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Migrants' and Refugees' Identity in Narrative and as Narrative – Constructing Stories in Literature

[Tożsamość migrantów i uchodźców w narracji i jako narracja – konstruowanie opowieści w literaturze]

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Ja, niżej podpisany

Mateusz Dudek

przedkładam rozprawę doktorską

pt. Migrants' and Refugees' Identity in Narrative and as Narrative – Constructing Stories in Literature

[Tożsamość migrantów i uchodźców w narracji i jako narracja – konstruowanie opowieści w literaturze]

na Uniwersytecie im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu

i oświadczam,

że napisałem ją samodzielnie.

Oznacza to, że przy pisaniu pracy, poza niezbędnymi konsultacjami, nie korzystałem z pomocy innych osób, a w szczególności nie zlecałem opracowania rozprawy lub jej istotnych części innym osobom ani nie odpisywałem tej rozprawy lub jej istotnych części od innych osób.

Jednocześnie przyjmuję do wiadomości, że gdyby powyższe oświadczenie okazało się nieprawdziwe, decyzja o wydaniu mi dyplomu zostanie cofnięta.

Poznań, 07.09.2026 r.	Mateusz Dudek
(miejscowość, data)	(czytelny podpis)

For Klaudia

I couldn't have done it without you.

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Introduction:
Stories, Migrations, Identities

Initially, the idea for this doctoral project was spurred by my interest in two fields of inquiry that, when positioned in a particular way, may share similar territory. First of all, I have been interested in ethics in literature and culture. Within this area, the problems of migration, colonialism, post-colonial studies, and biopolitics and political subjectivity in theory and in fiction have taken centre stage for me. Second, before pursuing this doctoral project, in my personal reading, I decided to venture outside the domain of literature and theory and, to broaden my perspective, became interested in narrative analysis and interactive sociolinguistics, specifically the qualitative research of Anna De Fina, Michael Bamberg, and Alexandra Georgakopoulou, only a small portion of which is reflected in the theoretical scope of this dissertation, as this lies beyond the scope of my primary, literature-oriented interest. However, reading sociolinguistic research has led me towards the questions of storytelling, narrative, identity construction, and positioning. Defining the areas in which these two fields overlap enabled me to formulate the main topic of this dissertation: narrative identity construction and political subjectivity representation of migrants, second-generation individuals, and refugees in contemporary anglophone fiction.

As I conducted my research into theory and fiction during the Covid-19 pandemic and in the post-Covid-19 world, news of armed conflicts in West Asia, Africa, and Ukraine, and of forced migrations, displacement, and refugeehood of many people, and of political turmoil in Haiti has been reaching Europe almost unceasingly. Migration and refugeehood have continued to be two of the most burning issues and controversial topics in political and public debate for many years. With migrations and refugeehood come

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intercultural encounters that change the fabric of societies and cultural landscapes around the world. The questions of individual subjectivity of migrants and refugees, political power, biopolitics of the modern state, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, and cultural identities of individuals and communities constitute the political, social, and cultural contexts of the present research.

In the present dissertation, the terms "refugee", "migrant", and "immigrant" are treated as philosophical and primarily political concepts that are closely connected with social discourses and perceptions. If they were understood in legal terms or in accordance with particular state regulations, they would more than likely lead to theoretical and analytical confusion and invoke racist and xenophobic notions. As a result, legal descriptions appear so limiting that they cannot be used to conduct literary analysis. Nevertheless, they can be contrasted and compared with philosophical and political theories.

To discuss the problem of terminology concerning "refugees", "migrants", and "immigrants", I would like to refer to a literary example. Dina Nayeri titled one of her books *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You* (2019). This title forces one to reflect on the meaning of the labels that can be attached to migrating persons. It seems that Nayeri deliberately employs the words "refugee" and "immigrant" in close proximity, as if they meant the same. This creative "mix-up" indicates the fact that these terms are frequently misused and mistaken for one another in popular discourse. However, it may also suggest that there is a strong connection between being socially recognised as a refugee and as "an immigrant".

According to the definition adopted by the United Nations (UN) in the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, a refugee is a person who leaves their country "of nationality", origin, or permanent residence because there is "a well-founded fear of being persecuted" for various political and social reasons (Master Glossary 2022). When an individual is a refugee, their home country is generally considered to be unable to provide life-sustaining protection of the state. It is also possible that a refugee "is unwilling to avail [themself] of the protection of that country" (Master Glossary 2022). It means that the definition is not limited to one's inability to come back; it also includes their objection against being further protected by their state. What appears to be the most problematic part of the definition is the fact that it provides a limited list of "'objective' circumstances" which make a person fleeing their home country a refugee. This may indicate that to be officially recognised as a refugee, one's story has to fulfil certain

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"objective" norms even though the 1951 Convention cites an element as intangible as one's fear as a criterion for refugeehood (Master Glossary 2022).

The same glossary of terms developed by the UN defines the migrant as a person who "chooses" to cross country borders. The definition also indicates that one of the biggest differences between the migrant and the refugee is that migrants "continue in principle to enjoy the protection of their own government" (Master Glossary 2022), which seems to be an overgeneralisation that does not include such elements as poverty, a lack of welfare protection, or the presence of extremist politics, which can also compel a person to leave their country. The glossary also comments that, if possible, the word "migrant" should not be employed as an umbrella term denoting all migrant figures together with refugees and asylum-seekers. In light of this definition, the term "migration" should be used to refer to situations in which one's choice is a major factor, and it should be substituted by "displacement" when refugeehood and the need for international protection enter into the equation. Even if the UN Master Glossary is designed to clarify the difference between the migrant and the refugee, it also attempts to specify migrants in "irregular" and "vulnerable" situations, whose lives are in danger because they are "unable effectively to enjoy their human rights" or do not comply with their host country's immigration regulations (Master Glossary 2022).

Thomas Nail, an American philosopher, describes "the figure of the migrant" by overtly stating that it is "a political concept that identifies the common points where these figures are socially expelled or dispossessed as a result, or as the cause, of their mobility" (2015: 11). Due to using political terms, Nail can interrogate the defining criterion proposed by the UN, namely that migrants "choose" to move. Moreover, he points to the fact that migrants exist in social discourses as "unrepresented" or as symbolising a lack of "sufficient stability". To balance it, Nail suggests that migration should be seen as "a socially constitutive power" that generates individual and community transformation (2015: 12–13). In this sense, it can be a society-building force, or it can be exploited by the state "in the form of slavery, militarism, incarceration, and waged labor" (2015: 14). This remark may imply that people characterised as migrants can also find themselves in situations of persecution or imminent danger. Finally, if one takes into consideration the existing multitude of political, regional, and historical "migrant positions", there is no "one migrant" but many "migrants", whose circumstances and types of movement differ so substantially that they cannot be theorised as one entity (Nail 2015: 15–16).

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As problematic as the present terminology already appears, the term "immigrant" (not listed in the UN glossary) adds further controversies, some of which are explored by Thomas Nail, Dina Nayeri, and Himani Bannerji. Nail rightly notices that whether or not one is "an immigrant" is only seen "from the perspective of the socially fixed point *to which* the emigrant arrives" and the definition is always "a socially relative one", determined by discourses that take certain "fixed points" of settlement for granted (2015: 14, emphasis original). Treating fixity as superior to movement is one of the causes of viewing migration as an "unfortunate phenomenon" that inevitably reduces "immigrants" to capitalist "reproductive labor" or dispossessed people (Nail 2015: 12–13).

In the first chapter of *The Ungrateful Refugee*, Nayeri offers a fierce and bitter commentary that focuses on how European society perceives refugees' stories. She explains that a refugee is made to configure their trauma into "a good, persuasive story" which can prove that they are not "the opportunist, the *economic* migrant" (Nayeri 2020: 8, emphasis original). In other words, the author expresses a refugee's fear of being labelled as "an immigrant". However, Nayeri also mentions one's hope to leave a refugee camp, to enjoy a migrant's right to work and to have regular accommodation. She suggests that the distinction between the refugee and "the immigrant" becomes uncertain and indeterminate if one migrates because of danger and, at the same time, wants to exercise their personal agency in education and at work. If they do so successfully, they risk being paternalised and perceived as "a good refugee/migrant". Nayeri demonstrates that Western societies tend to mistake refugees for "immigrants" and see them all as "a talented horde" of "opportunists" who desire to take advantage of an armed conflict or a political crisis and join a migration wave (2020: 9). Such an assumption discriminates against refugees, who deserve protection from persecution, and mistreats migrants at the same time, turning them into "palatable immigrant[s]", people who are "reaching above their station", or "thief[s]" (Nayeri 2020: 9).

In the final analysis, it seems that the term "immigrant", as a social phenomenon, carries a collection of unjust presumptions and is based on unequal access to participating in power relations of free social subjects. The Canadian sociologist and philosopher Himani Bannerji contributes to the debate on the concept and states that the notion of "difference" involved in the social perception of "the immigrant" and "the second-generation immigrant"[1] is "constructed through 'race,' class, gender and other relations

[1] I return to the term "second-generation immigrant" and Bannerji's critical reflections on it in more detail in Chapter II, specifically in section 2.2.

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of power" (Bannerji 2000: 102). She puts emphasis on the "othering" and racialisation of "the immigrant", whose skin tone, ethnicity, and nationality are frequently taken as meaningful: denoting a certain disposition, criminal tendencies, or "inferiority" to "whiteness" (2000: 107–108; 112–116). Due to the controversies and reservations voiced by Nail, Nayeri, and Bannerji, I shall use the term "immigrant" only when it is absolutely necessary or if the accepted scholarly terminology includes it.

The question about the role of literature in representing migrants and refugees can be answered from several different perspectives. First, as Siobhan Brownlie rightly argues in the "Introduction" to the volume *Figures of the Migrant: The Roles of Literature and the Arts in Representing Migration* (2022), literature can be instrumental in its function "of informing attitudes and subsequently policies" (2022: 4). One may hope that literature, which not only constructs migrants as victims but also intends to represent their stories of continued resilience and adaptability, can inspire and incite critical attitudes towards popular discourses that stereotype, stigmatise, racialise, and victimise migrants and refugees (Brownlie 2022: 6). The complexity of literary narratives also helps to avoid representations that mislabel refugees as economic migrants despite the fact that, having voluntarily decided to move, they have little or no influence over how they migrate and where they arrive (Brownlie 2022: 3–5). Furthermore, migrant and refugee literature can "give […] a voice and visibility" to the lives and identities of migrating persons who "possess little economic, linguistic and cultural capital" or to whom the means of cultural representation are not available. In summary, Brownlie states that:

> In postcolonial theory, the migrant represents a new way of living free from national borders that calls fixed cultural identity and traditions into question. Migrancy has become a metaphor for a series of metaphysical displacements in our postmodern world that encompass the increasing fragmentation of subjectivity, the instability of identity constructions, the destabilization of essentialist ideologies and fixed paradigms of thought, the recognition of culture as an intersection of different trajectories and the rise of new mobile cultural subjects in the nominally post-national era. (2022: 10)

My hope for the present dissertation is to provide a scholarly platform in which migrants', second-generation people's, and refugees' stories and identities can be represented without essentialising, stereotyping, racialising, or victimising. Aligning my purpose with the purpose of the works analysed and cited here, I am hopeful that the way this doctoral project is designed can contribute to a deepened understanding of migrants', second-generation individuals', and refugees' identities and perspectives and can serve to challenge stigmatising social representations.

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The ethical dimension of this dissertation dictates that every possible effort be made not to misrepresent the identities and subjectivities of the migrant and refugee figures constructed in contemporary fiction that are analysed and interpreted here. It means that the thesis presented here rejects the essentialist perspective on identity; however, it also necessarily narrows down the scope of analysis to narrative, political, and cultural aspects of identity. Moreover, this dissertation avoids formulating thoughts of a constructivist and relativist nature, which would see identity only as a social construct with no reference points in perceptible reality. Instead, it adopts a narratological and phenomenological perspective to study what is perceivable about the identity constructions of fictional migrant, second-generation, and refugee characters.

The ethical responsibility inscribed in this project also demands that the researcher's positioning should be made transparent. I am a white European male of Polish descent, who enjoys the privilege of higher education and a stable home. In my family, migrations in my grandparents' and parents' generations were only internal, within the borders of their country of origin, although some were made under precarious circumstances. My intention, as a researcher, in designing this research project, is to understand, at a deeper level, the literature, narratives, and identities that lie beyond my own cultural position, in order to keep the boundaries between cultures open and permeable in an academic context. Following Michel-Rolph Trouillot's encouragement in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of Knowledge* (1995) and his assertion that "[o]nly in that present can we be true or false to the past we choose to acknowledge" (2015: 150–151), I can explain my engagement with Black literature and Caribbean and West Asian topics by declaring my commitment to staying true to the past of colonisation and the present of systemic racism through my work. Borrowing again from Trouillot, I can add: "What we know about slavery or about colonialism can—should, indeed—increase our ardor in the struggles against discrimination and oppression across racial and national boundaries" (2015: 150). If the academic world of "the Global North", dominated in many places by white scholars, does not engage with literary works of Black and West Asian authors, cultural barriers, isolation, and misunderstanding of the histories of colonialism and racism can only deepen.

The main aim of this dissertation is to examine how Paul Ricœur's theory of narrative identity can be applied to studying fictional characters' identities as narrated and existing as narratives related to personal practices, political positions, and cultural discourses. My research problems are directed at exploring and analysing literary

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methods of narrating disrupted experiences of migration and identity changes, and interpreting the political and cultural aspects of migrant identities constructed within narratives. One of this thesis's objectives, which forms an academic undercurrent of its analytical aims, is to contribute to the de-essentialisation of the identities of migrant and refugee characters in fiction.

Paraphrasing Trouillot's words in *Silencing the Past* (2015: 24–25), I should state that one of the most important premises of this dissertation is a concrete focus on the process of identity construction in fictional narratives rather than an abstract concern for the nature of identity. Determining what identity is cannot be a task conceptualised in essentialist terms. Therefore, the goal is to analyse how identity works in contemporary anglophone migrant and refugee fiction. To de-essentialise the identities of migrant and refugee characters in fiction, one can stop seeing them only as migrants and refugees and analyse them as human beings, persons, political subjects, and acting and speaking agents. Such a perspective is most likely an unattainable ideal. Paradoxically, to analyse literature through the lens of a theory and a methodology is to narrow one's perspective to see works of literary fiction and the characters in them in more detail. Nevertheless, to speak of selected literary characters only as migrants and refugees is to interpret only one side of their multifaceted creation. This is why the present dissertation attempts to analyse constructions of narrative identities, depictions of political situations, and cultural positions and practices in the selected corpus of literary fiction. If it narrows its perspective down and labels characters as migrants, immigrants, refugees, second-generation individuals, and migrating persons, it does so to proceed to more nuanced and deepened interpretations.

Certain traditionally-minded scholars claim that personal life narratives need to be structurally coherent and logically "intelligible" in order to represent one's identity as "whole", "complete" and stable (MacIntyre 2007; Taylor 2001; McAdams 1997, 2008). What differentiates Ricœur's theory is that his idea of viewing identity as narrative opens a way for researchers to study life narratives as searching for symbolic coherence between narrative "concordance" and "discordance" of experiences (Ricœur 1984, 1985, 1988). Thus, one of the aims of my work is to examine whether works of literature attempt to convey the "discordance" or the "concordance" of identity through their structures and means of literary expression.

The idea of perceiving and analysing the self as existing in narrative forms may not seem original. However, a theoretical apparatus based on such a conception of human

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identity can prove useful with regard to literary analysis of identity representations within works of fiction that attempt to narrate events, "acting and suffering", as Ricœur would phrase it (1984: 56), peculiar to migrant experience. The philosophical advantage of narrative identity is the way in which this concept tries to encompass the problematic of narrating time as "human time" (1984: 3) and ordering events not as a mere sequence but as a narrative reflection of the process of becoming oneself (Ricœur 1984: 74–75). Moreover, this notion of identity answers to two methodological presumptions of this dissertation. First of all, it creates a necessary connection between identity and one's perception of time, which poses other theoretical challenges around such ideas as narrative linearity, non-linearity, and temporality disruptions. Second, the ethical problems which are taken into consideration in the present doctoral thesis help to understand the interpersonal and political implications of narrating one's identity. While studying migrant and refugee stories, it is indispensable to observe and elaborate on these two aspects of narrative identity. The concept of identity proposed here needs to safeguard the basic integrity required to analyse such delicate and complex literary themes as forced migration, dislocation, and identity struggles.

My dissertation focuses on fictional works which discuss the imagined lives of migrants, second-generation individuals, and refugees, who are often depicted as traumatised subjects negotiating their place, both culturally and politically, through narratives. Because of this, identity configuration and positioning in fiction are interpreted in relation to their political and cultural contexts. Therefore, one of the aims of this dissertation is to analyse how works of contemporary literature present the political subjectivity of migrants and refugees. The question posed in the political context is whether, in the selected corpus of literary fiction, the narrative structures represent the characters as active and speaking agents capable of political action and resistance. One of the gaps in contemporary research that this dissertation aims to fill, and which begins to be addressed in migrant and refugee studies (cf. Bağlama 2025), concerns the interpretation of the figure of the contemporary refugee in literature as a reincarnation of the Agambenian *homo sacer*. To examine this, the dissertation investigates representations of places and spaces of transience and dwelling of refugee characters. Furthermore, the analyses concerning migrant and second-generation characters inquire into the social and political conditions of racial prejudice and racism, systemic and quotidian, as presented in fiction. In the context of cultural studies, this dissertation constitutes a critical exploration of the categories of ethnicity, hybridity, cultural identity,

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and of various forms of cultural belonging and positioning, as well as of the figure of home as a cultural category.

Altogether, the present dissertation aims to contribute to the academic discourse on the question of individual and communal identities and subjectivities of migrant and refugee characters constructed in contemporary anglophone fiction. By approaching the research problem from the perspective of narrative studies, it perceives the narrative, political, and cultural aspects of migrant, second-generation, and refugee identities and subjectivities in fiction as inextricably linked to narrative structures, both concrete and symbolic ones. Within these structures, I study not only the temporal and spatial dimensions, the problem of the fragmented, incoherent self, and the self as narrative, but also other issues related to identity – political and cultural – such as the construction of Agambenian bare life, the problems of racial embodiment, racism, and state surveillance, and the critique of hybridity and multiculturality discourses in fiction. Although these research questions are already present in contemporary academic debate, they may be developed in relation to the categories of narrative identity and the so-called narrated self.

This dissertation is not concerned with actual stories and non-fictional accounts of the lived experiences of migrants and refugees, but with fictional narratives and imagined experiences of literary characters. Although sociocultural and sociopolitical issues are key elements in many sections of this thesis, and the perspectives of political studies and sociology are parts of the theoretical apparatus, they are not the primary concern of my dissertation.

The corpus of primary literature consists of seven works of contemporary migrant, refugee, and diasporic fiction published between 1988 and 2021 and written in English with a broadly understood English-speaking readership in mind. Edwidge Danticat's collection of short stories titled *Krik? Krak!* (1995) and her debut novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), are the representatives of Haitian-American literature here[2]. Dionne Brand's first and so far only collection of stories, titled *Sans Souci and Other Stories* (1988), represents Trinidadian-Canadian fiction. Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* and Brand's *Sans Souci and Other Stories* are compared and contrasted at certain points in this thesis. David Chariandy's second novel, *Brother* (2017), is another work of Trinidadian-Canadian fiction here. The works of fiction listed so far can sometimes be referred to as

[2] In Chapter IV, I also include a brief analysis of one short story from Danticat's most recent collection titled *Everything Inside* (2019). I decided to analyse this story for its nuanced and up-to-date perspective on modern migration, but I do not interpret the 2019 collection as a whole.

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examples of anglophone Caribbean literature. They mostly discuss migrant, second-generation, and diasporic experiences of Black characters. Christy Lefteri's novel, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019), first published in the United Kingdom, discusses the flight of Syrian refugees from Aleppo to Europe and the British Isles. Omar El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise* (2021), originally published in Canada, is a novel that narrates the story of a Syrian refugee child. Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* and El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise* focus on the plight of Syrian refugees during the Syrian Revolutionary War and may be considered to be works of refugee fiction. Dina Nayeri's novel, *Refuge* (2017), belongs to Iranian-American literature and, due to its scope and focus, it may be categorised as both refugee and migrant fiction.

In selecting the corpus of literary fiction, I followed two criteria: the personal experiences of authors and the directions of migrations that reflect the actual experiences and problems of contemporary migrants and refugees. The authors of all the works that belong to this corpus of primary literature are former refugees, settled migrants, or second-generation writers. The two directions of migration considered here are, first, from various parts of West Asia[3], specifically Syria and Iran, to Europe and North America, and second, from the Caribbean, specifically Haiti and Trinidad, to North America. I believe that the corpus of primary literature designed this way, despite the distant publication years of some of the works, shows the intertextual relations among the constructions of refugees, migrants, and second-generation individuals in contemporary fiction. By designing such a geopolitical pattern, I also want to map out the relations among the countries of the so-called Anglosphere in Europe, North America, and beyond. The themes of forced migration, extremely precarious refugeehood, and representations of various forms of identity crises can be observed in all of the selected novels and short stories. The analyses of my primary literature demonstrate certain changes, points of similarity and dissimilarity, and the development of migrant and refugee literature in English published in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom from the late 1980s to the early 2020s.

The first theoretical chapter of this dissertation begins with a philosophical reflection on the subject of narrative identity, a term proposed by Ricœur in the conclusion to the third volume of *Time and Narrative* (Ricœur 1988). The first part of Chapter I is

[3] I decide to use the strictly geographical term "West Asia" and refrain from using the geopolitical term "the Middle East", as the latter – despite its common usage – carries certain colonial connotations and may be regarded as an example of postcolonial linguistic legacy.

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devoted to the philosophy of narrative identity and begins with an overview of sometimes contradictory views of somewhat traditional thinkers and scholars who see the narrated self as a coherent unity. Subsequently, the chapter proceeds to elaborate on Ricœur's narrative identity as "discordant concordance" and *ipse* identity. Then, it adds a decolonising perspective on narrative identity, which may be found in Édouard Glissant's (1999, 2010), Chinua Achebe's (2000, 2010), and Dina Nayeri's (2020) essays and non-fiction. Next, the chapter, still in its part related to narrative identity, discusses current academic reflections on incoherent and disintegrated narrative identity types. The section on narrative identity is concluded with a brief overview of the problem of narrative emplotment. The second part of Chapter I is dedicated to discussing the status of refugees and migrants through the lens of political philosophy, as relevant to literary methodologies. After a short introduction, it moves on to elaborate on the figure of the refugee as one of the contemporary reincarnations of Giorgio Agamben's (1998) *homo sacer*, adding the perspectives of several other theoreticians to contextualise and substantiate the theoretical proposition made there. A brief reflection on Hannah Arendt's (2018) category of "*animal laborans*" and Jenny Edkins's (2011) concept of "the person-as-such", as used in literature studies, closes the section and the chapter.

The second theoretical chapter reviews the concepts of "race" and racialised embodiment from the perspectives of Linda Martín Alcoff (1999) and other philosophers and scholars, such as, among others, Frank Chouraqui (2021), Frantz Fanon (2008), Daniel Coleman (2006), Himani Bannerji (2000), and Christina Sharpe (2016). The remaining sections of Chapter II provide an overview of concepts related to diaspora studies, cultural identity, and transnationalism as they pertain to literary methodologies. They introduce the terminology of the second and third phases of diaspora studies, including cultural positioning, hybridisation, home, "homing desire" (Brah 2005: 177), "markers of home" (Bhabha and Stierstorfer 2015: 15), and – drawing on the research area of transnationalism – the concepts of the transnational social field and second-generation syncretism. The last section of Chapter II concludes both theoretical chapters by proposing several initial hypotheses and questions for literary analysis that stem from the gathered theoretical and conceptual material.

The first two chapters aim to provide the methodological apparatus and conceptual framework for analysing and interpreting the selected corpus of primary literature. However, the specific objective of the theoretical part of the dissertation is not only to list and explain the conceptual tools with which one can analyse literature, but it is also to

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present the frame of reference and general orientation employed while studying and interrogating the selected fictional narratives. The perspective set forth by these chapters allows one to observe and examine the individual and communal narrative identities and subjectivities, private, domestic, and public places, spaces, and postmodern "non-places" (Augé 1995), and political and cultural practices and positions presented and constructed in contemporary anglophone migrant and refugee fiction.

Chapter III, the first of the three analytical chapters in this dissertation, focuses on the ways in which the selected works of literature present migrant, second-generation, and refugee identities as narratives and endue them with the quality of being narrative identities rather than stable and inflexible ones. Providing a point-by-point analysis, the chapter examines the narrative structures that contribute to constructing *ipse* identities, the textual and symbolic concordance and discordance, coherence and incoherence, and other concrete and metaphorical ways of representing the fragmented and disjointed temporalities and identities of migrants, refugees, and second-generation people in literary narratives. The chapter's initial section interprets the narrative constructions of selected works by Danticat and Brand and, based on the Ricœurian *ipse* identity type and the metaphor of the palimpsest, it argues that they incorporate changes, re-evaluations, and re-writings of narrative identities in literature. The next section concentrates on trauma and the works by Lefteri, El Akkad, Nayeri, and Chariandy, which employ various narrative structures and methods to represent traumatising events and traumatised identities in literary fiction. It asks whether and to what extent these narratives are highly structured compositions that imitate the workings of trauma-afflicted minds, resembling the Ricœurian discordant concordance, narrating trauma to grasp the chaos of temporality within individual and communal suffering. Following that, Chapter III proceeds to the analysis of postmodernist narrative techniques and culturally specific, non-Western narrative influences, which can be observed in Black diasporic literature as well as in the works whose primary cultural reference is West Asia. At this point, the chapter argues that redefining and reimagining the narrative form in migrant and refugee literature is possible thanks to the merging of postmodernist narrative devices with culturally specific, non-Western narrative sensitivity. The chapter continues to reflect on the potential of literary narratives of migration, refugeehood, and second-generation lives to empower people and strengthen their sense of agency. The conclusion of Chapter III is divided into two separate codas. The first one reflects on the structures of coherence and incoherence in migrants' and refugees' narrative identities, and the other, continuing in the spirit of

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Ricœur's conceptual framework, proposes the term "migration time" as a nuanced way of viewing and examining temporality in migrant, refugee, and diasporic literatures and narratives.

