, and these adolescents attest to the resulting feeling of marginalization. Many prioritize economic stability ahead of formal schooling. But minimal research has been done on refugee claimants who arrive in Canada as adolescents and immediately take up wage employment.

Right to Safe Haven

The adolescent needs to have sufficient space, and a strong sense of security and trust, to allow for a process of self-exploration and working through. To heal from the various forms of traumas, both the physical and psychological infrastructure of a person need to be safe from any kind of abuse or threat. One might assume that the adolescent refugee who comes to Canada and experiences relative peace is finally free to tell his/her stories. However, being away from imminent threat is just the start for the process of experimentation and finding methods to make (new) meanings about wars, homelessness, and other layers of loss. For many asylum seekers, achieving permanent residence or citizenship status equates to regaining some of their humanity and greater protection under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Narcycist explains that being Canadian, carrying a Canadian passport, and speaking Canada’s languages make refugees more mobile and marketable throughout the world.

Narcycist's father considers his children's socio-political freedom before choosing Canada as a place to settle his family: "He wanted something better for his kids, so he brought us to Canada. So that's why the first move happened, specifically Montréal because he wanted us to learn French as well. He felt it would be a great asset to move around the world with" (Alsalman, 2014). Immigrating to Canada for the possibilities of pursuing higher education, a better quality of life, and bilingualism are core reasons for choosing Canada as a place of refuge for many asylum seekers (Sambou, 2014; Abdul Hadi, 2014; Aguirre, 2012; Ayed, 2013; Alsalman, 2014).

Many of the testimonies given in the memoirs and vlogs show that the asylum seekers are grateful for escaping. For Carmen, Canada is a safe haven. Her family traveled under the guise of Canadian tourists while they were actually part of the revolutionary movements in Latin America (Aguirre, 2012, p. 159). Canada is also a place to run back to when socio-political situations in the south become too dangerous (p. 261). At other times, Carmine recalls happy memories of her family in Canada when she finds herself in the middle of youth fighting paramilitary officers in the streets of Peru (p. 16) or when she faces the racism (p. 82). While in Vancouver, she brings awareness to the Chilean cause and does other solidarity work (pp. 191–3). For example, Carmen with her family runs a non-for-profit café where socialist sympathizers share their stories and art and showcase resistance projects (p. 193). Being in Canada provides the Aguirre sisters opportunities to catch up on revolutionary literature and perfect techniques of surviving underground (pp. 191–2).

As it is for Carmen, Canada is Nahlah's home base for mental and physical rejuvenation. She puts it poetically, "Winnipeg was where we children were born and where my parents were reborn. It was where we got our first degrees and took our first jobs. It was where our hearts and early friendships flourished" (Ayed, 2013, p. 60). Although Nahlah confesses that her parents can forget neither where they come from nor their tragedies, she admits this country provides a setting for healing to take place. Winnipeg, particularly, is her family's new home. She continues to say, "Winnipeg was *family* despite the fact that we didn't have a single relative there, not even

a distant one” (p. 60). She goes on to eloquently describe her family: “We stood for all that Winnipeg was: a frontier town, diverse, remote, infuriating and chilly, yet unusually friendly, even by Canadian standards, excessively optimistic and strikingly naïve” (p. 60). Canada is a place of rebirth, peace, and socio-economic progress for refugees like the Ayed family.

Nahlah is very clear about the difficulties of refugee-ness, and living in Canada aids in overcoming some of its trauma. Her parents make a conscious decision not to allow the hurdles of resettlement to affect their efforts at living fulfilling lives. She explains:

As for their past, my parents could never forget it, but they were unencumbered by it – and they didn’t attempt to burden us with it. They taught us the value of refusing to hate and the importance of looking forward, not back. They were refugees, yes, but they’d been lucky enough to escape the kind of life some of their relatives endured in host countries that didn’t want them. (Ayed, 2013, p. 59).

Nahlah’s parents focus on building in the present and acknowledging the positives of living in the Canadian prairies. Her personal experience of refugee-ness during her time in Amman provides a point of connection and shared subjectivity with her parents. Their optimistic outlook stems in part from living in a country where the federal government’s rhetoric is positive towards refugees. Displaced people need to feel desired in the host country, especially after residing and passing through so many states that did not want them.

While understanding that Canada has its challenges, the Ayed family is content with making it home because they are able to participate politically in ways that were impossible in Amman. As Hyndman (2012) explains, in the refugee camp the “crisis” of long-term displacement “creates the conditions of an emergency in which the right to ‘don’t-die’ protection for survival is provided, but at a cost: without the right to move, to work or to seek education beyond the minimum provision of a camp” (p. 92). Far away from that place, Nahlah’s parents take an active role in adopting citizenship rights; “they vote, pay taxes, never go on the dole, embrace Trudeau’s multiculturalism and adhere to bilingual status” (Ayed, 2013, p. 54). They obey the law and impress on their children the need to respect authority and play by the rules.

Nahlah's subjectivity is assimilative to the dominant norms and conditions of Canada. She leans on liberal democratic rights to protest in her university days and as an adult journalist she documents conflicts and political issues in the Middle East (pp. 63, 65).

Many adolescent refugees have a deep appreciation for the rights and liberties this country offers its citizens. Deeqa elaborates, "This country literally made me because I grew up here. I spent my teenage life, knowing my rights... In Canada I can write what I want to write, without thinking twice or looking behind me [looks over her shoulder]" (Ibrahim, 2014). These sentiments demonstrate that laws in Canada provide refugees like Deeqa the opportunity to express themselves fearlessly through their choice of words, dress, or music. Deeqa exclaims, "Canada made me proud me to be woman." She feels empowered as a female because the laws protect her against discrimination on the grounds of sex; like all citizens she has the right to vote, own property, and earn a fair wage. Refugee artists like her develop their subjectivity with the freedom to express themselves through creative processes free of political repression. The constitutional laws of the land create possibility of movement, speaking up, and changing the trajectory of the impact of past tragic events. Despite feeling alienated and desiring to belong, adolescent refugees are appreciative of the stability and laws that protect their rights when their claims are accepted and especially when they gain citizenship.

Somebody's Future Success

Successful adolescent refugees in Canada make use of and further develop the defense mechanism of fantasy outlined by Anna Freud (1968). Fantasy entails imagining ways out of the problems of refugee-ness. Often this means finding comfort in another place and time, as the subject mentally distances him/herself from immediate realities (A. Freud 1968, 71). According to Erikson (1965), children between the age of three to five who grow up under normal peace-time circumstances start to envision and pursue valued goals uninhibited by guilt or fear of punishment (p. 121). However, most adolescent refugees have grown up under exceptional

conditions, and this impacts their ability to go inwards and create a mental picture of who they want to be and the kind of life they wish to have. Those who are able to learn to do this fare better. This section will show adolescent refugees employing dream-making and visualization to psychologically escape the immediate challenges of resettlement. The mental process creates a stronger sense of self and propels them to positive mental and work activities that safeguard them from falling into a prolonged state of melancholia. Having an identity reinforced by dehumanizing processes of refugee-ness does not aid in the process of healing. Resiliency occurs when there is consistent working through of such negative self-images. Often times, this requires the adolescent to have a future-oriented mindset.

Caregivers and next of kin usually model defense mechanisms. Nguyen's maternal family is very supportive, and they instill in her the ability to fantasize. Her aunt creates a brilliant gift box containing her visualization of Nguyen's possible future professions:

Aunt Six had written on each of 10 pieces of paper, folded in two and placed in the tea box, the name of a profession, an occupation, a dream that she had for me: journalist, cabinetmaker, diplomat, lawyer, fashion designer, flight attendant, writer, humanitarian worker, director, politician. It was thanks to that gift that I learned there were other professions. That I was allowed to dream my own dreams. (Thúy, 2009, p. 76)

This gift enables Nguyen to think diversely about her future aspirations. The adolescent psyche, especially for a refugee, has difficulty thinking beyond the immediate desire to survive.

According to Winnicott (2005), it is important for the adolescent to think critically, be an idealist, and find various loved objects (imaginative and tangible) to play with. Otherwise, Anna Freud (1968, pp. 264–5) cautions, the adolescent risks becoming pathological when his/her psyche is too fixed, overused, or rigid. Nguyen's Aunt Six essentially gives the adolescent's ego an out; a possibility to be dynamic, a precipice from which to continue developing. It is most likely that while the family may have lost their material wealth, their social capital and epistemology of coping strategies carry forward to the next generation.

Meryem's mother also helps develop her daughter's mental schemas in order to prevent them from foreclosing. She wants to uphold the vision her mother has for her, while becoming a positive role model for younger people. Meryem says about her desire to be a successful singer that she wants to "Not do it just for myself but for the next generation" (Saci 2014). She admits, "I don't want to deceive my mom and deceive all the things she did and that she had to give up or all the sacrifices she had to make and just become something that she doesn't want me to be" (Saci, 2014). Meryem also sees this goal as connected to the place of refugees in society, as going from "coming here as a nobody, as a no status, that part of society, that 'unwanted' part of society, to becoming somebody is probably the most honorable thing you can do." She is committed to a successful future as an artist by moving her life in opposition to how dominant society perceives refugees.

Meryem also inadvertently connects her refugee-ness to Canada's social and racist hierarchy. Consider Fanon's (1952/2008) articulation of the influence of dominant society on the black or racialized body:

He [colonized, racialized body] lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that draws its strength by maintaining this complex, in a society that proclaims the superiority of one race over another; it is to the extent that society creates difficulties for him that he finds himself positioned in a neurotic situation. (p. 80)

Western societies have a racial hierarchy whereby the racialized other is on the lower end. Belonging to minority groups hinders regular development and progress due to structural barriers (Hall, 1988). In the case of Meryem, she feels that she is capable of overcoming her original image as a "no body." She is echoing Agamben's (1998) claim that "refugees are the ultimate 'biopolitical' subjects," but do not hold political relevance due to their "bare life" existence (p. 116).

Meryem's solution to being othered is to reach higher levels of fame, skill, and philanthropy – or what she calls "being somebody." It is not enough to be a citizen to be "somebody". To disconnect the colonial complex will mean to combat the racism that positions

all refugees as homogenous and as outsiders to a white settler state like Canada (Hall, 1988). She understands that representation in culture plays a constitutive as well as a reflexive role and she positions herself to be a part of that cultural production (Hall 1988; MacLellan 2016). Meryem's dismantling strategy is an alternative to Fanon's solution. For him, "at the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude" (Fanon 1961/2007, p. 51). Setting goals, looking forward to a brighter future, and building on her childhood dreams is not an outright revolution in the conventional sense, but it does position her against the repression of the inferiority complex.

Like Meryem, Vox's heritage plays a principal role in how he identifies. He emphasizes the importance of his ethnicity to his subjectivity: "For me, my [Haitian] identity is extremely, extremely important. And you cannot separate; you cannot just ignore your identity. For me you have to have this connection from where you come from, in order to evolve" (Sambou, 2014). Erikson (1968) would attribute this intolerance to integrating more of a western identity as a "necessary defense against a sense of identity loss" (p. 132). It is an unavoidable default position to be loyal to a place of origin when there are too many conflicting ideas and choices to decide. According to Erikson (1968), a positive outcome of the identity crisis stage is "to resynthesize all childhood identifications in some unique way and yet in concordance with the roles offered by some wider section of society" (p. 156).

