The Politics of Refugee Labelling: Reimagining Refugees' Struggles in Host Lands

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in English

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Date of Submission: Summer 2020

Declaration

I, hereby, declare that this work has been written entirely by me except for the references and quotations which I have acknowledged duly. Additionally, I have maintained all academic ethics and integrity while preparing this research.

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Approval of Supervisor

I certify that this dissertation satisfies all the requirements as a dissertation for the degree of Masters of Arts in English.

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Abstract

The treatment of refugees in host lands and their belongingness play a critical role in literary texts concerned with refugees' experiences. Merging literary texts with political theory, this thesis explores the endless struggles that refugees go through in their new states in the West, especially in the U.S. Despite the fact that they are supposed to be given shelter and protection in the host states under international rule, these displaced groups of people, who are forcibly driven out of their countries of origin, face the same fear of violence and persecution in the host countries. Through a close scrutiny of the refugee experiences depicted in four selected literary texts, I argue on the ambiguity of refugee-citizenship in the host states where refugees, losing their own roots are brought into the paradigm of global politics that further complicates their belongingness into political, social and economic arena because of being labelled as refugees.

Introduction

One of the prominent features of refugee literature is to bring to the limelight, refugee protagonists' struggles in asylums and host lands where they take refuge leaving their own homeland, nationality, and familial ties. Refugees' belongingness and treatment of the host states in their process of assimilation into the new land and culture play a critical role in the literary texts concerned with refugee experiences. Refugee protagonists of such texts, mostly, find it arduous to belong to their new surroundings because of the treatment they receive for their refugee status from the host states and natives. While a few succeed in making the new land as part of their home to belong, many others live their lives in distress and agony trying to adapt to the new situation as going back to homeland is not a viable solution for the refugees. As literature is a mirror that reflects society's agendas, realities, anomalies, and chaos, refugee literature brings forth the politicization that goes on behind refugee's experiences in host lands because of their refugee label.

Being labelled as a refugee is to "los(e) national protection" which is "replaced by international protection, as it is administered through another state" (Hovil 43). Additionally, in the host lands, their refugee label categorizes them as separate entities thereby differentiating them from the natives. According to Miller-Muro, labels are used by political campaigns to "strategically" ("The Danger of Putting Label on People") separate people from each other, and refugees with their labels in the host states, conforming to Judith Butler's argument, are brought into the matrix of difference (qtd. in Doerr and Suarez 185). This difference created by the labelling further "perpetuates marginalization" (Doerr and Suarez 185). Therefore, the issue of refugees play a significant role in global politics as it culminates the tensions between state and

international policies along with the precariousness of citizenship. The refugee issues are woven into broader political dilemma, where even if, on the surface, the refugees are shown to be rescued and offered a chance to start life anew in a new land, the new citizenship, however, is not that lucrative as it seems. The new citizenship often "fail[ed] to provide protection" (Hovil 25) and is offered with dubiousness and hypocrisy from the very core with a blueprint of strategized marginalization of this ill-fitting group of the displaced people. For refugees, becoming citizens of the new country elevates their stature from being no one to someone belonging to a new nation-state, and for the nation-state, accepting refugees within its border showcases their act of humanity and human rights in the global platform; nonetheless, this very phrase 'human rights' which is supposed to be inalienable "Rights of Man", according to Arendt, is deemed as the "evidence of hopeless idealism of fumbling feeble-minded hypocrisy" (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* 269). As human rights are associated with the state's sovereignty, there is no way that humanity and human rights are indefeasible. If one loses the citizenship of his/her birth place, s/he automatically loses everything that is given by the virtue of one's own birth right. Hence, the aim of this thesis is to explore the ambiguity of refugee-citizenship in new lands, especially in the West, where refugees losing their own roots, are brought into the paradigm of global politics that further complicates their belongingness into the socio-economic and political arena of the host country because of their refugee label. Considering their life after their escape into the lands of unknown along with refugee-citizenship, this proposed dissertation will argue of the concept of home and belongingness, state violence and social-shaming of the refugees in the host lands that further complicates their process of assimilation and obstructs their basic rights.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the world went through enormous changes and witnessed the effects of devastating wars (World War I and World War II) which resulted in huge numbers of people leaving their homelands to escape the cruelty of war. Thus, with the turn of events, multitudinous displaced people were on the run only with a hope to have a secured life. Before the era of refugees, migration was mostly unregulated, and those who needed refuge from political persecution were regarded widely as exiles not as refugees and they were few in numbers (Xenos 422-423). However, by the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century, following the German wars of unification, Jews' escape from Czarist Russia, Armenians' escape from the massacre by the Ottomans, Balkan wars, World War I and Russian Revolution (Xenos 423), the number of the displaced grew disconcertingly. With the aftermaths of World War II, the world stumbled upon refugee crisis—a human crisis with a massive shift in humanity—that for the first time needed legal intervention to monitor the problem that the world was experiencing. As a result, on December 14, 1950, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (hereafter, UNHCR) was established, initially with a three-year mandate to work on the rights of the displaced people, which resulted from wars. UNHCR is still functioning as one of the guardian organizations of this ongoing refugee crisis to protect and assist them on their journey of finding safety. UNHCR's 1951 refugee convention first defined the term refugee universally and, according to the Convention, 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" ("Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees" 3). Henceforth, refugees by nature are defined to have a credible well-founded fear in their countries of origin which forces them to look for a country that will accept them and where they will no longer live with fear. Till

date according to UNHCR's statistics, there are 79.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide where among them, closely 26 million are refugees ("Figures at a Glance"), and none of these refugees willingly chose to go through perilous journeys of crossing the borders leaving their own roots.

Leaving the homeland for refugees is leaving their home, their sense of belongingness along with their sense of security. Their rights as citizens of their own lands do not apply to them anymore, and thus their identity remains constrained to the word refugee. They are no longer perceived as individuals with their own stories and identities, rather they are introduced to the world with only one label, refugees. The relationship between the refugees and the host state and the state from which they have fled, according to Lucy Hovil, are "deeply problematic" (*Refugees, Conflict and the Search for Belonging* 43) because their native land has failed to protect the citizens and forced them to live in exiles, and the host state refuses to offer a new citizenship as the refugees are perceived only as outsiders. Therefore, a refugee's identity, as stated by Emma Haddad, is "forged precisely by her lack of belonging, her status as an "outsider" and her position between, rather than "within," sovereign states" (qtd in Hovil 43). This failure of not being 'within' position of national belonging excludes refugees to form any meaningful relationship with a polity. According to article 3 from UNHCR's refugee protocol under the clause "Non-discrimination", the states taking refugees in will not discriminate refugees because of their race, religion or country of origin (17), yet the reality, as depicted in the refugee literature, is quite different. Refugees are discriminated and marginalized in the host states only because of their refugee label even after they are given citizenship by their new land. The concept of home, identity, and belongingness for refugees become hard to reestablish in the new land as they are seen only as aliens. German-American political theorist Hannah Arendt

uses the term “enemy aliens” (266) in her essay “We Refugees” to describe the refugees from the eyes of the natives while highlighting what it means to be labelled as refugees in the host states from her own experience of being a Jew refugee after the Holocaust. According to Arendt, most of the refugees remain optimistic on the face of cruelty wishing that the promise of a new citizenship will end their struggles of home and belongingness, but that optimism is soon realized to be nothing but an idealized version of citizenship that is illusionary. Their refugee label is “synonymous with significant levels of restriction and unbelonging” (Hovil 46). Thereafter, refugees are perceived only as ‘enemy aliens’ and as threats by the natives of the new sovereign state.

Escaping from one kind of violence in their country of origin, refugees land in another kind of systematic state violence in the land they are given shelter. As outsiders, refugees represent, as per Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, “a disquieting element in the order of the nation-state” that creates a rift between nativity and nationality, and the citizen and the human which “brings the originary fiction of sovereignty to crisis” (21). This rift exacerbates hatred and intolerance towards the refugees which results in growing xenophobia around the world. Xenophobia and criminalizing refugees are all part of the “political process of labelling” (Hovil 185) where the new nation state systematically others the newcomers from their national fabric to create a pure nation. Thus, even though by accepting refugees as citizens of the state, the authority completes a humanitarian duty stated by the UNHCR, this humanitarian act is practiced as a part of a political humanitarianism with the label of multiculturalism, especially in the West. B. S. Chimni in his paper “The Birth of a ‘Discipline’: From Refugee to Forced Migration Studies” states that with the creation of the discipline of forced migration studies, an imperial global order is already in place where “hegemonic states seek to use the ideas and practices of

humanitarianism to advance parochial goals" (24), and with relevance to his claim, I argue that by taking in refugees and entrapping them into the spiral of native's intolerance and xenophobia, the developed states in the west showcase their humanitarianism only to advance their narrowed goal of othering, marginalizing and subjugating the refugees.

Socially shaming the refugees is another means by which the host states subjugate the refugees. Even after getting citizenship from the host states, they are constantly reminded of their status as refugees because of the cultural politics of shaming. They are shamed for their own culture, language, political and social opinions and sometimes, for their looks too. This process of shaming the refugee for who they are begin at the very inception of their refugee journey when they seek asylums under legal protection. Living with the charity of donated items and borrowed shelter become their part of shameful life, which results in racial discrimination. British Australian scholar Sara Ahmed equates shame with political action in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* where she explains the effects of the shame culture on the marginalized others. She reasons that national shame works to reproduce a heteronormative narrative which creates distances between the nation and the others, and this "apartness"(Ahmed 105) further creates a binary relationship between the nation as the good citizen and the refugees or asylum seekers as the "illegitimate others" (108). As a result, the nation state by shaming the refugees and marginalizing them as 'illegitimate others' perpetuates systematic racism. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai in *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* pinpoints the reasons behind the exclusion of the marginalized others in the sovereign state and one of the reasons behind such exclusionary attitude, according to him, is to preserve the national 'purity' of the state. In the globalizing world, minorities are "constant reminder of the incompleteness of national purity" (Appadurai 84) and the fear of losing national 'purity' victimizes the

marginalized of social-rage. With Appadurai's explanation and altering the word order of socialrage, I argue that refugees, as the marginalized others, fall victims of social-shame in the host lands where social-shaming is used as an exclusionary act.