Chapter IV, in its first part, offers a politically oriented analysis of the figures of the refugee and the refugee camp in selected works and argues that these narratives present the refugee as a contemporary *homo sacer*, as defined and developed by Agamben (1998). The analysis not only investigates selected refugee characters, but also interrogates selected depictions of the refugee camp as a *lager*, frequently referring to various takes on the philosophical problems of biopolitics and sovereign power. The analyses of the refugee characters and refugeehood spaces lead to a reflection on how the status of the refugee-*homo sacer* influences narrative identity constructions in selected fiction. The second part of Chapter IV focuses on the political status and positioning of migrant and second-generation characters, interpreting depictions of state surveillance, racialisation, and racial embodiment, and, consequently, their impact on narrative identity constructions in selected fiction. The third part of Chapter IV analyses various methods of resistance to biopolitics practised by refugee, migrant, and second-generation characters. It discusses seemingly depoliticised acts and habits, such as interpersonal relations of care and community building, as ways to restore agency, regain a sense of dignity and personhood, and re-establish one's place in politics and genuine power relations. The chapter is concluded with a coda that summarises the political reflections.

In Chapter V, the dissertation proceeds to study various cultural identity positions and practices in migrant, refugee, and diasporic prose. First, food, music, folklore, and storytelling are discussed as practices which carry symbols, metaphors, and narratives of cultural identities, their transformations, evolutions, and disruptions. Second, the category of home, which goes beyond mere building or place imagery, and the practices of homing are problematised in the context of hybridity and ethnicity. Next, the chapter examines generational conflicts and the possibilities for reconciliation between first-generation migrants and their children who were born in their parents' country of arrival or migrated as children and grew up in the "host countries". The analysis of generational differences allows one to study the re-evaluations of cultural positions and the identity negotiations between mothers and their daughters and sons as they are presented in selected works. Furthermore, the next section briefly reflects on the use of migrants' and refugees' mother tongues in anglophone fiction, focusing primarily on the direct use of Haitian Creole and Persian in Danticat's and Nayeri's prose. Last but not least, the chapter

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interprets the cultural identity positions, challenges, and negotiations which are specific to refugee and former refugee characters. In conclusion, the first of two chapter codas offers a discussion on how representations of cultural identities and narrative identity constructions in migrant, diasporic, and refugee prose mutually affect each other. The second coda to Chapter V includes final remarks on several approaches to de-essentialising cultural identities of migrants, second-generation individuals, and refugees in fiction and research.

The analytical chapters aim to answer this dissertation's central thesis that migrant, second-generation, and refugee identities exist in narratives – in works of fiction – and as narratives – constructed as stories themselves. The theory of identity as narrative – as a story – views identities as intangible categories and processes perceivable in literature, which is seen as a discursive and intertextual space that constructs (the representations of) the figures of migrants, refugees, and second-generation people.

A set of questions emerges from this central thesis. First, one can ask whether and to what extent migrant, second-generation, and refugee identities in fiction are presented as coherent, stable, integrated, and whole, or whether and to what extent they are depicted as fractured, fragmented, disrupted, and disjointed. Second, it is possible to inquire about the role of textual and symbolic narrative structures and structural-temporal disruptions within works of fiction in constructing or "conjuring up" migrant, second-generation, and refugee identities. Moreover, I ask how the experiences of migration and refugeehood are presented as affecting migrant and refugee characters' identity constructions. This dissertation argues that a story of traumatising forced migration cannot be narrated in an orderly fashion, and that migrating and seeking refuge outside of one's country cannot be fully processed and thus incorporated into the whole of one's experiences and identity.

Inspired by the fields of politics and sociology, I put forward further hypotheses. One can imagine that presenting refugees and certain migrants in fiction as fugitives and outlaws can alter their identity constructions and forms of belonging. Therefore, the politically oriented literary inquiry focuses on the assumption that how narratives depict the political and social status of migrants, refugees, and certain second-generation people affects and is inextricably connected with how the same narratives approach narrative identity structures. Losing one's sense of agency, being deprived of political subjectivity and personhood, and being denied one's place in relations of power, which also entails resistance, can exert an impact on a refugee's, migrant's, or second-generation individual's experience of identity continuity and constancy. Finally, this doctoral

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dissertation also explores how social structures of racism, racialisation, and the legacies of colonialism and wars in the Caribbean and West Asia affect the identity formations in refugee, migrant, and diasporic prose.

As regards the domain of cultural identity and its relation to narrative identity, I study whether contemporary literature primarily presents hybridising and syncretising forms of belonging, or whether it also includes structures and depictions of reactionary positions and nationalist discourses of identity and culture. Informed by postcolonial studies, this doctoral thesis analyses the influence that living in the diaspora has on migrant, second-generation, and refugee identities in fiction. I examine how migrant identities and transnational ties evolve between generations, and study whether home and the domestic sphere are narrated as a category of migrant identity. I also inquire whether refugee characters actively produce their own cultural identity positions in their places of refuge.

Migrants' and refugees' identities exist in narrative and as narrative, and their identities are analysed and interpreted here as constructed in selected examples of contemporary anglophone fiction.

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Chapter I:
Narrative Identity, a Contemporary *Homo Sacer*, and the Politics of Migrating Persons

1.1. Introduction

Paul Ricœur remarks in the first volume of *Time and Narrative* (1984) that history, literature, and phenomenological philosophy are "three partners who usually ignore one another" (1984: 83). However, what they have in common is the quest to understand the phenomenon of time. Although in the present dissertation history may merge into politics at certain moments, the very core of the triad should still be preserved. Ricœur's analysis leads him to the conclusion that historical and literary narratives connect the intuitive, almost primal human sense of time with a reconfigured and "re-understood" sense of human experiences that can be achieved through narration (1984: 52–87).

The modified partnership of politics, literature, and phenomenology helps to find and interpret the representations of human identities within narrative texts. It also directs one's attention to how literature treats and narrates the temporal aspect of personal and communal experiences. The issue of identity has to be considered first in the light of narrative analysis in order to notice, in the second step, the construction of the human subject in politics. The narrative is the catalyst: the space to which human beings' desire to understand their more or less chaotic experience may be transferred and in which it may be satisfied (Ricœur 1984: 74–75). For the sake of a coherent and comprehensible line of thinking, I wish to postpone an elaboration on this phenomenological aspect of narration until one of the following subchapters. Nonetheless, what needs to be emphasised at this point is the fact that literature, politics, and philosophy are linked

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together not only by time and narrative but also through the concept of "identity" that always has to be taken into consideration together with its temporal aspect, that is, the fact that identities are not stable, individual occurrences but rather continuous processes (Hall 1992: 275–288; Hall 2003: 234).

The belief that discourses of personal, political, and cultural identification are reflected in the mode of literary narration allows one to imagine a tripartite network whose background is the field of migration studies. Its first element is the narrated sense of time and experience. The most important component of the narrative perspective is the possibility of transforming human perception from pre-understanding, through narration, and towards grasping narrated time "as a whole" (Ricœur 1984: 54–77). The second element is the study of the political subjectivity of migrating persons and their social status in the "forms of life" established in modern states (Agamben 1998; 2000). These two dimensions of identity are dealt with in the present chapter. The third part of the network, closely connected with the previous one through such notions as citizenship or country borders, consists of the disciplines of transnationalism, cultural studies, and diaspora studies, especially when it comes to their expertise concerning the concepts of cultural identity positioning, hybridity, and the racialisation of bodies. These theoretical fields are discussed in the second chapter of the dissertation. The purpose of constructing such a complex interdisciplinary network is to pave the way for answering the question of whether narrative structures in literature can order and "story-tell" migrating persons' experiences in a way that does not misrepresent their cultural identities and political subjectivity.

1.2. Philosophy of narrative identity

To avoid oversimplifying the problem of narrative identity, one has to consider it from a comparative, almost genealogical perspective. An overview of selected works by Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Dan McAdams, who propose a traditional approach to narrating human actions, opens the discussion, which is then continued to include a reconstruction of the line of thinking offered in Ricœur's *Time and Narrative* (1984, 1985, 1988) and *Oneself as Another* (1992). The reason for including MacIntyre's, Taylor's, and McAdams's theories here is to trace their influence on contemporary literary practices and to enable comparing and contrasting migrant and refugee narratives

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against the backdrop of traditional conceptions of the narrative self in the analytical chapters of the dissertation. Ricœur, in turn, is one of the first philosophers to outline a definition of narrative identity, which, in his assumptions, becomes a theory that does not exclude nonstandard narrative forms. To provide a polyphony of culturally diverse voices, narratives, and identities, theories developed by white, Western scholars are balanced with Caribbean, African, and West Asian sensitivities and ideas. The penultimate part of this subchapter constitutes an attempt to gather and give thought to other conceptualisations of narrative identity that frequently contest traditional theses and suggest a poststructuralist approach, which links identity disturbances and incoherent narratives with various cultural, political, and psychological phenomena. A synthesis of the debate on the issue of narrative emplotment closes the section. Even though emplotment is an integral part of the entire concept of narrative identity, it is discussed here separately because it is a major theory re-evaluated by philosophers, historiographers, and sociolinguists on its own.

1.2.1. Unity and coherence of identity

In *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (1981), Alasdair MacIntyre's views concerning the self are based on the assumption that moral characteristics manifested invariably throughout one's life may contribute to perceiving a person's actions as unified (MacIntyre 2007: 205). His reasoning leads him to a thesis that moral virtues enacted and manifested in one's deeds can appear as "intelligible"[4] only insofar as a person's life is "conceived and evaluated as a whole" (2007: 205). As a consequence of adopting the traditional conception of virtue and stressing its continuity in an individual's life, MacIntyre turns to the Aristotelian notion of narrative structure. According to MacIntyre, the unity of the self exists in "the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end" (2007: 205), which is one of the most influential traditional theoretical thoughts challenged in the present dissertation. First and foremost, it imagines the structure of human selfhood as a structure of a narrative. MacIntyre is one of the first modern thinkers to see the human self as unfolding in a narrative manner. However, one of the presuppositions of his thesis is that a life narrative is uninterruptedly

[4] I put this word in quotation marks throughout the fragment concerning MacIntyre because, for him, the notion of "intelligibility" carries certain additional meaning, which is not limited to a dictionary definition.

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continuous. MacIntyre stresses the requirement that an individual action can never be understood in a logical way, as "an intelligible action", if it is not taken into account as "a-possible-element-in-a-sequence" (2007: 206–209). MacIntyre builds a notion of a narrative unity of identity on two pillars: the wholeness of life and the "intelligible" narrative. If individual actions are perceived as interlinked, especially by one's moral characteristics, they become an "intelligible" narrative characterised by "unity" (2007: 218). According to MacIntyre, the unity of life is also realised by an individual's ability to project their life as a teleological whole, which includes the past as well as the future (2007: 215).

MacIntyre also comments on personal identity as a concept. He sees it as "the unity of a [personal] character" as opposed to uncertain and ever-changing "psychological continuity" (2007: 217). He goes so far as to suggest that the reason why certain people consider committing suicide is that "the narrative of their life has become unintelligible to them" and has lost the *telos* of their projected future (2007: 217). In MacIntyre's philosophical system, the concept of personal identity "presupposes the applicability" and the existence of a narrative and its "intelligibility" (2007: 218). Thus, the unity of the self consists in perceiving one's life narrative as meaningful and consistent throughout the whole story. Furthermore, MacIntyre believes that a person's identity cannot pursue a moral *telos* if it is perceived as a solely individual entity. According to him, the heritage "of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation" provides one with a "moral starting point", which constitutes an element of identity that one may question but can never abandon completely (2007: 220). The scholar's line of thinking concludes with the idea that one's narrative of the self is "made intelligible" when it is seen as an integral part of a "larger and longer history" of one's community and nation (2007: 221–222).

The idea encompassing the aforementioned arguments proposed by MacIntyre is that it is "natural […] to think of the self in a narrative mode" (2007: 206). This thought refers to the concept of the "genre" in which human life can be conceived. As MacIntyre asserts, "the basic and essential" form that can help to describe and judge human actions and intentions is "[n]arrative history" (2007: 208). As conversations, utterances, and events might be classified into genres that correspond to fictional stories, one can understand their life and the lives of others in full in terms of narratives that "have beginnings, middles and endings" (MacIntyre 2007: 211–212). Additionally, MacIntyre argues that a narrative structure is not imposed on life but rather created by human speech and actions themselves. As a result, "enacted narratives", as the scholar names them,

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should not appear as "the work of poets, dramatists and novelists reflecting upon events which had no narrative order" existing in themselves (2007: 211). For MacIntyre, the narrative is not a form; it is certainly not artificially constructed in language. In his understanding, it seems to be a basic instinct: the natural inclination of human cognition to perceive life as a narrative (2007: 211–212). Consequently, one of the main theses offered by MacIntyre is that "man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal" (2007: 216).

From the thoughts formulated in *After Virtue*, one can infer that the specific kind of moral and logical narrative "intelligibility", which the author proposes, possesses an identity-forming power. According to MacIntyre, a life story conceived by an individual's perception can achieve "intelligibility" by being concentrated on a quest for narrative wholeness. One of the implications of such an idea is the view that a fundamental function of a life story is to create a narrative projection of the wholeness of life and unity of events, which enables a person to experience their self as a whole.

As a continuation of MacIntyre's ideas, Charles Taylor's concept of the self is based on narrative coherence. Taylor begins by laying out two terms that are the basis of his argument: "frameworks" and "meaning of life" (Taylor 2001: 16–19). In his understanding, a framework is generally defined as a philosophical or religious foundation by which people tend to judge their actions. Taylor suggests that the modern world appears as an assemblage of individualised frameworks devoid of certainty and permanence, which used to be provided by traditional doctrines and beliefs (2001: 17). Thus, as Taylor states, frameworks available in the modern discourse of ideas create an atmosphere within which an individual is left to rely on beliefs that are never definite, not necessarily coherent or consistent, and prone to change at any point (2001: 17).

To illustrate the modern concept of the meaning of life, Taylor evokes the figure of Martin Luther, whose overwhelming fear that he was going to be condemned by God for his sins, regardless of what he did, led him to a "liberating moment of insight about salvation through faith [alone]" (Taylor 2001: 18). As the Canadian scholar asserts, Luther's religious anxiety cannot be described in terms of "a crisis of meaning". For the Christian monk, the meaning of life provided by his religious framework was always stable and "unquestionable" (2001: 18). This conclusion suggests that the modern understanding of the meaning of life as an ethical concept is inherently unstable, disjointed and, as such, it can be one of the causes of one's feeling of meaninglessness. Taylor speculates that a subject liberated from all frameworks is likely to suffer from

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"an appalling identity crisis" (2001: 31). He argues that without the support of a secure framework, certain people develop a form of anxiety regarding their identity, which he describes as "an acute form of disorientation" (2001: 27). In this way, Taylor links one's ethical beliefs and intuitions to a person's ability to construct and maintain an identity.

In Taylor's understanding, an individual life can be described in terms of forming "unity" and "[aspiring] to fullness" (2001: 43). He bases his reflection on Martin Heidegger's *Time and Being* (1962) and states that human life is perceived not only as "being" but also as "becoming". This leads Taylor to a notion of the narrative self. Seeing one's "being in the world" in the temporal dimension may cause a person to comprehend their existence as having a "degree of narrative understanding" (Taylor 2001: 47). To his conception of the narrative self, Taylor adds the criterion of coherence, which later in this dissertation becomes a critical point of philosophical comparison, leading to contradictions and controversies. He argues that understanding an individual's life as "a coherent narrative" is a necessary condition for them to be able to respond to the most fundamental ethical and cultural issues that may position their identity in a particular place (2001: 47). He claims that one of the features of Western culture is an idea of a person who does not appear as "two [separate,] temporally succeeding selves" throughout their life. Thus, he insists on understanding the self as an entity unified by its ethical, structural, and narrative coherence (2001: 50–52).

What links Taylor's thought to more recent theories of the self and contrasts it slightly with MacIntyre's ideas is its emphasis on the role of language and interlocution in identity-formation processes. Taylor observes that one's "self-definition" takes place in language, which, despite carrying certain idiosyncratic features, cannot become entirely individualised as it is one of the most important "common spaces": elements of life and culture that are shared within society and constitute a repository of identity-forming concepts (2001: 34–35). Identity is not only grounded in ethical and religious concerns; it also refers to one's language, which is always influenced by one's community. Taylor does not limit his reflection to taking the collective nature of language into account. He also admits that "I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors" (2001: 36). In this way, he declares that one's identity can be approached only through communication and articulation, which find no other way than to happen in language and within "webs of interlocution": social networks that allow people to "grasp" their identities in interactions (2001: 36–39).

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In addition to MacIntyre and Taylor, Dan P. McAdams is yet another contemporary scholar who defends the idea of the unity of identity. His research focuses on studying personal narratives in the context of American culture and its psychological mindset. McAdams, a psychology professor and the director of The Study of Lives Research Group (The Study of Lives Research Group 2022), compares the postmodern way of thinking about identity with a more traditional, Aristotelian paradigm (McAdams 1997: 46–78).

The philosophical statements made by McAdams as he analyses *After Gregory* (1994), a novel by Austin Wright, situate him as an heir to the ideas of MacIntyre and Taylor. The protagonist of the novel in question receives thirty million dollars to facilitate changing his identities and social contexts. However, the main rule of the experiment is that he must not go back to his original self. McAdams sees the content of the novel as a literary exercise in putting the assumption "about the multiplicity of modern selfhood" into practice (1997: 47). The protagonist's identity transformations lead the scholar to deem the postmodern self to be a "protean self" that "takes on whatever forms and qualities that a particular life situation demands" (1997: 48). The literary character created by Wright serves McAdams as an illustration of the notion that the postmodern subject may re-make themselves in an anti- or a-substantialist manner.

McAdams's interpretation of *After Gregory* is also an introduction to his philosophical proposition about the nature of the self. According to McAdams, even the multiplicity of social roles that a subject adopts cannot stop the process of "selfing": "inherently a unifying, integrative, synthesizing process", due to which a person can perceive their life's experiences as forming their identity (1997: 56). In order to achieve this, selfing requires constructing a life narrative. However, the narrative presupposed in this conception of the self is necessarily an "integrative", "unifying and purpose-giving story" (McAdams 1997: 56). McAdams argues that numerous psychological ideas concerning identity are similar in the assumption that the personal self has a strong tendency to synthesise experiences incorporated within it and to strive for "a fundamental sense of unity" (1997: 57). Moreover, McAdams refers to the Aristotelian structural paradigm of "beginnings, middles, and endings" that is supposed to "[render] a life in time sensible" (1997: 63). He believes that self-images exhibit overall themes, such as love, power, or "agency and communion", together with relatively unified moral and ideological positions (1997: 66–68). Finally, McAdams states that "[s]tories are expected to have *endings* as well as beginnings and middles" (1997: 70, my emphasis).

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As he maintains, the urge to project a narrative conclusion is sometimes connected with the desire to develop "generative" potential for one's story to create a form of testimony for the future (1997: 70–72).

In an article published in 2019, McAdams claims that a narrative identity is linked to a "repository of canonical cultural stories" or "master narratives" that are specific to a given cultural context (2019a: 11). McAdams theorises that the American master narrative of selfhood can be called "the redemptive self" (2019a: 11). This culturally specific type of the self is essentially a narrative structure that follows a relatively well-defined plot and a succession of themes. To give an example, the scholar analyses a life story by Angela Robinson, "[an] African American woman" (2019a: 8). McAdams does not emphasise the socio-cultural significance of the woman's ethnic self-identification or the multiplicity of the social roles she has performed. Instead, the researcher focuses on the adjectives that the interviewee uses to characterise herself "as [a] 'strong,' 'driven,' 'creative,' […] and a little bit 'selfish'" person (2019a: 9). Despite this initial image, Angela's story continues through a string of major disruptions and traumas (2019a: 8–9). The interviewee openly shows that her narrative identity incorporates significant points of disturbance and inconsistencies (McAdams 2019a: 9). Even though McAdams reports the unsettling episodes in his article, he seems to direct his attention mainly at the fact that Robinson manages to rebuild her selfhood and redeem herself by presenting "positive outcomes (Redemption)" of "negative experiences" (2019a: 8–11). By claiming that "Angela's narrative identity celebrates the agency of a powerful protagonist who finds meaning and redemption in life" (McAdams 2019a: 9), the scholar reduces her complex story to a phrase that suggests a possibility for creating narrative unity and wholeness. It appears that McAdams interprets the woman's identity on the basis of a predetermined thematic structure that closes Robinson's narrative in a well-shaped and culturally embedded story of a specifically American type of "personal *emancipation*, upward *social mobility* (the American Dream), and *recovery*" (2019a: 11, emphasis original).

Probably the best summary of the philosophical views of Dan McAdams on the nature of the self is a sentence from another article by this scholar: "My students and I ask our research participants to imagine that their lives are like novels, with chapters, characters, settings, and scenes" (2019b: 79). The assumption that a story of a life can take a coherent form resembling the characteristics of a novel and enabling a person to imagine their identity as internally unified may suggest that McAdams's philosophical stance tends to favour logical continuity over life's disruptions. One may observe that

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the American scholar's theoretical conception combines a fairly traditional narrative ideal with the assumption that only well-structured narratives can be seen as "good stories" (McAdams 2008: 423). At a certain point, McAdams goes so far as to state that although certain individuals are naturally unable to create well-ordered life narratives, the production of extremely incoherent stories can be linked to such psychological illnesses as schizophrenia and personality disorders (2019a: 10).

All things considered, scholars who perceive human identity as unified and coherent have significantly contributed to developing the concepts of the self and identity by connecting them very closely with narrative aspects of life perception. MacIntyre and Taylor follow the Aristotelian vision of human character by bringing to the foreground the matters of continuity of virtue in life, one's community and history, as well as individual morality. Moreover, all three scholars discussed in this subsection base their notions of life narratives' structures on the codified, well-ordered, beginning-to-middle-to-end plot of the ancient tragedy. As far as identity is concerned, they clearly emphasise unity, coherence, intelligibility, logical continuity, and wholeness of narrative composition. Additionally, due to including the concept of *telos* into their notions of the narrative self, the scholars assume that a life story incorporates a presupposition of a "next part": a projection of a predictable future or a message carrying positive potential. Since it appears that MacIntyre's and Taylor's views still influence certain scholars, such as McAdams, one can infer that the narrative ideal of life that they present has become one of the first paradigms of thinking about human identity within a narrative sense of temporality. For this reason, I am inclined to turn to other sources that conceptualise narrative identity, which would more profoundly inform the research presented here.

1.2.2. Paul Ricœur's narrative identity as "discordant concordance"

The reflection on how human beings develop their identities through stories based on their lives introduces the problem of the phenomenology of time to the present subchapter. The issue of how a person comprehends their life in time and how a story may change their perception of temporality seems to inspire Paul Ricœur throughout the three volumes of *Time and Narrative* (1984, 1985, 1988). Ricœur begins the first part of *Time and Narrative* by establishing a fundamental link between the fact that human experience happens in time and the theory that narratives, fictional and historical, always

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include an impression of temporality within them. With this entanglement in mind, Ricœur proceeds to juxtapose two paradigms that lay the foundation for other cultural and philosophical beliefs about the human perception of time: St. Augustine's "paradoxes of time" and Aristotle's "intelligible organization of a narrative" (Ricœur 1984: 3–4).

As Ricœur states, for Augustine in the eleventh book of *Confessions*, the past, the present, and the future can be imagined in terms of "places" that extend in "the soul" (Augustine of Hippo 20: 26[5], trans. Vernon 1953: 350; Ricœur 1984: 12). If one does not imagine time as "extending", what is left is a series of unrelated points: "nows" that disappear as soon as they come into existence (Simms 2003: 81). As Ricœur notices, Augustine's notion of the present moment as perception may also be explained as a point or *attentio* which contrasts with *distentio animi*: "the distension of the soul" (Ricœur 1984: 11; 16). To put it differently, Ricœur states that the temporal qualities of life "implied by narration and prediction" are located in the human soul. This is probably why Ricœur prefers to speak about "the human time" (1984: 11–13). Conceptualising time as occupying "space" leads Augustine to a thesis that the passage of time and the distension of the human mind happen "*from* (*ex*) the future, *through* (*per*) the present, *into* (*in*) the past" (Ricœur 1984: 13–16). This assumption seems to constitute one of the basic phenomenological descriptions of the idea of time. Despite its fundamental character, Augustine's notion of time is not free from an elemental flaw: time remains "a being that lacks being" and "the extension of a thing that has no [physical] extension" (1984: 16). The only solution to this conundrum that Augustine notices is the progressive impression of time that the soul generates through "distending" itself (Ricœur 1984: 21).

At this point, Ricœur introduces the ideas of "concordance" and "discordance" (1984: 4). As he notices, Augustine's assumptions cannot create only a harmonious notion of passing time; they also generate a significant discordance: a lack of agreement that exists as a consequence of the mind being actively "engaged" in the process of *distentio animi* (1984: 21–22). In other words, the human image of progressive, seemingly concordant time never harmonises fully with the actual world and the temporality of real-life events. The relations between the future, the present moment, and the memory of the past are bound to "emerge again and again" as a discordance to the human mind (Ricœur 1984: 21).

[5] The conventional way to cite *Confessions* by Augustine of Hippo is to first give the number of the cited chapter (here: 20) within a book, followed by the number of the cited "topic" after a colon (here: 26). Here, the citation from Augustine is followed by a reference to the translation.

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This remark brings Ricœur's discourse towards Aristotle and the concepts of *muthos* (emplotment[6]) and *mimesis* ("mimetic activity"). Ricœur juxtaposes Augustine's impression of discordant time drawn from lived experience with Aristotle's narrative order established through "verbal experience where concordance mends discordance" (1984: 31). In contrast to Augustine's aporetic notion of human time, Aristotle's idea of temporality seems to be founded on the impression of narrative concordance. According to Ricœur, the Aristotelian emplotment is the operation of "organizing the events into a system" (1984: 33). Moreover, the idea of *mimesis* is also understood as a dynamic process leading towards representation or imitation in a story or a work of art. When he explains the Aristotelian definitions of *muthos* and *mimesis*, Ricœur clearly emphasises the active aspect of these terms and prefers to view them as narrative operations that generate plots rather than "static structure[s]" (1984: 33).