Said (2000) observes that exiles solve their disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule. He warns that "The exile's new world, logically enough, is unnatural and its unreality resembles fiction" (p. 187). Stephanie and Sundus look to a future where their respective native populations of Rwanda and Iraq are able to move beyond the tragedies of their wars. Their fantasies are utopian in the way Kristeva (2007) articulates the special ability of adolescents to be idealists. Stephanie prays, "But 18 years since the [Rwandan] genocide happened, we're trying to make sure the genocide doesn't happen anymore, destroy, it doesn't exist. We're all the same, we're all Rwandans, we're all humans at the end of the day" (Gasana, 2014). Sundus

optimistically says, “I hope 10 years from now, I won’t have to do art about injustice because I hope there won’t be injustice anymore” (Abdul Hadi, 2014). Said (2000) provides some rationalisation for exiles having these kinds of fantastic visions. He paints the paradox as involving “characteristic styles of being an exile, methods for compelling the world to accept your vision – which you make more unacceptable because you are in fact unwilling to have it accepted” (p.182). While Kristeva (2007) deliberately qualifies belief as an incredible need for adolescent ideality (p. 722), it manifests as a form of imagining alternatives to the current world that exists, but which are impossible to achieve outside the imagination.

As adolescent refugees play with fantasies of the perfect future, they are creating an alternative state of self, mind, and world. Fanon (1963/1988) encourages a new world imagination because the historical world of binaries creates dehumanizing environments. Reframing thinking that is future-oriented happens when caregivers give youth ideas and opportunities to innovate different and tangential journeys. This process makes for more resilient young refugees, because they live with a sense of purpose and fulfillment. These adolescent refugees manage their day-to-day affairs and dare to look past their immediate challenges. This is not to say that the residues of compound traumas do not exist. Rather, despite the second-class treatment these refugees have come to tolerate, they continue to push their physical, mental, and emotional potential.

In-Between-Ness

For the adolescent refugee, the process of identity formation is a difficult balancing act between cultural values, depending on the number of particular identity markers they accumulate through their travels. He/she is in a unique position of possibility, an in-between space characterized by hybridity and the potential for subversion and change (Bhabha, 1994). My research findings confirm that older adolescents gain a greater sense of agency by mixing traditional and western descriptions of self. To be resilient requires bringing painful life

experiences and identity markers from the periphery to the centre. The young refugee's subjectivity must not deny the past and present struggles of alienation and marginalization but rather create a hybrid using available language and performance. The intersecting paradox of the adolescent refugee lies in the necessity to fit in and the expectation to adopt Canadian culture in order to function here, while at the same time, they are to maintain links with their parents and other family members, requiring a high degree of connectivity to their native cultures (Bokore, 2012; Shakya et al., 2014; Sambou, 2014; Fantino & Colak, 2001). Studying the autobiographies of refugee artists shows us the approach of using their in-between positionality to draw together two cultures instead of keeping them separate.

As a freshman in university, rap artist Narcycist finds himself negotiating various integral representations of his ethnicity due to media representations and the dominant negative discourse about Muslim terrorism after the attack on the United States in 2001. The anti-Arab propaganda is extremely difficult to tolerate, even traumatic, for him because he identifies as an Arab-Muslim-Canadian (Alsalman, 2014). He elaborates, "September 11th happened and that completely shifted the board as to who we were in society. [Numbering off his fingers] That affected my music and my writing and my school and what I was studying. So, it permeated on every level." The events of September 2001 and the war on terror that ensued were pivotal to the body-world dialectic and identity formation of many Muslim adolescents living in North America (Sirin & Fine, 2007). Narcycist describes the shattering, "It's not really something that you can really put into words" (Alsalman, 2014).

He admits that a major motivation for the start of his music career was politics and the media representation of Arabs and Muslims, "I was feeling like our people was under attack. My motherland was at war. So, it was really like, middle finger in the air. Like how dare you assume to know who we are?! I found my own way of protesting, which was on stage." Performance provides a socially acceptable platform to talk back against the unfairness and xenophobia he witnesses (A. Freud, 1968). Hall (1990) reminds readers that identity as a "production," "is never

complete, always in process and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (p. 222). This quote speaks to Narcicyst’s constant consideration of how dominant media informs and misrepresents his native people. He responds with counter-arguments through his musical creativity as his body engages in the dialectical exchange with a hostile world.

Narcicyst produces a third space of unique expression, in between the peripheries from which he exists and identifies with. He proclaims, “I’m not trying to give people one side of things because I don’t have one side of things” (Alsalman, 2014). He emphasizes that his views and art expression are not exclusive to his native Iraqi heritage or his Canadian identity. The challenge of bringing together opposing sides of his upbringing further exemplified in the construction of his hip-hop lyrics. He elaborates, “I always wrote two verses: one of them my eastern upbringing and one of them from my western upbringing.” Through his play of words and rhymes, Narcicyst conjoins the world of his childhood and his present challenges as a young Arab Muslim in order to give his audience a better understanding of his identity crisis.

Narcicyst connects with others, like Meryem, who share the objectives of bridging or hyphenating seemingly oppositional cultures and expressions. Meryem also tries to reconcile her native and adopted cultures through her music. She admits, “My [music] style is still very much influenced by where I grew up, the oriental sounds” (Saci, 2014). She fuses these sounds from her native Algeria with western melodies, “So even if I’m singing the blues or R&B or hip-hop or I’m singing any kind of style, you still have that signature note or style that reminds you she isn’t just a Canadian singer.” By meshing sounds, styles, and lyrics from different continents, Meryem develops a unique voice of hope and possibility. The hybridity she creates sets her apart from the majority of other Canadian artists (MacLellan, 2016).

In their life stories and musical expressions, both Meryem and Narcicyst show a fusing of their native perspectives and sounds with western points of view and styles. In performing this kind of hybrid art, they are publicly showcasing the discriminatory effects of dominant representations of their identity markers. They are also introducing “new” culture that is

evolving, in an ongoing process of hybridizations. Bhabha (1994) defines hybridity as “the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal” (p. 159). Erikson (1968) discusses individuals who resolve their own identity crisis “by offering to their contemporaries a new model of resolution such as that expressed in works of art” (p.134). In the hybrid works of these young artists, whose subjectivities are torn between their past lives in their native countries and their present lives in Canada, art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent. It renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent “in-between” space that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present (Bhabha, 2013, p. 109).

Narcicyst and Meryem unsettle both the mimetic and narcissistic demands of colonial power and dominant white settler narratives by not remaining fixed on existential forms that society projects about Arabs and Muslims. Bhabha (1994) writes that hybridity counters “the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority” (p. 159). Recall the shattering effect of racism on the body, psyche, and subjectivity of the racialized other (Fanon, 1952/2008). Hybridization provides a resolution to fragmentation of the self. Meryem and Narcicyst find a niche, voice, and sense of belonging in a third space outside the self-other dualism, ultimately formulating subversion that “turns the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 160).

For some adolescent refugees, generating a sense of self or comprehensive identity is anxiety-provoking and threatening. The reality is that they belong to two (sometimes more) cultures but feel the deep sadness of not belonging to either (Fantino & Colak, 2001). The loss of identity spirals adolescents into a melancholic state. Many refugees never find solace and continue to remain in marginal spaces both in their native and host countries (Ahmed & Aboul-Fatouh, 2012; Akhtar, 1999; Fantino & Colak, 2001). Carmen describes her alienation in both Canada and Latin America: “I understood something: I didn’t exist. I didn’t exist in the Cousin’s life, or in this country [Chile], or in the exile countries of Bolivia or Canada. I didn’t exist anywhere anymore. It was that simple” (Aguirre, 2012, p. 73). Negotiating one’s identity is

difficult enough for any adolescent (Erikson, 1968; A. Freud, 1968; Winnicott, 2005). For those like Carmen whose native land's politics and people still continue to have a strong hold and influence on their life decisions and subjectivity, it is all the more overwhelming.

Carmen is almost unable to pull together the different personalities – Canadian voyager in Latin America and Chilean refugee in Canada. She does not have a chance to explore herself outside the Return Plan. At the age of 21, she finally resettles in Vancouver and has the opportunity to work through the layers of trauma and false selves she cultivated in her time as a revolutionary daughter (Aguirre, 2012, p. 269). Therapists and caring teachers discreetly and methodically take steps with her in formal clinical sessions and theatrical exercises. The void-like third space, where the subject is not integrating shattered pieces, proves for her to be a more devastating state than a liberating one.

Nguyen also experiences a strong sense of estrangement during her life. As an adult, she returns to Vietnam. She speaks in her native language to the restaurant workers, proving her claim to her country of origin. However, she is taken aback when the waiter says she is too fat to be Vietnamese. She reflects, "The young waiter reminded me that I couldn't have everything, that I no longer had the right to declare I was Vietnamese because I no longer had their fragility, their uncertainty, their fears. And he was right to remind me" (Thúy, 2009, p. 78). Unlike other Vietnamese women, Nguyen was "fattened" by her escape to Canada and made unrecognizable to her native people. Here, her brandishing of western culture and posture meant that she did not carry, "all the invincible weight of Vietnam's history like the women with hunched backs" (p. 125). Nguyen is also explicitly told she is not Canadian because of the slant of her eye shape. She exists on the periphery of both the dominant Caucasian population in Canada and the prevailing impoverished native population of Vietnam. Refugees like Nguyen are in a perpetual state of foreignness. Like Carmen, she embraces her in-between-ness more strongly much later in life.

The life stories of refugees who are attempting to balance their native and host cultures correlate directly to Bhabha's (2004) suggestion that hybridization has the capacity to challenge the status quo. He explains the long-term implications: "This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 5). Refugees, in the narratives and stories I examine, do not see themselves as either inside or outside. Adolescents who live in exile like Nancy, Carmen, Nguyen, and Meryem are particularly important because they give language to their status and journey of identity creation. Through their public engagements with native and settler cultures and markers, they essentially become a bridging body for peoples and cultures of the native land and Canada. As Simonis (2012) explains, "hybridization then puts them into a marginalized position within the host as well as the home culture, because as hybrid beings they do not conform to the cultural norms of either culture" (p. 12). Adolescent refugees combat an internalized inferiority complex, and speak as the subaltern by voicing their pain and frustration. It takes courage to formulate an integrated subjectivity. From their in-between-ness, a truth telling emerges about the tensions and pain of integrating identity markers and fragments of old selves.

Community

In this section, I consider how the experience of refugee-ness complicates our understanding of what it means to be a part of a community by exposing what goes into its (re-) imagination. Sentiments of newness not accompanied by feeling respect or care can fundamentally damage the refugee adolescent's sense of self and positionality. In fact, such dissociation from people and peers can further strengthen the sense of exclusion and negative nostalgia, especially during the adolescent stage when peer relationships are an imperative part of development (Visano, 2006; Erikson, 1968). Adolescent refugees complain about having a

hard time making friends and being bullied by classmates (Albanese, 2016; Fantino & Colak, 2001). They often form associations with communities they are familiar with or with people who share their language and customs. My reading of refugee life stories brings forth another kind of association, one founded on shared life journeys or affects from tragic experiences. In “Home and Away,” Sara Ahmed’s (1999) theoretical conceptualization of home involves “forming new communities that create multiple identifications through collective acts of remembering in the absence of a shared knowledge or a familiar terrain” (p. 329). Most adolescent refugees find comfort and solace by remaining in proximity to members of their ethnic communities, because of their shared histories.