In this thesis, I analyze four literary texts to discuss refugee-citizenship where because of their refugee status, refugees are not accepted as the citizens of the host countries. Escaping persecution from the countries of origin do not just end their struggles rather their struggle continues even in the host countries. This dissertation is divided into three chapters, each of which analyzes the never-ending problems refugees go through in the new lands. Focusing on Khalid Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* and Viet Thanh Nuyen's short story collection *The Refugees*, chapter one analyzes refugees' struggles in recreating home and belongingness in the host country. Chapter two unveils the systematic state violence committed on the refugees in the light of Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. Lastly, arguing with Dina Nayeri's autobiographical nonfiction memoir *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You*, the final chapter delineates the relationship of social-shame with the label refugee in new countries. Analyzing these four literary texts, I aim to argue on the ambiguity of refugee-citizenship in the host states where refugees, losing their own roots, are brought into the paradigm of global politics that further complicates their belongingness into political, social and economic arena because of their refugee status.

Chapter 1

Of Home and Belongingness

The immediate struggle that an individual has to undergo after being labelled as a refugee is to look for a secure shelter over his/her head. The struggle of finding a secure shelter points towards the uncertainty of survival of the future days. Crossing the border of their uninhabitable homeland marks the ending of their sense of belongingness and the beginning of the struggle for acceptance, security and a search for stable identity. Thus, refugees start to live in dubiety, and this uncertainty creates a kind of fear among them for the unpredictable journeys they have to embark on in search of a better living situation. This fear becomes an integral part of their daily lives when they seek asylum in different parts of the world. Fear becomes a constant companion although they gradually get citizenship in their newfound 'secured' land. Their dreams of becoming free citizens, acquiring a sense of belongingness and their wishes to assimilate with their surroundings in the new land remain a mere hope shrouded with uncertainty. Refugee fictions portray the eternal struggle of refugees trying to cope with situations that are foreign to them. Literature mirrors the nature, values and system of society, and literary works on refugees' situations let the readers explore how their freedom in every aspect of life—be it in forming opinions of their own, retaining their native identities, socializing with people and finding suitable jobs—are marred because they are seen as "enemy alien" (Arendt 266). Drawing Hannah Arendt's ideas of belongingness from her essay "We Refugees", in this chapter I focus on the prospect of refugees' acceptance and their sense of belongingness in the new land by exploring Khalid Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Refugees*. Afghan American writer Khalid Hosseini in his debut novel and Viet Thanh Nguyen's short story

collection bring forth the sufferings of refugees in the host country— America—with the hope of being part of a country after fleeing from their war-torn countries, Afghanistan and Vietnam. Ironically, their hope of a better life remains unfulfilled because of their label of refugee. Their dream of belonging to the new land is shattered in the face of reality.

Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* starts with the central character, Amir's retrospection of the past, which even though he has learnt to bury, still haunts him; and the past that he wants to flee from is associated with his half-brother Hassan. Amir goes back to the days of his childhood spent in his hometown, Kabul, Afghanistan, where he and his father Baba belong to the major ethnic group in the country, the Pashtuns. On the other hand, Hassan is a Hazara, a minority tribe, who are considered to be lowborn. Amir and Hassan remain close friends until the kite festival takes place, the time when Amir witnesses Hassan's terrible fate of being raped by Aseef, a boy with sadistic crave for violence. Amir's failure to save Hassan from the brutal violence and his selfishness to keep Baba's undivided attention only for himself burden him with guilt, and this guilt of being unable to rectify his wrongdoings brings him back to Kabul from America 26 years later. Against the backdrop of the story of Amir, Hassan, Baba and Aseef, the plot narrates the history of the fall of Monarchy in Afghanistan, the soviet military invasion that later forces the movement of refugees (Baba and Amir) to Pakistan first and then to America, and the rise of Taliban regime in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Nguyen's *The Refugees* is a collection of 8 short stories where each story shows, through the lens of Vietnamese refugee characters who were forced to leave their homeland in The Vietnam War, what it is like to be refugees in new the land, America. In this chapter, through an extensive discussion of *The Kite Runner* and *The Refugees*, I show the characters' struggles for a safe haven as refugees in foreign lands symbolize a microcosmic projection of the chaotic world of refugees in reality.

With the history of dislocated Jewish people after the Holocaust, the world started to associate refugees with statelessness and dislocation. Undeniably, the dislocated Jews had to go through immense sufferings; their hardships had no boundaries even after they found a place to live among new communities in different countries. They suffered and lived with the burden of being refugees everywhere they went. Likewise, in the novel *The Kite Runner*, both Amir and his Baba fled from Afghanistan to escape the cruelty of the Soviet invasion. In Afghanistan, people were living in fear— fear of rapes and violence, and "[One] couldn't trust anyone in Kabul any more—for a fee or under threat, people told on each other, neighbor on neighbor, child on parent, brother on brother, servant on master, friend on friend" (Hosseini 98). A word against the soviet army meant taking a bullet to the chest. Even in the privacy of their home, people had to speak cautiously. Living in Afghanistan became unbearable and suffocating for the citizens who were constantly terrorized by death threats from the military. Fleeing from the country, escaping the cruelty was their only way out to survive the death threats. Thus, Baba and Amir become refugees and start their journey for the hope of a better life in a new land. However, this hope of having a home which is associated with "familiarity of daily life" (3), as Hannah Arendt puts in her essay "We Refugees" is disrupted for these dislocated people. Unfortunately, when they cross the border of their homeland, they lose not only their own homeland but also their sense of belongingness, national identity and the freedom of expression. Both Baba and Amir had to lose all of these and had to settle for less in America.

Baba "loved the idea of America" (109) as a free country, but he was the first one who was victimized for his refugee label. In America, Baba could not belong to the new culture the way Amir did and as a result, he lost his self in the process; and it was his losing of the self "in America that gave him an ulcer" (109). Baba's inner turmoil manifested in the form of ulcer, a

physical deterioration of the self in America. Discrepancies between his past glorious-self in his own homeland and his present refugee-self in America as an outsider of the country exacerbated his process of belonging in the new land. In the foreign land, he kept looking for acquaintances from his homeland, a community where he could express himself and be part of that community and get a sense of belongingness. To make ends meet, he first worked at a gas station and then in a flea market, stooping down to the level of working class from rich Pashtun stature. In Amir's words, Baba "was like the widower who re-marries but can't let go of his dead wife" (112), which suggests that despite Baba's endeavors to belong, he could not accept his new homeland because of his attachment to Afghanistan. To settle in a foreign land, a refugee has to consider his own country dead and has to start life striking a new connection with the new land. But unfortunately, no matter how much Baba tries to connect and be part of the new land, his memory of the past life and glory create barrier in his assimilation. The only way to cope with this huge change was the suppression of the self altogether, for in America, Baba was just a "sad carcass" (119), an image of what dislocation can do to an individual.

Baba's state of being a "sad carcass" (119) in America symbolizes his killing of the former self and living as a ghost in America who could neither forget his past nor belong to the new land. In a similar vein, Viet Thanh Nguyen in "Black-Eyed Women" from *The Refugees* demonstrates how a refugee's state of losing the former self in homeland obstructs his/her belongingness in America which eventually leads him/her to live as a ghost in the new land. Through the unnamed character who is known as the ghostwriter and her family, Nguyen shows that refugees' former life and the possibility of what could have happened if there was no escape from the homeland besiege the process of belonging in the new land. The ghostwriter, in the story, lost her fifteen year old brother while escaping from Vietnam during the Vietnam War

when she was only thirteen. She along with parents and her elder brother were on a boat crossing the border when they were attacked by the sea pirates. The pirates looted all valuables and captured the teenage girls and young women as their prisoners. When the pirates came for the ghostwriter, her brother stabbed one of the pirates; as a result, the pirate hit his brother with his machine gun which led to his death as his head hit the deck. The pirates then went on to rape her in front of the other refugees, her parents and her brother's dead body. As a consequence of the trauma, the ghostwriter has been living like a ghost in the new country losing her brother and her former teenage self. Her mother still occasionally ponders on the possibility of the ghostwriter having a normal life, being married by now with children if they were in their homeland which suggests that even though in America there is no war and they are living in peace, life is not the same anymore and both of them are caught in the past trying to belong to their past roots. Her mother always fears that in America anyone can invade their privacy and holding them at gunpoint demand money. The ghostwriter's "American adolescence was filled with tales of woe [which proved her mother's saying] that [they] did not belong here" (Nguyen 20). Craig French in the article titled "To Lose One's Home in the World: The Injustice of Immigrant Detention" denotes the existential sufferings immigrants and refugees go through for leaving the home, for being homeless. The author brings forth German philosopher Martin Heidegger's thoughts on the spatiality of Being where according to Heidegger, dwelling, "the basic character of Being" (qtd. in French 13) is closely tied to belonging and an individual engages a space to convert it in a place which, as a result, becomes the abode of being to dwell in a safe place at peace (12). French connects Heidegger's philosophy on spatial dwelling to the homelessness of the detainees, where confined in detention, a detainee finds it impossible to dwell in the way what Heidegger suggests is centrally important to the human experience. However, my point is that

this condition is not only limited to detainees as French suggests in the article; this struggle of dwelling is also applicable for the refugees who leaving their former space of belonging, lead a confined life in a new land. Like detainees, refugees are also "caught between worlds [the sending nation and the receiving nation], confined, unable to go about their normal business […] to project a stable sense of themselves into the future or be with others" (French 15). For both the characters, Baba and the ghostwriter, living in America worked as a confinement for leaving their former safe space of dwelling, their abode of being, has disrupted their belongingness to the new place. For the ghostwriter, she has been living in confinement in literal sense because she faces difficulties in going outside her home in the new country partly because of the trauma of her brother's death and partly because of her mother's warning of facing the potential hostility in America. She passes her days in confinement writing other people's memoir in her basement at night and sleeping during the day. This confinement within the house eventually leads to her "consumption" called "*anxiety [sic]*" (qtd in French 15). This anxiety, towards the end causes her and her mother to believe in the existence of her brother's ghost in their space.