Aristotle's theory of *muthos*, especially the *muthos* of the ancient tragedy, seems to provoke a major question. Ricœur asks whether the Aristotelian narrative "paradigm" established on the emplotment that brings order to events is able to develop and change its functioning in order to "be applied to the whole narrative field" (1984: 38). The *muthos*, as understood by Aristotle, promotes narrative concordance and aims at achieving "completeness [and] wholeness" (Ricœur 1984: 38). Moreover, the categories of beginning, middle, and end, which the traditional *muthos* carries, can limit human actions and give them a narrative "contour". As Ricœur forcefully puts it, they "are not taken from experience[;] [t]hey are not features of some real action" (1984: 39). Time, as Augustine of Hippo understands it, is absent from the Aristotelian *muthos*. If emplotment orders events and subordinates them to the principles of unity and completeness, its mimetic action also focuses on narrative coherence rather than on a particular story or lived experience (Ricœur 1984: 41).

The observations on Augustine's and Aristotle's theories allow Ricœur to start developing his own notion of mimesis that transcends the boundaries of a narrative text. The Ricœurian idea of a threefold mimesis connects lived human experience with the effect that narratives have on the human perception of time and events. The relation between human life and time establishes two points of their interdependence with narratives. First, temporality may be seen as "human time" if it is expressed in "*a narrative mode*". Second, the narrative way of expression reaches its full potential

[6] The contemporary definition of this term, as described by Hayden White (1973), is discussed in this chapter in section 1.2.6.

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when it qualifies and characterises human existence in time (Ricœur 1984: 52, emphasis original). The system of the threefold mimesis seems to be designed by Ricœur to facilitate his understanding of this complex time-life-narrative relation. It also appears to be the French philosopher's answer to the limiting view on emplotment initiated by Aristotle. For the sake of clarity, I use Ricœur's original terminology and name the three levels of mimetic activity as $mimesis_1$, $mimesis_2$, and $mimesis_3$[7].

The temporality of events mediated on the level of $mimesis_2$ gains a renewed quality. For Ricœur, the way human beings interpret their lives and emplot narratives responds to the Augustinian problem of the "paradoxes of time". What reflects the Augustinian paradox is the fact that a plot includes two temporal structures: "the episodic dimension" and "the configurational dimension" (Ricœur 1984: 66–67). The episodic dimension corresponds to the mere sequence of a "now" following another "now" in a linear manner. The configurational dimension is the function of a plot that re-orders events to make the story a "followable" whole (1984: 67), or a collection of "themes", "points", and "thoughts" (Ricœur 1981: 175). By contrasting the episodic dimension with the configurational dimension, Ricœur suggests that the configuration which happens within a plot transcends a simple "succession of events" and becomes a "generative matrix of rules" that govern the human ability to understand narratives not only through "the linear representation of time" (1984: 67–68). Additionally, Ricœur appears to believe that the contemporary theoretical tendency to study narratives as "de-chronologised" does not lead to reducing the narrative form to sheer "logic". Contrarily, a narrative that does not attempt to represent time as entirely linear may in fact "deepen" its temporality (Ricœur 1984: 30). In this sense, time must be again understood in Augustinian terms: it is not eliminated from a story through the lack of a clear, linear sequence. Instead, the human mind may "extend" its perception and understand the time of actions forming a narrative even better when they are narratively configured, and not only chronologically

[7] $Mimesis_1$ constitutes the narrative relation to the real. This layer of narrative understanding constitutes "a stage of practical experience" (Ricœur 1984: 53). $Mimeses_1$ is the practical and intuitive understanding that tries to "prefigure" time before it becomes mediated by a narrative. Ricœur believes that human beings can proceed to the level of $mimesis_2$ and compose plots because they pre-narratively comprehend the facts of life, their basic structures, and their elemental motifs of "action and suffering" (1984: 55–56). $Mimesis_2$ or "configuration" constitutes the active operation of weaving a story out of "a synthesis of the heterogeneous" (1984: 66). Configuration transforms "agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, [and] unexpected results" to construct a story that readers perceive as a cohesive abstract "thought" (1984: 65–66). Finally, through $mimesis_3$, the Ricœurian concept comes full circle: renewed comprehension of lived experience is recalled and applied back to the sphere of real-life actions (1984: 70–71). The effort of prefiguration, configuration, and "refiguration" allows people to observe their lives and the world with a revived and reconstructed understanding.

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listed. In this way, narrated, configured time is brought closer to what Ricœur calls "the human time". The mental exercise of reading a narrative text seems to configure the time of events in a renewed way and turns it into "the narrative time": the perception of time that makes one's thinking navigate between the chronological list of events and their non-chronological configuration (Ricœur 1984: 67). This kind of time perception stems from the ability of the human mind to narratively re-order events and their causal relationships in the hope of producing a new understanding of them.

As Karl Simms notes, the above argument implies that narrative configuration happens within the threefold process of mimesis and depends on the presence of the reader, who lives in society and absorbs culture. Simms provides the example of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1920) as a work of literature that requires the reader to interpret and untangle the temporal arrangement of presented events (2003: 85). However, as Ricœur understands the function of narrative configuration, it is present in all kinds of narratives, not only in the stories that directly play with the reader's intellectual, sense-making abilities. Even the simplest plots depend on the reader's perception of narrative time and one's competence to understand events together as one "thought" within a story.

Moreover, Ricœur warns against viewing emplotment as "the simple triumph of 'order'" (1984: 73). Ricœur seems to regard the human fascination with narrative closure as an insufficient way of comprehending the relation between the world's dissonance and the narrative capacity for order. Seeing narrative time as always leading to a conclusive end might create an illusion that a story is bound to provide the audience with a sense of definite closure and a concordant resolution. Ricœur indicates that such an "apocalyptic" vision of narrative time "is only one paradigm among others" (1984: 73).

Ricœur's phenomenology of time in relation to storytelling and the production of narratives might be criticised for missing the fact that in a literary text, events always-already develop in a temporal order. Such an understanding of time within narratives constitutes what Ricœur calls "the ordinary representation of time" or a structuralist "nomological model", which resembles "a succession of instants" (Ricœur 1981: 167). This notion of time appears to be derived from Immanuel Kant's "*intuitive a priori*" of time: the rationalist idea that time has to be intuitively presupposed as a basic natural law and condition for any further intellectual activity (Simms 2003: 81, emphasis original). However, as Ricœur argues, this concept leads to searching for "the pure phenomenology of time", which engenders only "endless aporias" (1984: 84). According to Ricœur, "pure phenomenology of time" cannot be reached. As he states, "temporality cannot be spoken

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of in the direct discourse of phenomenology, but rather requires the mediation of the indirect discourse of narration" (Ricœur 1988: 241).

The person who actively configures a narrative develops a new understanding of their own real-life world thanks to the activity of reading and interpreting a fictional story. Moreover, temporal structures in narratives and the ways in which events may be arranged into plots remain in direct connection with the human ability to perceive the world and the self in a particular way. The additional meaning generated by the threefold mimesis is one of the elements that allow Ricœur to speak about a narrative identity present in a text.

Ricœur refers to Hannah Arendt's words, unfortunately without a clear citation, and asserts that "[t]o answer the question 'Who?' […] is to tell the story of a life" (1988: 246). In her monumental work titled *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt herself juxtaposes two possible kinds of answers to the question about one's identity. She states that there is a tendency to answer the question "who" with descriptions of one's qualities, traits of character, or the work one has accomplished. For Arendt, this is an insufficient kind of answer which is suitable only for the question "what" someone is (Arendt 2018: 181). Instead, Arendt claims that "[w]ho somebody is or was we can know only by knowing the story of which he [sic] is himself the hero" (2018: 186).

The vision of identity stemming from the "who" question is likely to be nuanced, complex and, as Ricœur insists, it "must be a narrative identity" (1988: 246). Ricœur states that narrative identity "is not a stable and seamless identity" (1988: 248). One's narration, configuration, and interpretation of events have a dynamic character because one can compose not one but multiple plots about their life's events. Such an operation may "make and unmake" their identity (1988: 249). Furthermore, Ricœur's notion of narrative identity inevitably includes an ethical dimension. As all narratives present "a vision of the world that is never ethically neutral", narrative identity must incorporate ethical judgments and valuations (1988: 249). Paradoxically, the action of ethical, dynamic re-evaluation of one's narrative identity may contribute to the construction of a sense of self-constancy. This realisation places the human subject in Ricœur's philosophy inside a vast network of interpersonal, cultural, political, and historical relations.

Ricœur admits that identity can be discussed in terms of "being the same" (*idem*) and being "oneself as self-same" (*ipse*). To explain the difference between these two notions, he declares that *idem* is "a substantial or formal identity", and *ipse* can be tantamount to narrative identity in certain respects (1988: 246). In this way, the *ipse*

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identity becomes a synonym of the "self-constancy" that is grounded in the dynamism, temporality, and ethics of a narrative (Ricœur 1988: 246). In *Oneself as Another* (1986), Ricœur speaks of "the distinction between sameness [idem] and selfhood [ipse]" (1992: 114). He states that an identity's "*permanence in time*" appears to be the most important issue connected with the relation between *idem* and *ipse* (1992: 116, emphasis original). Even though many other scholars contribute to the discussion on *idem* and *ipse*, it seems that certain Polish researchers attempt to clarify and synthesise the two notions. Elżbieta Wolicka states that *idem,* as "being identical", is close in meaning to "the permanence of particular traits of character [in time]". *Ipse*, in turn, appears to be "the constancy of one's motivation, which makes 'I' someone predictable, responsible, [and] worthy of respect" (Wolicka 2003: 103, my translation).

In *Time and Narrative*, Ricœur seems to overtly prefer *ipse* as more inclusive, open to non-destructive change, and connected to a narrative of one's life (1988: 246–247). However, in *Oneself as Another*, he tends to speak about *idem* and *ipse* in a more balanced way: he states that there exists a dialectic of *idem* and *ipse* within oneself (1992: 114). Certain scholars subscribe to the view that *ipse* must allow "some *idem*" (Simms 2003: 103), and that the *idem–ipse* is a dialectical relation which makes the dialogue between an individual and "the Other" possible (Wolicka 2003: 103, my translation). Such a conclusion to the discussion on *idem* and *ipse* would mean that, unlike Arendt, Ricœur believes that *idem* – what one is – is also necessary to maintain one's personality in time. In spite of this, Ricœur insists on including "an intervention of narrative identity" 1992: 118) as a mediating force between the domains of *idem* (character and sameness) and *ipse* (keeping one's word, self-constancy, and selfhood). This may explain why Marek Wilczyński claims that in *Oneself as Another* Ricœur's "choice […] is unambiguous: only the second option [ipse] makes it possible to permanently connect the acting factor [a human subject] with a narrative about events" (Wilczyński 2003: 78, my translation).

1.2.3. Identity of unity and coherence versus Ricœur's narrative identity

By referring back to MacIntyre and Taylor, one can notice that the actions of life as described in *After Virtue* already involve a clear narrative structure. For MacIntyre, life, even in its practical, lived form, always-already unfolds as if it were a composed story

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(MacIntyre 2007: 206–216), whereas in Ricœur's theory, life carries only an embryo of narration within the rudimental stage named mimesis$_1$. According to Ricœur, practical experience is, as it were, predisposed to emplotment since it includes basic narrative elements and a practical sense of temporality (1984: 54–64). However, unlike MacIntyre, Ricœur believes that one's practical understanding of life gains a new quality and a transformed meaning when it reaches emplotment (mimesis$_2$). The point at which lived experience acquires a configured, properly narrative structure seems to be the focal point of the disagreement between MacIntyre's vision of unified life and Ricœur's narrative identity.

In the discussion among Paul Ricœur, David Carr, and Charles Taylor, Ricœur seems to be the scholar who offers a middle-ground position. Between those who, like MacIntyre, believe that life is easily translatable into a narrative and always follows an ordered story-like structure, and those who see it as a disjointed sequence of meaningless occurrences that gains an artificial structure if it is narrated, Ricœur reminds his debaters of his concept of mimesis$_1$ (Ricœur in Wood ed. 2003: 180–187). Ricœur's view can be synthesised in the idea that a narrative does not create an entirely artificial order out of disorder but rather draws its characteristic features from the multiplicity of life as it is lived by a human agent among other people and within culture.

Furthermore, Ricœur augments MacIntyre's notion of the self and opens it to the criterion of change. MacIntyre reduces the stability of human identity to the permanence of one's character and virtue in time (MacIntyre 2007: 217). The unity of character and its continuous, identical form throughout life is what Ricœur terms *idem*. By adding *ipse* to the complex equation of identity, Ricœur introduces the notion of self-constancy that exists despite and along with changes, ruptures, and multiple interpretations of life's events. Thanks to *ipse*, constancy and stability within one's identity are not definite achievements but ongoing narrative processes.

Ricœur himself also indicates a major difference between his philosophy of identity and MacIntyre's ideas. In one of the lectures from *Oneself as Another*, he argues that if MacIntyre's notion of "the narrative unity of life" were to be successful, a person would have to have access to their life from its biological beginning in their mother's womb up to the moment of death "as a narrative end" (Ricœur 1992: 160). Such a unified life story would also allow only one interpretation. Ricœur further acknowledges a single life's "entanglement" in multiple stories of a number of people whose "itineraries" one crosses. The remarks about being "entangled in histories" and not reaching a true "sense

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of an ending" lead Ricœur to a rhetorical question: "Can one then still speak of the narrative unity of life?" (1992: 161).

While discussing Ricœur's relation to Taylor's theory, one could say that, unlike for Taylor, for Ricœur the traditional criterion of formal "coherence" is pushed into the background. In both *Time and Narrative* and *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur seems to bring to the foreground the human ability and, at the same time, the need to compose texts about events, which can help in the process of coherence- and sense-making within the self. As a result, Ricœur's narrative identity may introduce or even fulfil the criterion of coherence; however, coherence never becomes its main condition of existence.

Another point of comparison between Taylor and Ricœur is the matter of Taylor's insistence on ethical "frameworks". Ricœur is far from forgetting about the ethical dimension of life. Nonetheless, Ricœur's human subject can construct an ethical self not only through maintaining the continuity of one framework or moral stance, but also, and primarily so, through developing and reworking their judgments and ethical values in time. Here again, the mediation between one ethical evaluation and another is provided by a narrative, which does not lead to one's unwavering sameness but to a refined self-constancy of intentions and motivation.

In spite of the abovementioned differences, one substantial similarity exists between Taylor's and Ricœur's theories. Both philosophers agree that the only space in which identity can be revealed is language. Besides the obvious fact that stories are told in language, both Taylor and Ricœur put emphasis on the interpersonal and communal nature of identity formation. The sheer event of interlocution that requires one to articulate and reflect upon certain utterances about their identity is the necessary element in the construction of any narrative about the self. The scholars also mention the influence that culture and history have on the language used for creating interpersonal relations. Eventually, relationships with others built through conversation and storytelling are fundamental elements of one's narrative identity.

Last but not least, Dan McAdams's observations can also be compared and contrasted with Ricœur's philosophy. To defend narrative identity against being treated as a poststructuralist concept, one can argue that even significant changes within a person's life story do not necessarily engender a multiplicity of selves. A "protean" life may still form a narrative identity that is able to withstand and incorporate revisions, and configure heterogeneous elements. McAdams's "selfing" process and Ricœur's narrative identity seem to be compatible with each other at several points, such as the importance

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of creating life stories; the interrelations among one's story, culture, and ethics; as well as the usefulness of literary structures for understanding life in a narrative mode. Nevertheless, one can notice that the way in which McAdams analyses life narratives is close to projecting unity and coherence onto heterogeneous and open-ended stories, which may amount to overinterpretation. To balance this, one can refer to Ricœur, who states that it is possible to configure one's pre-narrative understanding of life in a text; however, he does not claim that such configuration on the level of $mimesis_2$ builds unquestionable order. If one follows the logic of Ricœur's theory, the beginning-middle-end structure can even appear as an imposition of a "prefabricated" frame on a narrative that may escape such simplifications on both structural and thematic levels.

All things considered, the sum of Ricœur's research into narratives and identity can constitute a moderate philosophical position. On the one hand, for Ricœur, life cooperates with the narrative form and already reflects some of its aspects. In the aforementioned discussion with Carr and Taylor, Ricœur overtly states that "life needs to be understood through literature […] to a very great extent" (Ricœur in Wood ed. 2003: 181). By this, Ricœur suggests that human beings may profit from their knowledge of literary fiction and its structures when they construct their individual and communal stories, and try to perceive life's episodes as "brought together by the story" and "forming a whole" (1984: 67). On the other hand, his philosophy of identity does not impose any rigid frame of unity onto life itself. This idea of heterogeneity and structural "openness" is likely to reduce the danger of constructing overgeneralising interpretations of narratives. In addition, it may help to avoid presenting identity as a monolithic, seamless, and uniform entity.

1.2.4. Decolonising the narrative: Glissant, Nayeri, and Achebe on stories and identity

Ricœur's concept of narrative identity appears to be a structurally open system that can incorporate temporal discordance, narrative heterogeneity, and emplotment variations. It also refuses to be closed in a traditional view of the narrative as order or a simplistic unity of life and character. In spite of this, one needs to remember that Ricœur's ideas belong to the Western cultural field and have origins in the European legacy of not only positive literary and cultural production but also of imperialism, colonialism, and cultural

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hegemony. To signal the urgent need for decolonising the narrative understanding of time and events, one could establish a relation between Ricœur's theory and the Caribbean, African, and West Asian sensitivities, and search not for one dominant narrative mode of understanding but for multiple, culturally diverse narrative ways of understanding. I believe that accumulating comments and ideas scattered among the works of Édouard Glissant, a Martinican critic and philosopher; Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian writer and essayist; and Dina Nayeri, an Iranian-American novelist, can shed a different light on how narrative identity may be established through non-Western narrative structures and positions that promote diversity and relationality.

In his essays in *Caribbean Discourse* (1981), Glissant describes "the Western mind" as imagining itself to be the Biblical "chosen one", which forces a linear narrative of events onto itself and the world. The Western mind can thus claim that it understands life, whereas, as Glissant states, it possesses only "an ordering-knowledge": an artificial sense of comprehension and power over nature (1999: 73). The Western ideas of linear narrative understanding and consistent progress "[in] which all *converges*" are countered with history seen as "*fragmented* into histories" of various cultures and peoples (Glissant 1999: 75–76, emphasis original). In order to make literature more open to lived experience, Glissant suggests that one should not follow the convention of totalising myths, which generate a "coiled structure" of time, but the Caribbean tradition of oral and written tales and folktales. For Glissant, they offer simple "symbolic value" and "a stylised reading of the real"; however, at the same time, tales can protect the human mind from "the belief that [linear] History is the first and most basic dimension of human experience, a belief inherited from the West or imposed by it" (1999: 80; 83–84, capitalisation original). A true "revaluation of power" can be realised by countering the ideology represented by a "single History" and exploring relations among "histories" that narrate identities of heterogeneous societies (Glissant 1999: 92–93). Moreover, according to Glissant, the Caribbean tale is concerned with "ordinary symbols" that "proceed to approximations" instead of "a sublimated History". It is also focused on communal identity rather than individuality, as expressed by the question "Who are we?" (1999: 85–86).

The Martinican critic characterises the Caribbean folktale as a form of "antiwriting" that creates fragmented texts whose achronological structure results in the fact that even "time cannot be conceived as a basic dimension of human experience"

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(Glissant 1999: 84)[8]. Glissant states that "a discontinuous conception of time" included in the Caribbean folktale together with "sudden changes in tone, the continuous breaks in the narrative and its 'asides'" amount to "a nonuniform whole" (1999: 85). The very concept of a story creating a "whole" that is also inherently "nonuniform" appears similar to Ricœur's narrative heterogeneity and might prove that the folktale provides the space for narrating and understanding time "by going back and forth". In a similar vein, Glissant strongly contraposes Western cultural "Sameness" against "a pattern of fragmented Diversity" (1999: 96, capitalisation original). His openness about cultural fragmentation and non-totalising diversity seems to broaden Ricœur's narrative "synthesis of the heterogeneous" (Ricœur 1984: 66) and, at the same time, it confirms the Ricœurian intuition that the *idem* identity as sameness is an insufficient category (Ricœur 1988: 246–247).

As Glissant indicates, to "declare one's own identity" and introduce a "disalienated relationship with the Other"[9], one needs to "write the world into existence" (1999: 169). An act of "self-expression" that realises its political potential becomes the sphere in which memory and identity can be preserved against oppression, explained, clarified, and incorporated as elements of one's self-conscious relationship with the Other (Glissant 1999: 169). Glissant believes that "the Poetics of Relation", in which the colonised not only fights the coloniser but also goes beyond the limit of being "opposed to" and creates "a fundamental relationship with the Other [the coloniser]" (2010: 11–14), is a way to open cultural narratives of identity to an interconnected multiplicity of diverse relationships[10] (Glissant 2010: 15–16). Such a pattern of identity formation is available to people involved in modern "errantry": a poetic interpretation of migration in which "uprooting can work toward identity, and exile can be seen as beneficial" if one perceives them as creative, mythopoetic adventures that initiate the process of being in relation with multiple Others (Glissant 2010: 18). As Glissant puts it, this type of narration about migration "challenges and discards the universal":

[8] It seems worth mentioning that Glissant himself writes in a meandering, digressive style and utilises various essayistic, narrative, and poetic forms. For example, his essay titled "Cultural Identity" is in fact a poetic "litany" (Glissant 1999: 231–233).

[9] For Glissant, who writes from the perspective of a Martinican, "the Other" frequently means a white person with a Western cultural background or a European coloniser.

[10] Here, Glissant speaks of "the rhizome" of relationships (2010: 15–16). Glissant, drawing on Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's notions of "the root" and "the rhizome", promotes the rhizomic way of identity formation in exile as a type of migrant narrative that emphasises the positive, generative elements of migration as "errantry" (2010: 18).

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the generalising and totalising effect of imposed models that carry "one presupposed sense and one destiny" (2010: 20–21).

Both Dina Nayeri and Chinua Achebe seem to notice the political importance of composing culturally specific narrative forms. While discussing refugees' oral narratives and written works, Nayeri argues that asylum applicants are frequently misunderstood by immigration officers because the narrative compositions that they produce do not meet the cultural "requirements" of good storytelling accepted in the Global North (2020: 242–243). Referring to her native culture and the Iranian practice of composition, she states that an Iranian person would "start [a story] long before the beginning" of the main event in question. Nayeri claims that an Iranian refugee's answer to the question: "Why did you leave [your country]?" could start with the words: "Let me tell you about modern Iran", or even "begin with the creation of the universe" (2020: 243). On the microscale of personal stories, Nayeri discovers fundamental differences in perceiving the world and understanding it through narrative patterns of various traditions. She indicates that culturally specific ways of self-expression and narrative identity formation may be stifled by the Western world's desire to hegemonically impose its principles of logic and narrative coherence on ethnically diverse and hybrid narratives. Nayeri shows that this culturally insensitive practice may result in rejecting asylum applications and thus seriously harm already traumatised individuals.

While also thinking in political terms, Chinua Achebe seems to notice a similar problem related to the narrative representation of the world and history on the macroscale of postcolonial politics. In an essayistic response to James Baldwin's 1955 essay "Stranger in the Village", in which Baldwin states that even an illiterate Swiss may symbolically inherit the achievements of Western culture in a way that an African person cannot (Baldwin 2017: 168–169), Achebe strongly asserts that "it is not necessary for black people to invent a great fictitious past in order to justify their human existence and dignity today. What they must do is recover what belongs to them–their story–and tell it themselves" (Achebe 2010: 61). In an essay from an earlier collection titled *Home and Exile* (2000), Achebe observes that "the process of 're-storying' peoples who had been knocked silent by the trauma of all kinds of dispossession" was initiated in the twentieth century (2000: 79). By emphasising the need for specifically African histories that do not construct "a great fictitious past" based on a European model, Achebe suggests that there are original ways of narrating a Black person's heritage and identity and that they are just as potent as European stories. Furthermore, Achebe combines the meanings of the words

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"restore" and "story", which shows that writing narratives of Black and African identities that do not reproduce the colonisers' narrative paradigms can contribute to establishing "a balance of stories among the world's peoples" (2000: 79). This view stands in opposition to the hegemonizing idea of "the universal civilization in Europe and North America" (2000: 90) and acknowledges that the "balance of stories" Achebe speaks of needs to include a diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and narrative structures (2000: 97). Following a similar logic, the Black Canadian poet and critic George Elliott Clarke argues that all Black histories and cultures should not be gathered under a unifying idea of globalised Blackness (Branach-Kallas 2010: 152). Instead, he proposes to acknowledge and study the rich diversity of Black traditions around the world. For instance, Clarke identifies himself as an Africadian, a descendant of Black Canadians who have lived in the Maritime provinces of Canada for over 200 years (Clarke and Domínguez 2001: 190) and have developed a unique Black culture in the region.

Although Fred Wah writes from the perspective of an ethnically non-aligned Canadian, not exactly from a non-Western position, his insight into the poetics of fragmented, "hyphenated identity" can substantially contribute to the debate on decolonising narrative paradigms. Wah states that an immigrant writer, in order to express themselves, "requires particular and circumstantial poetics" (2000: 52). "[A] singular and personal toolbox" of a migrant author needs to contain, in a positive sense of the expression, a "duplicitous voice", polyphony, formal syncretism, as well as a self-consciously chosen estrangement (Wah 2000: 52–61). He calls for a type of literature that "[embraces] antithesis, polarity, confusion, and opposition" in order to experiment and find "new organising principles, new narratives" that do not rely on unity and coherence (2000: 61). A hyphenated identity, such as Chinese-Canadian or Mexican-American, in-between cultures and ethnicities, can engender "[a] hybrid borderland poetics" in which "the hybrid writer must […] develop instruments of disturbance, dislocation, and displacement" (2000: 73–74), and use the metaphorical "no-man's land" of the hyphen for their own advantage in creative writing (Wah 2000: 87).