Sundus, as an Iraqi immigrant, admits that she remains close to people from her ancestral land and never feels ashamed for being Arab and Muslim, even in the post-9-11 era. She divulges, “All my friends, my parents’ friends were Iraqi. The friends I met at school, the friends that ended up closest to me were Iraqi. It’s just that I think there’s this magnetizing force that pulls people of a displaced group together” (Abdul Hadi, 2014). Her experience shadows Ahmed’s (1999) finding that “the very experience of leaving home and ‘becoming a stranger’ leads to the creation of a new ‘community of strangers’, a common bond with those others who have ‘shared’ the experience of living overseas” (p. 336). The “magnetizing force that pulls people of a displaced group together” that Sundus speaks of, fixes the boundaries implicated in community and identity formation. The shared story of crossing borders and breaking barriers of thought and experience ties many young refugees and immigrants together, but sets them apart from their settler peers.

For Leontine, what helps her heal is a psychosocial arrangement with other Rwandan genocide survivors. She rebuilds a family, full of members who have lived and shared experiences of the genocide. She explains that by “adopting” other orphan Rwandan war victims, she is “no longer alone. I have a new family. I am the mother of this family and I have 16 children – girls and boys. Some of my children are older than me... This is my adopted

family, the family who adopted me” (Uwababyeyi, 2014). The structure provides working-through opportunities in a family-like environment, a space for mutual healing. Ahmed (1999) breaks down how such processes of subjectivity identify “with a history, to find out, to discover, what one has already lost” (p. 330). Leontine explains that the recreation of a family helps to “fight the loneliness” (Uwababyeyi, 2014). Although this correlates to Said’s (2000, p. 173) understanding that living in exile possess an unsurmountable sadness, we understand that the uncommon loss of entire families due to genocide allows these asylum seekers to form deep bonds of care. The shared experience of estrangement allows subjects to form a kind of kinship with one another (Ahmed, 1999, p. 336).

Communal practices of healing help manage experienced trauma. For example, Leontine leads her created family and others in a ritual to commemorate the ethnic cleansing of Tutsis. She recounts, “During the bus tour we took people to the river to throw papers as a ritual that we do here and in Rwanda. Every year in April we remember our people that passed away who were thrown in the rivers. So, taking people there was very meaningful” (Mapping Memories, 2014a). By mobilizing this method of traditional therapy and mourning, the subject is able to create a sense of association with other participants and reconnect with native healing practices. Upholding some socio-cultural cohesion like rituals amidst extremely disruptive occurrences during resettlement can help sustain a community’s capacity for mutual understanding (D. Harris, 2009). As Ahmed (1999) notes, the same factors that unite refugee communities separate them from the dominant settler population and play an integral role in individual and a common identity.

Organizations are also spaces for refugees to create new relationships and find belonging. Many refugees rely on governmental and non-governmental associations to help them navigate through the processes of resettlement. Speaking of one such hub, Ayanda says that “the YMCA represents what is arguably the first home for a number of people coming into Canada as refugees. The Y residence welcomes approximately 2,000 refugee claimants every

year” (Dube, 2014). Ayanda’s stats give some insight on the work the Y does. He continues, “It provides a safe environment for families in the process of their new beginning, in a strange land, and a gateway for them to integrate into Canadian life.” Their services allow asylum seekers to have a place to stay and create networks, while their staff help children enroll in schools and find places of permanent residence. Ayanda goes on to say, “Through the YMCA residence I discovered Montréal multiculturalism at its best with people of many different nationalities bound by the same hopes and dreams.” The community at the Y portrays, in Ahmed’s (1999) words, “the uncommon estrangement of migration that allows migrant subjects to remake what it is they might yet have in common” (p.329).

On a more personal level, Ayanda finds inclusion at the YMCA. He says, “The Y also gave me the first experience of the warm welcoming nature of Canadians. It taught me that living in harmony with others is not at all a difficult task” (Dube, 2014). Positive experiences of interacting and recognizing commonalities create the circumstances to talk about experienced trauma (Felman & Laub, 1992). Ayanda understands, “We were all able to share our struggles, laugh at each other’s jokes” (Dube, 2014). Community establishments like the Y give refugees a sense of belonging, a shared home with those who understand their feelings or “what they have in common” (Ahmed, 1999). The human experiences that provoke sadness and happiness can be similar for those living in exile, even when the individual asylum seekers are from different parts of the world and speak different languages (Ahmed 1999). Feeling welcomed and appreciated is not possible without the workers and volunteers at the Y who facilitate inclusivity, care, and kindness (Dube, 2014). The affective connection between refugees draws them closer together, allowing for adoption and shared ritual.

Adolescents tend to congregate and make associations with others who share the same goals, desires, and worldviews (Visano, 2006). Narcicyst is no different. He says, “I ride with a clique which is ‘Nomadic Massive.’ We all share this one experience, which is ‘nowhere.’ You know? We’re trying to find somewhere” (Alsalman, 2014). The challenge of living in alienation

and exclusion from the mainstream unites this talented group of artists. Ahmed (1999) explains how “the very experience of leaving home and ‘becoming a stranger’ leads to the creation of a new ‘community of strangers’, a common bond with those others who have ‘shared’ the experience of living overseas” (p. 336). The sense of inclusion for Nomadic Massive’s members comes from a common feeling of exclusion from dominant society based on multiple factors: race, type of music, age, and fusion of sounds. Adolescent refugees’ associations heavily influence their subjectivities, particularly because these communities formed based on the vary elements that make them alien: global south, trauma, forced migration and war.

Arendt (1968, p. 293) helps readers understand that what is unprecedented about refugee-ness is not the loss of a home but the impossibility of finding a new one after forceful eviction from the country of origin. Many adolescents in Canada may fear they have no place on earth where they can go without adult restrictions, and no space where they are fully accepted. Refugee youth have personal and sometimes generational desires for a place in the world where they can feel fully free and completely secure – in short, a home. In Canada, they have some opportunities to find and participate in a new community of their own. An important part of countering the alienation felt during resettlement is the collective acts of remembering with other refugees, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. Even though most prefer to associate with those from the same place of origin, their shared history of loss and affective experiences connect them on a deep and meaningful level. Hardships caused by political conflict, displacement, and resettlement provide the conditions for relations of love, the telling of personal truths, and coping as individuals and collectives bear witness to each other’s traumas.

Sublimation

Traditional treatment of trauma often involves narrating and listening to the events, especially through the *psy* disciplines. However, growing research and theories demonstrate that memories of extreme threat undermine speaking abilities, and non-western communities in

western states have a harder time verbally disseminating information regarding the horrors they witness (D. Harris 2009). In this section, I address the difficulties refugees have in verbalizing their thoughts and experiences. Anna Freud (1968) argues that sublimation takes a long time to develop. This defense mechanism allows the adolescent to transform their fluctuating feelings of sadness, elation, aggressiveness, boredom, selflessness, and egocentricity into productive and socially acceptable outlets (A. Freud, 1958, 1968). Artistic expressions readily recover experiences and even provide onlookers with some of their complexities (Erikson, 1968). Some experts believe that art originated as a psychological response to trauma. Johnson (1987) explains how “Art, song, drama and dance in primitive times were motivated by a need for catharsis and for gaining control over threats to the community or to the individual” (p. 13). One of the major contributions of my research is to bring awareness to the impact of creative arts on the refugee adolescents’ capability of working through identity crises and other shattering life events, in the process of being resilient.

Writing Stories

Although articulating organized violence from childhood is very difficult for many, there are other forms of speaking that create nonconventional therapy. If the adolescent refugee narrates difficult episodes in his/her life with “coherent positive resolution,” then the formulized stories around those experiences are more likely to become important self-defining memories (McAdams, 2008, p. 253). These processes in turn remind us of the refugee’s ability to overcome adversity. Both postcolonial and psychoanalytic thinkers see storytelling as an effective method of constructing meaning, witnessing, and leading to potentially positive psychosocial outcomes (Felman & Laub, 1992; Bhabha, 1994; Olson & Worsham, 1998, Hamburger, 2018; Georgis & Kennedy, 2009).

Traumatic events demand more storytelling work and Leontine finds her voice and healing through it. She explains, “I wanted to tell other people’s story, not my story. But after, I

remember, I was writing and then I started: Once upon a time, there was a little girl. She was eight years old and she lived happily. After everything changed” (Mapping Memories, 2014a). Leontine starts to write her own biography despite her initial resistance. She understands that it is necessary for her to do the retelling, because there is no one else who survived to tell it. Confronting the genocide, Leontine finds purpose and meaning in telling her family’s story as part of the *Mapping Memoires* project.

The creative process of storytelling allows Leontine the opportunity to work through the violence and loss she experienced in Rwanda. Georgis (2006) proposes art and narrative as “resources for political imagination and for political recovery: they link us to unthought spaces, to spaces that thought refuses” (p.166). In alignment with her argument, my findings show that refugee stories open the public to the possibility of connecting with the survivors, as witnesses to their horrors. Leontine participates in speaking forums and workshops at schools and on Montréal’s tour buses. Retelling the horrifying experiences of the Rwandan genocide was a struggle for her, but a necessary part of working through. She says, “In the beginning, ahhh my god... I couldn’t look people in eyes... Practice, practice helped me do that.” She realizes, “it took me fifteen years to share my story” (Uwababyeyi, 2014). It takes encouragement and courage to confront the past and tell her survival story.

Leontine finds purpose and meaning not only in sharing her story, but by working with other war refugees. Leontine elaborates “also a nice thing working with others. They help you to do something that you cannot do it alone” (Mapping Memories, 2014a). By connecting with other war survivors as part of Concordia University’s *Mapping Memories* study, Leontine finds a place of belonging and support, in addition to her voice. The reality is that “a voice that cannot be heard collectively or supported institutionally is not a voice that can speak politically” (Georgis, 2006). The work of mourning occurs in conjunction with a developing collective consciousness regarding the place of war trauma in the subjectivity of the adolescent refugee.

Leontine engages with audiences by answering their questions. This extends Canadians' consciousness of refugee-ness through public speaking, giving interviews to national news outlets and submitting vlogs online. She suggests that recalling the horrors of her past and providing answers are extensions of the original trauma and origin of discontent; but from this pain Leontine learns her story is meaningful not only to her, but also to those who are actively listening and later engaging in the question and answer sessions. By sharing her story through video, she engages in a "media production [that] invites other people's feedback and readings, sparking a dialectic that is inherent in mediating and reshaping how we see ourselves and how we think others see us" (Weber & Mitchell, 2008, p. 41). Such public exchanges have the possibility of disrupting the colonial gaze.

Ayanda takes his story one step further and connects it to the larger epidemic of mass forced migration. He critically reflects on government policies regarding refugees by explaining to a group of secondary school students, "We only have 35000 refugees a year and yet a country like Pakistan, which is not as rich as Canada, allows close to two million refugees" (Mapping Memories, 2014a). Ayanda emphasizes that he hopes that recounting his lived experiences as a refugee will inform youth about that population's strengths and struggles. He elaborates, "I wanted to find a way to tell my story and also educate you guys. Not a lot of you know what a refugee is or have ever met one." He is gesturing to the need for more pedagogical spaces where truth can be recited.

Ayanda wants to evoke a sense of empathy for the material and emotional conditions of socio-political inequality that young refugees coming to Canada experience. He gives pragmatic solutions for young adolescents: "Teaching those kids, at least for now, for the thirteen/fourteen-year-old, you see that kid over there, that kid looks out of place. Let's just go and say hi – because people did that for me as well" (Mapping Memories, 2014a). Talking to settler youth and providing them with some information about the history, plight, and experiences of the adolescent refugee, means they will have working knowledge and methods with which to

approach them. Adolescent refugees like Ayanda demonstrate the “unfettered sweep of their thoughts but impressed by the degree of empathy and understanding manifested... by the wisdom they display in their handling of the most difficult problems” (A. Freud, 1968, p.160). Ayanda shows gratitude by saying “And I think that any success I’ve had is because other people who have opened up their arms, hearts and homes to me.” He re-works the knowledge of his traumas and the process of resettlement in order to create new meanings and understandings of what he has seen and heard. Retelling his life story, with gratitude for others who have assisted in his success. His emphases on Canadians who empathized with him removes feelings of alienation and failure.