Refugee's anxiety is also connected with their idea of home and their sense of belongingness. Leaving the former life and home, refugees settle down in the new country with a hope to belong to the new space, to build a peaceful dwelling of their own. However, according to Heidegger, the anxiety leads to the "existential mode of *not-being-at-home [sic]*" (French 15). When Dasein (according to Heidegger, human existence) is compromised, the world becomes hostile, strange, alien and inhospitable. Alluding Heidegger's idea of human existence with Arendt's concept of refugee optimism, refugees in the new land settle with optimism, but this optimism later forces them to live in denial of the prospect of being finally the citizen of the new land. Living in denial does not make the process of assimilation easier for the displaced people,

for they, nevertheless, are treated as “enemy alien” (Arendt 266) of the foreign land. The idea of a land, a home is not simply just a place to live; it carries more meaning than just a space for survival. This home is associated with identity, belongingness, security, and serenity. Being refugees is to embrace the depravation of all of these, and compromising these, refugees start to live an incomplete and a miserable life wrapped with innumerable struggles, both physically and mentally. In the novel, Amir and Baba fled from Afghanistan to their dreamland Fremont, California where they thought their hopes of security and a better life would be fulfilled. . However, little did they know that California, which they thought to be their safe haven, would push them to a life of uncertainty and anxiety. In California as refugees, they are labelled as aliens. Baba, particularly was treated as enemy alien as he could not assimilate the way Amir assimilated in America. When Baba goes to the Vietnamese couple Mr. and Mrs. Nguyen’s grocery store, he is asked to show an ID to buy oranges. For two long years they were buying grocery from the store, yet it came to Baba as a shock that Mr. Nguyen refused to sell oranges to him without the ID. The owner of the store also threatened them to call police just to make them leave the premise. They also closed the door of the grocery store for him saying that Baba was “not welcome anymore” because Baba did not want to show his license to the couple, which served as a proof of his belongingness to the land (Hosseini 111). This particular hostility of the Vietnamese couple towards Baba can be reasoned with Astri Suhrke and Frank Klink’s proposed ideas on the Vietnamese and Afghan syndromes in their paper titled “Contrasting Patterns of Asian Refugee Movements: The Vietnamese and Afghan Syndromes”. According to Suhrke and Klink, even though international migrations of Vietnamese after 1975 and Afghans after 1978 happened because of similar type of social conflicts, “high priority [is] given to Vietnamese refugees in the United States” (92) as the Vietnamese “represent the classic resettlement case

(…), organized movement of people from Asia to Western Europe and the United States" (85). On the other hand, Afghans' movement is the opposite case because of their concentration in refugee camps and settlement in neighbouring countries first. Therefore, in the US soil, the Vietnamese, in this case Mr. and Mrs. Nguyen, are migrants and Afghans, in this case Baba, are refugees. This stark difference between the labels— migrants and refugees— gives the Vietnamese couple a sense of superiority over the other refugees and for this reason Mr. Nguyen thinks of himself to be superior to Baba.

Likewise, in "War Years" from *The Refugee,* the idea of the world being a strange and inhospitable place for the refugees to belong is reflected with the incident of burglary in the narrator's house. The unnamed narrator is thirteen year old boy, who along with his parents are now living in California as refugees after escaping the war in Vietnam when he was a child. His parents own a grocery store in the New Saigon Market. The shop being in the Vietnamese community in this new land indicates their attempt to cling onto their past and own culture instead of belonging to the new culture of the adopted land. However, the boy shows reluctance to adhere to his Vietnamese culture by choosing American culture to belong, while his parents find themselves more akin to their former space of being, their home in Vietnam. The boy's explicit cultural rebellion is understandable as he cannot recall his refugee experiences, for he was too young. However, even though the parents cut off ties with own home in Vietnam, they remember their refugee experiences and the lives they were forced to give up back in home. The parents live in constant fear due to the hostility of this new land. She even goes on to hide her jewelry and money all over the house planting decoys on them for fear of robberies. This symbolizes the loss of refugees' peace and their eternal fear of potential disruption in their new abode. The fear that anyone can invade their personal space anytime in the new land torments

them perennially. The boy's Americanness does not save him from the hostility of the new land when their private space is invaded by a white man's knock on the door. The boy opens the door and welcomes the white man to their space without realizing that his intention is to rob them. The robber makes the boy and his father down knee down at gunpoint but the mother she resists by fighting back with a scream. Her anticipation of the hostility makes her courageous enough to fight with the burglar which scares the burglar away. Even the involvement of law in such situation does not help them as "the police never caught the man (the robber)" (Nguyen 110), which implies the reluctance of the law enforcement about the gravity of this encroachment on refugees. They live practically being nobody in the new land and they are constantly haunted by their former life which makes them live a life of ghosts in the new land. This entrance of the burglar into their home inadvertently suggests that their home would be easier to target because they are nobody. In other words, "while some people are haunted by the dead (the past), others are haunted by the living (the present)" (130) and in case of refugees, they are haunted by both the past and the present.

Occupation is another aspect that is closely associated with one's sense of belongingness to home and dignity. Occupation defines a person's worth, social status and class in this world. Without a respectable occupation, a person is not considered valuable to the society. For refugees, leaving their homeland means leaving their social status, class and dignity, and belong to no social class in the adopted land. Priya Kissoon, from a practical approach on refugee research, demonstrates the importance of home for refugees' lives where she shares FEANTSA's (the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) definition of home circulating in three domains, which are: physical domain, social domain and legal domain, and in legal domain, the importance of "having legal title to occupation" ("Home/lessness as an

Indicator of Integration: Interviewing Refugees about the Meaning of Home and Accommodation" 77) has been emphasized. She further adds that dignity, security, social connection and identity are the fundamental needs that are "important not only because they buttress functional integration, but because they are essential to human welfare and a sense of home" (76). Hence, having a dignified occupation marks the spatial relationship of being at home where s/he can belong. However, refugees being status-less in the new country have difficulties getting a decent job let alone a dignified job. In Afghanistan, Baba, Afghanistan's "Toophan agha, or "Mr. Hurricane"" (Hosseini 11), had several successful businesses and his occupation was associated with the word respect. Despite his vices and flawed life style, people revered him and feared him for his intimidating personality. Even when fleeing the country, he showed people what he was for the last time when he singlehandedly fought for the honour of the fellow female voyager, standing against one of the Russian soldiers. Baba possessed a personality that people admired and respected, but this same Baba loses all of his former glory the moment he steps to the new land as a refugee. Baba, because of this refugee label is stripped off all his respect, high social status; he even loses his means of earning his livelihood in a respectable way. In the new land, his first job was to work at a gas station in Fremont, and the first neighborhood that they lived was inhabited by "bus drivers, policemen, gas station attendants, and unwed mothers collecting welfare, exactly the sort of blue-collar people" (Hosseini 110). From an elite and well-respected Afghanistani who lived in a posh bungalow, Baba was transformed to a gas station employee who was forced to live in a neighbourhood of working class people. This transformation is inevitable when one is labelled as a refugee. Baba had to go through several stages of despair before he settled for his fate in the so called safe haven, a fate of being just an ordinary man, not even a dignified one because of his profession.

Baba did not have any other option but to work in the flea market in America, and to work in a flea market is to lose the opportunity of standing out as a dignified man among the crowd. In the new land, to be a dignified man is to assimilate into the new culture completely and to fight for the position; the position only comes in the society with one's occupation. Arendt, in "We Refugees" shares one anecdote to argue that in "this mad world it is much easier to be accepted as a 'great man' than as a human being" (9). For refugees like Baba and Amir, it was necessary to be established as a "great man" to be treated with respect. Amir became that "great man" by pursuing his dream of writing and achieving the label of an international author; hence, he was treated better than Baba, whereas Baba was left alone to a life of ignominy where no one cared about his existence, except his few Afghan friends. Thus, for Baba, the illusion of having a life of prosperity and respectability in the new land is shattered as his very existence is nullified by his refugee status.

According to Arendt, the meaning of occupation for refugees is "the confidence that [they] are of some use in this world" (264). The pressure of proving this usefulness through respectable jobs is not only limited in the adopted country, it is also crucial in the homeland they left behind. In "Fatherland" from *The Refugees*, through the portrayal of Vietnamese refugee characters like Vivien and her mother who settles down in America, Nguyen sheds light on the aspect of refugees' familial and societal pressure to prove their worth not only in the new land, America, but also in the homeland, Vietnam. Refugees need to prove their worth in the host land as well as in their homeland. In the story, Mr. Ly had to stay back in Vietnam while his wife and their children managed to escape the terrors of their country during the Vietnam War. As a result, after the war was over, My Ly remarried his mistress and fathered another set of children giving them the same names as his first set of children. The second set of children, especially Phuong is

always envious of the fact that her namesake step sister is offered a better life in America with many opportunities and a successful career. Mr. Ly's first wife always updates the father with all the news of their children being successful in America; the mother tells her community back home that her elder daughter, who is the first Phuong, is a successful pediatrician. These stories elevated their social status among the relatives in the homeland. However, first Phuong's short visit to her homeland reveals that she is neither a pediatrician nor a successful career woman in America. In a desperate attempt to belong to the American culture, she even changes her name from Phuong to Vivien taking the name from the *Gone with the Wind* star Vivien Leigh. Here in their homeland, the mother has chosen to uphold the success of her and her daughter's life in America because everyone assumes them to be leading a dignified life. And in order to keep ties with the former home and community, Vivien's mother forged their stories of dignified life in America which seemed to be a better option than to face the reality and shaming from their own people. In reality, Vivien lets the secret out to second Phuong about her being a "receptionist without a job" (352) and her mother working as a beautician for a salon just to make ends meet. This epitomizes the pressure of proving refugees' worth through their financial status both in the homeland and the new land. Even after Vivien's attempt of assimilation, she and her mother do not get a respectable job in the new land which not only diminishes their chance of having a dignified life in America, but also alienates refugees from their root and home.