1.2.5. "Beyond narrative coherence"

If one endeavours to analyse narrative representations of migrants' and refugees' identities, it is indispensable to consider a type of incoherent, disintegrated narrative self,

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which escapes the normative ideas of centrality, wholeness, and unity. This kind of narrative identity would rather reflect fragmented and disrupted time structures and events. To illustrate such an approach to identity representation, both Alasdair MacIntyre (2007: 214) and Mark Freeman (1998: 29; 2016: 82–85) refer to Jean-Paul Sartre's debut novel *Nausea*, originally published in France in 1938. Antoine Roquentin, Sartre's protagonist, presents a notion that human consciousness orders life's experiences into coherent stories and, as a result, falsifies what actually constitutes the raw material of life. MacIntyre criticises Sartre's/Roquentin's opinion that real life is composed of disconnected events. The scholar claims that a theory of the self based on viewing life's events as "unintelligible occurrences" would render the idea of writing a life narrative aimless (MacIntyre 2007: 214). For Roquentin, imposing a narrative structure upon real events and providing them with seeming coherence feels like a "dishonest" and artificial act (Freeman 2016: 81–84).

If there are no actual beginnings and closures in life, as Roquentin would claim, and the human mind only desires to see them as such, the notion of narrative identity stemming from Sartre's novel would be that of a fictive construct or private myth. Consequently, an "honest" narrative of identity would take the form of a disconnected chronicle or an incoherent piece of writing, which would represent life's fragmentation by breaking up its composition, beginning *in medias res* without background information, and offering no narrative closure. Such an understanding of identity can produce an impression of extreme instability or multiplicity of selves. Altogether, existentialist and postmodernist approaches to narrative identity may be seen as a critique of traditional views represented by MacIntyre and Taylor. Interestingly, Freeman suggests that in *Nausea*, Sartre's protagonist seems to admit that in order to understand themselves, people have to tell stories (Freeman 2016: 108–111). Although "we do not and cannot live stories" and the "narrative desire", as Freeman calls it, may distort reality, it is possible "that perhaps living and telling are not so far apart" (2016: 105). In his 1998 article, Freeman explains that the "narrative" or "mythopoeic desire" is "a desire to raise our own existence, somehow, to that level of meaningfulness, of sacred integrity" that may be found in narrative structures that offer coherent explanations and uphold a unified image of oneself through a configured temporality (1998: 45). Even though Freeman believes that narrating one's identity is *not* simply a process of imposing a meaningful story onto disconnected, formless events and that the narrative form "grows out of the very temporal conditions of our existence", he openly acknowledges that the "meaning"

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life bears cannot be represented by the metaphor of a continuous line, but rather by a model of "spirals of remembrance and return, repetition and reconfiguration" (1998: 47). This realisation makes it possible to envision more complex narrative identities which become "populated", "multiphrenic", or "fundamentally disconnected" (Freeman 1998: 47).

Mark Freeman's views are a "departure point" from which one can move "beyond" the idea of "coherence". The editors of the collected volume titled *Beyond Narrative Coherence* (2010), the one after which this section takes its name, state that the ideal of narrative coherence "privileges middle-class conventionality and marginalizes the experiences of […] politically traumatized people" (Hyvärinen et al. 2010: 2). One could also add that the convention of producing coherent stories has become a Eurocentric, neo-Aristotelian paradigm of storytelling developed in the Western tradition of white people. Because of its normative character, narratives described as fragmented and disorganised can be dismissed as "bad" or "improper". The editors stress that "the imperative of coherence works to legitimize certain narratives while excluding or marginalizing others from the narrative canon" (Hyvärinen et al. 2010: 7). If the concept of narrative identity, especially that of migrants and refugees, is analysed along with the theoretical tension arising around the idea of narrative coherence, one needs to consider if the way in which one theorises identity is not closed in "the perspective of [presupposed] unity and coherence", which may exclude certain "dis-unities", "complexities, contradictions and undecided elements" that frequently enter into the fabric of identity (Hyvärinen et al. 2010: 4).

When the Western paradigm of coherence meets the problematics of postcolonial criticism, the coherent self, as a model of identity, "emerges as a cultural construction and an effect of gendered and racialised discourses and practices" (Hyvärinen et al. 2010: 7). Due to this, narrative identities of migrants and refugees should also be studied "beyond" the level of linearity and coherence, or the criterion of coherence itself should be critically re-evaluated. If there exists the narrative desire as Freeman defines it, scholars in the fields of migrant and diaspora studies may ask "[w]hat happens to the desire for textual coherence when place and location as material coherences par excellence, melt into fluid spatialities, forced displacement and diasporic subjectivities" (Hyvärinen et al. 2010: 7). Narratives created as representations of the processes of colonisation, racialisation, discrimination, and identity hybridisation are more than likely to include unstable, non-linear structures. Moreover, to expect a story told in a postcolonial context to reproduce

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Western models of narrative coherence constitutes an interculturally insensitive and racist idea. For example, stories produced by Black Americans might not offer any "positive narrative" characterised by "generative" or teleological potential because they are often "shaped" by the historical context of slavery in America (Pamerleau 2021: 217). Nevertheless, they may still provide a space of resistance and freedom for their authors (Pamerleau 2021: 219). Similarly, stories depicting discontinuous processes of identity formation told by and about contemporary migrants and refugees can still be considered as narratives of identity even though they may be open to non-normative structures.

The expectation that traumatised subjects, such as forced migrants and refugees, produce well-ordered, coherent narratives is rightly criticised by Molly Andrews. The London-based scholar argues that people who survived trauma tend to be caught in an unresolvable situation. On the one hand, their narratives cannot be contained within traditional, linear, beginning-to-middle-to-end structures. On the other hand, they feel a great need to tell their stories and make them meaningful for others. As a result, trauma testimonies often struggle with language and textual coherence, and they may produce unclear or "non-traditional narrative forms" (Andrews 2010: 147–163). Andrews cites Jenny Edkins (2003) who introduces a distinction between "linear" or "narrative time" of successfully resolved discrepancies and "trauma time", which cannot leave the space of "forever present", and thus cannot stand "the imposition of a traditional narrative structure [that] compromises the attempt to speak the unspeakable" (Andrews 2010: 155–156). Edkins herself notes that trying to reflect "trauma time" in a narrative composition would amount to "a disruption of this linearity" that is a "widely accepted" and "homogeneous time [structure which] suits a particular form of power […] of the modern nation-state" and its political agenda (Edkins 2003: xiv–xv). Considering the above discussion on narrative identity as a concept, it does not appear surprising that Molly Andrews frequently refers to Ricœur's theory and his heterogeneous, "dynamic tension" of narrative "discordant concordance" (Andrews 2010: 152). She also emphasises the interpersonal dimension of narrative production that enables human beings to communicate with "the Other" through stories (2010: 165). Altogether, the most important aspect of Andrews's work appears to be her distrust towards Western institutions and "a certain pressure" they exert on traumatised subjects to tell their stories in accordance with "an Aristotelian […] narrative configuration" that is inequitably seen as a "natural" and "neutral" form (2010: 152). As Edkins (2003: 52) and Andrews (2010:

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155) assert, employing such a conventional structure may deprive one's storytelling of its political and meaning-making power.

In the "Afterword" to *Beyond Narrative Coherence*, Mark Freeman concludes his discussion by quoting what seems to be one of the final thoughts by Ricœur on the subject of narrative identity:

> I am stressing the expression 'narrative identity' for what we call subjectivity is neither an incoherent series of events nor an immutable substantiality, impervious to evolution. This is precisely the sort of identity which narrative composition alone can create through its dynamism. (Ricœur 1991: 32 in Freeman 2010: 185)

In this passage, Freeman discovers a certain assertion that human identity perseveres as "[n]either incoherent nor immutable, neither senseless nor static" thanks to narrative mediation, which "reconnect[s]" even an incoherent and "senseless" story "to the world of the living" (Freeman 2010: 185). This, in turn, contributes to a subject's return to a domain of relative coherence and to "the human community even amidst its devastation" (2010: 185).

1.2.6. The problem of narrative emplotment

It is widely accepted that the English term "emplotment" was first used by Hayden White in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973). After White's publication, the term has been discussed by Ricœur and reinterpreted by other scholars, such as Donald E. Polkinghorne, a psychologist, and Anna De Fina, a sociolinguist. White uses the word "emplotment" to argue that the criterion of objectivity in historical writings can be called into question because even the form in which a historian arranges and "emplots" facts can affect the way they are perceived by readers[11] (White 1973: 12–13; 56–57; 143; 276; 280). White states that by giving their narrative a selected type of "formal coherence", a writer inevitably configures "*a story of a particular kind*" (1973: 11–13, emphasis original) and frames the narrated events into a specific genre (1973: 276). He also points out that a distinct "mode of emplotment" carries moral and ideological implications. He refers to the Kantian idea that one's "decision to emplot" their past in a particular form directly affects the way in which they

[11] This is also one of the arguments for the connection between history and literature that is established through the idea that the two disciplines share a narrative mode of comprehension.

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perceive their present and envisage their future (1973: 56–57). White adds that the "explanatory effect" a story creates due to emplotment goes beyond mere "formal explanatory strategies" (1973: 143) and stems from a particular philosophy of history, an ideology, or an interpretation of facts that informs a narrative's structure (1973: 276). To sum it all up, one can say that White's emplotment is a process of narrating and configuring events that provides one's story with a specific "mode" or "effect" that can make readers focus on a limited range of relationships among events and lead them to certain meta-narrative conclusions about the state of reality.

Although much has already been said about Ricœur's approach to the Aristotelian *muthos*, from which Ricœur derives his notion of emplotment, there still remains a question about its contemporary relevance. Ricœur rightly notices that the ancient paradigm of emplotment relies on the composition of the tragedy and its symbolic *holos*: "completeness [and] wholeness", which contributes to narrative "concordance" (1984: 38–39; 1981: 175). However, Ricœur also doubts whether this model "is capable of extension and transformation" that could make it applicable to other types of narratives (1984: 38). One may ask whether the traditional narrative model of emplotment can "extend and transform" in order to "accommodate" disrupted and dislocated narrative identities of contemporary migrants and refugees, such as those represented in literary works. If it can, how does the model achieve its "distension"? If it cannot, what other modes of emplotment are capable of narrating migrants' and refugees' identities? Taking White's views into consideration, it is also possible to ask how different emplotments of the experiences of migration and exile affect the way migrants are perceived by receivers of literary discourse.

Furthermore, Ricœur puts considerable emphasis on the relationship between emplotment and readers' activity. After being "configured" into a text, a narrative is "refigured" and influences the lived experience that it emanates from. Ricœur believes that the process of narrating is finished only when a person reads a text, "makes sense" of it for themselves, and thus completes its composition (1984: 70–77). If the self is constructed textually, the above remark indicates that the concept of narrative identity includes an interactional dimension, in which identity can be narrated and negotiated through interpersonal communication between oneself and another, or the Other. Such a conclusion brings the present reflection closer to the fields of narrative psychology and sociolinguistics.

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Donald E. Polkinghorne notes that emplotment "is not the imposition of a ready-made plot structure on an independent set of events". He thinks that it is a process in which "a theme" of a story helps to discover the meaning generated by the interrelations among events and "allows [events] to be grasped together" (Polkinghorne 1988: 19–20). Polkinghorne immediately adds that structuring a plot "is not a completely rule-governed activity" (1988: 20). According to him, it is possible to configure "unique" and "novel" plots even though they refer to "the cultural repertoire of sedimented stories", such as myths or "children's tales" (Polkinghorne 1988: 20). By emplotting popular myths and tales together with narrative innovations and one's lived experience, a person can undertake imaginative work on their "life script" and explain the significance of their life's events in a "storytelling" manner (Polkinghorne 1988: 20–21). In this definition of emplotment, Polkinghorne seems to combine White's remarks on the "explanatory effect" of narratives with Ricœur's "followability" and heterogeneity principles.

Although their work is outside the scope of this dissertation's literary interest, one can admit that the research conducted by such sociolinguists as Michael Bamberg, Alexandra Georgakopoulou, and Anna De Fina, to name only a few, contributes immensely to the contemporary understanding of narrative identity. In *Identity in Narrative: A Study of Immigrant Discourse* (2003), Anna De Fina connects several approaches to the problem of narrative emplotment while devising her definition of the term. The researcher starts by enumerating such features of emplotment as "providing temporal organisation", generating "coherent self-understanding", grasping events together in a story as a whole, and giving a sequence to "disconnected events" (De Fina 2003: 17). She also comments that the action of configuration can be seen as "central in the encoding of human experience […] because experience itself becomes intelligible to humans only when they narrate it" (2003: 17).

De Fina stresses the idea that identity is not "a given" and has to be studied as "an ever changing process" which takes place in interaction and is often based on the mechanism of "identity positioning" (2003: 17–18). Even though De Fina's definition draws on White's, Ricœur's, and Polkinghorne's ideas, from such an open, discursive, and interactional perspective, the process of emplotment can be seen as much less stable, less textual and more conversational, as well as more dependent on idiosyncratic linguistic features and individual modes of expression. Furthermore, despite De Fina's philosophical inspirations, she places her observations on emplotment in the contexts of Mexican-American migration, diaspora studies, and racial positioning.

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All things considered, one should also acknowledge the effect a discursive, conversational model of emplotment has on the theory of identity. Such an approach to researching narrative identity promotes a concept that does not exclude instability or a plurality of narrative selves. It may also help to discover stories that are less focused on formal textual elements and struggle to maintain thematic coherence. Conversational narratives can be open-ended; they do not have to offer any formal introduction or unifying closure. However, as De Fina concludes in *Identity in Narrative*, interactional narratives can also serve to interpret one's experiences because they tend to disclose one's identity positions in relation to a variety of elements: local and global contexts, social roles, ethnic belonging, shared cultural practices, and dominant ideologies (2003: 220–222).

1.3. The political figure of the refugee and the migrant

The two following sections approach the refugee and the migrant as political concepts denoting people dislocated from the stabilities of their identities and their physical homes as well as deprived of their political subjectivity, agency, and other elements that constitute one as a person and human being. On the next few pages, I briefly define the Agambenian figure of the *homo sacer*, referring it directly to the sociopolitical situation of contemporary refugees, and discuss the refugee camp through sociological and political perspectives insofar as they are relevant to literature analysis in the present dissertation. Next, section 1.3.2 approaches Hannah Arendt's and Jenny Edkins's works and the selected terminology they develop, which is used in the literature interpretations in the analytical chapters here.

1.3.1. The figure of the refugee as a new kind of the *homo sacer*

Giorgio Agamben, the famous and occasionally controversial Italian philosopher of politics, claims that the figure of the refugee is so critical for modern politics that it can serve as the basis for a complete restructuration of the way contemporary people perceive political philosophy and individual subjectivity (Agamben 2000: 16). To understand why Agamben thinks the refuge important, one has to first consider the figure of the *homo*

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sacer in Agambenian philosophy and its implications for the theory of the modern nation-state. The *homo sacer* (the sacred man, the outcast) is a figure of ancient Roman law described by Pompeius Festus as:

> the one whom the people have judged on account of a crime. It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide. […] This is why it is customary for a bad or impure man to be called sacred. (Agamben 1998: 71)

Agamben cites this definition to stress that a *homo sacer* is a person who is banished from their state and stripped of all political rights, including the human right to live. Moreover, an outcast is suspended in a liminal state in which they cannot be sacrificed "to the gods" by an official death sentence because they are "already possessed by gods" or "damned", but they can be killed with impunity (Agamben 1998: 71–73). Interestingly, the type of "sacredness" implied in Festus' definition is a mixture of being "sacred and impure" as well as taboo (Agamben 1998: 77–79). Therefore, the liminality or suspense experienced by the *homo sacer* is caused by being "set outside human jurisdiction without being brought into the realm of divine law" (Agamben 1998: 82). The state in which they exist as "sacred" is further described by Agamben as "*[t]he sovereign sphere*" in which everyone may act as a sovereign king towards the *homo sacer* and dispose of the outcast's life as they wish and without consequences (1998: 83, emphasis original).

Agamben builds his theory of sovereign power on the figure of the *homo sacer*. The power of the sovereign and, in modernity, of the nation-state is the force that can create a "state of exception": the condition in which certain laws and rights may be arbitrarily suspended, and one's political life (*bios politikos*) can be taken away from them. What is left of personal subjectivity under sovereign power is "bare life": the merely biological life (*zoē*) of a human being that is "exposed to death", deprived of all political rights, and included in the law only by being excluded from it (Agamben 1998: 83–85). What is perhaps the most disconcerting inference from Agamben's theory of bare life is that in the modern state, everyone may become a potential *homo sacer* and be threatened with death to be governable (1998: 84).

Agamben notices that the structures of power exercised in Nazi concentration camps can serve as a symbolic illustration of how the state of exception functions in modern democracies (1998: 171–176). If "assuring the care, control, and use of bare life" is the primary objective of sovereign power (Agamben 1998: 122), the state is no longer interested in the politics of free subjects, and it engages in "biopolitics", in which bare life is protected and abused at the same time. The concentration camp, "the pure, absolute

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and impassable biopolitical space" (Agamben 1998: 123) is the terrifying and peculiar condition in which, using Hannah Arendt's words, "the fundamental belief of totalitarianism that everything is possible is being verified" (Arendt 1979: 437), and in which an act of a guard or an officer is the law, and the law is nothing more than what is done. The confusion of fact and law and the realisation that the state protects the biological life of the modern "sovereign", which is the collective body of a nation of citizens, by excluding certain groups of people as *homines sacri* and suspending their fundamental rights, lead Agamben to the conclusion that "the condition of the camp" is the paradigm of contemporary biopolitics, which is exercised not only by totalitarianisms and dictatorships, but also in parliamentary democracies (1998: 166–176).

An introduction to the topic of the *homo sacer* should include one more remark on the power of the nation-state, namely that birth, as one's nationality, has never ceased to be considered a privilege. Agamben lists "the state, the nation (birth), […] land" and "the camp" as the four elements that contribute to modern biopolitics (1998: 175–176). With this theoretical structure in mind, one may begin to reflect on the political position and paradoxically disruptive power of the refugee. As Agamben observes, the refugee "calls into question the fundamental categories of the nation-state" (1998: 134). In fact, the modern state can protect only the bare life of the refugee because, in the eyes of its law, refugees are nothing more than bare life included in "the rights of man" and excluded from the political order of "the rights of the citizen" (Agamben 1998: 133–134).

For Agamben, the state of exception in which refugees and migrants are allowed to be detained is also a form of "the camp". The philosopher himself mentions "the *zones d'attente*" at airports, which are seemingly innocent places where "the normal order is de facto suspended and in which whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on law but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily act as sovereign" (1998: 174). Following Agamben's research, I believe that the category of "the condition of the camp" can be extended onto all spaces in which refugees and migrants are incarcerated or detained, or where their rights are suspended in such a way that the exception seems to become the new social order (Agamben 1998: 166–176). Bülent Diken argues that the camp is no longer a condition of life realised only within closed spaces, such as the refugee camp, but that "the logic of the camp is generalized throughout the entire society" (2010: 97). He states that sovereign power, as it exists in actual camps, is now exercised not only in "delimited spaces", but it can also be employed everywhere else in society, "penetrating the whole political/social field, transforming the entire social space into

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a dislocated biopolitical space" (2010: 97). Diken's thought is a direct continuation of Agamben's metaphor of the camp as the "*nomos*" of modern political and social life: the norm and order of all political, legal, and social acts. Such a metaphorical conceptualisation of the camp as "the new biopolitical *nomos* of the planet" blurs the boundaries between modern liberal democracies and totalitarian states (Agamben 1998: 166–176, italics original).

The question of whether one should compare modern refugee camps, detention centres, and other reception facilities for refugees with concentration camps remains highly controversial. The aim of this subsection is by no means to suggest that contemporary refugee facilities and living places perform the same functions as Nazi death camps. Despite this, for the integrity of the present argumentation, it seems indispensable to refer to the work of several researchers who claim that refugee camps and detention facilities are, in a way, a reincarnation of the *lager*.

To review the theories that can help to describe government-controlled and international organisation-administered refugee camps and unofficial refugee encampments, one can begin with Michel Foucault's concept of "heterotopia", which is defined as the "other" space. Heterotopias are sites "outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality" (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986: 24). Although they are physically existing places, such as cemeteries, prisons, hospitals, brothels, holiday resorts, military barracks, or other sacred or forbidden locations with strictly limited access, they exist as a "nowhere" and "elsewhere" of society (1986: 24). They are different from their surroundings in three main ways. First, they are physically or mentally separated from the outside world, where ordinary life and day-to-day activities take place. For instance, access to a cemetery is not restricted, yet its walls form a symbolic barrier between life and death. Second, their functioning is based upon rules that deviate from the social norm. For example, a patient at a hospital is obliged to observe a certain discipline and follow the medical personnel's instructions. Third, heterotopias are spaces where the continuity of time is disrupted and becomes a "heterochrony": an "absolute break with [people's] traditional time" (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986: 26). Again, cemeteries are heterotopias where the living can face "this strange heterochrony, the loss of life" (1986: 26).

One may describe a contemporary refugee camp as a heterotopia. It is a space with restricted access and separated from the city or the countryside by a wall or fence. Those who are deemed "other" are forced to enter it, and those who wish to visit from the outside

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might be denied entry. It houses individuals who are in some way "undesirable" and whose political and legal status is considerably different from that of citizens. A refugee camp's rules of functioning differ from the usual order of life in society and resemble those of other "total institutions" (Goffman 2017). Finally, most refugees in camps wait to be granted asylum or deported, but the time they might spend in a camp is often unspecified. Because of this, staying in a refugee camp is also a heterochrony. It forces a person to live in suspension and causes a break in the continuity of their life.

In his analysis of life in camps, Michel Agier emphasises "the colonial rationale" behind European refugee camps as migration control measures. As he comments on humanitarian aid provided for refugees, he states that "the management of the vulnerable is simultaneously a government of undesirables" (Agier 2023: 88–89). According to him, camps are post-colonial measures deployed to deprive refugees of or restrict their freedom (2023: 88–90). In this assertion, he agrees with Maximiliane Brandmaier, who notices that refugee camps function on the paradoxical premise that if one wants to receive help, first, they need to be stripped of their civil rights and be controlled by the people whose primary aim is to provide assistance and rescue (Brandmaier 2023: 158). Agier concludes that camps "remain exceptional, extra-territorial, places of exclusion" (2023: 94). By listing these specific characteristics, he acknowledges Agamben's analysis of refugee detention places and the status of the refugee as a state of exception (Agamben 1998: 131–134). He also draws on Foucault's definition of heterotopia to describe refugee camps as "extraterritorial" spaces.

Other theorists refer to refugee camps in a similar way. Achille Mbembe strongly asserts that all European refugee camps and detention centres are in fact "*foreigners' camps*" (2024: 37, italics original), which further emphasises their colonial dimension. He adds that camps "are essentially places of internment, spaces of banishment, devices for segregating people", in which refugees can be deprived of their rights, officially seen as unwanted, and "destroyed" (Mbembe 2024: 37–38). Diken calls refugee camps "non-places", in which the characteristics that usually determine a person in society become insignificant. He also highlights the financial hardships that refugees have to face in camps and the restricted mobility, both of which can result in "extreme isolation" of refugees (Diken 2010: 91–92). To summarise, one may refer to the words of Christina Sharpe, who describes the condition of refugees in camps as "the living death of the lager" (2016: 71).

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Although it is only one descriptive category and one of many possible approaches to the issue of representing refugeehood in literature and the arts, I argue that the figure of the refugee is a contemporary *homo sacer*. If one's birth and nationality directly indicate their belonging and are immediately linked to their citizenship and political rights, the status of the refugee forces the modern state to recognise the category of "the pure human" for which, according to Agamben, "there is no autonomous space in the political order of the nation-state" (2000: 20). Therefore, if a country wishes to offer humanitarian help to refugees, it has to "realise that here human life is exclusively considered […] as sacred life—which is to say, as life that can be killed but not sacrificed" (Agamben 1998: 131–133). If a person is denationalised and deprived of the protection guaranteed by the rights of the citizen, they are "truly *sacred* […]: doomed to death" (Agamben 2000: 22). In other words, the life of a refugee is exposed to death and oblivion because they cannot exercise their political rights and their death is likely to remain largely unnoticed and inconsequential for the political order of a host country. Agamben demonstrates that the figure of the refugee, as "a disquieting element in the order of the nation-state" (2000: 21), denounces the principle of birth as no longer sustainable in the political reality of territories inhabited by both citizens and non-citizens, and lays bare the discriminatory practices facilitated by the gap between the rights of the citizen and the rights of man. By defining the status of the refugee in this way, Agamben calls for a groundbreaking change in the modern state's functioning and urges nation-states to radically reconceptualise nationality and citizenship as they continue to be challenged and "perforated" by the refugee as a "new" *homo sacer* (2000: 24–26)[12].

By combining the thoughts of Ricœur and Agamben, a researcher can hypothesise whether one's existential and political condition of the *homo sacer* influences their narrative identity construction. A refugee's narrative configuration, their story's structure and its general tone may be altered or distorted by the politically induced trauma of refugeehood. However, on the level of re-evaluation and refiguration of one's narrative identity, a migration story can also aspire to become an act of political resistance and show the migrant and the refugee as active agents, whose voice transforms them back into ethical and political subjects.

[12] Substantial literary research into the field of citizenship has been conducted by Canadian scholars and writers such as Lily Cho and David Chariandy, among others. Both Cho and Chariandy emphasise "the essential 'unfitness' between the subject of diaspora and the subject of citizenship" and express their hope that citizenship can be unbound from the nation as its sole determiner by such theories as "diasporic" or "migrant citizenship" (Cho 2007: 94–95; Chariandy 2011: 324).

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1.3.2. The migrant and the refugee as "the political animal" and "the person-as-such"

For Hannah Arendt, the German-American political philosopher, the difference between merely existing as an "*animal laborans*" or a "*homo faber*" and living as a "*zoon politikon*" lies in the ability to perform "speech and action" freely and publicly. Arendt strongly believes that neither the *animal laborans*' way of living, which only satisfies one's biological needs and follows the survival instinct, nor the work that is supposed to guarantee the *homo faber* their humanity (2018: 118–121) allows a person to make their intentions public and act in a way that discloses their identity to the world (2018: 175–188). For this reason, she argues that the true sphere of politics, in which the *zoon politikon* – the "political animal" – can live, is founded on the freedom to speak openly and publicly (2018: 22–28; 178). For Arendt, one can live the life of an active political agent if they are not reduced to the status of an "animal" concerned only with their survival, or if they are not confined to the position of a manufacturer of material goods. A person's identity can be political and free if they speak and act among other people. By relating Arendt's ideas to the political situation of modern refugees and migrants, it is possible to notice that they, due to being "new" to a place, desire to "begin" their life and initiate action (Arendt 2018: 177); however, they are frequently prevented from enjoying their right to "speak and act". In other words, they are underrepresented politically and culturally: their stories, biographies and, as a result, their identities are not visible in social and cultural discourses. If refugees and migrants seize the space to tell their stories and express their opinions, they can reclaim their position as political beings, whose lives and actions are socially visible and important. By extension, literature and fiction can provide a platform for refugees' and migrants' narrative identity "disclosure", which seems to be one of the necessary elements of a person's political life (Arendt 2018: 178–184).