Psychotherapy aims to accomplish healing through telling stories. The adolescent refugees who employed this method to bring public awareness demonstrate a lot of courage. They verbally repeat their renditions of traumatic events using the language skills they have until they become confident in their retelling abilities and an openness to create meaning beyond the melancholic losses. Through this, dominant media and popular sites become spaces of agency and discourse. The public witness the adolescent refugees’ stories and sorrows, and provide some space and time to acknowledge the human cost of genocide and refugee-ness.

Music

Certain medical or psy professionals use music therapy as a structured form of medical treatment (Laansma & Haffman, 2016), but the refugee life stories analyzed here demonstrate that music, even in an informal, non-structured way, can help adolescent refugees cope and heal. Closely connected with the “in-between-ness” section of this chapter, the narratives discussed in this section show resistance to dominant renditions of adolescent refugee identity through the vocalization of refugees’ marginalization in the lyrics and mixing of traditional tunes with modern sounds. Finding a third place that is neither settler nor native, but actually a mix or hybrid of both, allows for unique cultural dialogue and creation of something entirely new to

culture (Bhabha, 1994). Music allows for the communication of the very difficult and conflictual feeling these youth are dealing with.

Many young asylum seekers recognize music as therapeutic, without the presence of a therapist. Deeqa explains the method and importance of reggae to her healing: “Every time I felt down, I’d put Gregory Isaacs, the whole CD. I’d just sit down and listen to the whole CD and I used to feel better. See, some people may go see a therapist. Me, my therapy was put some reggae on and sit down and listen” (Ibrahim, 2014). Listening to music allowed Deeqa to relax to relatable lyrics and music, and work through the situations that cause her to feel sad. Listening to music, according to recent studies, has shown to be an effective strategy for regulating emotions (Laansma & Haffmans, 2016). The kind of music she is attracted to speaks to her struggles and challenges: “I love reggae, not just the rhythms, the consciousness. It’s for people like me. You see, it gives hope for people like me.” Reggae music not only provides her with a sense of optimism but also expands her critical thinking and self-reflection regarding her positionality.

As an adolescent, Narcycist had to formulate his subjectivity in light of the 9-11 attacks, and hip-hop music became the vehicle for him to articulate his existential conflicts. Narcycist is an Arab Muslim originating from war-torn Iraq, and also a bilingual Canadian living in the modern-western context. As such he chooses to be genuine in his music and lyrics by writing in a way that addresses his experiences and the multiplicity of his identity. In his song “Prince of Poets” Narcycist spits, “My first-hand experience/ My second-class citizen/ Third person verse/ Fourth I’m an immigrant...” (Alsalman, 2014). Arabs and Muslims living in Canada and the US publicly and politically symbolize living in between Manichean dichotomies. He articulates the inner turmoil he felt due to the schism: “It’s who am I? Where do I stand? Why do I stand here? Do I really have to constantly defend my religion to people? Do I constantly have to defend my land to people?” He stresses that, “My music was very politically driven” because he is trying to rap out his frustration and desire to link seemingly oppositional markers of his identity.

Narcycist's negotiation of the different layers of his identity through music, and his audiences' responses, allow him to be socio-politically reflexive. In "Paranoid Arab Boy" he raps, "Dedicated to the pain in my heart/ Pinching on a very little part/ Hurts to hear like Linkin Park/ Are you ready for the start of the end?/ Breaking over society, America/ Lynching me in a rowdy area/ Baba don't shroud me..." Death drives caused from witnessing international conflict waged on his native land can be eerily felt through his voice and lyrics. Simultaneously, there is hope in the "start of the end" and "baba [dad] don't shroud me." His years of MCing develop articulation for his revulsion towards current affairs and emotional upset. He says, "I've also learned to channel more human emotions into my music. When I went solo, I made an album about growing up as a human being" (Alsalman, 2014). His rhymes demand greater empathy and understanding from his listeners because he taps into the core commonalities of the human experience.

Although the refugee experience is unique and challenging, the hyphenation by young people to the Canadian context is important to draw out. In his *Mapping Memories* vlog Narcycist asks, "What is it about the immigration process for someone who's not an immigrant may relate to? So, leaving home, leaving familiarity, leaving your, uh I don't know, leaving your pet behind, leaving your best friend behind and not being able to speak to them face-to-face anymore" (Alsalman, 2014). The punished loss of exile is far more potent than these examples, but Narcycist tries to create a compassionate connection between various audience members who may have different triggering episodes. He links the experience of loss to both settler and refugee Canadians as a starting point for further commonalities and dialogue.

The adolescent feels the strain of otherness when she or he tries to create mental and social spaces of acceptance. After coming to Canada, Vox feels ostracized and reflects on the socio-political conditions that led to his refugee-ness. In his own words, "My music changed because I'm more conscious about it now. Once you are aware of something, you have, for me, have an obligation to address it. And that's when it becomes a bit dangerous too" (Sambou,

2014). He admits that his activism has a lot to do with denouncing the state of affairs in both Haiti and Canada. Songs like “Toussaint Louverture” and “Article 14” directly address the colonialization of his native land and the Geneva conventions regarding refugees, respectively. Vox seesaws to and from the past and present politics of Haiti and Canada. Bhabha (1994) describes such movements: “each formation encounters the displaced, differentiated boundaries of its group representation and enunciative sites in which the limits and limitations of social power are encountered in an agonistic relation” (p. 41). Moving in-between cultural traditions reveals hybrid forms of life and art that do not have a discrete place in the other world (Haitian history in Canada or Canadian politics for Haitian people).

Vox pushes his response to the circumstances in Haiti and settlement issues in Canada a step further, beyond his music. His leadership in community programming for immigrant and refugee youth in Montréal is in part meant to create a place for hybridization and adolescent identity formation to flourish. The Côte-des-Neiges youth centre offers space for adolescents to reevaluate “the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 159) through the creation of art. Vox says, “They’re adolescents, they are looking for their own identity and most of them freshly arrived, just arrived, so they’re looking for identity in both places. They’re trying to adjust and they’re looking for themselves at the same time” (Sambou, 2014). The various sound and visual classes offered there, and the built-in recording studio allow disenfranchised youth to voice their frustrations, hope, and alienation in novel and creative ways. Vox is deeply connected to the community he wishes to elevate. He says, “Most of the youth who come to the centre want to express themselves artistically and that’s why we chose to use art to help them express themselves and also encourage them.” He emphasizes the importance of listening and bearing witness to the youth’s hardships, struggles, and challenges as part of their healing and community building. These newcomer youth now have a place to learn and play with compositions, productions, and marketing. Vox and his team at Côte-des-Neiges provide skill development as well as connection to community.

Analysing these artists' vlogs and music, I find the healing power of music occurs in listening, in the process of writing prose, in broken phrases and divided thought. In the articulation of personal narratives, my observation is that Deeqa, Narcycist and Vox make sense of troubling feelings and traumatic plots. The repetition of words, the tones and sounds of instruments blaring, make for an empathetic connection. Audiences either understand the frustration in the split articulation and identity or they simply witness the artist's reflective creativity. Vox's altruism is an important example of the nexus community- healing- transformative hybridization. He understands the challenges of current adolescent refugees. Artists and philanthropists who share refugee-ness are able and willing to help nurture and create strong association with refugees in order to fight against their alienation and melancholia.

[(in) formal] Schooling

As mentioned in previous chapters, schools can be places of healing, recognition, and working through, or spaces where the re-emergence of trauma, painful flashbacks, and vengeance occur. Adolescent refugees placed in Canadian classrooms deal with the day-to-day challenges of being students in addition to negotiating their foreignness and desire to belong. Britzman (2012) elaborates that a tension involved in school boards and their "mandates that require observable results and evidence of progress" is that they are also "subject to the drive and to libidinal cathexis dedicated to the object of knowledge, or the adolescent syndrome of ideality" (p. 282). Even under prime conditions, adolescents must deal with curricula and educational institutions that can conflict with their ideals and adopted values.

Adolescent refugees have many additional issues to work through when it comes to formal education. Some have a long absence from school or never went to school at all. Immigration at a younger age, according to McCabe and Brewer (2014), "can be difficult, but the effects of not being well adjusted can carry over into secondary school, where students face a harsher academic environment" (p. 11). Adolescent refugees who attend secondary school right

away have challenges accessing resources and finding a sense of belonging in their new schools. According to research by Anisef, Kilbride and Khattar (2008) they are not old enough to be supported by programs for newcomer adults, not young enough to have the time necessary to adjust before graduating from high school. The academic process becomes even more challenging as memories of living with war or in camps combine with being in a new society and school environment (McCabe & Brewer, 2014; Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Bokore (2016) laments that refugees' past learning and knowledge are unacknowledged, leaving these youth with sentiments of uselessness.

Schooling itself is an institution where oppositional process of conflict and reconciliation, friendship and alienation, and success and dropping out occur simultaneously. Refugee parents compound difficulties by forcing their children to adhere to native cultural practices and identity markers. The paradoxes of hyphenated identity markers become more evident in this space as adolescent refugees establish who they are: racially known as native origin–Canadian; psychologically as traumatized–resilient, and materially as having childlike disadvantages–adult responsibilities. Since young people spend substantial amounts of time in educational facilities, these environments and the adults within them hold great significance for the development of adolescent refugees.

Creating bonds and associations is integral to learning and adolescent well-being. However, Carmen does not feel connected with her party-loving, drug-induced peers in Vancouver (Aguirre, 2012, p. 190). A simple exchange that illustrates the exclusion from her Canadian counterparts is her discussion of extracurricular activities. Her classmates ask her to go to McDonald's and Carmen responds that she is hosting a Nicaraguan poet and pastor. At this point, the classmate cuts her off by saying Carmen should attend a pool party, for which this classmate is picking up drugs (p. 191). Even though she feels isolated from her peers ideologically, Carmen attends dances and parties to "fit in," but considers them a waste of her

time. She confesses, “as before, I had nothing in common with my Canadian classmates” (p. 190).

Part of the reason why, later on, Carmen does not want to return to Canada from Latin America is that she does not have a sense of inclusion in Vancouver. Carmen draws inspiration and support from older Latin American men and women interested in revolutionary change in the developing world. In her early adolescence, she participates in revolutionary classes after a full day of attending Vancouver public school. Here, she and other teens discuss the writings and lives of Che Guevara, Karl Marx, Fidel Castro, Lenin, and Tania (pp. 100–1). During her adolescence, she finds Canada-born teens lack a sense of cultivating meaningful or resolute activities.

Like Carmen, Nahlah returns to Canada as a young adolescent and finds it challenging because she too feels detached. Nahlah’s self-esteem dives because she is socially and culturally awkward. The Ayed siblings receive many derogatory comments: “My sister was singled out as a ‘Paki’ or a ‘camel jockey’. I had a fair amount of jeering to contend with as well, not least on account of my name, which provided hours of entertainment for those of my fellow students with an aptitude for improvising lyrics” (Ayed, 2013, p. 57). Her English communication skills had declined during the seven-year residence in Amman’s refugee camps. Nahlah becomes so self-conscious due to the constant teasing for her mispronunciation and reading style that she eventually opts to be a mute (pp. 57–58). Bhabha argues that the colonized subject’s mode of resistance is itself constrained by the language of the dominant group (see McLoad, 2000, Rizvi et. al., 2006). When the dominant language as available to these young people is laughable and mutable to their peers, adolescent refugees are essentially language-less.