Additionally, language barrier is one of the difficulties that every refugee has to suffer while trying to belong to a foreign land. According to Arendt, losing own language is to lose "the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings" (264). Baba used to converse with his broken English as he had prejudices against taking ESL classes that Amir wanted him to take. For Amir, the language came in handy easily as he embraced this

new land with all its limitations and this land, for him, was a process of burying his past life. On the other hand, for Baba, the process of embracing the new culture and acquiring the new language was excruciating both mentally and physically. Baba's inability to learn English bars the "naturalness of his reactions" (Arendt 264), and his unwillingness to acquire the language of the new land causes him to lose his freedom of speech and his ability to voice his opinion. His idea of expressing his political opinion is to frame a picture of Ronald Reagan, the then president of America, and hang it alongside the picture of him "shaking hands with King Zahir Shah" (Hosseini 110), the old remnant of his former life. This signifies how his linguistic incompetency of the new language has limited his political opinion to only hanging pictures as he cannot voice his opinion in proper English. Even with the pictures, he tries to make sense of his present and former self of being by hanging both Reagan and Shah's photos together. Thus, it was his way of declaring in the neighbourhood of working class that he was the "lone republican in [his] building" (110). This was Baba's way of voicing his political views in the new land, but the opinion was uncalled for and unnecessary, for no one cared to ask his opinion, and even if anyone was bothered about it, he could not share it because of the linguistic disparity. For Baba, his linguistic incompetency pushed him in "the hopeless sadness of assimilationists" (Arendt 11). As a result, because of linguistic incompetency, Baba lost his freedom of expression and failed to form his own individual opinion, which is one of the many reasons why refugees leave their former home in the first place where their right of speech was challenged. Correspondingly, Nguyen in the story "The Other Man" explicitly shows a refugee character's struggle with language in the new land. In "The Other Man," the refugee character Liem also goes through a similar situation like Baba in America. Liem left his parents back home in Vietnam when he fled the country and is now living in Parrish's house, his sponsor, in America. The first encounter

with Parrish catches Liem off guard because of Parrish's command over proper English. Liem's reply to Parrish's every question was in monosyllables as he had hard time understanding proper meaning of Parrish's words. He was unable to comprehend the difference between words and idiomatic phrases of American English. When Parrish informed him that he was gay and introduced his partner Marcus using words like "in the romantic sense" (Nguyen 54), Liem's reaction was limited to words like "okay" and "wow" (54) as he thought 'romantic sense' was an American way of saying they were close friends. Even the difference of perception between the native and the refugee was reflected in Liem's perception of the house's color as purple where for the Americans it was actually the color mauve. These subtle distinctions of linguistic incomprehensibility on Liem's part affected his expression of feelings and created unnaturalness of his reaction. For Liem, linguistic disparity, towards the end of the story, disintegrated his selfimage on the mirror, and he saw that he did not belong to this home, this new space at all. This, as a result, affected his sense of belongingness in the new home where he was constantly reminded of his homeland.

Additionally, communal identity is one of the necessary constituents of an individual to have a sense of home and belongingness. In *Refugees, Citizenship and Belonging in South Asia*, Nasreen Chowdhory argues that the "basic need for human beings is to belong to a particular 'home' and community" (22). This communal identity is covertly connected with space as well where any "loss of spatial attachment makes their identity incomplete" (qtd. in Chowdhory 21) which further problematizes the displaced people's sense of belongingness. , Living in a particular society, symbolizes acceptance within the community and the neighbours. Communal identity is the proof of one's own existence and acceptance within the society. However, often refugees' existence and their desire to belong to community are met with indifference. In *The*

Kite Runner, Baba longs for the acknowledgement from the fellow neighbours, the citizens of America, but he does not receive it as he is an alien. Peter Hulme in his essay "Beyond the Straits: Postcolonial Allegories of the Globe" uses a documented photograph by a Spanish photographer Javier Bauluz of a lifeless corpse of a refugee lying on the southern coast of Spain near the towns of Tarifa and Zahara de los Atunestaken to emphasize the indifferent attitude towards the refugees. The corpse of the refugee on the shore evokes neither pity nor sympathy from the European couple's part in the photograph who were sunbathing just beside the corpse. Through the photograph, Hulme indicates about how refugees are seen from the eye of an inhabitant; it is always in "between their bronzed skin and his shabby clothes; between their togetherness and his isolation" state (43). This incident echoes Hosseini's another writing on refugee struggles which is an illustrated novel *Sea Prayer*—inspired by the true event of a 3 year old Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi whose dead body is washed off the European shore when his family was on the voyage of finding a safe haven, escaping the war-torn country Syria. In *Sea Prayer* the narrator, before taking a sea voyage to escape their country in search of safety, tells his son that they are "the uninvited" and "the unwelcome" ones who should "take [their] misfortune elsewhere" (Hosseini 31). It is a universal condition that refugees all over the world have to face.

To conclude, refugees leave no stones unturned to assimilate into the new culture, new community and in the new land, but the assimilation comes with a price; a price to forget the old glory, old life, sighs of frustration for the past friends and families. The price is to learn how to compromise with the national identity, how to accept the indifferent attitudes of the insiders and how to live with the reproachful stares of the surroundings. Even though refugees are housed in a new land, home, in its truest sense, is difficult for them to create. Home remains not just a space for the refugees, home, for them, becomes the medium of their belongingness, of their perception

of whole being. For refugees, home in the new land is the name of confinement where they cannot see themselves belonging to the surrounding. Hosseini and Nguyen's delineation of refugee struggles brings to light the fact that despite the refugees' ardent desire to be accepted, to belong, they remain in the periphery of the social fabric of the host country.

Chapter 2

Can Refugees Fight Back?

> Civilizations are illusory. But they are useful illusions. They allow us to deny our common humanity, to allocate power, resources, and rights in ways repugnantly discriminatory. To maintain the effectiveness of these illusions, they must be associated with something undeniably real. That something is violence. Our civilizations do not cause us to clash. No, our clashing allows us to pretend we belong to civilizations.
>
> - *Discontent and its Civilization*, Mohsin Hamid.

The previous chapter illustrated the struggles refugees go through in order to find a secure place to live and belong, but to be a part of a new country, refugees need to get used to "something undeniably real" and, according to Mohsin Hamid, that something real is human being's proclivity to violence (*Discontent and its Civilization*). Very often to create a place for oneself, refugees have to undergo perilous situations. Besides being victims of discrimination they also become a target of violence. Here the question arises, can the refugees fight back? Do the refugees, who in the eyes of the natives of a country are unwelcomed intruders, have any right or power to resist or counteract the violence committed on them by the majoritarian? These are the questions that this chapter aims to explore. Analyzing Pakistani writer Mohsin Hamid's refugee narrative, *Exit West,* I investigate the relationship between violence and refugees' lives and their ways of resisting this 'undeniable violence'. Blending magic realism with refugee literature, Mohsin Hamid in *Exist West* shows Saeed and Nadia's days of fighting violence in foreign lands.

Exit West is a story of two lovers who are gradually exploring their relationship against the backdrop of war and violence, where the lovers, Nadia and Saeed, are forced to leave their unnamed homeland with the hope of settling down in a country where there is no violence.

Unfortunately, their refugee label pushes them to a life of more chaos and violence. Doors play a significant role in the novel as through these magical doors refugees flee from their homelands escaping the cruelties of wars in search of a much safer place in foreign lands, especially in the West. When, in an interview, asked about the significance of the doors, Hamid, answered that the rumored magic doors in the novel are evidences that the distance in the world is collapsing (00:01:28-00:01:35), and that one has the right to be in any place in the world, especially in times of danger. However, for refugees, like Nadia and Saeed, rights are not just a matter of democracy or humanity; rights, for them, are infused with political agenda and xenophobia. According to UNHCR's definition, one is called a refugee when one has the fear of being persecuted, and without the "well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group," one cannot be identified as a refugee ("What is a Refugee"). Therefore, fear of violence and prosecution is the deriving factor of 'refugeeness', and driven by fear, people leave their own country and become refugees. Ironically, that fear of violence and persecution become refugees' perennial companion as they have to deal with them even in the host country. Nadia and Saeed, and other refugees in Hamid's *Exit West* live in constant fear, and it is this fear that later on compels them to stand tall and resist violence. However, their resistance to violence neither lasts long nor does it bring any drastic changes in their fate or position in the new land.

Exit West unfolds stories of refugees' forced migration to different parts of the west in search of a better living condition. Nadia and Saeed's homeland is in the middle of war and as tension increases between government and religious radicals, the situation of their city deteriorates. Amid such situation when Saeed's mother is killed by a bullet, both Nadia and

Saeed decide to leave their unlivable city through the magic doors. Entrance into these magic doors require money, and once one enters through the door, it leads to a dark tunnel. The passage through the door is an exhausting process both physically and mentally as one does not know where one will land next. These magic doors symbolize borders that exist among countries. Like the borders in real world, these doors are also heavily guarded and the more money one spends on the process, the better place one can expect to be in. Saeed buys a pass to one of these magical doors for Nadia and himself to escape from their war-torn country. Landing first on a Greek island named Mykonos, both of these protagonists start living in refugee camps which are devoid of facilities and security. When Mykonos becomes a place of threat for the refugees, they pass another door which takes them to a luxury home in London. However, the comfort of getting a home does not linger long as situations start to worsen for all the refugees in London with the rise of mob and xenophobic attacks. As London gets populated by more refugees from all over the world, they are eventually forced to live in a ghetto, also known as "Dark London" (Hamid 142) with limited food and electricity supply. Saeed and other refugees start manual labors in exchange of small plots of lands and utilities. However, this restless situation among the natives and refugees leave the displaced people in a crisis of constant threat. The crisis even scarred Nadia and Saeed's relationship as Nadia and Saeed no longer share the intimacy that they once used to share before leaving the country. Nadia and Saeed both search for shared communal identities amidst the chaos. While Saeed gets closer to another refugee community from his homeland, Nadia wanting to be liberated from the shackles of her past remnants, associates with the Nigerian refugee community in London. In order to rekindle their relationship and to find better opportunities for living, Nadia decides to pass through another magic portal and this time, they land in Marin, in San Francisco. Unfortunately, this last relocation to a new country

deteriorates their relationship instead of patching them up and they both go on their separate ways to find peace in life.