Another political scholar, Jenny Edkins, develops her reflection on life and identity as politically significant matters and defines "the person-as-such" (2011: viii). According to Edkins, the politics that perceives people not as *homines sacri* but as "persons-as-such" does not objectify. On the contrary, it recognises people as "unique", "irreplaceable", and "singular" (Edkins 2011: viii–xiii). Her perspective on personhood is illustrated by the status of "missing persons", who are searched for and valuable to their relatives and friends because of their interpersonal relations and their specific emotional and economic roles in their relationships. As Edkins explains, the-person-as-such is

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"someone who cannot be pinned down, categorized, controlled, or known, someone who always escapes capture" (2011: xiv). Therefore, the politics of the person-as-such is fundamentally relational; it is based on the "who" question (2011: 12) and practised through "memorialisation, debate, and protest" (Edkins 2011: 37). The exact opposite of the person-as-such is a depersonalised object of control and governance, whose relationships, political views, and will are ignored. Such a distinction lets Edkins argue that persons-as-such are also "fully political" and "equal speaking beings": the ability to take political action through speech "bring[s] the person-as-such back into politics" (2011: 174), which seems to be a very "Arendtian" statement.

If acknowledged as persons-as-such and "political animals", refugees and migrants are restored and are able to restore themselves into the political sphere, in which they may resist generalisation, objectification, and debasement. Moreover, if migrating persons insist on being seen as active political subjects and relational beings, they can interrogate and disturb the political systems that reduce them to *homines sacri* and desire to "own" them as objects of power (Edkins 2011: 196–197). The role of speech and action, emphasised by both Arendt and Edkins, is crucial for describing and narrating refugees' and migrants' places in politics and human relationships. In summary, migrating persons' stories can not only show the configuration and refiguration of their narrative identities but also give them back their social and political status as substantial elements of relations of power.

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Chapter II:
Towards "Race", Embodiment, Diaspora, and Transnationalism

2.1. Introduction

This chapter moves the theoretical problematic of the present dissertation towards the body, "race", and racialisation. Its first part focuses on the argumentation developed by the Latin-American scholar and philosopher Linda Martín Alcoff in her 1999 essay on racialisation and "visibility" titled "Towards a phenomenology of racial embodiment". The discussion proceeds to place Alcoff's work in several contexts provided by Frank Chouraqui, Frantz Fanon, William C. Pamerleau, Françoise Baylis, Daniel Coleman, and Himani Bannerji. The subchapter on racialised embodiment is concluded with a paragraph on Christina Sharpe's celebrated book titled *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016). Next, I discuss a number of theories and concepts closely related to diaspora and transnational studies. The subchapter on diasporic social phenomena, hybridisation of identities, and selected problems of transnationalism highlights issues that later serve as indispensable analytical categories for literary interpretation. It is anchored in the ideas and theories developed by Stuart Hall, Avtar Brah, Pnina Werbner, Homi Bhabha, Robin Cohen, Steven Vertovec, Paul Gilroy, and several others. The chapter also includes a conclusion to the whole theoretical part of the present dissertation, which summarises the gathered material and gives space to pose hypotheses and analytical questions for further interpretation.

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2.2. Towards "race" and racialised embodiment

Linda Martín Alcoff regards "race" as a "socially constructed, historically malleable, [and] culturally contextual" category which is "produced through learned perceptual practice" (1999: 17) and exists in the form of culturally constructed meaning attached to skin tone (1999: 16–19). Between those who would like to see this category absolutely abolished as "invalidated" and "not real", and those who, in an essentialist way, perceive racial identities as historically inalterable and "always politically salient and always the most important element of identity" (1999: 16), Alcoff approaches race from a "contextualist" angle. She argues that racialisation happens in "micro-interactions" in society, within multiple contexts, and, if one perceives it as lived, experienced, and involved in the process of personal subjectivity formation, "racialization can reveal how race is constitutive of bodily experience" (Alcoff 1999: 17). For Alcoff, race is "real" in the sense that racialisation culturally changes people's vision: one's skin tone is linked to a set of presuppositions and assumptions in another's eyes. Racialisation also influences and distorts a racialised individual's self-image and, as a consequence, it "can block the development of coherent body-images" (Alcoff 1999: 18). Race is real not as an objective biological observation but as a cultural phenomenon of racialised social perception and practices that relate to the body. Both Alcoff and Frank Chouraqui believe that the fact of having a body that other people see and judge is racialised. In effect, racialised embodiment is a type of "reading" or interpretation that is socially attached to one's body and felt by the body's owner, changing their self-perception (Chouraqui 2021: 183–185, Alcoff 1999: 23). As Chouraqui adds, how a racialised person experiences themselves, their identity, self-image, and their place in society cannot be separated from the "meaning-making practices", "racial interpretations", and "judging habits of the racist" (2021: 185, 189, 191). In this way, racialisation becomes and remains embodied.

To illustrate the phenomenon of "visibility", Alcoff uses the example of Jack Kerouac's experience in Black and Mexican neighbourhoods in Denver. Alcoff notices that in his unpublished 1949 journal, Kerouac, "the iconic white Beat prophet", describes how he feels the embodied realisation that he is a white person among a majority of non-white people. According to Alcoff, he "senses the arbitrariness of his dominant status" as a white person (1999: 19). He can no longer forget about race because the context in which his body is perceived has changed. The illusion of "racelessness", which a white person might foster among other white people, is broken for Kerouac (Chouraqui 2021:

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190). He feels "visible" and starts to read himself through the "codes" and "signs on the body" (Alcoff 1999: 22–23). Alcoff and Chouraqui define racialised visibility as "the experience of being exposed to a world organised by racial interpretations" (Chouraqui 2021: 188–189), which form "a structure of contemporary perception" and entrap an individual (Alcoff 1999: 20, 23).

For the Martinican philosopher and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, such an environment necessitates "[a] slow composition of [one's] *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world" (2008: 83, emphasis original), a world in which, as a Black person, he does not "make a meaning for [him]self, but it is the meaning that was already there, pre-existing, waiting for [him]" (Fanon 2008: 102). The "meaning" of a racialised person's body is described by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) as a "corporeal malediction" (2008: 84). Alcoff understands Fanon's term as the experience of "the disequilibrium" between one's first-person, preferred self- and body-image and the "third-person dimensions of the body": the ways others perceive and racialise one's identity (Alcoff 1999: 20). She further states that racialisation is "powerfully determinant over individual experience" (1999: 25). She concludes that "[r]acial identity […] permeates […] our consciousness of our self" (1999: 25). A racialised person can build their awareness of racial meanings "located on the body" and "make visible the practices of visibility itself" by working to express themselves "in relief" from the Fanonian corporeal malediction (Alcoff 1999: 25).

Alcoff's idea that racialised embodiment influences subjective lived experience and a person's self aligns with William C. Pamerleau's reflection on racialisation in narrative identity. Pamerleau believes that "racism is embodied in narratives" (2021: 217). He points out that racialisation affects narrative identities of Black people in the United States by depriving them of "adequate narrative resources with which to construct a desired identity" (2021: 217). One of his thoughts is that racism changes the way racialised individuals and communities perceive themselves in their narratives. If one considers the ability to choose a specific way of narrating one's identity to be a type of personal freedom (2021: 209), it becomes clear that Black people's racialisation is a form of cultural oppression of their narrative selves (Pamerleau 2021: 217). A lack of socially available narrative structures and public recognition for their narratives undermines racialised people's capability to construct narrative identities that are meaningful for them (Pamerleau 2021: 217–219).

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Françoise Baylis, a Black Canadian bioethicist, admits: "[i]t is clear to me that my racial identity as a black [sic] person was (and is) carefully constructed for and by me" (2003: 143–144). Through her own personal narrative of racial identity, Baylis instantiates Alcoff's and Pamerleau's theories of how external racialisation within various sociocultural contexts influences one's own narrative identity. Baylis asserts that "[w]e are both who we say we are […] and who others will let us be" (2003: 148–149). However, one's racial identity is represented and negotiated predominantly "in the stories we choose to construct and are able to sustain" (Baylis 2003: 149).

Daniel Coleman begins the first chapter of his seminal *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (2006) by discussing Himani Bannerji's equally famous short story titled "The Other Family". As Coleman describes, the story:

> tells of a South Asian mother in Toronto who […] experiences a shock when her daughter gets out the picture she drew in response to her teacher's request that the students draw a picture of their families. "Listen," said the mother, "this is not your family. I, you and your father are dark-skinned, dark-haired. (Coleman 2006: 3)

Coleman observes that Bannerji's short story constitutes an "outline of how the workings of White normativity shape people's perceptions of themselves, their families, and their relation to social legitimacy" (2006: 3). The story serves as a symbolic tale of racialised embodiment. The daughter experiences her own body in a racialised and somewhat distorted way. How she perceives herself and her parents is altered by the dominant discourse of the white body represented in the story by the girl's schoolbook. In consequence, the image of a "normalised" white body is internalised and "embodied": the altered, racialised meaning is put "on" the skin and hair of the girl, and she seems to take it as her self-perception before the mother liberates her from it.

Himani Bannerji herself, in *The Dark Side of the Nation* (2000), links racialisation with a form of "othering" experienced mainly by "refugees, immigrants or visible minorities" (2000: 88–93). She observes that the bodily features of a person "labelled as a visible and minority body" are socially read as "signifiers of inferiority", which implies that what is superior, free, and modern is culturally "coded as white" (Bannerji 2000: 107–108). If, as Bannerji argues, "[w]hiteness […] works as an ideology of a nation-state", contemporary refugees and migrants who come from non-Western cultural backgrounds are racialised not only through the ways their bodies are perceived as "visible", but also through their culturally specific modes of behaviour and cultural production (2000: 108, 112). Bannerji also hints that non-white descendants of migrants

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in Canada and the United States are frequently seen as "second-generation immigrants" even though they are those countries' citizens (2000: 112). Thanks to Bannerji's observations, one may notice that "race" and "the immigrant" are two interrelated discursive notions in contemporary politics, especially in the countries whose dominant ideologies are based on a racialised myth of whiteness. In these states, racialisation becomes the primary sphere in which non-white people are turned into *homines sacri*, "labelled as criminals" and murdered by the police (Bannerji 2000: 116).

Last but not least, the issue of racial embodiment must be problematised in close relation to Black people's enslavement and oppression. In *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016), Christina Sharpe discusses what she calls "the wake" in which Black people experience "the still unfolding aftermaths of Atlantic chattel slavery" (2016: 2). Using the polysemy inscribed in the word "wake" (i.e., the consequences of an event; a vigil held for a dead relative's body or a repast had after a funeral; a path of disturbed water or other surface left by a passing ship or vehicle; or simply the state of being awake and conscious), Sharpe demonstrates that contemporary racism and antiblackness constitute "the afterlives of slavery" and narrate being Black as "liv[ing] near death, as deathliness, in the wake of slavery" (2016: 7–8). Moreover, they represent "blackness as the ontological negation of being" (2016: 14), a form of "non-Being" in general (Sharpe 2016: 20). Similarly to Bannerji, Sharpe mentions that existing "in the wake" also involves Black people's migrations and refugeehood, because of which they are "imagined as insects, swarms, […] narratives of danger and disaster that attach to our always already weaponized Black bodies" (2016: 15–16). A Black person as a migrant or a refugee can also be returned to captivity, "to the hold in the form of the camp, the *Lager*, the detention center", or figuratively forced back onto the slave ship represented by deportation (Sharpe 2016: 108, emphasis original). Altogether, to fully comprehend the intangible atmosphere of racialisation and "the totality of the environments in which we [Black people] struggle", Sharpe describes contemporary racism as "the weather" (2016: 102–111). It is like "a pervasive climate of antiblackness" in which Black people need to "move" and work in order to resist "the push […] toward Black death" (Sharpe 2016: 106).

Given the points made in this section, the category of "race" is real and exists as a cultural form of maledictive perception. Correspondingly, racism affects people's lived experience as it generates an omnipresent, permeating "climate" of everyday discrimination, "quotidian disasters" (Sharpe 2016: 14) and racialised social "micro-

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interactions" (Alcoff 1999: 17). Finally, almost all of the scholars cited in this subchapter agree that racialisation exists first and foremost in the body and that it always relates to how racialised people construct and narrate their embodied experiences and identities.

2.3. Diaspora studies, cultural identity and transnationalism – a theoretical outline

The theoretical problems and notions discussed in this subchapter – including diaspora, cultural identity, transnationalism, hybridity, and home/ing – stem from the paradigm of postcolonial theory. Seminal works by Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, and many others provide a platform for studying the relations of political power and cultural authority between the coloniser and the colonised by demonstrating how cultural representation, language, and means of cultural production can change and distort the images of the oppressed peoples. If the colonised notice the imperial production of narratives and knowledge/power, it is possible for them to counteract and demand access to their own forms of cultural representation. Similarly, if diasporic subjects, migrants, and refugees realise that they are misrepresented, their cultural production and narratives can constitute the space of self-expression and resistance against racialisation and discrimination.

Due to the fact that the novels and short stories selected for analysis in the present dissertation include representations of various diasporas and diasporic relations, it seems necessary to outline at least a number of theoretical issues connected with the contemporary understanding of diaspora. The most relevant of them in the present context is the relation between the notion of diaspora and the formation of "hybrid" cultural identities and diasporic narratives. Having formerly denoted only the Jewish, Armenian, Irish, and African experiences of dispersal, since the 1980s, the concept of diaspora has been used to refer to numerous peoples who are scattered outside their countries of origin and form united or loosely connected communities in their new places of settlement (Cohen 2008: 1–2).

The historical and ideological foundations of a diaspora construct a narrative which includes certain diaspora-forming motifs. Among several major causes of displacement, Robin Cohen emphasises a tragic, traumatic event in one's country of origin which compels people to flee, such as war, famine, genocide, the mass African slave trade, or severe economic and humanitarian crises (2008: 2–4). These motivating

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factors can fulfil the function of a narrative beginning or become a founding myth for a diaspora. Another narrative symbol that contributes to the formation of the so-called "prototypical" or "victim" diasporas is the idealised image of homeland, which is sustained "*in the collective memory of a forcibly dispersed group*" (Cohen 2008: 4, emphasis original). In his list of the common features of the prototypical diaspora, Cohen also enumerates "a strong ethnic group consciousness […] based on a sense of […] a common history" (2008: 17). This suggests that the diasporas whose narratives begin with a trauma of forced migration are more likely to develop a feeling of distinctiveness, separateness, and victimhood. However, the contemporary space of "complex diaspora" is theorised around the idea that "[d]iasporas […] are both ethnic-parochial and cosmopolitan" (Werbner 2010: 75). The most recent voices in diaspora studies emphasise the sociocultural phenomena and processes of hybridity, creolisation, social heterogeneity, "a *multiplicity* of discourses" (Werbner 2010: 74, emphasis original), and the concepts of identity hyphenation and syncretisation within an in-between "third space" (Vertovec 2010: 67).

Furthermore, one of Cohen's main points of reflection on diaspora is the problem of home and homeland. Whether imagined or real; mythologised, idealised or criticised; changing, fluid, precarious or fixed and stable, "home" remains a vital social, cultural, and narrative category that spans national and ethnic identifications, identity positions, and cultural practices (Cohen 2008: 10). Home can also change into a transnational or hybrid space. It may be the longed-for, mythologised homeland, "a place of no return", or a new space of transethnic relations in which one experiences "a homing desire" (Brah 2005: 188–189) that is, nonetheless, deprived of a sense of fixed origins.

In "We Refugees", a seminal article originally published in the *Menorah Journal* (1943) and written from the position of a Jewish refugee in the United States, Hannah Arendt intuitively anticipates several concepts that are now theorised within the field of transnationalism. She argues that "[r]efugees driven from country to country represent the vanguard of their peoples—if they keep their identity" (Arendt 2007: 274). This statement can be seen as foreseeing what Pnina Werbner calls the "transnational social fields" in the new countries to which migrants "translocate" their culture, customs, rituals, and religious beliefs (Werbner 2013: 117–118). Moreover, Hannah Arendt criticises the Jewish migrants who eagerly assume new national identities in order to assimilate and create an appearance of belonging to their host countries. She notices the confusion caused by the fact that "[l]acking the courage to fight for a change of our social and legal

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status, we [Jewish refugees] have decided instead, so many of us, to try a change of identity" (Arendt 2007: 271). The specific type of confusion about one's belonging and identity that Arendt describes shares certain characteristics with the disrupting transnational experience of contemporary refugees and migrants. Even though in 1943 identifying only as a Jew did not provide one with any legal protection or citizenship, Arendt claims that there is paradoxically a certain "advantage" in being Jewish in a transnational setting: "[f]or the first time Jewish history is not separate but tied up with that of all other nations" (2007: 274). Although the interconnectedness of Jews with other national and ethnic groups in the time of war and the Holocaust might seem obvious, Arendt indicates that it is possible only if Jews acknowledge their cultural identity and "represent the vanguard of their peoples" (2007: 274). Despite the obvious fact that Arendt could not conceptualise Jewish refugeehood during the Second World War in transnational terms, her 1943 article anticipates certain issues articulated nowadays by such scholars as Steven Vertovec and Pnina Werbner.

2.3.1. The space of diaspora, hybrid identity, and home/ing

I use the expression "the space of diaspora" to refer to the research and ideas developed in the mid-1990s during "the third phase" of diaspora studies (Cohen 2008: 1). Even though researchers in the 1980s extended the scope of diaspora and included "words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guestworker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community" in its lexicon (Tölölyan 1991: 4), the initiators of the third phase claimed that diaspora was still an underutilised term. Cohen relates that postmodernist and "social constructionist" critics questioned the prototypical, foundational categories of diasporic consciousness: "namely 'homeland' and 'ethnic/religious community'", and they described the deterritorialization and deconstruction of previously fixed, stable, and firmly localised identities (Cohen 2008: 1–2). As Cohen claims, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, diaspora studies have experienced a "phase of consolidation". Despite the fact that certain diasporas and their communal identities become more and more complex, it appears that such concepts as home and homeland do not lose their salience and analytical potential (Cohen 2008: 2).

Increasingly complex diasporic spaces and individual lifeworlds open the possibility to acknowledge not only uncertain, fluid ethnicities but also "[the] surrounding

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context – divided by gender, class and race" (Cohen 2008: 9). The scholarly debate in the late 1990s focused on the processes of establishing transethnic relations and challenged the assumption that diasporas need to be defined through their ethnic and national origins. This approach is designed to be inclusive of and sensitive to migrant experiences of dislocation, which may elude national and ethnoreligious notions of identity and citizenship (Cohen 2008: 10–11). Moreover, it seeks to encompass issues of migrant femininity and masculinity, financial struggles, and the problems of racist discourses and discrimination.

Despite the developments of the third phase, Cohen admits the limitations of the term and argues that "the concept of diaspora is not a magic bullet and cannot be used to slay all enemies" (2008: 11). Drawing on Martin Sökefeld's (2006) ideas, Cohen suggests that diasporas be seen as imagined and socially constructed: to be named a diaspora, a community needs to be perceived by itself and others as one. According to Cohen, Sökefeld's most valuable theoretical innovation is the idea of mobilising social movement within diasporas. For a genuine diaspora to emerge, there have to exist more or less organised "*mobilizing practices* like neighbourhood associations, demonstrations and fund-raising events" (Cohen 2008: 13, emphasis original). Therefore, there is a continuum of diasporic mobilisation that ranges from effectively mobilised communities to loosely united or dormant diasporas (Cohen 2008: 15).

Finally, exploring David Chariandy's work (2006), Cohen acknowledges that a diaspora cannot be conceptualised as a closed community since it undergoes changes and crosses over with other national and ethnic groups and individual agents in the desire for new, decalcifying, "cross-ethnic" notions of belonging and "cooperative struggle" for justice "by […] peoples of many different backgrounds" (Cohen 2008: 15). Due to linking this approach with the developments of the consolidation phase, Cohen is able to outline what contemporary diasporas are: "social groups [that] want to reach in and to reach out, to be simultaneously ethnic and transnational, local and cosmopolitan, to have a comfort zone and a questing impulse" (2008: 18).

Besides the traditional notions of victim diaspora and migration prompted by traumatic events, there are other, non-prototypical diasporic formations and economic or labour migrations, which are often motivated by political and financial factors. If considered from the Marxist and postcolonial perspectives, these migrations can be seen as a result of the unequal access to sufficient employment and education in former colonies around the world, as well as the increasing workforce demand in well-developed

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regions (Van Hear 2010: 35). Nicholas Van Hear calls this phenomenon "mixed migration" of people whose decisions to move include "varying combinations of choice and compulsion" (2010: 36). They are both financially compelled and politically "free enough" to leave their home countries. One could argue that in spite of the mixed character of their migration, labour migrants still retain and narrate their memories of resettlement and generate enough social mobilisation to build non-elite, working-class diasporas. Moreover, to counterpoint the concept of deterritorialised, transethnic identity and other developments in diaspora studies in the late 1990s, Steven Vertovec observes that "[n]ot all diasporas entail open acceptance of diversity […]. [M]any diasporas often include hardened identities, reified cultures and reactionary nationalisms" (2010: 68). According to Pnina Werbner, people in certain diasporas can be ideologically and materially engaged "in the nationalist projects of their homelands", and endorse exclusionary or even racist ideas (2010: 74).

The above observations and reflections demonstrate that diaspora has become an overloaded, "weighty" concept (Cohen 2010: 70). Nevertheless, it seems possible to redeem it. The "space of diaspora" is a metaphor that refers to a sense of undefinable location, unfixed attachment to a place, as well as the room that diaspora might give for new and generative movement within politics, cultural production, and identity formation. In a Glissantian spirit, Cohen notes that such diasporic processes as creolisation and cosmopolitanism can bring about "fresh and creative beginnings", in which cultural interchange becomes unbounded, and multiple "nodes and connection points" help to start "refashioning the basic building blocks of organized cultures and societies" (2010: 71–73). Even though Paul Gilroy limits the applicability of "creolisation" to the cultural syncretism among the "Black Atlantic" peoples who went through the horrors of the Middle Passage (Gilroy 1993; Kabir 2010: 148), it is still possible to discuss other syncretisms within and around the ideas of cultural heterogeneity and hybridity.

According to Stuart Hall's famous statement, identity is "[n]ot an essence but a *positioning*" (2003: 237, emphasis original) and a diasporic subject is always involved in "a politics of identity", which can take the form of living among and taking different identity-positions that are actuated by numerous contexts and situations. It is possible to imagine a fictional character: an English barrister of Pakistani origin, a secular Muslim, who lives in London and marries a Polish woman. He is a British citizen; he has received an education in the United States, and he loves Western literature and cinema. In other

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contexts, he observes Pakistani wedding customs; he sends his children to an English state school and teaches them Urdu at home. When a cataclysm hits Pakistan, he donates money and discovers the Pakistani community in London. When he stays home with his children for his wife to pursue a career, he might be called a feminist. He is colleagues with several white, privileged, conservative lawyers, but he votes Labour. He used to volunteer at a youth club, where he taught mathematics to children of migrant parents. This type of fictional "cultural" description can be used to demonstrate how a person in a globalised world navigates their transethnic, transcultural, and political positions (Werbner 2015: 42; Hall 1992: 308–310). It should also be situated within postcolonial theory, which has provided the foundation for transnational and diaspora studies and has paved the way for the notions of cultural positioning and hybridity.

When considering the concept of hybridity, one can begin by outlining Hall's reinterpretation of cultural and ethnic "difference". As Hall states, in a cultural sense "[t]here is the 'difference' which makes a radical and unbridgeable separation: and there is a 'difference' which is positional, conditional and conjunctural, closer to Derrida's notion of *différance*" (2021: 252, italics original). From such a viewpoint, the awareness of cultural and ethnic differences is not "marginalising, dispossessing, displacing and forgetting other ethnicities" but rather paves the way to a multi-positional, nonhegemonic, noncoercive form of heterogeneity and diversity (Hall 2021: 253). If difference is seen as the Derridean *différance*, diaspora is a space of constant instability, transformation, and renewal. Hall perceives diaspora as an environment shaped "not by essence and purity, but by […] a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference, by *hybridity*" (2003: 244, emphasis original).

In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha conceptualises hybridity in more political terms than Hall does. For Bhabha, in the context of colonial exploitation and Christianisation, hybridity is connected with cultural authority "negotiations" that force both sides, the imperial culture of the coloniser and the customs and religion of the oppressed colonised, to change their languages and habits in order to rearticulate and translate certain cultural elements which, in effect, become "hybrid – neither the one thing nor the other" (Bhabha 1994: 33). Hybridity emerges as the interstitial, "in-between" "third space" that makes the meeting of cultures and the awareness of difference positively unsettling and creative (Hutnyk 2010: 60, Bhabha 1994: 110–112). Through cultural hybridity, a marginalised community can become a "counter-authority" and force

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a hegemonic imperial culture to participate in genuine relations of cultural power (Bhabha 1994: 114–120).

While Bhabha recognises the political potential of hybridity to generate new relations of power within postcolonial cultures, Hall puts more emphasis on the consequences of diasporic and migrant experiences for individual and communal politics of identity. As hybridity is never a finished project but a continuous work of "hybridisation" (Hutnyk 2010: 60), a hybrid identity is "a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always continued within […] representation" (Hall 2003: 234). If a dominant culture attempts to represent a diasporic community, such as the African or Asian diasporas, as inherently unified, "stable, unchanging, and continuous", they are more than likely to "[impose] an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation" (Hall 2003: 234–235). Hall also observes that hybridisation and globalisation pave the way for "the production of *new* identities", which is closely connected with "the effect of contesting and dislocating the centred and 'closed' identities of a national culture" (1992: 308–309, emphasis original). New identities, which emerge due to migrations and away from one's homeland, "draw on different cultural traditions at the same time" in a struggle against assimilation and absolute cultural identity loss. As Hall summarises it, "[t]he difference is that they [hybrid identities] are not and will never be *unified* in the old sense, because they are irrevocably the product of several interlocking histories and cultures, belong at one and the same time to several 'homes'" (1992: 310).