The Ayed children learn how to respond to racism and other hardships from their parents, who encourage them to remain quiet (Ayed, 2013, p. 57). To complain or speak up is to be ungrateful for the opportunities they have in this country (p. 59). At the same time, by forcing

their children to remain silent and not give words to these events, the sense of foreignness, inequality, and violence continues. The children internalize aspects of identity that align with dominant prejudicial Canadian narratives about their native land and people. The girls feel unwanted, helpless, and without agency when called names and bullied.

Like the other two authors, Nguyen comes from a family that encourages her to strive for academic excellence regardless of the difficulties or insensitivities she faces. From her story, we learn that the manner in which classmates or teachers respond to unconventional or alternative ways of living can have long-lasting repercussions, especially for the self-conscious adolescent refugee. Nguyen describes teachers questioning Vietnamese children about the kind of breakfasts they had. She responds to one teacher, "I told her: soup, vermicelli, pork. She asked me again, more than once, miming waking up, rubbing her eyes and stretching. But my reply was the same, with a slight variation: rice instead of vermicelli" (Thúy, 2009, p. 106). The teachers, hesitant to accept the fact that people from different ethnic backgrounds eat different foods, compare Nguyen's eating habits to other boat children, and find out, "The other Vietnamese children gave similar descriptions." However, they distrust the kids and "called home then to check the accuracy of our answers with our parents" (p. 106). Even after this level of insensitivity and disapproval, the teachers do not admit to any wrongdoing, apologize, or compensate in any way for making the refugee students feel so self-conscious and even embarrassed of their traditional food choices.

Inevitably this kind of reaction towards early adolescents has detrimental emotional and psychological effects. Refugees are reassured of their foreignness and fixed in their sense of inferiority. The inferiority complex, which starting for Nguyen in her native Vietnam and further reinforced during her time in the Malay camps, is so humiliating that her teacher disapproving her breakfast is tolerable in comparison. But still, Nguyen explains the long-term effect of internalizing the inferiority of her native menu: "As time went on, we no longer started our day with soup and rice. To this day, I haven't found a substitute. So, it's very rare that I have

breakfast” (Thúy, 2009, p. 106). This example of coercion to adopt western food regimes and recipes shows that refugees’ interaction with teachers, agents of dominant society, can have long lasting impact on adolescents’ subjectivity, daily practices, and lifestyle choices.

Nguyen also brings to light the lack of appreciation many Canadian-born adolescents have for the learning opportunities available to them. She explains, “I remember some students in my high school who complained about the compulsory history classes. Young as we were, we didn't realize that the course was a privilege that only countries at peace can afford” (Thúy, 2009, p.38). Here, Nguyen has a deep admiration for learning about Canada’s collective history and appreciates the peace required for it to be written and taught. Canadian-born high-school students take for granted educational circumstances that refugees dream about. Nguyen continues, “Elsewhere, people are too preoccupied by their day-to-day survival to take the time to write their collective history” (p. 38). Refugee-ness encourages Nguyen’s desire for schooling: ostracized in classes in Vietnam due to her ethnic background and exclusionary textbooks, attending make-shift English classes in the Malay camps, and becoming literate as a new Canadian settler. She appreciates being able to attend classes in Canada without worrying about war and conflict affecting her learning.

Nguyen is critical of the unfair pedagogical assessment tools that measure refugee students’ learning. In Canada, she explains that teachers cannot understand how she shows a low intelligence quotient (IQ) while scoring in a higher percentile on class tests. Nguyen responds retrospectively to these curious guidance counselors, “I only mastered what had been specifically taught to me, passed on to me, offered to me. Which is why I understood the word *surgeon* but not *darling* or *tanning salon* or *horseback riding*” (Thúy, 2009, p. 73). Nguyen’s Canadian schooling experience challenges universal evaluation methods and demonstrates that student assessments should reflect the knowledge they are “offered,” not what they derive through socialization, because they do not share the same upbringing as their settler peers. This kind of systemic problem disadvantages racialized youth academically. Bhabha (1990)

reminds readers, “the truest eye may now belong to the migrant’s double vision” (p. 107).

Nguyen sees the positives and challenges in the Canadian education system she experiences.

Nguyen and many other refugees experience language-learning difficulties, which minimizes their academic growth and limits their career opportunities. The paradox for adolescent refugees is evident in a need to remain linguistically fluid for parents and other native speakers but not being proficient enough in English and French for peer exchanges. The added complexity of mainstream North American culture valuing its own language makes the refugee believe that their personal cultures are inferior (Lobban, 2013), and thereby rendered inadequate. Nguyen’s mother greatly encourages her to take any and every chance to engage in dialogue with peers and even strangers because “my mother tongue had become not exactly insufficient, but useless” (Thúy, 2009, p. 19).

Like Nahlah, Nguyen refused to speak much. Her mother is so desperate that she sends her daughter to a military garrison with Anglophone cadets to

learn English for free, she told me. But she was wrong, it wasn’t for free. I paid for it dearly. There were forty cadets, all of them tall, bursting with energy and, above all, teenagers. They took themselves seriously when inspecting in minute detail the fold of a collar, the angle of the beret, the shine of the boot. The oldest ones yelled at the youngest. They played at war, at the absurd, without understanding. And I didn’t understand them... My first conversation in English started with me saying to him [the superior] at the end of the session: “Bye, Asshole!” (p. 73)

Nguyen describes her peers as all things she is not: tall, energetic, serious, teens, and rude.

The pre-teen Nguyen feels incompetent; and Fanon (1952/2008) provides insight (quoting Mannoni): “an inferiority complex is found only among those who form a minority within a group of another colour” (p. 73). Fanon takes this point one step further to explain that a person of colour would not feel “superior to a member of the white minority” (p. 73). He emphasizes, “it is the racist who creates the inferiorized” (p. 73). Nguyen feels less than equal because she looks different physically, in addition to not speaking the dominant languages well enough. The absurdity of a group of cadets playing war makes matters worse. The cadets are completely ignorant of war’s destructive nature and its side effects: loss, sadness, insecurities, trauma, and

carnage on the survivors' mind and body. Evidently Nguyen's firsthand experience of such terror makes it incomprehensible why others want to recreate it.

Some students feel the traumatic effects of misrecognition when teachers put them on the spot, especially if they recklessly ask them to discuss wars in their native lands and the reason for their family's migration to Canada. Stephanie is one example of a refugee who is expected to be an "expert" by a teacher who desires to know about Rwanda. She describes the situation: "So I'm sitting there in class and my teacher is talking about all the genocides... he mentions this one in Rwanda and points me out. He says to me, you come from a country where genocide happened" (Mapping Memories, 2014a). She cannot address the question in any coherent manner. She is singled out in front of her peers, the very ones she is trying to befriend. The manner in which Stephanie is brought to bear witness to her family's connection to the war, displacement, and settlement in Canada is most embarrassing and unexpected. The teacher goes on with his lesson, explaining the Hutus had killed Tutsis.

Here, the eventual outcome of the traumatic confrontation with an insensitive teacher proves meaningful to Stephanie's relationship with her native land, family, and, ultimately, sense of identity. She feels lost: "So I didn't know where I was from, which group I was in and how come my family had not told me about it. Ever since I was thirteen, ya, I haven't stopped asking questions" (Mapping Memories, 2014a). The arrival of the "imperative to tell" (Felman & Laub, 1992) creates the conditions for the family to begin their testimony. Stephanie goes on to say "I interviewed my family and discovered when I was older, when they were ready to tell me, what had happened and why I was a refugee in the first place. Why I had to flee my country" (Mapping Memories, 2014a). By having these conversations with her parents and siblings, she becomes better informed, and it draws her and her sister Solange closer.

Fazel et al. (2005) note that effective schools and teachers have the potential to promote resilience in refugee children by becoming the focal point for educational, social, and emotional development. This point directly relates to Deeqa's enthusiasm in speaking about her ESL class

environment. It is the place in school where she feels most comfortable. Her otherness and foreignness, usually a liability in school, make her fit in this class of misfits. Deeqa elaborates, “That [ESL class] was the best support system in the school. That was my favorite class! You can relate [to] others like you there. You’re not alone” (Ibrahim, 2014). The class is full of refugees and immigrant children from all over the world who share the same struggles of learning a new language. This “community of strangers” (Ahmed, 1999) are all adjusting to a new culture and coming to terms with loss of home and desire to create stronger bonds here.

Like the one teacher who made a world of difference for Nguyen in the Malay refugee camp, Deeqa’s English instructor is very inspiring. Deeqa exclaims, “ESL was the funnest [sic] class because there was Chinese, Korean [punches fist thinking back], Somalian, Arab, Bosnian, all of us in one room with this most beautiful teacher in the world” (Ibrahim, 2014). Deeqa recalls this class with a huge smile and wide eyes. She continues to praise her teacher, “So kind to put up with all of us. Accents! I don’t know how she understood us, but she did.” Just as significant is that Deeqa recognizes the impact this one teacher and class has on her. She describes this experience as so much more inclusive and encouraging than any other. Deeqa clarifies, “Any other class I couldn’t even ask a question. The teacher, she’d go ‘what?! Excuse me! I don’t know what you’re saying!’ [making a face] but Miss Moore knew what I was saying.” Refugee students like Deeqa gain confidence when teachers treat them with respect, understanding and care.

A teacher’s openness and influence cannot be underestimated, because they guide how and if the adolescent refugee assimilates or resists. Some of the life stories examined in this dissertation demonstrate informal learning and training as well. Postcolonial literature related to education calls for coherence between teaching, learning, and cultural policy, and for a teaching style that facilitates individual creativity and social transformation (Rizvi et al., 2006; Dei & Asgharzadeh 2010). The joining of education and policy in this way challenges dominant schooling systems. Most refugee youth continue to feel marginalized due to racism, bullying,

systemic barriers, unrelatable resources, and teachers' cultural insensitivities. This makes it sometimes difficult for some adolescents to see an alternative to the fixed and meaningless place they have in Canadian schools and society. As such, extracurriculars and community organizations may provide alternative spaces for learning and socializing, as ministries, school boards, and teachers take up more inclusive and safer approaches to teaching adolescent refugee.

Intellectualization

In reading the memoirs and watching the vlogs, I found that adolescent refugees who acquire higher levels of education in Canada develop stronger reflectivity and critical thinking skills. Their subjectivity and making meaning from compounded traumas are highly nuanced. Now resettled in Canada as their host country, these refugees have a profound awareness of who they are, where they come from, and who they want to become. During adolescence, Anna Freud (1968) suggests, some "have an insatiable desire to think about abstract subjects, to turn them over in their minds and to talk about them" (p.159). She goes on to say, "Many of the friendships of youth are based on and maintained by this desire to meditate upon and discuss such subjects together." The defense mechanism of intellectualization sharpens in post-secondary classes. Resilience comes with the ability to acknowledge the challenging lives adolescent refugees live, and their capability of thinking forward despite their immediate circumstances.

For example, Stephanie is an adolescent refugee who is interested in conflict resolution informed by personal and family experiences as well as her studies at Concordia University. She takes issue with the way the president of Rwanda suggests that "the Tutsis should put their memories and pains in a box, lock it and put it away, move on, look forward and focus on the future" (Gasana, 2014). Stephanie's questions, "Is there a way to connect the past to the

present? Without your past, who are you? And does it matter if anyone knows?" Her inquiries are political with implications beyond the personal. They also suggest that personal and family healing requires recognition of past atrocities and not downplaying the war's damage.