In the host countries the refugees, as dislocated people, are treated as "enemy alien" (Arendt 266) and are exposed to oppressive circumstances, sometimes with an agenda to drive them out of the land. As a result, of such oppression, refugees build a somewhat ambivalent relationship with the surroundings. This ambivalence forces refugees to show complicit resistance to oppression. In the novel, through the protagonists' movement to different refugee camps in different parts of the world, Hamid brings to light the sufferings of the refugees. Along with the other refugees, Nadia and Saeed also travel to three different places- Mykonos, London, and California through magical doors. These movements suggest the growing eagerness of the refugees' travel to the West in search of a safe haven. This westward movement in Hamid's novel throws light on the persistent problem of the refugees where they, as outsiders, are seen as threats to the natives and their nationality. This phenomenon of perceiving the refugees as threats evidently echoes in the then French Prime Minister Manuel Valls' speech in World Economic Forum in 2016. According to Valls, refugee crisis is causing problem in Europe. It is destabilizing their society and as a result, Europe is perceived to be in great danger ("French PM Manuel Valls says refugee crisis is destabilising Europe"). He further adds, "France, and by extension, Europe —has to learn to live with terrorism" (qtd. in Gheorghiu) because of the influx of refugees who are considered invaders and terrorist. Oana Gheorghiu, on *the political history of Hamid's novel,* in an article titled "As if by Magical Realism: A Refugee Crisis in Fiction", pins the anomalies of world's treatment of refugees where countries in the west advertise their welcoming attitude towards refugees while surreptitiously, adopting new forms of extremism to drive these enemy-aliens out of their cities. She states that:

> Borders are erased or redrawn, refugees flood Europe, and politics of inclusion flourishes, while America is building a wall to keep immigration at bay. British media (and not only) is engaged in a race of framing migrants. The structure of the EU is redefined after Brexit. Much of these political phenomena are closely connected to the most recent wave of migration, with people fleeing from war- and terror-ridden territories in a desperate attempt to save what is left of their lives, both physically and psychologically. This is, in a nutshell, a significant part of the history of the last decade, and this is also the historical background of Mohsin Hamid's latest novel, *Exit West*. (85)

With the backdrop of such incidents, the novel criticizes the West for mishandling the influx of refugees. Interestingly, Hamid uses terms like refugees and migrants loosely to reflect his thoughts on the whole situation, even though there is a borderline difference in the respective definitions. Hence, while migrating from one place to another, refugees are engulfed by the fear of being seen as threats in the host countries.

The process of crossing borders to find a secure land to settle down is a torturous one; in their pursuit of a safe home, refugees not only go through physical pain but also undergo mental trauma and dilemma. Such an example of both physical and mental turmoil is evident when Nadia and Saeed first pass the border of their homeland through the magical doors. Saeed leaves his father behind who was unwilling to go with them because of his attachment to his dead wife. Saeed experiences an inner struggle while passing the dark tunnel of magic doors, for he has to sever his ties off with his father and his past life. Even Nadia, who has no family ties and is eager to leave her homeland for a better life, also experiences pain when she enters the blackness of the door and goes through a gasping struggle to exit it. She feels bruised and cold; she lies on the

floor motionless for a while, and then trembles to stand on her feet while passing through 'Narina-esque' door of escape with Saeed (Hamid 98). The trauma of witnessing the death of closed ones "blown[…] literally to bits" (29) precipitates both Nadia and Saeed's escape from the homeland, and this escape is perceived as a murderous activity for when – "when [refugees] migrate, [they] murder from [their] lives those [they] leave behind" (Hamid 94). This struggle of crossing doors is parallel to crossing borders in real world, where the stateless people, in their desperate attempt to save life, choose to cross borders illegally with the help of people smugglers. Some refugees succeed in going to the other side of the border, while others perish in their journey. Border crossing is not only a form of physical violence, it is also a mental torture on the self, as in the murderous process, one needs to be prepared to exterminate the old self associated with the past life in the homeland; and, there is no way refugees can fight these forms of violence while they cross borders in the hope of having a better life.

When Saeed and Nadia first found themselves in the beach of Greek island of Mykonos after passing one of the magic doors, they were unwelcomed there because the beach was "a great draw for tourists" (101). Their first experience in Mykonos was to be shooed off from the beach as they would be a sore to the eye. When they arrived on the beach, a local pale-skinned man with light brown hair literally made shooing gesture to them towards the direction of refugee camps, so they could move further away from the tourist spot; this particular incident is the first evidence of local's ignominious treatment towards the refugees who are always seen as unwanted burden not only in tourist places like the island of Mykonos where economy is concerned, but also everywhere else. Refugee camps are the only place that shelter them until they assimilate and become partially part of the host state. Leaving their own countries, refugees become rootless and vulnerable for they do not have any government behind them to protect

anymore. Thus, from the very beginning of their refugee journey till they are accepted in the host country, they remain powerless and defenseless to even think of fighting their way out of their misery.

Refugee camps, can also become a place of hostility for the refugees. In the refugee camps of Mykonos, Nadia and Saeed need to barter for everything from acquiring a place to live to even accessing water to drink, to the tent itself. Everything required monetary negotiation between the buyers and sellers. In the camp, Nadia and Saeed's life revolves around the tent which was "too small for them to stand" (Hamid 107); their inability to stand signifies refugees' universal condition of losing their dignity and not being able to stand tall and fight back in the foreign land. From the beginning of their camp life, Saeed and Nadia are treated as the 'Other' by the locals, who perpetuates their subordinate state to make this a profit making system. Even though camps are supposed to provide security, food and shelter to the stateless, refugees need to barter with the locals to get access to various utilities. Nadia and Saeed trade some of their belongings which are a part of their past life to gain some space to "make sleeping more comfortable" (107). Thus, to live a moderately comfortable life, refugees need to trade some parts of themselves to make things seemingly whole in their lives. However, this wholeness is not a complete process, as it is a never-ending loop of sufferings, compromises, and struggles. In the novel, refugees from the camp are also ready to trade their lives to get a pass to a much safer place than the camp in Mykonos. When a rumor of a new door to Germany being opened spread out, "unarmed mass of people" were on the run to get through that door past "a line of men in uniform" (107-108) who blocked their way. Nadia and Saeed passed days waiting in anxiety and "false hopes" of being in a safe place, which in reality was another place of hostility. The fear of being "trapped [in the refugee camps] forever" haunt them, and

> until hunger forced them back through one of the doors that led to undesirable places, the doors that were left unguarded, what people in the camps referred to as mousetraps, but which, in resignation, some people were nonetheless trying, especially those who had exhausted their resources, venturing through them to the same place from which they had come, or to another unknown place when they thought anything would be better than where they had been. (Hamid 111)

As a result, people within the camps, out of desperation, started to scam other refugees by luring them with assurance of door-passes. Saeed becomes a victim of the scam when he is mugged by one acquaintance from his home country in the camp. Saeed and Nadia's condition become so desolate in the camp that in order to fight poverty, they buy a half-broken fishing rod at one point using their last remaining penny. Spending their last piece of money on a worthless piece like the half broken fishing rod, which they may not be able to use as they did not know fishing, suggests their ardent desire to stay honest and their willingness to survive without getting involved in scamming. They encounter hostility not only inside the camp but also in the outer world. Both of these refugees face hostility when four local men started chasing them after dark because they were roaming around the island freely. This particularly suggests that being refugees curbs their freedom of movement outside the refugee camp and they are allowed only limited spaces to pass their days until a better opportunity comes knocking at their door, which rarely happens in most cases. While trying to outrun the chasers, Nadia injures herself and Saeed decides to offer the only thing he possessed, the fishing rod, to the men to get themselves out of the situation. In Mykonos, the fishing rod, works for Nadia and Saeed, not only as a weapon but also as a safety net for their survival on the island. When they were being chased and the guards standing afar did not do anything but shouted at Nadia and Saeed to stay back, the rod helped them to

protect/save themselves. Refugees, even when they are exposed to violence, remain vulnerable in front of the law. Nadia and Saeed's giving up of their fishing rod, their only means of safety and surviving tool, to their chasers again proves their vulnerability in camp. Not all refugees can fight back the hostile situation they are in directly; some try fighting back to better their situation, where they get involved in smuggling, scamming and violence within the camps; and some, like Nadia and Saeed, try to stay honest in their path of survival even at the cost of trading their safety. Hence, these refugee camps work as a microcosmic projection of the treatment of the outer world on the refugees where they remain powerless and incapable of fighting back the hostility they encounter in the host country.

Furthermore, hostility turns into extreme form of violence when xenophobia adds to it. The second phase of Nadia and Saeed's intolerable struggle as refugees begins when they are in London escaping Mykonos' insufferable refugee camps through another magic door. This time, they do not end up in refugee camps; instead, they find themselves in hotel-like surroundings with a private room to claim. Even before they get to know the situation, they are already surrounded by "a dozen Nigerians, later a few Somalis, after them a family from the borderlands between Myanmar and Thailand" (Hamid 120), who are also migrants like Nadia and Saeed. Having a room to themselves is next to having a home, which minimizes their state of being homeless temporarily. However, this short-lived illusory sense of having a 'home' is soon shattered when the housekeeper gives out a cry of terror seeing the refugees in the house. The police follows shortly after, fully armed, with submachine guns. The screaming of the housekeeper seeing the refugees echoes the initial reaction of the natives where these people are perceived as a threat and an intruder to the fabric of their nationality, and the armed police indicates the authority's ambiguous nature of the host state. The door of the host state being

available for refugees to cross the border suggests that the nation is welcoming the process of migration for the sake of saving humanity; however, the reaction of the owner of the house and the law enforcements on seeing refugees exposes the hypocrisy of this welcome by the host state which pretends to welcome the refugees but actually sees them as alien who will never be truly accepted.

Nevertheless, when refugees finally cross the border as stateless and displaced people, they become not only a threat to the host state's ambiguous hospitality, but also fall into a systematically stereotyped category of impending perpetrators of violence. This tendency of seeing the refugees as perpetrators of violence can be analyzed by using Derrida's argument on hospitality where he states that "the foreigner is first of all foreign to the legal language in which the duty of hospitality is formulated," and that the fact "he has to ask for hospitality in a language which by definition is not his own" is considered to be an act of violence ("On Hospitality" 15). The doors via which people around the world are migrating, mostly fleeing from wars and terrors, in the novel, epitomize the ambivalences of hospitality; and refugee narratives conceptualize doors and windows with the hospitality of the nation from host states where the key to a door is always on the superior side who subsequently "controls the conditions of hospitality" (Derrida 14). Rachel C. Wilson in her paper further argues on the dual functionality of doors and windows in refugee narratives where doors "symbolize the borders between nations, but also act as liminal spaces in and of themselves, for refugees must be accepted into peoples' homes — into the community, not just the territory — in order to survive" (49-50). Hence, for refugees to be accepted by the host country in order to survive, they need to tailor themselves according to the demands of the host state, which means to hand in the power of controlling their lives to the natives, and by extension, to the state. Therefore, by creating an

imbalance relationship with the state from the very beginning, refugees remain powerless to fight back any injustices.