Despite the political potential and the analytical value of hybridity as a concept, a considerable number of scholars voice their reservations towards it. Arguably, the strongest argument comes from Paul Gilroy, who forcefully asserts: "Who the fuck wants purity? […] the idea of hybridity, of intermixture, presupposes two anterior purities" (Gilroy 1994: 54–55 in Hutnyk 2010: 61). The idea that hybridity assumes the pre-existence of at least two "purities" makes the concept incongruous with the notion of the nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) that is always-already a mixture of various traditions and customs, among which cultural or ethnic purity appears as invented. Moreover, Ananya Jahanara Kabir points out that the generative and positively subversive power of hybridity and creolisation might be overshadowed by the fact that they try to describe, under umbrella terms, the cultural elements of "debilitating and traumatizing phenomena", such as the Middle Passage, forced migrations, and dislocation (2010: 147). Last but not least, Himani Bannerji criticises the official Canadian policy of

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multiculturalism as "ossificatory" as much as she distances herself from the oppressive idea of assimilation[13]. Instead of the global "cultural supermarket" of state-imposed multiculturalism, Bannerji pictures "a mixture [that] is not a hybrid, it is something substantive" (Bannerji and Mukherjee 1990: 147–148). For Bannerji, "being substantive" is a process of dynamic cultural change that happens from below, in the everyday spheres of domesticity and communality. It is a form of cultural life that cannot be reappropriated and legally defined by a government.

Diasporic spaces and identities are more and more often theorised as both ordered and chaotic: "chaordic" (Werbner 2010: 74). According to Werbner, in terms of identity formation, the phenomena of hybridity as fusion and heterogeneity as multiplicity coexist in "late modern *complex diasporas*" (2010: 75, emphasis original). Members of a complex diaspora live in two directions. They want to stay in the "new" place, acquire citizenship, and contest "the hegemony […] of the nation-state" as well as be loyal to their "transnational relations" with home, which does not necessarily imply a national homeland (Werbner 2010: 74–75). New diasporas are both hybrid and ethnic. Therefore, analysing diasporic identities in literature should be diversified: looking at hybridity without paying attention to home can be considered a mistake (Werbner 2010: 75).

Home is not only the physical space of private life, a house or an apartment with the artefacts in it. It is also a broad metaphor for one's spiritual, cultural, ideological, and mythical lifeworld, "a mini-universe" that one figuratively inhabits and returns to (Drewniak 2022: 17–18). In the contexts of migration and refugeehood, home "is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination […] a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory" (Brah 2005: 188). Avtar Brah indicates that home is the imagined "place of 'origin'" and "a locality": the natural, human-made, and social phenomena that surround it (2005: 189). However, "[t]he *concept* of diaspora places the discourse of 'home' and 'dispersion' in creative tension*, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins*" (Brah 2005: 189, emphasis original). "Homing desire" is a process of cultural identification that does not necessarily look back to a mythical, idealised home since "not all diasporas sustain an ideology of return" (Brah 2005: 194). It establishes domestic relations, narratives, and practices which

[13] Anna Branach-Kallas synthesises Smaro Kamboureli's (2000) and Neil Bissoondath's (1994) critique of official multiculturalism in Canada. She paraphrases Kamboureli's words: "According to Kamboureli, the politics of multiculturalism is only seemingly based on openness and tolerance towards ethnic and racial minorities; in reality, its aim is to control diasporic communities in order to protect the culture of the descendants of white, mostly British, settlers" (Branach-Kallas 2008: 37, my translation).

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include "*multi-locationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries*" (Brah 2005: 191, emphasis original). According to Brah, through "homing desire", identity clearly appears as "always plural, and in process" (2005: 194). To illustrate Brah's theory, one can refer to the interview by Klaus Stierstorfer with Homi Bhabha, in which Bhabha suggests that many people "follow a certain kind of narrative pattern" if they often move homes (Bhabha and Stierstorfer 2015: 15). In Bhabha's personal story of building "homeyness", homing emerges as a positioning, with multiple "markers of home" that can appear and disappear, be created and recreated out of diverse needs and in multiple locations (2015: 14–16).

2.3.2. The transnational social field and its ruptures

According to Steven Vertovec, transnationalism is "a condition in which, […] notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning […] arena of activity" (2009: 3). For fear that transnationalism might become "a catch-all term for any migration-related matter", Rainer Bauböck defines it as "involv[ing] simultaneous overlapping affiliations of persons to geographically separate polities" and provides the example of "dual citizenship for migrants" (2003: 705). Moreover, Bauböck limits the scope of transnational relations and argues that "[t]ransnational political practices are, in most cases, a concern of the first generation [of migrants] only" (2003: 706).

Despite Vertovec's broad scope of analysis, it is possible to select a limited number of "takes" on transnationalism which may be applied to literary analysis. The first one emphasises individual consciousness and personal experiences of migrants. This approach to transnationalism is particularly characterised by "a refusal of fixity" and by multiplicity, as national and ethnic affiliations within diasporas change between or even within generations (Vertovec 2009: 6–7). Different "mode[s] of cultural reproduction" (Vertovec 2009: 4) constitute another point of interest of transnationalism, which involves studying ethnically traditional and hybrid products of diasporic cultures. Vertovec indicates that certain scholars tend to connect cultural hybridity particularly with the practices of "transnational youth whose primary socialization has taken place within the

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cross-currents of differing cultural fields" (2009: 7). To address the issue of young people's transnationalism and perhaps to respond to Bauböck's argument, Vertovec asks:

> how exclusive is transnationalism to the first generation of migrants? Will the so-called 'second generation' (children of immigrants born and raised in host countries) also maintain socio-cultural, economic and political ties of some kind (if so, what kind?) with homelands and with co-ethnic members around the world? (Vertovec 2001: 577)

Vertovec suggests that young people's mode of transnationalism, which incorporates multinational affiliations and cultural syncretism, puts the traditional, bilateral transnationalism of migrant parents into question. Finally, despite the planetary extent of cultural and sociopolitical cross-connectedness, there also exist local "everyday networks" and "social fields" (2009: 12) that help to create "little" transnationalisms of "family and household" (Vertovec 2009: 18). As Werbner mentions, cultural transnationalism happens in transnational social fields, in which cultural elements "translocated" between countries can flourish (2013: 117–118). Probably the clearest example of a transnational social field is a diasporic neighbourhood, such as Little Haiti in Miami, Little Italy in New York, or popular Chinatowns across North America. Although home, family, and community are still significant elements of transnational identities, a lack of cultural fixity might jeopardise the production of coherent local structures (Vertovec 2009: 12).

Although transnationalism might be represented as "simultaneous overlapping" (Bauböck 2003: 705) and intensification of relationships (Vertovec 2009: 3), Terrence Lyons, Peter Mandaville, and Pnina Werbner signal several issues that contemporary theories of transnationalism encounter. Lyons and Mandaville, among many other scholars, indicate that transnationalism urges nation-states "to reimagine the meaning and remit of citizenship" and, by emphasising independent cross-border political activities, it decentralises the territorial nation-state as an essential actor in international relations (2010: 92–95). It seems that this argument might challenge the image of transnationalism as politically "state-bounded" (Lyons and Mandaville 2010: 94). Looking at culture- and identity-related issues, Werbner stresses the idea that transnationalism, as a part of diasporic life, is also involved in the creation of "double consciousness" (Gilroy 1993: 126) and "a split subject, a fractured reality" (Werbner 2013: 107). She emphatically argues that "the unproblematic assumption in transnational theory of uninterrupted, continuing, intimate, taken-for-granted sociality across homeland and diaspora misrecognizes the critical phenomenological question of how intimate knowledge is

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sustained over discontinuous space and time" (Werbner 2013: 107–108). Even though contemporary technological advancement generates a digital illusion of "simultaneity" and multiple possibilities for interpersonal contact, Werbner mentions several situations in which transnational migration is a rupture: transnationalism for the sending country may be synonymous with brain drain or even depopulation; parent-child transnational relations are often trauma-inducing (2013: 110); a lack of Internet connection puts an end to "simultaneity" in relations (2013: 114–115); and finally, those who fulfil their dream of return experience confusion and realise that their home has changed (2013: 109–110).

2.4. A conclusion to the theory

The gathered theoretical material ranges from narratology and phenomenology of narrative identity, through the political significance of the refugee as a contemporary *homo sacer* and the migrant who struggles to be recognised as a valuable individual, through racialised embodiment and the problem of racism, to the issues surrounding postcolonial, hybridised, diasporic, and transnational identities. By putting together all these fields and problems, I am able to put forward several initial hypotheses and analytical questions. First of all, I look at identity as embodied in literary texts. The idea of identity *in narrative* and *as narrative* is the starting point for my analysis: identity is not only visible in literary texts; it is also a narrative in itself. One of the first questions is how literary works "distend" their forms to narrate the journeys and identities of fictional refugees and migrants. It is crucial to examine what literary forms and devices they use to represent identities of traumatised subjects without reducing them to politically dependent objects of power. Another problem is connected with how identity re-evaluations, refigurations, and "self-constancy" are presented in fiction. The following analysis is, in large part, an inquiry into the narrative structures that are used to represent coherence and fragmentation of identity. The question is whether fragmented plots are postmodernist, deconstructionist plays with narrative form or unironic attempts to narrate the "trauma time" (Edkins 2003) of fractured identities. Finally, there is a degree of scepticism about whether a story of forced migration can ever be narrated in an "orderly" fashion.

Furthermore, I describe how the status of the refugee and the migrant as a contemporary *homo sacer* and an *animal laborans* is represented in literature. The issue

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of personal and communal agency and subjectivity of refugees and migrants is considered from political and postcolonial points of view. One's presupposition might be that contemporary literary representations of migrating persons endow them with political agency and make them participants in genuine relations of power: that they see them as "persons-as-such" (Edkins 2011) who can challenge the discriminatory biopolitics of the nation-state. While examining such a view, I analyse how the *homo sacer* status and racialised embodiment change and distort a character's narrative identity and their self-image. My hypothesis is that a racist "climate" surrounding refugees and migrants turns them into social outcasts and influences their identity positions.

Last but not least, I interrogate selected works of fiction in search of first- and second-generation migrant characters who represent various phenomena of diasporic and transnational life. Paying attention to "little" relations and social fields enables one to notice ruptures and developments of identity peculiar to diasporic communities, homes, and families. Another assumption to examine is that the diasporic hybridity of identity generates a considerable amount of confusion and instability, and deprives one of desired narrative order and closure. However, one must refrain from understanding hybridity as a kind of "cultural schizophrenia". Hybridisation, a concept born within the paradigm of postcolonial studies and described by Hall, is a "chaordic", narratively reconfigured and ever-changing process that can lead to the devising of meaningful cultural practices and rituals. In light of this reflection, one can challenge the assumption that postmodernist narrative techniques represent only trauma-related fragmentation and non-linearity of narrative identity. Following Fred Wah, one might consider experimental migrant poetics as resisting political oppression and embracing deterritorialization, inner confusion and contradictions (Wah 2000: 61).

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Chapter III:
Migrants' and Refugees' Identities as Narrated

3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines how literary narratives construct migrants' and refugees' identities as narrative identities, giving them the character of being narrated selves rather than stable and rigid essentialist identities. It also sees migrant and refugee identities as narrative constructs, "emplotted" through literature. Its first part contains analyses of textual and symbolic narrative structures of concordance and discordance, *idem* and *ipse* representations of identity, and identities understood through the palimpsest metaphor – all grounded in Ricœur's philosophy of narrative identity. The subsequent subchapter aims to study selected works that depict traumatic experiences. It investigates how their narrative structures emplot traumatised individuals' psychological states and their perception of time. Next, the analysis focuses on contemporary postmodernist narrative patterns in the context of culturally specific and non-Western narratives and traditions and their influence on migrants', second-generation individuals', and refugees' narrative identities in fiction. The problem of migrants' empowerment through narratives is the subject of interpretation in the penultimate part of this chapter. The conclusion consists of two separate codas, each with its own aim. In general, studying narrative identity construction in literature may enable one to understand how contemporary fiction endeavours to incorporate aspects of migrants' and refugees' lived experiences, including those of trauma, grief, racialisation, and loss of agency, and to create unconventional narratives that can provide representation to migrants, second-generation individuals, and refugees.

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3.2. *Ipse* identity and palimpsests – (im)possibility of incorporating change

According to Paul Ricœur, to turn objective time, the time of clocks, schedules, and calendars, into "human time", the time of experience, change, and personality, one needs to resort to narration (1984: 3; 1988: 241). The first of several problems discussed in this chapter is the *ipse* identity. The purpose of this subchapter is to analyse and describe how certain migrant identities in literature can be regarded as *ipse* rather than *idem* selves and to demonstrate how other plots and characters elude this dichotomy altogether. The *ipse* type of identity can be defined as the narrative self that allows for and actively incorporates change into one's identity construction, and does not experience abrupt and disruptive consequences of that change. For this kind of identity, change does not result in chaos and incoherence. On the contrary, it leads to inner transformation, refiguration, and to the achievement of new coherence and self-constancy (Ricœur 1988: 246; 1992: 114–116).

Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* presents the story of Sophie Caco, who emplots her first-person narrative in which she seems to develop a new self-constancy within her transnational identity. Having grown up in an atmosphere of exile rather than an environment of hybrid transnationalism, Sophie is left to refigure her troublesome relationship with her mother, Martine, and the intergenerational trauma of sexual abuse on her own. Due to this process, she can re-evaluate her Haitian background and traditions.

The narrator is born in Haiti and migrates to the United States as a young girl to reunite with her mother, whom she knows only as a voice recorded on cassette tapes. One could claim that Sophie is a first-generation migrant: she speaks Haitian Creole fluently, her childhood personality is grounded in her aunt Atie's upbringing, and her cultural identity is rooted in Haitian customs. However, due to being a child of a migrant mother, Sophie is able to interrogate her Haitian background more critically than Martine, who practices a kind of closed, two-way transnationalism and harbours a feeling of exile from Haiti. In the United States, Martine insists that Sophie learn English quickly. Despite that, she sends Sophie to a bilingual Haitian school, where she uses French and feels "as if [she has] never left Haiti" (Danticat 1998: 66). Furthermore, Martine's first apartment in New York is located in Flatbush: the Brooklyn neighbourhood that is also referred to as "Little Haiti". Its diasporic social field is represented in Sophie's narrative as she recalls Haiti Express, a postal service kiosk "packed with Haitians" that "remind[s] [her] of home"

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(Danticat 1998: 50). Therefore, as I argue elsewhere, it appears that Martine is searching for a Haitian home in the United States (Dudek 2022: 87). In an interview with Ginetta E. B. Candelario, Danticat admits that "[e]verything change[s] when you become an immigrant. Home is more abstract, less reachable, less tangible". Danticat indicates that a migrant is more likely to view home as "an idea, an attitude, an ideal" (Candelario et al. 2004: 72). This commentary suggests that the author understands home as something fluid and unstable for migrants; however, she also hints at the possibility of constructing a romanticised "ideal" of a lost home.

One can argue that the temporality ruptures experienced by Sophie are not directly reproduced in the novel's narrative structure. It follows a subjective point of view and a first-person narrative, constituting a relatively linear representation of events. However, one of the most significant disruptions of temporality is shown symbolically through the way Sophie Caco feels when she flies to the United States to move in with her mother. She "had aged in one day, as though she had been through a time machine, rather than an airplane" (Danticat 1998: 49). Her immigration to America seems to be incomprehensible for her in terms of the continuity of her life. For the girl, as Ricœur could contend, life is far from pure order. Her narrative is changed abruptly: the experience of migration constitutes a major identity disruption for Sophie.

Another uneasy transition occurs when Sophie and Martine move to "a one-family house in a tree-lined neighbourhood" (Danticat 1998: 65), which stands for financial stability, safety, and independence in the migrant's story. Nevertheless, as I claim elsewhere, what should have been a safe family sphere is marked by the experience of sexual trauma inflicted on Sophie by her mother. "The supposedly safe domestic sphere full of material references to Haiti becomes the place where Sophie is forced to revise her perspective on Haitian culture and her mother's mode of transnationalism" (Dudek 2022: 87). The rupture is represented symbolically in the act of "testing" teenage Sophie's genital organs to check if she is still a virgin. This terrifying experience of sexual violence is reproduced across borders and through generations. Grandma Ifé's testing on Martine stops when a *Tonton Macoute*[14] rapes her; the rape turns into testing on Sophie; Martine's testing on Sophie stops when the daughter mutilates her hymen with a pestle; testing transforms into Sophie's bulimia and sexual difficulties in marriage. Eventually, the rape

[14] The *Tontons Macoutes* were paramilitary police, a private militia of the Duvalier regime that ruled Haiti from 1957 to 1986. They terrorised the population of Haiti through kidnappings, torture, and rapes (Polyné 2010: 181–183, 203).

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turns into suicide for Martine when she becomes pregnant again. Because of the practice of testing, Sophie is made to notice that certain Haitian customs are harmful and that patriarchal oppression permeates her mother's life and the lives of other women in her family as a norm. What is done to women transforms into an unspoken rule that prioritises a myth of purity over dignity and bodily integrity.

When Martine tests Sophie for the first time, she tells her about the Haitian myth of "inseparable lovers" who "were the same person, duplicated in two" called the *Marassas* (Danticat 1998: 84). According to Nadège T. Clitandre, Martine "attempts to preserve the mother-daughter bond through narcissistic identification with Sophie" when she realises her daughter will leave her and marry a man one day (2018: 98). She needs Sophie as her protector and *Marassa*: a double. This desire constrains the girl, closes her in Martine's space of exile from Haiti, and, through the forced act of testing, makes Sophie a "co-victim" of the rape on Martine (Clitandre 2018: 98). The mother introduces the spiritual and psychological practice of doubling into Sophie's life. While being tested, Sophie escapes her body and recalls pleasant images from her childhood with Aunt Atie in Haiti (Danticat 1998: 155). Later, when she has sex with her husband, Sophie also doubles: she retreats from her body, and she does not identify with herself in order to survive the sexual act. Symbolically connected to her mother's sexual trauma and the traumas of Haitian women harmed by patriarchal oppression, and still re-living her own trauma of testing, Sophie starts a process of bringing her split and "doubled" identity together. As Clitandre argues, the metaphor of the *Marassa* can also be a positive image, which suggests a creative tension that "embraces ambiguity, contradiction, and the plurality of identities" instead of a desire for a oneness of identity, a tension which can be created and harnessed, as Ricœur would see it, in the process of configuring the displacement of immigration and the intergenerational trauma of sexual abuse into a new, refigured identity (Clitandre 2018: 79–82).

Paradoxically, to start the process of healing and reconciliation with her mother, Sophie visits Haiti and Grandma Ifé, the very place and the person whose practices initiated the harm. Sophie's narrative identity can be refigured only when a verbal articulation of trauma and a confrontation with Martine and Grandma Ifé take place there. Only when she puts her suffering and grievances into words can she begin to gain a renewed understanding of her native culture and her private migration narrative. Again paradoxically, it is the presence of home and the family sphere that seem to be the necessary conditions for Sophie to grasp her "narrative dialectic of trauma and

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reconciliation, suffering and order" and enable her to re-evaluate her Haitian-American identity in a process of Ricœurian *ipse* (Dudek 2022: 89). Even though it is initially presented as a "narrative dialectic", a collection of heterogeneous elements, Sophie's refigured narrative identity seems to achieve a triumphant closure towards the end. According to Carine M. Mardorossian, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* as a novel upholds a mythical and nationalist paradigm of home (2002: 25–31). On the one hand, Mardorossian believes that Danticat's first novel does not challenge "traditional notions of form, identity, home, and nationalism". On the other hand, the scholar admits that "aspects of the traditional way of life depicted in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* are represented as unequivocally oppressive" (Mardorossian 2002: 25). One of the conclusions of Mardorossian's essay could be that Sophie revises her view on Haitian culture and Haitian diaspora but, at the same time, she adheres to a traditional idea of identity, belonging, and rootedness. "Haiti and its cultural traditions thus become both a site of oppression and freedom in the novel" (Mardorossian 2002: 27).

Another significant narrative element of *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is constructed through Grandma Ifé's Haitian folktales. As in Glissant's description of the Caribbean tale, Grandma Ifé's stories configure the difficult, complex facts of Sophie's and Martine's lives into simple symbolic characters and events that unfold without a clear sense of time. Despite their seeming ordinariness, they carry an ambiguous message for Sophie. For instance, the fable about "the lark, [who] wanted more than anything to have the little girl" and "would like to take [her] to a faraway land […] by sea" can be read as a story configuring little Sophie's migration to the United States as she is taken away by her mother (Danticat 1998: 124–125). Mardorossian sees Ifé's tales as "empowering" for the novel's narrator (2002: 27) because they show Sophie that she can outsmart "the lark", even though "she gave in to the bird and let him have his way", and protect her heart by leaving it "at home", i.e., in Haiti (Danticat 1998: 125). However, as I have claimed elsewhere, it is possible to discover a disturbing sexual undertone in Grandma Ifé's Haitian fairytales and read them as suggesting that a woman's body should be "whole" for her future husband or condemned for her sexual desire, and that her heart ought to stay attached to her home (Dudek 2022: 90). Aunt Atie's resentment towards "all the unpleasant stories *Manman* [mother] used to tell us" and towards the patriarchal society in Haiti (Danticat 1998: 164, italics original; 136–137) might support this interpretation. If one follows this reasoning, it appears that the tales told by the grandmother can stifle the development of an *ipse* identity within Sophie's narrative and prevent her from

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constructing a renewed comprehension of her life and the traumas she experiences. In this way, Grandma Ifé's folklore plays a vital yet ambiguous role in Sophie's narrative identity refiguration. The Haitian storytelling tradition in Sophie's family is an inspiration for her to verbalise her experiences and transform them into a tale of identity.

Although Sophie Caco's narrative incorporates changes and re-evaluations of transnational, Haitian-American identity, the narrative refiguration takes place only to a limited extent. Her narration comes to a premature closure, which indicates too easily that Sophie can recover from intergenerational trauma and transnational ruptures of migrant identity after her mother's death. In the final image of the novel, after Martine's funeral, Sophie runs into a cane field, where her mother was raped as a young woman, and "[begins] to beat a cane stalk" until her hands bleed (Danticat 1998: 233). When she stops, Grandma Ifé tells her:

> "Listen. Listen before it passes. *Paròl gin pié zèl*. The words can give wings to your feet. There is so much to say, but time has failed you," she said. "There is a place where women are buried in clothes the color of flames, where we drop coffee on the ground for those who went ahead, where the daughter is never fully a woman until her mother has passed on before her. There is always a place where, if you listen closely in the night, you will hear your mother telling a story and at the end of the tale, she will ask you this question: '*Ou libéré*?' Are you free, my daughter?" […] "Now," she said, "you will know how to answer." (Danticat 1998: 234, italics original)

Even though Sophie retains a strong connection with Haiti as home, she does not accept Haitian folklore uncritically (Mardorossian 2002: 25). If family tradition is still a significant identity-forming element, it is narratively re-evaluated through immigration to the United States and transformed into a new mode of transnationalism practised by Sophie. For Martine, Haiti is a place from which she has to escape and whose customs and culture she feels compelled to reproduce in another country. By contrast, for Sophie, Haiti is a place to which she *can* return – it is a privilege – and whose cultural identity she has to reinterpret in order to become free. Nevertheless, if one follows Mardorossian's interpretation (2002: 27), it seems that such a refiguration of narrative identity is final and liberating. An analysis based on Ricœur's ideas can be more nuanced. Eventually, Sophie's narrative self becomes a re-collected whole which contains heterogeneous and contradictory elements: a traditional notion of home, a critical view of her homeland's culture, and her American life marked by trauma and bulimia. The narrative heterogeneity, however, is not given an open and nonuniform ending. Instead, it receives a "generative" closure, which restricts Sophie's narrative identity and, at the same time, promises a positive outcome and liberation in the future.

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In Sophie Caco's narrative, "trauma time" never fully becomes "narrative time"; however, the ending of the novel indicates that a fulfilling closure and a reconciliation with the past are possible. To configure her trauma time of "testing" into a plot, Sophie needs to put her hurt into words and voice them before her mother and grandmother in the presence of Aunt Atie. When Grandma Ifé begins a storytelling session with a group of village boys, she says: "The tale is not a tale unless I tell. Let the words bring wings to our feet" (Danticat 1998: 123). In like manner, Sophie needs to realise that only uttering the words of her traumatic story can "bring wings" to her complicated relationship with her mother and the Haitian traditions they share. Thanks to telling her story and giving her trauma a narrative meaning, Sophie is not a passive object of intergenerational sexual trauma, which brings only discontinuity and rupture to her family narrative. She is an active storyteller, a Haitian "tale master" willing to reconnect her body, the bodies of other female characters, their own traumas and stories, and Haitian culture and history together with her narrative identity and perspective. She does it not only before her mother, grandmother, and aunt; she also participates in a therapy group with two other women who share their lived experiences of sexual trauma. It seems that Danticat, among many other aspects of her first novel, desires to represent the telling and articulation of difficult experiences by female characters as a healing mechanism that builds on narration and one's construction of narrative identity.