Stephanie's inquisitiveness about the role of the genocide creates new cognitive schemata to frame genocide anew in Rwandan people's psyche.

In a similar manner, Narcicyst forcefully re-conceptualizes his sense of self and of being part of the Arab-Muslim community after the events of 9/11. All the while, he is internally reflecting on larger socio-political issues that are influencing his and the dominant society's perception of people who share his ethnicity. For example, he understands the benefits of being Canadian: "Sure, I love Canada. I loved growing up here. I love the things it has offered me and allowed me to do" (Alsalman, 2014). At the same time, he acknowledges that there is a power hierarchy that manufactures his otherness. He probes, "But I also see as an immigrant, I also see that immigrant experience. That I have that first-class experience and that second-class experience." The mental work of seesawing between native and settler society conceptualization of the Arab Muslim identity is at play here. This quote shows that even with all the great opportunities afforded to him, there are difficulties negotiating his subjectivity. He perceives himself as other because of the portrayal of his native Iraq as foe to the global north. He is clearly challenging himself to bring together identity markers that modern western culture sees as oppositional.

Narcicyst pinpoints his schooling as being integral to his ability to conceptualize and rework his emotional and political response. Attending university allows him to work through these complicated contradictory identity positions. He admits, "A year within me moving here [to Canada] and going to university, studying political science, getting into communication studies and really looking at the media and how they present Arabs and Muslims, September 11th happened and that completely shifted the board as to who we were in society" (Alsalman,

2014). The process of intellectualization, according to Anna Freud (1968, p. 159) allows for some distance from the original trauma and using reason to process one's emotions logically.

Narcicyst's mindset adopts an anticolonial framework that challenges the prejudicial rhetoric evident in the dominant Canadian settler society and media at the time. He explains, "Education was really key in me analyzing myself vis-à-vis the world, if you will, and then back analyzing the world vis-à-vis myself" (Alsalman, 2014). He seesaws back and forth between macro and micropolitics. His university learning helps him "be more critical of what I do, more critical of myself and my preconceptions and how to grow out of misconceptions of my own," He ultimately learns to "look at both sides of the world that I'm from and not be partial to both." Here an integration of the various markers is happening – hybridization. Studying at Concordia gives Narcicyst critical thinking and ability to question his circumstances within a larger global framework. In not only reconstructing his positionality as contrary to dominant understandings, but creating his own third, hybrid space. Narcicyst shows grit by working through the trauma of being othered and proceeds to undo the inferiority complex held by many adolescent refugees because of their pre-migratory, migratory, and post-migratory treatment.

Narcicyst's political understanding makes him question the lack of a human element within international relationships and border security. Having reasoned through his experiences and the layers of identifiers he admits of politics, "you realize that it's a human experience. Wait a second, you realize it's not about me being able to get across the border. It's about how ridiculous it is that there is a border and there's another guy my age questioning me about who I am" (Alsalman, 2014). Narcicyst's reflections and border metaphors lead him to conclude that having checkpoints is "just stupid. If you were to snap [your finger] the moment and freeze everything and freeze the world and say dude, look at me, I'm just a regular guy, like you. What's your problem?" Narcicyst's cognitive reframing allows him to recognize abstractions and ambiguities like multinational exclusionary practices operating through immigration and labour laws that control the movement and residence of displaced people.

Ayanda is another older adolescent refugee whose education generates a multitude of critical questions related to what it means to be a Canadian and to be at home in this country.

This is a sample of the list of questions he comes up with:

After a number of years of being in Canada I reflect on, what is home? Is Canada my home? Or is this a temporary refuge? Have I made friends and connection that will last a lifetime? Do I have people who I can call family? Did I endure many of those cold winter months in vain? When Canada won all those gold medals, did I feel Canadian?

What do I love? What do I hate? Poutine, maple syrup, bacon, canoeing, camping, skiing, the cottage, lakes, coast to coast, snow. Ice, English, French, the maple leaf, Oh Canada, Canada eh? Bear, moose, beaver, Montréal, Quebec. What is home? (Dube, 2014)

From reading the vlogs and memoirs, refugees reflect on who they are and are not, even after they gain citizenship, because they continue to feel out of place and not at home. In examining the mundane taken-for-granted milieu, Ayanda also addresses his positionality within this nation-state, as an outsider understanding who the typical insider is. In the second set of questions, Ayanda connects identity to loved objects – the symbolic representation of emotional conjunctions – in order to sort out a stable sense of identity. He does not close off his identification, but constantly negotiates it through critical questioning or intellectualization.

Schooling often leads to an occupation that addresses refugees' identity integration or crisis. For example, Stephanie is involved in the new Rwandan Documentation Centre in Montréal (Mapping Memories, 2014a). Leontine decides to study psychology to help victims of genocides (Mapping Memories, 2014a). Ayanda creates a student support group at Concordia University to help newcomers feel less alienated. Vox's community centre for disenfranchised youth and art education was already discussed in sections above (Sambou, 2014). Deeqa, Meryem, and Narcicyst continue to create music that articulates the challenges of loss, trauma, readjustment, and making meaning from such events to give hope to others who are going through similar experiences (Ibrahim, 2014, Saci 2014, Alsalman 2014). The skills of reflexivity that these youth acquired during their university education position them to be socially and

politically more knowledgeable and accountable. Their reasoning and intellectualization help bring voice to their fluctuating and conflictual emotional states and cognitive development. Thúy is a lawyer, Nahlah is a journalist, and Carmen is a screenwriter, and all three women have pierced through the Canadian consciousness with their story telling. By bringing well-articulated and moving personal narratives to the dominant story of the nation-state, they are colouring Canada's story with plurality and hybridity.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined adolescent refugees' experiences and development as they interact with and partially join host society in Canada. It has contributed insight on how refugees interact with major Canadian institutions like the IRB and public schools. I have addressed adolescent refugees' methods of working through war trauma, refugee-ness, and racism, among other challenges. Through unique work of sublimation in the form of writing music and songs, public speaking and storytelling, these refugees demonstrate a degree of undoing of the internalized inferiority and other colonial complexes. Refugee youth have internal debates regarding their responsibilities to family, friends and ethnic backgrounds that further complicate subjectivity. They continue to question who they are well into adulthood, often bringing oppositional facets of their identity to the centre of who they are. Adolescent refugees are bridging together and hyphenating paradoxes of their experiences and selfhood.

Chapter 7: Interrogation of Hyphenation

In this concluding chapter, I address theoretically the use of hyphenation as a form of hybridization and integration of identity fragments accumulated in the adolescent refugee's life journey. The chapter includes a brief summary of healthy development of identity and self-healing from trauma, as well as critical reflections on methodology and addressing accountability while dealing with young asylum seeker narratives. I outline some suggestions for how the project can be extended to look at social media and its role in creating the public self-image of refugees and platform for their stories.

Theory of Paradoxical Hyphenated Subjectivity

Ultimately my research shows that adolescent refugees accept their circumstances of exclusion, horror, and disregard as second-class as imposed by citizens by some Canadian officials and settlers. This tolerance is mainly due to the fact that their living conditions in Canada are generally an upgrade from more inhumane treatment they received throughout their asylum-seeking journey, in their native countries and in camps. My analysis of ten biographies demonstrates that they experience these circumstances consistently throughout key phases of their growth and adolescence. Erikson (1965) provides a model for understanding their situation. At each phase of development Erikson outlines a dichotomous crisis that the individual must overcome. As the child enters their school years, they experience the crisis of "industry vs. inferiority." In this phase they acquire a sense of adequacy by completing assigned tasks with competence and receiving recognition from teachers, neighbours, and peers (p. 252). When young refugees sit in rat-infested camps or zigzag through streets to avoid bombardments, they quickly internalize the sense that their lives are meaningless. Their "industry" is their ability to survive, but their sense of inferiority is much deeper than those who do not experience war. In this dissertation, drawing from Fanon's concept of the dichotomized colonized mindset, I have

shown how the young refugee develops an inferiority complex during her/his unstable childhood, and how her/his greatest act of courage is living to tell about it.

This dissertation has weighed the impact of complex trauma on the identity formation of young asylum seekers who come to Canada. It has traced numerous social and political constraints as well as somatically shocking external events that affect the young refugee's psychic reality. My analysis shows that the conventional view that trauma occurs only in the conflict zone – along with perhaps some anxiety and discomfort during escape and life in bordering tent towns – is an insufficient acknowledgement of the mental health risks these spaces pose to the young refugee's sense of self. Trauma is often described as a loss of continuity on the surface of the body or of the mind; this dissertation addresses the ways that trauma initiates various degrees of disorganization or fragmentation within cognitive space, and how that further complicates the question of "Who am I?" In a Freudian sense, war creates a "shattering self" that alters the psyche (S. Freud, 1919, p. 17). Fragmentation of the self also occurs during racist exchanges, according to Fanon (1965/2007, p. 89). As Said (2000) puts it, "Exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal; but no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew" (p.186). What happens to the pieces of the self that are shattered due to conflict, displacement, homelessness, and resettlement?

Addressing the "adolescent identity crisis" involves bringing together identity markers or pieces of the old and new parts of the refugees' identity. The fragments that result from different shattering events provide the basic building blocks for new identity. The young person must somehow integrate these markers to create a cohesive sense of self. The most obvious fragments here are those related to ethnicity. I have proposed the hyphen in refugees' new integrated identities as a representation for how these fragments come together. The integrated or new identity does not resemble any of the old full identities, those that were on either side of the hyphen. The hyphen does signal a kind of adhesion. Based on the narratives analyzed,

however, subjectivity does not land on either end of the hyphen; rather it oscillates between them. Initially, it is difficult for the refugee to find balance institutionally and emotionally. Adolescent refugees need to determine whether or not to adopt socio-politically imposed or self-identified hyphens. The hyphen as a hybrid or third space presents a resolution. All the refugees addressed in my research opt for hybridity as a resolution to the identity crisis, and this is expressed through their forms of intellectual and artistic sublimation.

I used the concept of the hyphen to explore the bridging of paradoxical identity markers originating from native ethnic practices and Canadian cultural norms. Often used to bring together compound adjectives, the hyphen also represents internal and external demands to prove identification. Erikson suggests that “the young person, in order to experience wholeness, must feel a progressive continuity ... between that which he conceives himself to be and that which he perceives other to see in him and to expect of him” (1964, p. 91). Identity formation is an ongoing process, organized at any given moment through considering past, present, and future binaries: tradition and modernity, family and friends, belonging and unbelonging, native and host state laws and responsibilities. According to Mercer (1994), “identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (p. 43). As the vlogs and memoirs show, refugees negotiate their identity several times.

The hyphen symbolizes the working through of the crisis, representing the emotional pull-push from either side. It is dynamic and complicated, fluid and static, self-imposed and structurally imposed. Cultural markers exist on each end of the hyphen; the adolescent refugee achieves a secure positive identity when there is more integration of fragments, both old and new adopted markers. She/he grows up picking up on heritage representations, mannerisms and responses from her/his native communities or families. Young asylum seekers then also come to learn the descriptive markers of dominant society in Canada, such as whiteness,

adulthood, middle class, masculinity, and heterosexuality, in addition to Anglo-Saxon and Judeo-Christian cultural markers, unseasoned simple recipes, and mainstream musical sounds. The young person notes their considerable differences and desire to belong, often consciously internalizing societal values and standards and espousing dominant markers. The binary continues to be oppositional until the two sides are integrated. Adolescent asylum seekers take elements of culture and performance from “borderland” liminalities to the western metropolitan centres where many of them live now.