On the other hand, the process of othering the refugee community in a host state gives rise to criminality and counterterrorism into the discourse of constructed stereotypical refugee narrative. The state remains well aware of the process of othering the refugee communities within its ground, and to prevent any potential threats coming from the displaced people as a result of othering, the host state organizes systematic violence for counteracting any act of violence coming from the refugees. In the novel it is seen that to highlight the crisis emanating from the influx of refugees in London, the authority of the host state uses local newspaper and news media to circulate their foreboding condition of the state. Using the global platform to showcase the natives as victims and referring migrations "as the worst of the black holes in the fabric of the nation" (Hamid 126), the host country tries to portray the refugees as threatening and unwanted creatures. This victimization of natives, as a result, exacerbates the helpless situation for refugees. Fleeing from wars of their homeland, surviving the mob attacks, and many other struggles in refugee camps from Mykonos, Nadia and Saeed, once again fall into the cycle of never-ending violence. With the psychological trauma, this time they directly face violent attacks from the "nativist extremists" who trying to reclaim "Britain for Britain," form their own legions "with a wink and a nod from the authorities" (132). They advocate a "wholesale slaughter" (156), destroy dwelling units, and beat up refugees without any qualms. Not only this, the powerless refugees within the house were kept continuously under surveillance with the help of drones and helicopters. The situation worsened when the authority cut off the power supplies to evacuate the place. The refugees were forced to move into a "migrant ghetto" (159), but the natives were so adamant on wiping off all the refugees from their own land that they incinerated

over two hundred migrants by burning down a cinema hall where these displaced people had taken refuge. Thus, the state sanctioned systematic violence to systemically oppress refugees in London. And, without any authoritarian intervention, the violence committed by the dominant group were "often receive(d) [with] light or no punishment" (164). Political scientist Iris Marion Young, in her book *Justice and the Politics of Difference* theorizes five types of oppression through which society nurtures cultural imperialism and racism to disempower the others and to keep them suppressed. One way of sustaining systematic violence is to marginalize the others. No matter how much trouble the natives cause to the refugees, "society renders their acts acceptable" (Young 62). Hence, no law intervened and justice was not served when the natives burnt down the cinema, incinerating refugees and migrants. When situation turns worse for both the migrants and natives because of "denial of coexistence" (Hamid 164), the authority finally intervened with promises of "forty metres and a pipe; a home on forty square metres of land and a connection to all the utilities of modernity" for the migrants (168).

Even when the authority does intervene, the hostility has its rhizomic deep-seated roots of oppression in disguise within the intervention. According to Simone Weil, "oppression is the second horror of human existence […], a terrible caricature of disobedience" (qtd. in Young 39); and so in fear of experiencing disobedience from the refugees, the host state starts to systematically oppress the uprooted ones in London. London gets divided into two parts— dark London inhabited by the refugees and light London occupied by the Brits. Authority puts tax system on refugees, where "a portion of the income and toil of those who [have] recently arrived on the island would go to those who had been there for decades" (Hamid 168). Yet, migrants and nativists in some parts of London still continue to "carry out knifings and shootings" (168) to show resistance against this hostile situation and the system. However, refugees' resistance, their

way of fighting back does not better their situation, nor does it affect the host state; rather they "suffer a form of oppression in addition to exploitation, which [is] powerlessness" (Young 56). Introducing worker's camp for refugees to earn their livelihood, authority starts exploiting these powerless group of people which is a form of oppression. This oppression "occurs through a steady process of the transfer of the results of the labor of one social group"— the migrants— "to benefit another" (Young 49) — the natives through the tax enactment. There are no instances where a migrant/refugee gets to work for high-paid jobs in the market, because these high paid jobs are reserved for the locals and the whites only. Nadia and Saeed both are well educated who met each other in evening classes on "corporate identity and product branding" (Hamid 1) back in their homeland. Saeed also had a job in advertising company in his home where his boss was fond of him because of his works. Yet, none of their education and qualification matter in the host land. Through menial labor, Nadia and Saeed earn their way of survival in London, and Young argues that menial labor is "a form of racially specific exploitation" that subjugates the rightless (52). Nadia and Saeed, along with the other refugees, belong to the working class in London, which according to Young, is a category that are considered nonprofessionals. Young further adds that "the powerless lack the authority, status, and sense of self that professionals tend to have" (58), and this feeling of powerlessness prevents refugees from fighting back. In fact, they cannot think of fighting back because they are neither in the position nor physically fit to fight back as they remain hungry and lack the energy and strength after the menial jobs which are "lengthy and rigorous" (Hamid 169). This losing of self and the process of becoming the powerless 'other' in this London has a negative effect on Saeed and Nadia's relationship.

With the hope of rekindling their relationship, "to reconnect their relationship, as it had been not long ago, and to elude, through a distance spanning a third of the globe, what it seemed

in danger of becoming" (189), Nadia and Saeed, passes another door to a new city of Marin, closer to San Francisco with hopes of brighter future. Such hopes, as Arendt opines, is dangerous for refugees because refugees' high optimism often leads to deaths and suicides (266). The United States, being the western capitalist hub, is shown to have a multicultural utopia with "almost no natives" (Hamid 195). Hamid delegitimizes the myth of West being the utopia for refugees where influxes of refugees happen mostly from East as East has been stereotyped as a dystopian place and Greek Islands being the limbo for the refugees on their way to the West. In other words, the colonial history between the East and West remains, but with a new form of a global crisis— refugee influx to the Living in Marin, however, does not help to alleviate the problems in Nadia and Saeed's relationship; instead, it widens the gap between them, which ultimately leads them to end their long-cherished and tumultuous relationship. Even though there is no mention of death or suicides in the novel, Nadia and Saeed's hope of having a better life in America as a part of refugees' optimism ultimately brings death to their own relationship as they could no longer connect with each other. The crossing of borders and the struggle for survival had toll on their relationship and created a barrier between the two which ultimately lead to their separation. With the death of their relationship, Hamid, in a subtle tone of sarcasm, comments on the death of the 'American dream' for the stateless and rootless refugees.

Even though postcolonial writers writing on border crossings, border issues, diaspora, and migration focus on transnationalism and cosmopolitanism, Hamid's *Exit West*, shows that for refugees, this idea of belonging under a same cosmos, a single community is unattainable especially after post 9/11 context when the world is stereotyping refugees. According to Homi K. Bhabha, the "terrains of world literature" is about the "transnational histories of migrants, the colonized or political refugees" (qtd. in Wilson 6). Focusing particularly on the words "political

refugees," *Exit West,* thus, demonstrates how refugee experience is highly politicized where there is no scope of fighting back. Even if one wants to fight back the hostility, s/he cannot do it without the risk of becoming the villain, a terrorist for the host land, which, justifies the xenophobia, anti-immigration movements in the West where refugees flee for a better life escaping their war-torn countries. The following chapter, analyzing Dina Nayeri's non-fictional memoir *The Ungrateful Refugee,* tries to investigate social shaming, and how this shaming affects the assimilation process in host states.

Chapter 3

Of Shame and Refugees

From previous chapters' discussion, it can be said that refugees inhabit a liminal and an in-between position in the host country where they not only struggle to belong in the new country but also are rendered powerless to resist violence committed on them. Yet, the question remains as to what happens to refugees when overcoming incomprehensible sufferings they settle down in the country they are given shelter? What type of life do they lead there and do they face a different kind of discrimination because of their refugee labels? My investigation unravels that they are categorized as a different category of migrants because of the 'refugee' label. Even after getting citizenship into a new country, they are constantly reminded of the debt for being granted to live a new life that needs to be repaid. Therefore, in this chapter, I aim to focus on the politics of shame on the refugees once they start a new life in the West. In the light of Iranian American author Dina Nayeri's autobiographical non-fiction memoir *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You*, in this chapter, I demonstrate how in every aspect of their life, refugees are shamed for their refugee label and are compelled to show gratitude to the host country for giving them the chance to start life anew.

The Ungrateful Refuge is a memoir where Nayeri, along with some vignettes of other refugees' stories, has unapologetically laid bare her days of being a refugee, seeking asylums in different countries, being accepted in America as citizen, and the expectation of the natives and the new country from her as the uprooted one. The story unfolds the chronicles of the author Dina Nayeri's life as a refugee. At the age of eight, she fled her motherland Iran with her maman (mother) and her little brother, Khosrou, because of her mother's religious conversion from

Islam into Christianity during Iranian Revolution under Khomeini's regime. From the childhood, growing up in Isfahan, Iran, during the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, Nayeri and her brother were accustomed to the sounds of bombing and fleeing to the basement for shelter. They belonged to the elite group of the society as her maman was a doctor and her baba was a renowned dentist. They were respected citizens of Iran, yet her mother's religious conversion in an Islamic republic regime ostracizes her in her own country. Maman was held accountable for committing apostasy, which eventually led her to be arrested multiple times. The political unrest and threats of execution that they were getting impacted Nayeri's parents' conjugal life as well. As a result, fearing the safety of her and her children's life, Maman fled from Iran in 1988 with the children. From then on, they began their journey of dislocation and statelessness. Initially, running off to Tehran and then with her father's help, maman and the children were granted refuge in Dubai on tourist visa. In Dubai, they struggled to make ends meet as they were under financial constraints; simultaneously, they also had to adjust to a culture which though seem to be similar in many ways to their own culture, was in fact, a lot different from Iranian culture. Here they first realized how learning English was crucial for assimilation in the West. UAE was a stop for them in their journey of finding a secure land in the West where they would be accepted as citizens. It was at this time that Nayeri's brother Khosrou was renamed Daniel by their mother to suit the western culture for "westerners can't pronounce Khosrou" (136). Soon their visa expired and they immediately became illegal immigrants living in a foreign land., Months later their papers were worked out by the UNHCR and they were temporarily allowed in Italy but not granted asylum;. Italy was a "next pass-through state, a safe haven as [they] petitioned other countries" (166).

In 1989 they began their life as refugees in an Italian village, Mentana, which was a home for refugees. They lived in Hotel Barba, which was filled with other exiles from different parts of

the world, waiting for their days of struggles to end so that they could settle in a safe land. All of these refugees did not have any work permit and they were living off charity of donated unwanted items and food coupons from different organizations. According to Nayeri, hotel Barba was a "house of political outcasts" (171) and the residents living there, including her family, were social cripples who were "unemployable, un-house-able and without options" (175). After 16 months of being refugees in Hotel Barba, hours of lining up outside embassies and in interview rooms, Nayeri's family was accepted in America and, on 4th of July in 1989, they landed in Oklahoma City. Moving into America has been the starting point of Nayeri's "chameleon life" (190), for she believes that every refugee needs to adopt oneself into a chameleon's life. Divided in five sections of escape, camp, asylum, assimilation and cultural repatriation, Nayeri's memoir brings out the truth of her chameleon life, of being shamed and eternally grateful to be an American citizen because of their refugee label.