Saskia Fürst claims that Edwidge Danticat's and Dionne Brand's "short stories provide more than a reconnection and re-membering of past events; they actively rewrite specific, traumatic experiences of the protagonists and of their ancestors through hauntings to provide these events with a new (or renewed) purpose and meaning for the present" (Fürst 2017: 67). Seen in this way, their short stories may represent collective *ipse* identities in which traumatic migrant experiences, ancestral stories, and Black Caribbean myths are rewritten and re-understood together. Fürst connects the narratives about Caribbean women to their "ancestral memories": the intergenerational re-memories of past traumas, stories of liminal spaces and states, and embodied racialisation, which come back to female characters in the form of the palimpsest (2017: 68–69). The first recorded metaphorical usage of the palimpsest can be found in Thomas De Quincey's 1845 essay "The Palimpsest" (De Quincey 2013: 130–138), in which the author compares the work of the human mind to a palimpsest: one sheet of parchment or vellum on which one's life events are repeatedly overwritten. I believe it is possible to reinterpret the metaphor of the palimpsest, developed further by Sarah Dillon (2007) and Saskia Fürst

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(2017), in order to notice that migrant identities do not become protean selves as a result of migration and transnationalism, but they live as palimpsestuous identities. If one follows the Greek myth of Proteus, the notion of protean identity suggests that a person can take "many shapes" on the outside but always has a core identity on the inside. The metaphor of the palimpsest removes the notion of an essence or core identity and implies that reading palimpsest identities in narrative configuration can provide one with a renewed meaning and comprehension of their life events, which closely resembles Ricœur's thoughts on identity. In this way, a migrant's narrative identity does not necessarily become a coherent or incoherent identity: it eludes the Western dichotomy and becomes a layered identity of different "texts" that do not erase one another but coexist (Dillon 2007: 52; Lara-Rallo 2009: 101). Narratives by and about Black women are "Palimpsests of Ancestral Memories" (Fürst 2017: 66, capitalisation original) and, at the same time, they become palimpsests of narrative identities in which an original identity is not lost because of migration and narrative refiguration, but stays on the material of identity and constructs its meaning together with the new "text".

Edwidge Danticat's short story titled "Epilogue: Women Like Us" from the collection *Krik? Krak*! is a creative monologue of a young female writer who sees her past at home and her present in exile as two interlocking realities. When contrasted with the new country, her home world is remembered and seen even more clearly. As the young woman attempts to justify her motivation for becoming a writer, she realises that she needs to speak for "[a] thousand women urging [her] to speak through the blunt tip of [her] pencil" (Danticat 2015: loc. 2076). In many short stories by Danticat, the pain and traumas experienced by Haitian female migrants to the United States and the atrocities that their Black ancestors went through in the Caribbean and during the Middle Passage are together "(re)written and, therefore, revised" (Fürst 2017: 68). Perhaps the first structural element that the reader notices in Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* is that almost every narrative in the collection is told from the perspective of a Haitian woman. Due to this, women's palimpsestuous identities consist of or at least refer to three narrative "layers": the folktales of their female ancestors and relatives, the migration narratives, both historical and recent, and the unspoken, silenced stories of women's traumas.

Examined closely, the duration of action in "Epilogue: Women Like Us" is only one moment when the narrator-protagonist braids her hair in front of a mirror. However, the scope of narrative time and therefore human time in the story is much wider: it spans generations of Haitian women, decades or even centuries. The women who demand that

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their stories be told are called “kitchen poets” by the narrator: “They slip phrases into their stew and wrap meaning around their pork before frying it” (Danticat 2015: loc. 2049). “Kitchen poets” are both women who tell folktales, “whose fables and metaphors […] daily slip into your survival soup”, as well as those whose stories remain unheard and suppressed because of trauma, shame, or patriarchal gender roles. The narrative undercurrent of the short story is immigration, even if the names of the countries are never used in the text. Instead, the narrator mentions “home” and “the world where we are from” and contrasts them with “here” (Danticat 2015: loc. 2057–2066). Arguably, the strongest theme which brings the three narrative layers together is the liberation of the female writer: only the women whose unspoken stories the narrator is urged to write down can “tell your mother in your place that yes, women like you do speak, even if they speak in a tongue that is hard to understand” (Danticat 2015: loc. 2075). Through this, a collective narrative identity is constructed. “Epilogue: Women Like Us” binds the narratives in the collection together. The palimpsest of stories is once again overwritten; however, Danticat’s new addition revisits and revives the lives that are hidden underneath it and “bleed” to the surface like ink through paper.

Elizabeth S. Anker believes that *Krik? Krak!* can be read as a novel whose plot, although fragmented into episodes and concealed from the reader at first, constitutes a relatively coherent narrative (2014: 150). Even though the idea may seem difficult to defend, it is possible to discover that several of the short stories gathered in *Krik? Krak!* follow a transgenerational story of what appears to be the maternal line of one family. “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, a story which refers to the Parsley Massacre of 1937, the genocide “of thousands of Haitians authorized by [the] Dominican president Rafael Trujillo” (Polyné 2010: 109), introduces the characters of Josephine – the narrator, her mother – Défilé, and her grandmother – Eveline. The mother, Défilé, takes her name after the nickname of Dédée Bazile, the woman who is believed to have saved the body of the first leader of independent Haiti, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, from desecration in 1806. She is a Haitian national myth and a symbol (Sarthou 2010: 111). Sharrón Eve Sarthou states that the story “implies that the narrator and her mother may be direct descendants of the Défilé who gathered the hacked up body of Dessalines” (2010: 111). The central theme of “Nineteen Thirty-Seven” is a secret society of women who perform an annual ritual of remembrance by the river where Haitians were murdered. Some of these women are arrested and sent to prison to starve as they are accused of witchcraft and considered to be *lougarous* or *soucouyants*: vampiric creatures with burning wings

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present in Caribbean folklore (Sarthou 2010: 111). The secret sorority of Ville Rose is mentioned several times throughout *Krik? Krak!*, which symbolically holds the short stories together, even if they are not directly related to the narrative of "Nineteen Thirty-Seven".

Both Anker (2014) and Sarthou (2010) follow Jana Evans Braziel's (2004) interpretation in which she indicates that "Between the Pool and the Gardenias" is the short story which coheres the most with Défilé and Josephine's narrative (Braziel 2004: 79). The narrator of this story, Marie – which might be yet another reference to the first name of the historical Défilé – cannot continue the matrilinear tradition of her Haitian family's storytelling and remembrance because she cannot have children of her own. When she finds an abandoned newborn infant, she takes care of her and calls her Rose, even though she is aware of the fact that the child is dead. Braziel argues that through the images of testing, rape, and suicide in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* or death, decay, and genocide in *Krik? Krak!* Danticat "re-write[s] Haiti's history both through diasporic distance and through the traumas of female embodiment, insisting that it is only by passing through Haiti's maternal bodies that the country will be reborn" (2004: 83). The stories of Haitian women are embodied through the suffering inflicted on them. Their traumas, in turn, are "re-written" into literary narratives, which makes them understandable in the transgenerational and transnational perspectives that Danticat presents in a fragmented manner:

> There was my great grandmother Eveline who was killed by Dominican soldiers at the Massacre River. My grandmother Défilé who died with a bald head in prison, because God had given her wings. My godmother Lili who killed herself in old age because her husband had jumped out of a flying balloon and her grown son left her to go to Miami. (Danticat 2015: loc. 870–878)

The genealogical description given by Marie in "Between the Pool and the Gardenias" and the names she would like to give her unborn daughters: "Eveline, Josephine, Jacqueline, Hermine, Marie Magdalène, Célianne" (Danticat 2015: loc. 858) link her narrative directly to other short stories in *Krik? Krak!*. "A Wall of Fire Rising" is the short story about Lili and her husband Guy, who commits suicide by jumping out of a flying balloon, over which he obsesses as it becomes a sign of freedom and liberation from a life of poverty, hardship, and humiliation. "The Children of the Sea" is constructed as an epistolary story, most probably about Lili's son, Little Guy, who, as a young man, escapes Haiti on a refugee boat. On the dinghy, he meets Célianne, a girl raped by Haitian *macoutes*, who gives birth at sea and, as the baby dies, she throws herself into the ocean.

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It remains unknown whether Lili's son reaches Florida since the reader can only access the letters he and his girlfriend write to each other, even though they cannot send them. Ville Rose is again mentioned by the girlfriend as her father's family village and a provincial shelter from the cruel paramilitary *macoutes*. Finally, Marie, the narrator of "Between the Pool and the Gardenias", is the daughter of the narrator of "Nineteen Thirty-Seven".

As Braziel states, "Danticat's stories seek to reclaim historical losses and to refigure Haitian women into the national body and its diasporic offspring" (2004: 89). If one attempts to follow the matrilineal connections in *Krik? Krak!*, the short stories in the collection appear to be ordered non-chronologically, with numerous interconnections scattered among them. The links among the stories are usually details whose ordering throughout the book forces the reader to pay close attention and makes them an active "co-narrator" of *Krik? Krak!*, which has the potential for a novel-like structure if read through these connections. If there exists a quasi-plot uniting several stories from the collection into a novelistic construction, its composition is fragmented and achronological. Edouard Glissant's remarks on Caribbean history and literature suggest that discontinuities and temporal ruptures constitute the mode of self-expression of French Caribbean nations because their "mythical chronology", its "continuum" and "historical consciousness" have been turned into "nonhistory" by "a brutal dislocation, the slave trade" (Glissant 1999: 61–70). Carole Sweeney, following Glissant's postcolonial criticism, argues that "[t]he traces of violence, rupture and dislocation continue to possess and to haunt generations of Haitians, thereby producing a present that is played out as repetition and recurrence, endlessly circling around a central lacuna of loss and dispossession" (Sweeney 2007: 54). The discontinuities and ruptures of time and memory inform Danticat's short stories in the collection and, reaching for the re-memory of colonialism, slavery, and plantations, they impact upon and transform women's narratives of Haitian history, the Duvalier regime, and the Haitian diaspora in the United States.

Eventually, "Epilogue: Women Like Us" connects the fictional narratives of Haitian women with the outside reality and the history of Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. The palimpsestuous stories of Haitian history and Haitian women's memory become reconnected in Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!*. Danticat reminds her readers that the narrative identity of each Haitian, regardless of gender, whether in Haiti or in the diaspora, is an amalgamation of numerous embodied, unwritten or unspoken women's narratives:

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folktales, fairy tales, and traumas. The author rewrites Haiti's history and women's traumas together because they *are* one, and perhaps understanding this is possible only when fiction and narration intervene in reality – as Ricœur postulated – configuring and refiguring Haitian memory from a female perspective. The traumas of forced dislocation, slavery, humiliation, and later, the Duvalier terrorism and rape as a tactic of subjugation are rescued from oblivion by transforming them into events in stories that can be interpreted. In this way, Danticat saves the Haitian "nonhistory" and provides it with narrative representation (Sweeney 2007: 57).

Dionne Brand's short stories also revisit and rewrite Black women's traumatic experiences, which can be comprehended anew or for the first time through their narratives. Yet again, as Saskia Fürst claims, in Brand's short story titled "Blossom, Priestess of Oya, Goddess of Winds, Storms, and Waterfalls" from the collection *Sans Souci and Other Stories* (1988), there exists a palimpsest of past and present, which links the suffering of Black people as slaves, the haunting of Caribbean mythical spirits and African Yoruba deities, recent memories of life in Trinidad with the most recent events of migration to Canada. In the palimpsest of Blossom's identity, all elements and "layers" do not obliterate one another but co-create the protagonist's present self-awareness (Fürst 2017: 73–74). However, Blossom's narrative identity is not as linear and stable as Sophie Caco's narrative refiguration in Danticat's novel. Charlotte Sturgess argues that "[d]rinking [alcohol] mediates the transgression of borders and promotes 'alterity' as a recurrent narrative device" in Brand's short story (1993: 223). Blossom is a Black woman who migrates to Canada and works as a domestic helper in white middle-class people's houses. After defending herself from being raped by her white employer and forcing her negligent husband to leave her home, she is transformed into a priestess of Oya, a Yoruba goddess who is often described as a "patron of feminine leadership" (Fürst 2017: 72). She establishes a speakeasy where she also performs religious rituals. The bar seems to be a cultural "exclave", a deterritorialised space of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora where Blossom and other displaced Caribbean people can escape white Canadians' gaze and where their nationalities, cultures, and skin colour do not have to define them.

When examined from a narratological perspective, the short story seems to elude closure and follows a mode of traditional storytelling (Sturgess 1993: 224). The story appears to be articulated "here and now", in Blossom's speakeasy over a glass of liquor. Moreover, it uses a vernacular which symbolically "transgresses" the rules of standard English grammar and can indirectly refer to *The Lonely Londoners*, the 1956 novel by

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Sam Selvon (Sturgess 1993: 225). This way of "telling" the story instead of writing it as "conventional" literary fiction is a political sign of resistance against a North American discourse of literary distance and style, and the traditional plot of beginning, middle, and end. As Sturgess states, if establishing a stable and linear narrative identity depends on embracing the discourse of white Canadian culture, the mode of Caribbean storytelling signifies the Black woman's protest against being objectified and silenced: her Black body desires subjectivity, albeit "altered" and "concentrated in language as release, as unreason, as the carnival of voice and the body" (1993: 225).

Blossom's spiritual visions of Black ancestors' suffering, spirit possession by Oya, and spirits drunk in Blossom's bar allow not only for a metaphysical atmosphere of religious festivity but also for the narrative to leap back and forth and work as an endless palimpsest, in which drunkenness and haunting facilitate a "revision and reappropriation of a discontinued Afro-Caribbean history" (Sturgess 1993: 226). The narrative's fragmentation through the symbolic destabilisation of Blossom's identity by the arrival of Oya helps her to review her life as inherently linked to Black Afro-Caribbean people's history and, at the same time, to her contemporaries' stories of migration and cultural alienation in Canada. In this way, past and present are perpetually "informed" and "revised" by one another, which facilitates Blossom's "symbolic liberation", "self-development, and self-empowerment" (Fürst 2017: 73–74).

Furthermore, the narrative connection between Black people's past and present does not come to a closure in Brand's short story: "On the nights that Oya didn't come, Blossom sell liquor and wait for she, sitting against the window" (Brand 2023a: 55). Blossom's narrative exists in "a perpetual state of swerving from closure" (Sturgess 1993: 224). Blossom as Oya is a sign of rebellious and liberated femininity, which can spiritually and ideologically escape the dominant culture of white Canada and emancipate her Black body and spirit through a narrative structure that may seem deconstructed and destabilised for a white reader accustomed to "coherent" storytelling of the Western European tradition. The composition of Brand's short story and the language used in it resist the paradigm of narrative linearity and gradual, stable identity refiguration by incorporating unexpected alterations and transformations, both in political and metaphysical terms. The conclusion of the short story does not provide closure; it does not yield a "generative" ending of a traditional Aristotelian plot (McAdams 1997: 70–72), which could stifle possible change. The final paragraph of "Blossom, Priestess of Oya, Goddess of Winds, Storms, and Waterfalls" implies a state of open-endedness in

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the Black woman's identity. She cannot assimilate into the dominant culture of North America; she does not go back to Trinidad, and she lives in constant waiting for her Yoruba deity to possess her and help her to see the past and present simultaneously. One could say that after a crisis, Blossom's identity is refigured and assembled anew. However, to state this would be to forget about the narrative features of the Caribbean tale: as an Oya priestess, Blossom is freed from the constraints of white linearity, and her narrative identity mutations can happen without restraint and without the imposition of the dominant cultural narrative. It seems that such a form of narrative liberation promotes the development of a palimpsestuous identity that functions similarly to an *ipse* identity, supporting Blossom's self-development and a re-evaluation of the heterogeneous layers of her life and experience.

Another form of haunting can be found in Brand's short story titled "St. Mary's Estate". In this story, the haunting can be understood as both spirit possession or presence and as a memory or image that reappears in one's mind, causing anxiety, fury or pain. The protagonist of "St. Mary's Estate" visits a place from which she has only blurry childhood memories. It is a plantation where she was born and spent the first several years of her life as the granddaughter of a Black overseer. The journey she makes is not only a literal, physical one but also a quest through time. She barely remembers the place: her memories have been repressed, almost forgotten. Now, they are woken up, conjured gradually, as it were, as she moves closer to her former house – the overseer's shack – and to the white owner's mansion. The image of the place, the feeling of rejection that occurred in her family when her grandfather was dismissed by the white owner and replaced by a younger man, and the grievance she feels resurface and regain their place in the protagonist's consciousness.

There is also a more literal kind of haunting in the story. The protagonist recalls that "the dried-out river bed […] is where the spirits of dead unchristened children used to live, *duennes*, calling children in the evening to come and play" (Brand 2023a: 59, italics original). The folktale of the *duennes* might serve as a metaphor for the protagonist's memories, which have been haunting her like the spirits of the children who died on the plantation. When she arrives at St. Mary's Estate, the "dried-out" space of her memory calls her back and lures her to the white people's house. The big green house symbolises the forbidden sphere, the hierarchy, and the white owner's power over her grandfather, the overseer, and over other Black people who lived and worked on the plantation. Even setting one's eyes on the house was forbidden: fear and deference

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towards the white family were taught from a young age, and they became embodied. It is a possible reason why the protagonist does not remember the precise location or the appearance of the house. Only now, as an adult woman, is she reminded by the new overseer that the plantation and the big green house have always belonged to one family, even now: "'Always?' […] I must not have remembered about the house because now I can see it from the front of the wood house, too" (Brand 2023a: 67–68). With this one recollection, she remembers the years of hard labour and struggle that her family endured under the yoke of the plantation owner. When she learns that the place has always belonged to and is still owned by the same family, she is confused. After a moment, she realises that she desires revenge: "Red-eyed, I have a picture of the green house in my head, ablaze" (Brand 2023a: 68).

For the protagonist of "St. Mary's Estate", the fact that she left the plantation as a child constitutes "a door" to which she was never supposed to return. The woman remembers certain elements of her childhood on the plantation and forgets the ones she might have been unaware of as a girl. Therefore, the short story may serve as a literary illustration for the extended metaphor that Dionne Brand develops in *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* (2001). In this seminal work, Brand imagines a door of a "slave castle" in Africa as the Door which is closed after a Black person as they are taken from Africa to North America, the Caribbean, or to Europe (2023b: 33). Metaphorically speaking, the Door locks the Black person out of all ancestral memory and traceable history:

> Having no name to call on was having no past; having no past pointed to the fissure between the past and the present. That fissure is represented in the Door of No Return: that place where our ancestors departed one world for another; the Old World for the New. The place where all names were forgotten and all beginnings recast. In some desolate sense it was the creation place of Blacks in the New World Diaspora at the same time that it signified the end of traceable beginnings. Beginnings that can be noted through a name or a set of family stories that extend farther into the past than five hundred or so years […]. I am interested in exploring this creation place — the Door of No Return, a place emptied of beginnings — as a site of belonging or unbelonging. (Brand 2023b: 5–6)

Although the protagonist of "St. Mary's Estate" does not wish to and, as Brand states, cannot explore her ancestral history beyond the plantation and the Caribbean region, she also suffers the consequences of the oblivion that the plantation system itself engendered. The children born on the plantation who later moved, like the *duennes*, are left wandering and wondering: without access to the true history of their families' suffering and humiliation, and often without a full awareness of the power relations on the plantation.

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The woman who comes back to St. Mary's is left to gather fragments of an almost forgotten history and turn them into a new, albeit still partial, understanding of her family's past. The re-understanding of the past begins in the present; however, it does not reach a point of completion. Even though the protagonist can trace her "beginnings", the image that she reconstructs is confusing, almost incoherent for her at first. Through her work and actions, through her deliberate decision to visit the plantation, the post-colonial oblivion imposed on her is transformed into a memory that haunts her instead of forming a coherent whole. St. Mary's Estate is, to use Édouard Glissant's term, "a nonworld" in which being confused and enraged does not necessarily mean being alone: "you share in the unknown with others whom you have yet to know" (Glissant 2010: 6–7). As the protagonist of "St. Mary's Estate" makes an effort to understand her past and refigure her identity, her work never leads to "a stable and seamless identity", which illustrates Ricœur's warning about narrative identity formation (1988: 248).

The last two stories that form a coda for *Sans Souci and Other Stories* titled "Sketches in transit … going home" and "… seen" present Ayo, a Black Caribbean woman who travels home along with many Trinidadians who fly to the Caribbean for Carnival, and a group of white Canadians, who – outnumbered on board of the plane – do not dare ask the Black group to turn Calypso music down. Ayo does not go to Trinidad; she travels further to Grenada, but during the first stage of her journey, she is focused on observation. For Ayo, the board of the plane becomes a catalogue of individual stories, which are happening here and now. For the reader, they are merely "sketches" of people who live perpetually "in transit": between the unwelcoming Canadian climate and the carnival heat of Trinidad; between physically draining jobs performed for white Canadians and the lies of North American paradise that they tell their families and neighbours when they visit home for two weeks once every five years. The construction of narration in "Sketches in transit … going home" resembles an imagist glimpse of people, music, colours, and shapes. One might think that it was inspired by the Hemingwayan "tip-of-the-iceberg" technique: it is focused on observation with little commentary added. In contrast to Danticat's "Epilogue: Women Like Us", Brand's short story is not a universal meditation on Caribbean, Trinidadian, or Grenadian women's fates or histories. Instead, it seems to be built of several sketches: individual stories of specific lives. It does not constitute a general reflection on writing stories of or for Caribbean women.

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The short story titled "… seen", which closes Brand's collection, is perhaps a continuation of Ayo's narrative. It is the story of an individual who re-assimilates into life in her home country. She works, learns to appreciate nature, remembers local customs, and attempts to "understand this", which is an enigmatic expression used at the very end of the text (Brand 2023a: 198). Throughout the short narrative, the protagonist tries to understand if it is possible for her to come back to her previous life. After a year of living "at home", she experiences fear, insomnia, and uncertainty about the exact purpose of her return. However, she is determined to stay and work. If "Sketches in transit … going home" and "… seen" are indeed connected by one protagonist, there is a possible autobiographical explanation for Grenada being the setting of these stories. In 1983, Dionne Brand "worked for the People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada during the revolution and lived through the 1983 American invasion (Rzepa et al. 2018: 144). In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, she reminisces about a breadfruit tree that grew in front of her Grenadian house (Brand 2023b: 156–157); a breadfruit tree also appears outside the protagonist's house in "… seen" (2023a: 198). This minor detail and the mention of a coming revolution in "Sketches in transit … going home" may confirm that the author's personal experience inspires the last two stories of *Sans Souci and Other Stories*. As Brand herself admits in the interview published in *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions* (1990): "I am merely writing myself" (Brand and Novak 1990: 276).

Similarly to the conclusion of "Blossom, Priestess of Oya, Goddess of Winds, Storms, and Waterfalls", "… seen" does not end with a narrative closure but with an open question, which makes it, as Ricœur postulates, not a seamless narrative of identity but a story that distends the soul and the meanings of memory and identity. As Johanna Garvey contends, if Brand's purpose in writing *Sans Souci and Other Stories* was to narrate a sense of being "again at home" with one's identity, then Brand's narratives demonstrate "the difficulties of (re)establishing any such unified notion of selfhood, precisely in the face of the history being excavated" (Garvey 2003: 488). Even a rewriting or re-understanding of the palimpsest of Black people's history and present does not produce an unproblematically coherent narrative. The changes of identities present in Brand's short stories are not effortlessly incorporated into the narratives. The haunting re-memories of "intertwined disasters of colonisation and slavery, whose ghosts inevitably structure contemporary experience" (Rzepa et al. 2018: 147), cast a shadow on

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the present and make it difficult for contemporary Black narratives and identities to be unified, whole, and always coherent and intelligible.

In *Sans Souci and Other Stories*, a Ricœurian *ipse* identity of Black Caribbean people in Canada resembles a thin layer, overstretched and almost impossible to narrate. The protagonists' narrative identities are uncertain; for them, closure is never achieved or even promised. A palimpsest of identity can exist; however, it has to embrace "the fissure between the past and the present" to start happening (Brand 2023b: 5). A palimpsestuous identity always exists as a process. The intervention of literary narration into Black diasporic identity and the narrative forms that emerge from it suggest that this identity cannot be stabilised in time or in a particular place.

In both Danticat's and Brand's works, forgotten memories and suffering haunt the protagonists. There are unspoken, silenced stories of female traumas and diasporic alienation that result in "a distension" of the narrative form. The traditional Aristotelian beginning-middle-and-end plot construction cannot contain Afro-Caribbean and diasporic myths and narratives. In a way, Ricœur senses this when he questions the Aristotelian narrative paradigm as one from which an Augustinian, aporetic sense of time is "excluded" (Ricœur 1984: 39). Danticat and Brand seek new forms and new stylistic and narrative devices to convey their characters' identities. The telling of a story is not only a coping mechanism for the psyche; it is a new, diasporic *ipse*: an uncertain narrative identity that searches for meanings, interpretations, and explanations, usually without a clear promise of fulfilment. Narrative identities that may be discovered in Danticat's and Brand's fictions are Black bodies and diasporic lives, which are constantly asking if there is a possibility for a re-understanding of their experience through narration. In Ricœur's philosophy, such re-evaluation would only be possible in narrative emplotment.

There are also a few points of contrast between Danticat's and Brand's works. It appears that Danticat's prose tends more towards traditional narrative forms and a relatively stable configuration of events. Moreover, her fiction does not directly challenge conventional concepts of nation and community. *Breath, Eyes, Memory* seems to pursue a narrative refiguration of individual identity within a largely traditional Haitian family and community. Danticat's debut novel and *Krik? Krak!* incorporate and emplot the history of Haitian women together with present changes in the individual identities of Black women in the diaspora. By contrast, Brand's short fiction collected in *Sans Souci and Other Stories*, while also focused on women and their perspectives, destabilises Western narrative forms and tends to draw on the narrative structure of the Caribbean

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folktale. Even though both writers, Danticat and Brand, have been educated at North American universities, their fictions are influenced by Caribbean traditions at different levels. Danticat focuses on Haitian history, habits, customs, and their diasporic transformations, whereas Brand derives more inspiration from culturally specific narratives and revolutionary themes. In addition, Brand, as she openly admits, "[does] not care about what is universal" and pays more attention to "what is specific" (Brand and Novak 1990: 273). She is concerned with the ideological and political problems of resistance and rebellion against white neocolonial discourses, but she presents these as motifs of individual lives and stories. Overall, Brand explores the possibility of finding a shared history or narrative of Black people in the diaspora that would be focused on narration and not on a particular nation.

3.3. Narrating trauma – discordant concordance or mere chaos

"[T]o speak the unspeakable" (Andrews 2010: 155–156) is the phrase that Molly Andrews uses to describe the process of narrating one's flight and refugeehood experience in a relatively intelligible way. This subchapter examines what kinds of narrative devices and structures are used in selected works of refugee, migrant, and second-generation fiction to narrate traumatising experiences. The main focus of this section is the question of whether works of literature can be constructed in ways that attempt to "grasp" and narrate refugees' and migrants' ruptured experiences and narrative identities. One of the aims of the following interpretations is to observe and describe how literary works emplot refugee, migrant, and second-generation stories and experiences, which are very often deemed "unspeakable", traumatic, and disrupted.