Surrounding adults force them to demonstrate their loyalty to one end of the hyphen or the other. An unhealthy outcome results when youths’ commitments are based on the opinion of adults around them, sometimes without much exploration of their options. Socialization involves understanding and even internalizing their adult family members’ existential notions of safety, home, sexuality, autonomy, shame, guilt, success, and happiness. However, citizen peers see the emerging adolescent prejudicially as a cultural “deviant,” holding on to old-fashioned beliefs or styles that do not adhere to socially progressive or contemporary ways of life in Canada. To accept the native state of being and practices through the narrow perspective of parents and family also forecloses the diversity of the native culture, missing sites of alteration caused by social and political influence.

Specific puritanical conceptualizations of the host states’ culture also prevent the needed openness for self-exploration and cross-cultural connection. Refugees may show a preference for the majority group in school because they want to belong and befriend peers. They may fantasize about looking like the dominant white body, speaking without an accent, and wearing the latest fashion. Fanon uses psychoanalysis to describe the condition of many (post-) colonial subjects who desire to achieve whiteness, to wear a white mask when the subject has non-white skin. They can temporarily imitate the dominant customs (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 80). The adolescent refugee is a “sellout” to peers who share their ethnic backgrounds or condemned for

anti-native actions or even apostasy if they adhere to only the Canadian end of the marker. Against these negative reactions there is a minimum of satisfaction in “just being me” regardless of criticism or support from either side.

Pride and commitment to either of the identity markers too quickly produces a rigidity in psychic faculty and a loss in creative interplay or critical engagement with self and society. Past generations were in engrossed entanglement with one end of the antagonistic dichotomous paradox in their journey of identity creation. However, holding on to that kind of fixed identity is impossible as people progress, learn, and adapt themselves and their cultures. Unchanging identities also produce unfair hierarchies of power based on prejudices, especially racism. Fanon (1952/2008) implores that the divisions of peoples as inferior and superior be dissolved in order for more authentic communication and recognition of the dynamic nature of the subaltern’s subjectivity. Every time the young refugee feels s/he does not belong or is irrelevant on the basis of foreignness, race, class, or gender, they experience a shattering of the self. Despair takes hold if there is no critical engagement of fragments. Working through involves addressing all kinds of loss including notions of the old self. There can be re-integration of identity markers through connectivity or hyphenation.

Approaches to Identity Crisis

I postulate that a healthy alternative for young refugees is to be “good enough” through hybridization and to find harmony in dialogical discourse when seesawing between the dichotomous options. While Winnicott (1960) attributes the characteristic of “good enough” to successful parenting in *Deprivation and Delinquency*, I extend the concept to adolescent refugee subjectivity. If youth move away from needing to completely comply to particular markers at one end of the hyphen or the other, a personal balance or industrious hybridity

becomes their reality. Becoming comfortable with the dialogical discourse of multiplicity as a normal or natural part of development allows for the adolescent refugee to rid high levels of anxiety associated with unresolved subjectivity. Finding tranquility in inner negotiation is key. Mixing markers derived from liminalities offers potential for the emergence of what Winnicott calls the “True Self,” in addition to subversion and change in society (Winnicott, 1960; Bhabha, 1994). For the adolescent refugee to achieve True Self, s/he must understand the various levels of internalized disadvantage. The undoing of decades or even generations of ingrained inferiority complexes takes time and significant work. My analysis indicates that in order to be healthy, productive citizens, adolescent refugees must seriously consider hybridization as the main option for identity crisis and acculturation.

But I also speculate an alternative reality to hybridization that none of the refugees in my study demonstrated. Theoretically, it is possible to obliterate the hyphenated space. The adolescent refugees may neither ascribe to native nor to dominant peoples’ identity markers. This idea comes from the view that a postcolonial world must completely break away structurally and intellectually from the past (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 206; Said, 2000). It suggests that unshackling modern humanity from alienation and dichotomous outcomes of past colonial conditions and encounters lead to more authentic speaking and listening. An adolescent refugee will sometimes have difficulty expressing the nature of the paradoxical situation that occurs when s/he confronts the identity crisis but can neither resolve it nor opt out of the circumstance. When the refugee is presented with conflicting messages, this theory would postulate that communication must shift to something outside of the two choices presented, something ingeniously different. Most fragments remain outside the identity formation process, unable ever to reconcile or even come to join through the bridge of hyphenation. In this case, the young person rejects markers on both sides of the hyphen, eventually obliterating the bridge or hyphen in-between.

Some adolescent refugees opt to ignore the identity dilemma altogether. For example, between 11–21 years old, adolescent refugees can choose not to engage in identity politics at all nor address their positionality. Ignoring, deflecting, and excusing oneself from interactions that involve questions “Who are you?” can achieve the obliteration of the paradoxical bond of hyphenated subjectivity, too. Future research and analysis should determine the viability or positive outcomes of this kind of subject formation outside the binaries and eradication of the hyphen.

The process of “becoming” and resolving the identity crisis is lifelong for the adolescent refugees discussed in this dissertation. Their narratives show that the “psychosocial moratorium” for the adolescent refugee is far more prolonged than for their settler counterparts. Erikson (1968) describes the development that occurs through the psychosocial moratorium: “Through free role experimentation [the adolescent] may find a niche in some section of his society, a niche which is firmly defined and yet seems to be uniquely made for him” (p.156). A period of self and other exploration is necessary for achieving coherent subjectivity, and the refugee subject defies the expected development timeframes for resolving the adolescent identity crisis. For many adolescent refugees who learn English and French quickly, adapt to Canada’s climate, and take on after-school jobs to help their parents financially, the need to survive as newcomers hijacks the time that would otherwise be used to explore identity options. Generally, they follow rules and expectations passed on by family and other adults because they simply cannot afford any further cognitive and affective turbulence. Parents and the state rely heavily on their complacency for more seamless transition to Canadian life on a social and economic level. When identity plurality is not an option for these youth, depressogenic outcomes are more likely to relate to the ongoing confusion. Hybridization is explored more and adopted by many successful refugees during adulthood because during adolescence they do not see or find space for who they are in society.

Young refugees too often take it upon themselves to create reparative social networks and innovate positive communicative mechanisms to allow healing from various shattering events to occur. My research shows that preliminary factors including peace and liberal laws provide the foundation for working through to begin. Self-curative methods take time and are very difficult to practice because of barriers, prejudices, and additional trauma that happens when refugees resettle in Canada. “Successful” young asylum seekers learn early in life that avoiding negative outcomes is necessary for survival, so they develop interpersonal skills and compliance to deal with authority figures in order protect themselves. Releasing the false belief that pleasing adults is necessary, the young person frees him/herself from the bondage of dichotomous markers. It is important for adolescent refugees to realize that their own wants, wishes, and dreams are relevant and accomplishable instead of getting lost in fulfilling adult desires. Reacting mindfully beyond merely surviving establishes circumstances for creatively thinking beyond the binaries. Such freedom loosens the mind, allowing its flexibility to flourish.

I have made several observations regarding how refugee youth successfully work through their identity crisis and war trauma. These refugees did not avoid their stories, no matter how fearful they were of the consequences. My findings show that creating an integrated identity involves commemorating and openly addressing the past while being functional in the present. The youth under study confronted their thoughts, images, and emotions as young adults in their memoirs and vlogs, as well as in their chosen artistic expressions (e.g. storytelling, music, lyrics, art). They bravely retold their biographies several times to trusted family and friends in preparation for the primary public retelling, such as before immigration review boards; this made the re-telling in public settings more possible. Conscious compulsive repetition fosters an observable reduction in anxiety and an increase in self-care when faced with tragic situations. With time and creative expressions, more intensely evocative episodes become less triggering. During adolescence, healthy development necessitates the young person see themselves in less concrete and all-or-none terms and more in abstract and

differentiated ways. Refugees may not arrive at such a moment until later in life, when they achieve greater personal and financial stability. Although refugees witnessed and received negative treatment several times in their lives, healthy youth learn to evaluate themselves more realistically by comparing themselves against their own set standards and expectations. Often times such comparisons are to those left behind in the native lands and refugee camps. Constructing a positive view of the self during this period contributes to more confidence and better responses to stressors; scepticism and pessimism give way to optimism.

Self-expression through writing, storytelling, and poetry creates new ways of speaking about conflicts, the overlap and cohesion of shattered parts and irreconcilable parts of the self. Writing in particular provides curative responses to experienced crises. Creative expressions in poetry, drama, and song help young people sort their thoughts, feeling, and behaviour in non-structured ways. They are able to really let go and explore their deepest emotions and responses regarding the most impactful episodes of their lives. Moments of silence, body language in performance, and facial expressions are symbolic and important in the self-soothing process. These nonverbal moments open space for audience exchange (Georgis, 2006): connection, reflections, critique and affective responses to the refugee's survival story.

Hybridity is evident in the mixing of genres and sounds. Heritage and other non-dominant languages provide imaginative play for ingenious and unique review of subjectivity when it disrupts English or French lyrics or storytelling. Language allows refugees to disguise and capture complicated and compounded forms of trauma. The writing process allows them to tie identity confusion to other parts of life: childhood, relationships with others, including parents, lovers, friends, relatives, or strangers. Their imaginations are not restricted to writing conventions (style, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, or grammar) or society (needing to choose between dominant or minority languages). The expressions create links to new futures and fantasized worlds. The refugee life stories in this dissertation show that the subjects squarely focused on the present and the future to deter negative rumination.

Learning from the Adolescent Refugee Narratives

There is a need for positive engagement by the host country with refugees in order to help with their integration process. One of the key pedagogical and methodological questions of this dissertation is, What does it mean to listen empathically to the life journeys of asylum seekers? Simon, Rosenberg and Eppert (2000) explain remembrance as an endeavour that brings forth specific people and events from the past in order to “honor their names and to hold a place for their absent presence in one’s contemporary life” (p. 4). Adolescent refugees have strong nostalgic recollection of pre-war native lands. On the one hand, this helps them counter negative media portrayals of those places and people. On the other hand, Canadians respond to the refugee crisis as a moral obligation, but their hospitality feels burdensome. Often other ethical demands fall by the wayside after the CIC rescues these seemingly desperate people. What can the experiences of the other teach us as researchers, teachers, and counselors?

Perhaps insight into my own vulnerabilities and fears will provide some response to the question of what happens when we are “wounded by others’ wounds” (Simon, 2000, p. 20). Like the symbolically violent empathizer for whom the other’s suffering functions as a portal for self-reflection, I include and extend empathy to these various refugee narratives. Indeed, my dissertation pays attention to memoirs and vlogs only because they serve my argument on subjectivity. Yet, as Veprinska (2020) reminds readers, “any project that pivots on the pain of others owes a responsibility and a sensitivity to these others, particularly a cautiousness of appropriating those who have already suffered appropriation” (p. 186). As much as I have tried to approach the asylum seekers’ narratives with sensitivity, the participation of my project in appropriation – however unavoidable – makes me uncomfortable.