Nayeri, through her memoir showcases how refugees, leaving their homelands, fall in an entrapment of the cultural politics of shame. They are made to feel ashamed of their culture, their language, and their ways of life, their opinions and sometimes of their looks too. Nayeri further indicates that they are made to feel ashamed by their surroundings, natives, agencies, organizations, embassies and even sometimes from fellow refugees too, which results in explicit coercion of these refugees into forced assimilation with the host culture. Nayeri further comments that, in attempts of trying to get themselves out of this culture of shaming, most of the refugees try exhibiting all the characteristics that are expected of them either during their wait in asylums or their settlement in host countries. Nayeri's family too, in their refugee days, faced such shame. Nayeri's family first felt ashamed when they stayed in Dubai. In Dubai when their tourist visa expired, Nayeri, for the first time, realized how shameful it was to be fugitive in

Dubai leaving their comfortable life back in Iran. Nothing could compensate the comfort and wealth of their home in Iran. They needed to remind themselves that they were "respectable people, not dehati at all" (132). While mingling with their sponsor in UAE, Baba's distant relative, Jahangir and his family, Nayeri and her maman were taken aback by the lavish western lifestyle of the family where the girls of Jahangir knew well how to "seem British, or American" (133). With the shame of being unable to speak English, young Nayeri started to associate educated-respectable individual with being able to swim for which the girls took pride in as Nayeri did not how to swim and speak English. Her young self was ashamed that they were no one in the new land, even their mother's PhD degree was of no use and did not earn them any respectability. The two things of her homeland, which earned her respect and admiration among people — her parents' medical degrees from Tehran and her place at the top of the class— were all amiss in the new land. She was no longer the top student and it was "shameful to lose [all of] that, to sound like a villager in front of the other children and to have the most ordinary of them pity [her] luck" (135). When they met another of their Baba's acquaintance in Dubai, a prison friend who moved to Sharjah with family and owned two Iranian restaurants, they were relieved because the arrangement of their stay in Dubai, this time, was more equal and dignified for them as "their [the prison friend and the family] naked respect for Baba dulled the shame of receiving charity" (139). And it was this very feeling of being ashamed by the natives that made maman to change her son's name to Daniel. She knew that the name Khosrou would be ridiculed and made fun of when they would move to the West.

Kathleen Woodward in her article "Traumatic Shame: Toni Morrison, Televisual Culture, and the Cultural Politics of the Emotions" gives voice to the cultural politics of shame and how it is circulated in mass culture; she points that the politics of shame needs to be

understood as a social emotions that circulates widely in contemporary culture, not just only psychologically (212). This social phenomenon of shaming is also responsible for racial discrimination "resulting either in trauma or chronic discrimination, neither of which can be overcome" (Woodward 218). Therefore, this chronic discrimination from shame affects the refugees immensely and leaves permanent scars on them. In Italy, too, Nayeri, was a victim of shaming. Nayeri calls Barba hotel "a private calculation of shame and place and dignity" (200). She prefers to call it a hostel instead of a hotel for the shame that this refugee camp brings in her life. Living off the donated charity shamed the refugees in hotel Barba, and it still is the real scenario of refugee camps/asylums everywhere. All the individuals are categorized into one label and that is refugees who are neither seen, nor heard beyond the label. Not being acknowledged as a member of a community circulates shame among the refugees which creates a racial discrimination making them subordinates. Nayeri shares a story of a college educated man working as a gardener in Barba just to buy dresses for his wife so that she would not "feel like a refugee" (Nayeri 171). Being refugee means to be ashamed of one's self, to loath the perpetual waiting and hanging in limbo for living a better life. The chronic discrimination of the refugees remains imprinted even after when life gets comparatively easier. Accepting charity breaks their souls and they feel humiliated when they need to barter for "ill-fitting pair of trousers" or "tossed jacket from a truck-bed" (Nayeri 193). Nayeri narrates in her book that despite living a life of a successful author, she still tip-toes on her surroundings as any gesture from strangers/friends reminds her of her days of charity and humiliation in the refugee camp.

British-Australian scholar Sara Ahmed equates shame with political action in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* while explaining the effects of the shame culture on the marginalized others. According to Ahmed, shame is "an intense and painful sensation" (103) that

reminds an individual of a failure, a wound that needs to be covered up from the gaze of the others. She argues that national shame works to reproduce a heteronormative narrative which creates "apartness" (105) between the nation and the others where

> [t]he nation is reproduced through expressions of shame in at least two ways. First, Shame may be 'brought onto' the nation by illegitimate others (who fail to reproduce its from, or even its offspring), such as queer others, or asylum seekers. Such others are shaming by proxy: they do not approximate the form of the good citizen. As citizens, they are shaming and unreproductive: they cannot reproduce the national ideal. Second, the nation may bring shame 'on itself' by its treatment of others; for example, it may be exposed as 'failing' a multicultural ideal in perpetuating forms of racism. (108)

Hence, shame evokes a feeling of "badness" (104) in the self that creates "apartness" (105) between the natives and the marginalized others within a country. Refugees, as one of the marginalized others, are victims of this politics of shame in asylums and in host countries; as a result, they are always reminded of their failure of not being able to be productive for the new countries no matter how much they try to contribute to their adopted country and attempt to achieve accolades. In America, Nayeri went through extreme phases of physical and mental transformation to get rid of the shaming of being the illegitimate other even though they got citizenship in America. Once a refugee is accepted and gets citizenship in a country like America, one would think that the struggles of survival have finally come to an end for the refugee; however, it is far from being over. The new fear of shame cripples them and makes them doubt their worth in the new country. Trying to prove their worth as a good citizen and covering up their 'failure' of running away from their homeland, Nayeri and her family work

relentlessly to fit into the expectation of the natives. For Nayeri, getting into Harvard or Oxford means proving her worth to the American society. In her school in America, "children chingchonged" at her (Nayeri 306), called her names like "cat-eater", "sand-nigger", "camel-fucker" (315) for her ethnicity and shamed her because of her Iranian facial structure, particularly her nose. She went through extreme phase of bullying for being different from the other American children. Even her class teacher Miss White was part of the shaming process after she hears that she (Nayeri) comes from a refugee camp: "Awww, sweetie, you must be so grateful to be here"
(309). Moreover, Nayeri was admonished for not learning the language of the new country. Miss White called her lazy as she had not yet learnt to use the word eraser instead of rubber. This very notion of being grateful, her difference from the American-ness and constant reminder of being lazy from her teacher, which according to Ahmed implies being unreproductive, shames her and creates a sense of "badness" (Ahmed 104) in the self. To cover up this 'badness' from the gaze of others, she later becomes anorexic trying to lose weight, and even goes to the extent of changing her Iranian facial features so that she could blend in. She also acquires an American accent and becomes an athletic. She goes through long hours of exhausting training to strengthen the marks for extra-curricular activity along with her grade to get into Harvard.

Nayeri's mother on the other hand, was subject to shaming in different forms at her work place. In spite of being a doctor and having a degree, Maman had to settle for a job in a pharmaceuticals factory. Even though she was an excellent student in her homeland and was renowned for excelling in her medical sector, here in America because of her "thick accent and Iranian medical license, no one took her seriously" (311). Her only job was to sort pills in bottles till night along with other immigrant doctors and PhDs. She was constantly advised by her

American colleagues to be humbler, to be grateful to the new country even though she was constantly demeaned and harassed for her Iranian identity. This constant hint of being grateful, as Nayeri claims in one of her article titled "The ungrateful refugee: 'We have no debt to repay'" threats the future of refugees and shames them into destroying the former self, so they do not lose their 'freedom'. The self develops into believing in their owned debt to the country, for "if [one] failed to stir up in enough gratefulness, or if [one] failed to properly display it, [one] would lose all that [one] had gained, this western freedom, the promise of secular schools and uncensored books" ("The ungrateful refugee"). The fear of losing the western freedom and being no one shames these refugees in the new land and drives them to be the perpetual foreigner, the marginalized others, which ultimately echoes Ahmed's second notion of the reproduction of shame in a nation that is nation's inability to reproduce a multicultural community which in effect perpetuates forms of racism by their treatment of the others. Thus, the cultural politics of shame by the nation and the national ideal within the host country, in this case America, reproduces heteronormative culture beneath the mask of egalitarian promise of multiculturalism.

Preserving authenticity and 'purity' of a nation by shaming the subordinate others is not a new tendency of the West. With the influx of refugees towards the West, this notion of preserving the pure nation by subjugating the others has been inflicted towards more on the refugees and asylum seekers, in other words towards the stateless, uprooted ones. In *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* social anthropologist Arjun Appadurai states the reasons behind this attempt of excluding minorities for building a socially uniform nation and trying to preserve the 'purity' of the nation with their exclusionary attitudes. According to Appadurai, minorities are seen as a potential hindrance in modern global context

towards the national narrative, a narrative of homogeneity by the natives. Refugees as a minority become a threat for monolithic society in the host countries. Appadurai adds, “minorities in a globalizing world are a constant reminder of the incompleteness of national purity” (84), and this fear of losing national purity makes the minority a victim of social-rage. Justly acknowledging Appadurai’s explanation, I propose an alteration in the word order from social-rage to socialshame, an implicit emotion, equally impactful and no way lesser than rage (explicit form of emotion). By social-shaming the refugees, which is also an exclusionary attitude, the nation fights the potential fear of role change as there is a threat for the natives of a change of minorities becoming the dominant group and likewise, for refugees are adding up to the number of outsiders in the new land every year. Their shaming process starts from the very first stage when they are forced to repeat their escape stories to embassies, asylum offices and organizations. Nayeri, sharing stories of other refugees in her memoir details the role of the gatekeepers of agencies who in desperate attempt of differentiating among refugees, opportunists and economic migrants shame their (refugee’s) truth. To label an individual is to stigmatize a person into shame, and giving different labels to the vulnerable (refugees, asylum seekers, opportunists, illegal immigrants and economic migrants) is one way of making sure of the distinctions of social-shame by the native-born. The story of Kaweh and Kambiz, two Iranian refugees from Nayeri’s memoir, is one of the many examples of such stigmatized social-shaming of the refugees’ narrative of truth. Both of these two men, unknown to each other, were politically affiliated with a rebel group KDPI for which the regime of their homeland wanted to execute them. With the help of people smugglers, both the men fled from Iran to escape death and became refugees waiting in a limbo to be accepted. However, while going through several phases

of interviews, gathering up documents, remembering every detail of their story and re-living and re-telling escape stories to the asylum officers, Kaweh was granted refugee status by the UNHCR while Kambiz had been rejected several times because his story was not credible enough for the gatekeepers. Kambiz, while dreaming of a better life, of owning a house in a safe land, repeated his stories and was shamed based on a mere suspect that he could be an opportunist. The IND *(*Immigration and Naturalisation Service, Dutch) reduced his status from being an asylum seeker to illegal migrant. This is how social shaming a refugee begins on one of the initial phases by the gatekeepers to keep him at bay.