Working closely with refugee stories was moving but also an emotionally taxing experience. One consequence of empathy is “carrying of the suffering of others, the emotional weight that accompanies this carrying, the sharing of one’s own suffering, and the theft of

another's experience" (Veprinska, 2020, p. 183). I can picture Monsieur An pointing his index finger towards Nguyen's temple, the same way officers put a pistol against his head (Thúy, 2009, pp. 85–88). Then there is the story of Nahlah, attacked by a mob during her coverage of the Khathem shrine bombing (Ayed, 2013, pp. 144–148). She chose not to report on it because the mass killing in Iraq that day was more relevant to international news than what happened to her. I sensed so much of Carmen's anxiety and fear when her mother did not return for days after a revolutionary assignment (Aguirre, 2012, p. 180). Affective and cognitive receptiveness to another refugee's trauma was intense for me. Many of the narratives spoke about the secret officers, agents, and random military break-ins that parents in the global south warn their children about. As adolescents and adults, refugees found evidence to prove such episodes that previously seemed impossible or mythic. Such descriptions in particular kept me up at night. The emotional challenges speak to the strength and significance of the narratives, as well as to the affective relation that threads this project and my secret story together.

Not limiting my project to refugees from a particular country has the risk of conflating socio-political plights and reasons for seeking asylum. Although it is not my intent to reduce the differences between the various struggles from different regions of the global south, juxtaposing the stories may suggest to some readers a comparative study of the crises more than a study of the impact of the various kinds of conflict on the minds, bodies, and positionalities of adolescent refugees. The memoirs and vlogs are all in English. The use of native language and custom appears from time to time in the narratives. Where I quote these I use the translation given in the book or vlog. Sometimes external references were cited for clarification, because I do not share the native language of any of the narrators. I fear that I may not represent their stories accurately.

I also learned that successful Canadians who experienced refugee-ness inspire their communities and society to address the more difficult pedagogical question of what it means to interact and learn from their lives. Whether through screen writing, hip-hop, poetry, storytelling,

or journaling, these asylum seekers use artistry to respond to dominant international perspectives and to resist homogenizing propagation of the image of refugees as helpless victims. One unique part of the methodology was to pinpoint youth narratives available in the public domain. Through online and print publication, youth are putting forth cultural contributions that shift the national understanding of who refugees are and the significance of their lived experiences to a healthier Canadian society. This dissertation proposes that ethical and empathetic listening to the needs and desires they express can show ways to minimize some of the struggles experienced and to assist in the acculturation process. The Canadian state also benefits from having physically and mentally healthy citizens who are willing and able to participate in taking the country beyond its current social and economic boundaries.

Recommendations

In chapter 6, research showed the importance of creating a public self as a means of fighting against mainstream projections of refugees as “second-class migrants” and “helpless victims” who existentially endure “bare life” (Agamben, 1998; Nyers, 1999). Recent developments in media technology show that new Internet 2.0–based applications (apps) can provide new space for identity integration, and counter hegemonic expressions of refugee-ness and multi-media representation of asylum seeking. The private-public discourse of forced migration brought many Canadian citizens to rally and support policy changes regarding opening this country’s borders. How apps assist in refugee identity integration, acculturation, and other effects merit further study.

The adolescent refugees examined all demonstrated courage and a deep desire to be “someone.” Scholars in the field of migration studies theorize that recognition is dependent on asylum seekers’ proximity to a political affiliation: repatriation to the native land or gaining citizenship from a benevolent host state (Arendt, 1968; Nyers, 1999; Casas-Cortes et al., 2014; Hyndman & Giles, 2016). Asylum seekers must negotiate their liminality and in-between-ness to

formulate a stable sense of political identity. The inhumane and ill-treatment these people experienced since childhood and the resulting inferiority complex require many years and much work to undo, so their desire for acceptance as human and equal citizen involves both conventional and non-conventional legitimization (Fanon, 1952/2008). What most seem to miss is that achieving Canadian citizenship in itself does not give many adolescent refugees a good enough sense of legitimization.

The ten people discussed in this dissertation strived to achieve modern liberal notions of success: independence, financial growth, support for civil liberties under the rule of law, etc. Many are multi-lingual, fluent in more than just Canada's national languages. They all graduated from university, some with multiple degrees. On a deeper level, through higher education and learning to critically question themselves and the state, refugees inevitably come to intellectualize their horrific experiences and struggles in order to make meaning and cope in healthier ways. They use words from different places to fill in the gaps the dominant language cannot capture. Several of these youth present on local, national, and even international stages. These adolescent refugees are now "someone" to listen and engage with, because they have not only done the difficult work of repeatedly returning to the past and gaining new insights from tragic episodes, but have also gone the extra mile to achieve respectable platforms to speak from. In Arendt's (1968) words, for them "Only fame will eventually answer the repeated complaint of refugees of all social strata that 'nobody here knows who I am'" (p. 287).

The move away from traditional print media to apps theoretically provides adolescent refugees with opportunities to bypass dominant methods of propagating their stories and expressing themselves. Most young people today rely on information and communication technologies (ICTs) and mobile technologies as tools to relay their narratives publicly. We know that in today's contexts of resettlement, social media facilitates and builds transcultural communication and connections (Veronis & Ahmed, 2015). According to studies of Syrian asylum seekers in Europe, these new technologies transformed "the perceived social and

economic stigma" associated with refugee status and becoming "visible ... through self-presentation, co-presence and mobilization" (Witteborn, 2015, p. 353). Narratives and representation on apps influence positive change in host countries.

Research tends to support the positive effects of technology for those forced to be on the move, such as mobile intimacy (Hjorth & Lim, 2012) or creating ties that enable refugees to gather information precarity before, during, and after flight (Dekker et al., 2018; Gintova, 2019). Studies in the Netherlands indicate that social media networking sites are relevant for Syrian, Eritrean, and Afghan refugees to acquire language and cultural competences, as well as to build social capital in that country (Alencar, 2019). In Canada, federal, provincial, and municipal governments created Twitter and Facebook accounts in the 2000s maintained by a Canadian federal government agency – Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). They now use them to interact with the public (Gintova, 2019). The possibility of finding online support groups like Amnesty International Canada and Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture can also promote healthy development and community support. Exchange of information regarding legal crossing, documentation, and alliances occurs through chat groups on WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter.

Blogs, YouTube videos, and online networks are novel ways to present narratives in personally significant ways to a public. Many of the existing online platforms like *Mapping Memories* or *Refugees in Europe* are run under the direction of universities or non-governmental research teams (i.e., Concordia University and UNHCR, respectively). Facebook and Instagram provide free online spaces for adolescent asylum seekers to post their stories about refugee-ness. The story of Saudi national Rahaf al-Qunun (Alkowatly, 2019) comes to mind. Her Twitter plea caught the attention of human rights advocates. The UNHCR quickly moved to find her asylum and she is now a permanent resident of Canada. Online forums are slowly becoming instrumental in facilitating adolescent exchange, testimony, bearing witness, and even dialogue, outside of the confines of the adult world and institutions. Ideally, adolescent

refugees will share their voices, concerns, and demands with broader audiences through apps. Where these young people may face continuous exclusion in face-to-face interactions, they can find belonging in these virtual spaces.

The paradox of voicing and silence that I outlined earlier in the dissertation, may also plays out on online forums. The digital footprint or the trail of online searches, saved data IP addresses (identifies the geographic location of searches) deters many from telling their stories. There continues to be state censorship in many countries in the global south and grave responses to online activity (Curtis, 2011; Ayed, 2013). Many young asylum seekers cannot risk their escape plans by recording their journeys. “Exile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it happens to you” (Said, 2000, p. 184). Sometimes in the process, as we saw with some asylum seekers in this dissertation, criminal and unethical methods are employed in order to reach a safe place in the world. They believe every action they take must ensure their survival and safety. While digital productions using multimedia aids showcase the multiplicity of identity representation and performance, and their change overtime (Weber & Mitchell, 2008), there continues to be a lack of safety and trust for sharing personal stories (van Liempt & Zijlstra, 2017). My research has shown that refugees do not tend to speak about the harm, loss, and sadness they have accumulated in their journey, due to fear of being perceived as ungrateful, disruptive, or hostile by host citizens. Tracing a displaced person’s journeys and stories through digital mechanisms might further risk an asylum seeker’s well-being, and they may not take the chance of figuring out their identity through such media.

There is an emerging body of scholarly literature about the role of ICTs and mobile technologies on adolescent identity formation. Some argue that social media mediates subjectivity and does not produce it (Fullam, 2019; Jenzen, 2017). We assume that there will be some signs of identity hybridization through cultural contact and mixing in the virtual space as young people search and post. Veronis et al.’s (2018) recent findings regarding Syrian refugees show “notions of hybrid identities when discussing their use of social media to negotiate

personal change through resettlement and belonging to multiple places and cultures.” (p.97)

They show that adolescent refugees use apps to remain in contact with old friends in Syria, Jordan, or Turkey while they build new connections in Ottawa. This provides them with a sense of connectivity to their pasts and to relationships that historically asylum seekers lost. However, the lasting impact of apps on various refugee groups and refugee identity negotiation using them need further research.

The question of what happens in the online hyphenated spaces of social media is important for the adult population and for Canadian society as a whole. Most often the long-lasting consequences of refugee-ness go unaddressed. The stories in newspapers and publications, including the memoirs analyzed in this dissertation, focus on achievement of a Canadian version of the “American dream” and gratitude for opportunities present in Canada. We know that in refugees’ stories empathy and positive behaviour towards them in host countries is often increased (Taylor et al., 2019). What is uncertain is whether the interconnectivity in the virtual realm expressed in recent studies can translate into comfort and the “imperative to tell.” My research shows that self-healing through various writing expressions is beneficial to the individual. How does combining text and images in dynamic social media posts help adolescent refugees navigate and represent who they are? Having an immediate audience response through “likes” and “shares” adds another layer of encouragement or discouragement for re-telling. Georgis (2006) reminds us that “the stories we construct to survive are the provisions we need to go on living” (p. 166). What happens to the adolescent refugee’s sense of self when there is cyber-bullying or push back from peers? It is important to consider what empathetic listening or ethically witnessing in apps can mean, and how these responses to expressions of identity negotiation morph in virtual spaces.

My research demonstrates that refugee subjectivities consists of self-awareness (intrapsychic) and mutual recognition (intersubjectivity). The consciousness of our knowing selves is not simply an imposed illusion superficially appropriated and manipulated. The negotiated hyphenated identity challenges readers to move beyond atrophied cultural roles and

expectations, incubated within spaces like law, bureaucratic rationality, media, manufactured common sense, education, employment, etc. Becoming someone is not a simple reduction as rehearsed echoes and reproduced showpieces – a serious risk of inauthentic symbolism online. The analyses of refugee youth biographies show an awareness of one's own interpretive framework as part of a negating hegemonic force will lead to forms of consciousness that expose various mediations.

This reflective study on adolescent refugee subjectivity restores multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the political. Consistent with Smith's (2012) methodology of uncovering organized colonial ways of knowing in terms of larger structures of scholarly work, this exercise questions what it may mean to make public more refugee stories. As Visano (2015) reminds his audience, "These interweaving fragments of biography facilitate an interrogation of dominant interpellations that have been integrated with and implicated in our daily lives." The narratives shared through this dissertation remind readers of the impact of being, becoming, and belonging, which dominant society for far too long has tried to erase and silence. The autobiographical approach is important because it not only authenticates positionality but clearly defines the refugee as someone who is positioned to have experienced and is experiencing the particular consequences of living from a certain social juxtaposition (Visano, 2015). By asking uncomfortable questions, citing a pattern of examples embarrassing to the closed mind, and proffering a critique of the dominant culture, it is hoped that the emerging dialogical discourse confront directly the social organization of identity formation (Britzman 2003). As new "virtual" spaces emerge, the discourse away from unhealthy dichotomous representations to more nuanced plural forms of language and representation the self and its paradoxical fragments is imperative. A dialectics of empowerment is necessary for True Self development for adolescent refugee youth and their onlookers.

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VITAE AUCTORIS

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