After the rejection from IND, Kambiz was denied to live in the refugee camp too and he was asked to request for passport from the Iranian embassy so the Dutch could send him back to his homeland. Demanding Kambiz to contact with the Iranian embassy was like sending him back to hell-fire from where he escaped his death in the first place. Without any other consideration, the Dutch blatantly closed his case doubting his reason of escape by shaming his story, his truth. Neither could he work legally nor could he find a place to live; yet till the end of his days, he tried to prove his worth, learned to speak Dutch in a softer tone to make the authority believe his story so that the unbearable stint of waiting in a limbo would come to an end. He was "standing on a thin border between the past and future, waiting for madness to come" (*The Ungrateful Refugee* 345). To be a "legitimate human" (346), he started the whole process again, but ended up being in detention for nearly a year. Spending a decade of asylum denials in the Netherlands, Kambiz Roustay finally lost all his hopes on the world and in 2011, he set himself on fire in Dam Square ("Iranian dies"). Kambiz's suicide echoes Ahmed's idea on shame, where "prolonged experiences of shame, unsurprisingly, can bring subjects perilously close to suicide" (104). According to Ahmed Pouri, a refugee whisperer in Nayeri's memoir and

the director of PRIME (Participating Refugees in Multicultural Europe), from the escape of the asylums to the process of being granted the refugee status, the whole journey is highly politicized on refugees' truth where the gatekeepers "don't make all the refugees look like crazies and liars and manipulators (…) [to showcase their humanity] the European way" (387) .Refugee's truth are not believed because the gatekeepers control the discourse of their narrative. On the subjectivity of truth, French philosopher Michel Foucault pins that the discourse of truth always lies in the master's hand, a being with power ("About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self" 210), and here in the refugees' case, their truths are always in the hand of the authorities of host states, the gatekeepers of asylum offices and those who are in power playing the master role, in other words, the dominant ones. Therefore, their truths are questioned, disbelieved, doubted and rejected to shame the refugees so that the dominant group can never be outnumbered by the minorities. They have already decided the true story for the refugees, so if one offers a different story, the story gets rejected. Yet, if there are stories told in European or American way too often, one must be lying. This complicit act of the gatekeepers, according to Ahmed Pouri, suggests "the logic of a democratic nation to brutal dictatorships" (390) which forces refugees to "fit in narrow conceptions of [authorities'] truth" (435).

In addition, shaming the refugees in a "pervasive sense of personal inadequacy […] is profoundly disempowering" (qtd. in Ahmed 224). Nayeri with her well-established life in the west still feels inferior because shame bows her head down in front of the native-born with the debt of being eternally grateful for her better days that are given by the new country. Unable to overcome her sense of inferiority, her "Sisyphean boulder" (360), she develops OCD as a form of mental illness. Years after, she still suffers from trauma and shock of her refugee days. Her shock is evident in her reaction when she ended her marriage with her first husband, Philip, a

French citizen where the thought of ending the marriage made her ponder more on the possibility of revoking her citizenship by the husband and less on the effect of relationship itself. So, fearing the situation, she gathered all her documents of citizenship, took her passport and hid them in a safe place, so no one could cancel her citizenship. Her fear proves that even after being a successful writer, earning her place in the society, life for a refugee-citizen is still disempowering because of her inferiority brought out by social-shaming. By disempowering the others, the natives ensure that the marginalized will always be grateful for what they have been offered; they are reminded of their debt that needs to be repaid. By accepting refugees and offering them citizenship, the host country has done a favor on them, they have made an investment on his/her life. Hence, the marginalized should act accordingly and be eternally grateful, so they can always remain powerless and subordinate and ever grateful to the 'benevolent' superordinate. In Nayeri's words:

> The refugee has to be less capable than the native, needier; he must stay in his place. That's the only way gratitude will be accepted. Once he escapes control, he confirms his identity as the devil. (…) And that's precisely it – one can go around in this circle forever, because it contains no internal logic. [One is] not enough until [one is] too much. [One is] lazy until [one is] a greedy interloper. ("The ungrateful refugee: 'We have no debt to repay'").

As above discussions make it clear to understand, Nayeri's memoir *The Ungrateful Refugee* reveals the culture of shaming of the refugees. This shaming is done by the natives for two political reasons mostly. The first reason is to prove the refugees as unproductive and burdensome on their culture to preserve their national purity of a homogenous society; so that the minority group cannot out-power the dominant group. On the other hand, the second reason for

this social shaming is to keep them in debt of being eternally grateful in front of the majority of native-born, so they remain at their place for the country's investment in their 'better days. Thus, unable to create a proper belongingness, facing engineered state violence and social shaming in the new land, the refugees fall into the paradigm of global politics because of their label, where the authorities, the dominant groups in power, work in perpetuating oppression on these vulnerable groups of people who are in dire need of protection all over the world.

Conclusion

Recent discourses on refugee issues and refugee literature have discussed refugee representation in literature and law, refugees' integration in public domain and media discourse of the refugee crisis. While prominent researchers, such as, Lucy Hovil has analyzed on the aspect of the conflicts refugees find in search for belongingness, and Kirsten McConnachie has researched on justice, order and legal pluralism of governing refugees, this paper differs from the previous researches done on refugees. Infusing refugee literature with political and cultural theory, the aim of this research has been to portray the gravity the label 'refugee' holds in an individual's life when s/he embarks on the perilous journey of 'refugeedom' in search of a better living condition. Leaving the root, the origin state and falling under the protection of international law as a refugee are not conscious decisions made by a stateless individual; instead, the fear of persecution and threat to his/her life in the homeland leave the individual with no other option but to accept the refugee label. From the procedure of status determination, as to who can be called a refugee, to settling down in a new land with hope of rebuilding life, the label refugee determines and dictates their belongingness and their relationship with the new land. Drawing upon some of the notable works on refugee experiences, in this dissertation, I have demonstrated how their label of refugee problematizes their sense of home and belongingness in the new lands, particularly in the West. In addition, I have tried to explore how they are perennially regarded as refugee and are barred from being part of the social fabric of the country by state sanctioned violence and social shaming.

With international law's protection and NGO's humanitarian works around the globe towards these displaced groups of people, refugees are automatically brought under the paradigm of global politics. Apparently, the refugees are compartmentalized as one of the minority groups in host states, especially in the US because of their status and their label which make them the central point of world politics where they become a part of a much larger system of international state power and state interests. As refugees they are voiceless, powerless and homeless; in Albert Cohen's words, a refugee is an "unprotected alien" as he does not have any Government behind him, and this 'abnormal alien […] who in the last resort is unable to return to his native country—and who for that very reason, and most unjustly, is often treated as a suspect and an undesirable" (qtd. in Stone 104-105). Comparing the life of an immigrant with the life of a refugee, Viet Thanh Nguyen comments that, immigrants' lives are more reassuring than refugees for immigrants' desire for a new and better life can be "absorbed into the American dream or into the European narrative of civilization" ("The Hidden Scars All Refugees Carry"). He being a refugee himself compares the life of refugees with zombies "who rise from dying states" ("The Hidden Scars All Refugees Carry") and live amid hostility in new lands. Being perceived both as 'abnormal aliens' and 'zombies', it is evident that for refugees settling down in new countries promises no emancipation from hostility, rather it just takes a new form in the host country where they are marginalized and subjugated.

In the first chapter, "Of Home and Belongingness," I explore the factors that preclude the refugees from creating new home and sense of belongingness in the adopted land. Through extensive discussion of the selected primary texts, I demonstrated how the refugee characters' desire of citizenship in the adopted land, which they thought would bring an end to their state of homelessness and sense of belongingness is actually illusionary and unattainable because of their

refugee label. In the literary works considered, marginalization and discrimination in social, political and economic arenas impede refugees in their process of belonging to their adopted land, and they remain perpetually homeless.

The second chapter, "Can Refugees Fight Back?", addresses the physical and mental pressure of state violence on the refugees in new lands. Welcoming refugees in the new land creates a rift between the natives and the refugees where this rift brings out hatred and intolerance towards the refugee characters which often leads to xenophobia. Through state violence and intolerance towards the newcomers, the host states systematically Others the refugees pushing them to the periphery. This chapter also shows how the Othering of the refugees has a political underpinning.

As explained in the final chapter, "Of Shame and Refugees," social shaming is also another exclusionary strategy adopted by the host land to dominate and subjugate the refugees. The characters, regardless of being citizens of the sheltered lands, fall in the cultural politics of shaming because of the label. This chapter further analyzed how the culture of shaming the refugees starts from the asylum when they are under the legal protection. By making the refugees feel ashamed of the label, their origin, and their culture, the host land others the refugees and creates a binary relationship between the nation and the refugees.

My dissertation, thus, establishes a new outlook of seeing refugees in the adopted lands where being 'rescued' from their misery in their countries of origin do not just end their struggles; the 'freedom' comes with a price of being eternally grateful to the new land for giving a chance to rebuild their lives. The exploration of treatment of refugees in new lands shows that the label refugee is invariably stained by marginalization and alienation, and surely, it is not just in the West that refugees suffer, they suffer worldwide because of their label. Labelling matters

because refugees' vulnerability is wrapped with this imposed label, and thus politicization of the label emerges from the moment they are controlled because of their vulnerability.

In conclusion, this research in its small effort calls for awareness on the host countries' prejudices and discrimination against the vulnerable refugees. This paper also opens up the field of research to be conducted on various literary texts on refugee movement and their perilous journeys to other parts of the world. The observations made in this thesis regarding the exclusionary attitudes that refugees experience in host lands are not end in themselves; instead, this thesis is an invitation to view the growing number of active refugee voices portrayed in fictions as part of a complicit resistance against the dominance of host lands, NGOs, and asylums. Therefore, this research should be taken as a base structure of this field and further research can be done in the field of refugee literature.

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