A traumatic experience is defined as an event or a series of events that inflict such damage on an individual or a group that what they know about themselves and the world is severely disturbed (Aydin 2017: 127). A traumatic experience can be so distressing and so unfamiliar to a person that it cannot be, by any means available, incorporated into the body of one's known experience. If trauma is caused by war, destruction, damage done to one's place of living, or the death of a loved one, it makes a fissure in the continuity of one's identity and may change one's coherent life story into an incoherent, unintelligible narrative, which might appear chaotic to a reader or listener (Aydin 2017: 125–129). The fact that one's traumatic experience is written down: that certain linguistic, literary,

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and narrative devices are employed to tell their "unspeakable" story as a work of fiction or non-fiction can provide aid in the process of healing and incorporating trauma into one's processed experience and comprehensible memory. Nevertheless, instead of helping the process of healing, trying to narrate trauma can also constitute another violation for a traumatised person or group; in certain cases, it can re-traumatise them.

Trauma can also be understood as the suffering connected with post-traumatic stress disorder (further referred to as PTSD), which is, as Molly Andrews and Jenny Edkins explain, a state of re-living a traumatic experience over and over again, a state of living in "a forever present" of the traumatising event (Andrews 2010: 155; Edkins 2003: xiv–xv). Edkins states that "trauma time" differs from "narrative time" because "[it] doesn't fit the story we already have, but demands that we invent a new account, one that will produce a place for what has happened and make it meaningful" (2003: xiv). She also argues that it has a crucial political aspect. If an authority appropriates and rewrites a traumatic event in a way that the new narrative fits "a widely accepted story", it violates the traumatised people's political rights and changes "trauma time" into linear time by force. Edkins contends that such a form of political abuse of somebody's trauma exists "because linear, homogeneous time suits a particular form of power – sovereign power" (2003: xiv–xv). If rewriting one's trauma into a linear narrative is seen as a negative political phenomenon, interpretations of refugee and migrant fiction should also examine whether works of literature can commit similar malpractice in any way. Therefore, the following analyses also inquire into the selected novels to see if their structures might reproduce the traumas they discuss in a way that disregards refugees' or migrants' subjectivity and depoliticises their experience by, for example, providing it with a smooth, effortless narrative closure (Edkins 2003: 40).

Regarding the issue of trauma in literary theory, it is impossible to omit Cathy Caruth's contribution to the field. In her model, trauma is seen as a lived experience which has the power to disintegrate one's consciousness and psyche, and which resists being put into words or stories (Balaev 2018: 363). As Michelle Balaev explains: "Trauma is an unassimilated event that shatters identity and remains outside normal memory and narrative representation" (2018: 363). If trauma fragments memory and prevents one from creating stories about it, it can also be passed down as "transhistorical trauma", which makes it possible to contend that individual and collective traumas are interconnected and can transcend generations. Moreover, the impact of trauma makes it extremely difficult to understand and convey it through language. Even though it cannot be narrated in

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a coherent, continuous manner, which constitutes its "strange absence", trauma occupies a place in one's consciousness and narrative identity through its "ghostlike presence" (Balaev 2018: 363). This "ungraspable" existence of trauma in a place without time and narrative desperately requires new or uncommon types of stories and narrative devices that could meet the challenge of speaking the unspeakable (Balaev 2018: 363). Trauma can be integrated into narration through unique and original means of expression, and thus, the meaning of the past may be at least partially retrieved.

Christy Lefteri's bestselling novel *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019) is set in Syria, Turkey, Greece, and the United Kingdom as it follows the itinerary of Afra and Nuri. Nuri, the eponymous beekeeper, is also the narrator of the novel. Together with his wife, Afra, he leaves Aleppo after a bombing attack destroys their house and kills their seven-year-old son, Sami. After the explosion near their home, Afra loses her eyesight. During their journey, they stay in Istanbul for a short time. Then they move to Greece, where they live in a refugee camp set in an Athenian park in the Pedion tou Areos neighbourhood (Lefteri 2020b). Later, still in Athens, they live in a bedroom in a flat owned by a smuggler who uses Nuri as his drug courier and rapes Afra. When they get to England, they live in a bed and breakfast which serves as accommodation for asylum seekers from various countries.

When approaching Christy Lefteri's novel, one can first discuss the editorial aspects of the book. The continuous flow of narration and the conventional structure of chapter divisions are broken up. The book is divided into fourteen numbered chapters and another thirteen chapters that start with a word that could be a continuation of the sentence which ends the previous numbered chapter. In the numbered sections, the narration is stopped abruptly, and one word which could follow in a sentence is moved to the next page and singled out typographically[15]. This editing device aims to demonstrate how a traumatised mind works. In an interview, Lefteri explains that she wanted to convey the feeling of being transported into another place and time by a memory provoked by one word or phrase (Lefteri 2020b). A specific word and a memory connected with it prevent Nuri from experiencing the present moment and move his consciousness into the past. The past becomes present because the present is taken over by a traumatic recollection. The words often represent images, places, or objects which take the narration back to

[15] In the 2020 edition of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* published by Manilla Press, the words are moved to the next recto page, set in enlarged font, and encircled by a flower ornament that resembles an arabesque: a form of abstract Arabic art.

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the time before Nuri and Afra arrive in Britain. The narration is transported to Aleppo and to the tragic events that happen on their way through Turkey and Greece. These points of transference or transposition happen when Nuri experiences the fissures of his narrative identity. His memory and his narrative are not linear: their flashbacks and flashforwards are perhaps the only available form of narrative for the traumatised character.

Nuri and Afra experience several symptoms of PTSD that are represented in the narrative. For example, Nuri sees people and objects that do not exist. In Istanbul, Nuri makes friends with a boy named Mohammed. When they sail from Turkey to a Greek island on a dinghy with a small group of refugees, Nuri tries to save the boy when he falls into the water. After coming to the island of Farmakonisi and being transported to Leros island, Nuri and Afra pass through the refugee camp's gate, and Nuri shows their dead son's passport to certify that Mohammed is their son. The next day, Mohammed goes missing and does not return to Afra and Nuri. In the United Kingdom, Nuri sees the boy again several times in the bed and breakfast's backyard garden at night. The story of Nuri's friendship with the boy is narrated in such a way that it is difficult for the reader to tell whether Mohammed is a real boy or a recurring hallucination. Only towards the novel's end does Afra and Nuri's conversation clarify that Mohammed has always been a traumatised mind's projection, which has filled the gap left by Sami's death and has helped Nuri to comprehend a world and a life without his son (Lefteri 2020a: 336). When Afra and Nuri stay in the bed and breakfast, Nuri often waits until other residents retire to their rooms, goes out into the garden, and is transported to a fantastic reality. In addition to seeing Mohammed, Nuri's visions include a tree with "more than a hundred golden keys" growing on it (2020a: 80), which could be a non-linear reference to the key that Mohammed shows Nuri in Istanbul and claims that it is a key to a house without a door (Lefteri 2020a: 91). The symbols of the key and the house can refer to Muslim paradise or a safe place. A religious interpretation can be supported by the fact that the boy is named after the founder of Islam. The keys in Nuri's vision can also refer to the key to Afra's bedroom that Nuri forgets at the smuggler's flat in Athens, which makes it possible for the man to enter Afra's room and rape her (Lefteri 2020a: 326–328). Finally, the vision of the keys also refers to "an old bronze key" that Nuri gives little Sami during the bombings in Aleppo "so that he could feel that somewhere in all the ruins there was a place where he could be safe" (Lefteri 2020a: 338).

In terms of narrative structure, Nuri's visions usually appear without specific signs of change in narration. The largely realistic novel incorporates fragments of fantastic

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hallucinations or dreams, which are woven into the narrative in such a way that the narration can inconspicuously and almost fluently move from a realistic event to an oneiric incident. The terrace door in the bed and breakfast often acts as a symbolic point of transition for Nuri's consciousness. During one of his visions, Nuri picks up the keys from the tree into a bowl for Mohammed, but the boy disappears. Nuri brings the bowl to his and Afra's room; however, in the morning, he discovers that the keys are, in fact, white flowers. Lefteri uses the narrative device of merging realism with a fantastic or oneiric convention as a way to represent severe trauma. One needs to notice, however, that the novel does not employ the style of magical realism. Although Afra is usually quiet and does not comment on her husband's psychological condition, she senses the difficulties that Nuri experiences. During an appointment with a general practitioner, she admits: "He is not my husband" and quickly adds: "He talks aloud to himself, or rather to someone who is not there" (Lefteri 2020a: 247). In this way, it is made clear that Nuri's visions and insomnia are symptoms of trauma. Both Nuri and, metaphorically speaking, his narrative suffer from memory loss. He does not remember certain events or remembers them non-linearly.

One could argue that a chronological ordering of events would not be plausible for the traumatised first-person narrator of the novel. Nuri's narrative identity is non-linear, but it is not chaotic. After all, it is a literary representation of what a traumatised refugee's mind can work like. If one reordered Lefteri's novel chronologically, it is possible that it would resemble what Ricœur calls "the episodic dimension": a story assembled from disjointed "nows" put in a sequence. The "configurational dimension" of the novel, albeit non-linear and achronological, can represent the refugee's narrative identity altered by trauma. The narrative structure of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* forces the reader to actively participate in the narration process. Where a linear representation of time and events seems too rigid and insufficient to depict the cumulative trauma of bombings, Sami's death, rape, and refugeehood, the achronological configuration of Nuri's narrative and its refiguration on the reader's part might enrich one's perception of time and allow for a fragmented narrative to "make sense again". If Nuri can ever understand his experience as a whole, he can also narratively reformulate his sense of self, and the narrative structure devised by Lefteri does not need to follow a linear plot to achieve it.

During his asylum interview, Nuri tries to tell his story "in a straightforward, linear, coherent way", but the interviewer's questions make it difficult for him to stay

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focused: “he replies often with a question that […] throws me and takes me to another part of the journey” (Lefteri 2020a: 278). As a result, the structure of Nuri’s narrative answers in the asylum interview resembles the construction of the novel. However, attempting to compose a “straightforward, linear, [and] coherent” story leaves Nuri mentally exhausted: “When I stand my legs are numb and I feel that I have been robbed, somehow, of life” (Lefteri 2020a: 278). The way the asylum interview is depicted in the novel suggests that such interrogation can constitute a form of political, narrative violence. This, in turn, may be one of the reasons why Lefteri does not devise a linear plot for her novel. The author is probably aware that forcing refugees to narrate their life stories in a linear, coherent way is likely to leave them re-traumatised.

Nuri’s wife, Afra, also suffers from PTSD. At first, her blindness is attributed to the explosion near their house: the one that kills their son. This assumption is not challenged in the novel until Afra admits that her blindness is probably a long-lasting psychosomatic response to the trauma of losing Sami (Lefteri 2020a: 248). Although Lefteri’s novel focuses on the male protagonist, and Afra is not the focaliser of events, she is depicted as very attentive, observant, and resilient: she is a painter; she is aware of her husband’s PTSD symptoms even when she does not comment on them; and she travels as a refugee despite her relatively recent eye condition. Both Nuri’s and Afra’s traumas are mainly caused by the horror of war in Syria and the loss of their son, which is their original trauma. Their refugeehood experiences and journey intensify their cumulative trauma and alter their individual responses to the original one. However, through Nuri’s narrative perspective, it seems that Afra’s PTSD symptoms stem almost solely from Sami’s death, and his own trauma is further complicated by refugeehood experiences, which reduces or even overlooks the impact of escaping Syria and being raped on Afra’s psyche.

Even though severe trauma poses a dire threat to the continuity of Afra’s and Nuri’s narrative identities, it does not necessarily damage them completely. In spite of their displacement and the PTSD symptoms that they experience, their narrative identity is represented as leading towards a progressive change. Towards the end of the story, Afra begins to regain her sight; Nuri realises what his PTSD symptoms are, and he acknowledges that Mohammed is a hallucination. They reunite with their lost relative Mustafa, and finally, Afra and Nuri reach a point of reconciliation in which they can mourn together. In addition, the recurring symbol of bees in the novel refers to the motifs of refugees’ vulnerability, hope, and perseverance. Different species of bees can survive

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the desert climate of Syria or the frequently unpredictable British weather. Even if the symbolism of bees is justifiable, one of the possible risks of structuring a refugee's narrative as following a progressive pattern of recovery and success is that it can contribute to "the kinder, but equally reductive myth of the refugee as an idealized 'pure victim'" (Alrefaai and Spangler 2022: 5). Alrefaai and Spangler argue that a migration narrative in which trauma, loss, and harm are followed by perseverance and resilience can be used by "a progressive policy agenda" and misrepresent refugees' experiences as always leading to financial stabilisation and mental recovery (2022: 5). Even though this "progressive myth" does not appear as unethical and harmful as nationalist and xenophobic discourses on migrants and refugees, it offers a simplistic depiction of diverse lived experiences of refugees.

Yet another way in which *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* could be interrogated is by examining it as "a discordant concordance". Although the novel incorporates elements of Syrian tradition, culture, geography, and proper names, Christy Lefteri is a London-educated author and a university teacher of creative writing of Cypriot ancestry (Lefteri 2020a: back matter). In all probability, she is aware of a range of postmodernist techniques of non-linear plot construction that can be employed to convey the traumatic fragmentation of a refugee's story. Moreover, the last part of the novel can be interpreted as allowing the main characters a possibility of closure. Although the novel is left with an open ending, Mustafa's arrival at the bed and breakfast makes a hope for closure possible for Afra and Nuri. The abrupt transitions between chapters and the depiction of trauma symptoms generate a sense of discordance in the story. Nevertheless, concordance seems to prevail since the first-person narrative might be viewed as an attempt to "rationalise" the unspeakable experience of trauma and refugeehood. In addition, the narrative configuration of Afra and Nuri's story, which interweaves the past and the present, the realistic and the oneiric, can be regarded as Nuri's coping mechanism, in which "verbalising and understanding traumatic memories might help to live through a particular traumatic experience and move on" (Daukšaitė-Kolpakovienė 2022: 61). All things considered, it is possible to argue that Nuri's narrative is supposed to seem "discordant", but the fact that it is a consciously devised and planned literary structure makes it a Ricœurian "discordant concordance". The chaos of trauma and suffering is controlled and configured by literary devices, which make it comprehensible and thus might partially deprive it of the genuine characteristics of lived trauma and refugeehood experience. Perhaps this literary conundrum can be answered through Ricœur's assertion

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that human life and literature share a specifically narrative nature (Ricœur in Wood ed. 2003: 181). Therefore, Nuri's narrating of his experiences is not an act of producing artificial concordance; it is a natural need which exists in an interrelationship with life and trauma's discordance.

As a brief point of comparison and contrast to *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, one could mention Atia Abawi's *A Land of Permanent Goodbyes* (2018). Even though it is classified as young adult literature, it is also discussed as war fiction strongly connected with trauma theory (Ahmad et al. 2023). It explores themes and motifs similar to the ones found in Lefteri's novel: the war in Syria, deaths of children and relatives, refugeehood in Turkey and Europe, dispersion of family members, displacement and subsequent recovery, and a possibility of starting a healing process. The story is narrated by a first-person yet omniscient observer introduced as "Destiny" (Abawi 2019: 3). It follows the itinerary of teenage Tareq and his family from the destruction of their home in Syria, through their separation in Turkey and Greece, and towards a promise of relative stability in the epilogue, which takes the family to Germany. Although the novel does not depict the effects of trauma and PTSD on a person's mind as vividly as *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* does, it includes the perspectives of refugee camp volunteers, which help to present the issues of humanitarianism and refugee-rescuer relations in the story. It also directly addresses refugees' feelings of alienation and being "othered" by the "host society" in Europe. Despite some of its strengths and similarities to *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, perhaps the greatest limitation of *A Land of Permanent Goodbyes* is its journalistic style and structure. Abawi is a journalist and a war correspondent (Abawi 2023). Her novel exposes the suffering, hardship, and oppression of Syrian and Afghan refugees; however, its structure and plot lead to a promise of recovery and a miracle: Tareq's brother Salim, who is considered to be dead for almost the entire story, is found alive towards the end; his family reaches Germany and is reunited; and their orphaned cousin makes marriage plans. Although such an ending might be seen as open because of the uncertainties of the characters' new life in Germany, it symbolically seals the story with a level of closure, restoration, and renewal that Christy Lefteri's characters cannot enjoy. Nevertheless, one must remember that an optimistic, "generative" conclusion is frequently seen as a characteristic feature of young adult fiction.

Another refugeehood novel which breaks with a linear, chronological presentation of events is Omar El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise* (2021). The protagonist of the novel is nine-year-old Amir. His migration itinerary starts with his family's flight from Syria

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to Egypt. After that, Amir and his uncle travel on an overcrowded smuggler's boat from Egypt to a nameless, probably fictional island, which strongly resembles one of the Greek islands of Lesbos, Kos, or Rhodes, or the island country of Cyprus. The novel's temporality and grammatical tenses are torn between the present and the past. The events that take place after Amir reaches the island are narrated in the present tense as if they happened "here and now". In contrast, the chapters which narrate Amir's time with his family and on the smuggler's boat belong symbolically and grammatically to the past. In this way, the chapters are divided between "Before" and "After". On the island, Amir meets Vänna, a teenage girl, who is willing to help the boy and communicate with him despite the language barrier. They run away from soldiers who want to track Amir and escort him to an overpopulated refugee camp. At the end of the island plot, they take a boat that is supposed to carry Amir to "his people", who live in diaspora on the mainland of an unnamed country, probably Greece or Turkey.

Even though the novel does not directly explore symptoms of PTSD in refugees, it depicts events that are frequently trauma-inducing for them. Amir's traumatic memories are being created as the journey progresses. The novel, however, is narrated as if it were an existentialist fable. When they flee from the soldiers led by Colonel Kethros, who relentlessly hunts the child refugee, Amir and Vänna resemble Peter Pan and Wendy running from Captain Hook. El Akkad confirms this interpretation: "For telling this particular kind of story, I wanted to take a comforting fairy tale that Westerners have been telling their kids for a hundred years" (El Akkad, as quoted in Volmers 2021). The unnamed island on the Mediterranean Sea becomes Amir's Neverland, where he never has a chance to grow up. The boy and teenage girl have an almost fantastic adventure, during which they experience both the cruelty and kindness of strangers. The fantasy of reaching safety or a new opening is underscored by Vänna's joining Amir on the boat. El Akkad's "fable" problematises the girl's motivation as ambiguous. Amir takes the boat because he is being searched for and far from home. Vänna leaves the island probably because she wants to escape her dysfunctional home. Her family is not originally from the island: they are foreigners whose guesthouse business has failed. One can speculate that Vänna runs away not only to help Amir but also to save herself from her neglectful parents. The next part of the pair's adventure is genuinely open: Amir and Vänna do not know what can happen to them on the mainland on the other side of the passage.

The novel's last chapter, titled "Now", puts the island plot of the "After" chapters into question because it shows Amir dead on the beach. It repeats the same words that

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open chapter one: “The child lies on the shore”; however, this time the boy does not open his eyes (El Akkad 2021: 3, 235). This rewriting allows for a reinterpretation of the original adventure plot. What happens after Amir wakes up on the shore might be a fantasy: the boy’s dream or a Peter-Pan-inspired fable-like vision of the afterlife. If the island is a heavenly delusion, it is a paradise *à rebours*, where angels are soldiers who hunt the boy, and the only companion also needs to escape. An upside-down paradise is the novel’s bitter reflection on the fate of contemporary refugees. Like Amir, refugees who travel to Europe expect humanitarian help and better, safer conditions of life. Instead, the boy experiences hostility and acute uncertainty, which can become traumatising factors.

Last but not least, Amir’s itinerary is marked by the impossibility of reaching a final point: a definite destination. He is a figure of an eternal migrant, even if the migration is a delusion of a dying mind. At the end of their adventure on the island, Vänna joins Amir in his migration. The moment when she leaves her home island and follows Amir seems to direct the reader to the utopian thought that there is a better world, a more welcoming society, and a better life waiting for the characters. However, it may also suggest that the boy’s refugeehood can never end and that reaching safety and closure in migration is a fantasy. In El Akkad’s novel, the discordance of a refugee’s life and traumatising experiences, although presented through a carefully devised structure, seems to overwhelm any possibility of extracting a sense of narrative concordance or wholeness within the story.

Dina Nayeri’s second novel, *Refuge* (2017), can be classified as a pseudo-autobiographical narrative which merges many details and facts from the author’s life, which she discloses in her memoir, *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You*, with fictional events and characters. Despite the convention, Dina Nayeri and the protagonist-narrator, Niloofar Hamidi, are not identical. Because of her medical practice and conversion to Christianity, Pari Hamidi, Niloo’s mother, is abducted for interrogation by officers of the Iranian morality police twice. After that, she flees the country with Niloo and Niloo’s brother, Kian. Niloo exposes herself through the “I” pronoun in exactly five chapters of *Refuge*. The first chapter with the homodiegetic or even autodiegetic narrator presents the idyllic past of Niloo and her Baba, Bahman Hamidi, and their family in Isfahan and Ardestoon, Iran. Then, four other chapters, using first-person narration in the past tense, recount Baba’s four visits with his family in four different cities: Oklahoma City in 1993, London in 2001, Madrid in 2006, and Istanbul in 2008. These chapters do

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not follow one another without interruption in the novel; they are scattered and narrate the protagonist's relationship with her father in fragments. Altogether, there seem to be two or even three narrators in the novel, depending on the focalisation. Several chapters narrated from the perspective of Niloo's father, which present Bahman Hamidi's situation in June 2009 in Isfahan, Iran and in August and October 2009 in Istanbul, Turkey, use a third-person narrator and the past tense. Bahman is the protagonist and the focaliser in these sections. The events that take place from August through October 2009 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, are narrated by a third-person narrator in the present tense and focus on Niloo's life with her husband, Guillaume. The perspectives of the two main characters, Niloo and Bahman, converge in the last chapter, "Village Building", whose events happen in October 2009 in Amsterdam. Bahman, after two failed marriages and over two decades of virtual estrangement from his first wife and children, finally joins his family in Europe. He hopes to become a refugee in the Netherlands. Although he escapes his personal problems, he wants to use the social unrest in Iran after the June 2009 presidential election as his official motive for claiming asylum.

The novel narrates several traumatic experiences. Most of them are related to Niloo's and other characters' refugeehood and migration. Chronologically, the first of them is Niloo's flight from Iran with her mother and brother in 1987. When she leaves Isfahan, Niloo is lied to by her parents about her father's plans to join them. When she learns that he is not going to become a refugee with them, she feels deceived and is traumatised by the abrupt separation from her parent. Her refugeehood is connected to a variety of cultural identity positions and practices, which are analysed here in Chapter V. One of them, jokingly called "the Perimeter" by the characters, stands out as both a cultural practice and a symptom of trauma. Wherever she travels or moves houses, Niloo insists on having a small fragment of shared space reserved just for her to store her private belongings and her backpack, which contains all her papers, university diplomas, naturalisation certificates, passports, identity cards, and property deeds:

> She goes to the bedroom, to the corner of the walk-in closet, and sits in the Perimeter. She flips through the file folder with her passport and naturalization certificates, her marriage license, her Yale degree, the deed to the new apartment in the Pijp, and the construction contracts. She counts them again: nine documents that entitle her to her life. She gathers her backpack to her chest and hugs it tight, takes a breath until her lungs ache, holds it for a beat and forces it out. When she opens her eyes, the atmosphere is no longer weighing down on her arms and chest. She recalls the day she made up this trick; she was ten and trying to vanquish the tic alone—no one, she promised, would see her that weak again. (Nayeri 2017: 47–48)

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This fragment not only illustrates how dependent Niloo's identity is on her official identification and the "what" of her identity: the social and professional roles she performs, but also shows that the Perimeter is a coping mechanism designed to manage what seems to be a panic attack. The Perimeter, the backpack, and the folder in it are directly connected to the character's refugeehood experiences and the anxiety stemming from them.

Another major traumatic event takes place in Oklahoma City in 1993 during Bahman's first visit. Then, in the Red Carpet Motel, Niloo sees her father affected by either opium-induced stupor or symptoms of opioid withdrawal. Bahman, addicted to the substance, is found by Niloo in his motel room bathroom: he sweats heavily, is half-asleep, and speaks incoherently. Seeing her father in this state hurts Niloo, and it leaves a lasting negative impression on her, as the event and the terror associated with it are recalled several times in other chapters. Furthermore, as an adult and a married woman, Niloo suffers the loss of her Iranian friend and asylum seeker, Mam'mad, who dies by self-immolation in Dam Square in Amsterdam in 2009. Niloo and her other Iranian colleague witness Mam'mad's death and try to save him. After this, the protagonist grieves, suffers from a depressive episode, and experiences an acute sense of discontinuity in her life. Another trauma-inducing factor, which is hinted at towards the end of the novel, is the possibility of Niloo's upcoming divorce from Guillaume, which is foreshadowed as a major break in the life of the protagonist.

Although it is clearly fiction – a novel, as opposed to life writing – Mariya Shymchyshyn and Svitlana Chernyshova interpret it as a "literary representation of memory": a form of fiction of memory (2022: 575). One can easily accept this classification. As Nayeri demonstrates in her 2019 memoir, the novel is based on the author's personal itinerary and life experiences as a refugee in Rome, Italy and in Oklahoma City, the United States. The researchers use a Ricœurian perspective as they argue that "confession and re-evaluation in their turn provide the evidence of identity fluidity and development" (Shymchyshyn and Chernyshova 2022: 575). This can lead to the interpretation that Niloo's identity construction in *Refuge* is an *ipse* identity, which regains a sense of self-constancy as it undergoes changes and re-evaluations, because her traumas and other difficult experiences are incorporated into her fictional life narrative. However, what may seem debatable in Shymchyshyn and Chernyshova's analysis is that they view Niloo's narrative as steadily progressing towards regained continuity and integrity (2022: 576), while Ricœur's concept of narrative identity does not include such

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a structure as a necessity, but only as a possibility within the Augustinian paradoxes of time and its narrative representations (Ricœur 1984: 30, 66–68; 1988: 246–249). Shymchyshyn and Chernyshova state that "identities of refugees described in contemporary migratory novels signal a shift from postmodern subjectivity as fragmented to one which is whole and coherent" and continue: "This mapping out of a new sense of self goes through sincere self-discovery rather than postmodern self-irony" (2022: 576). I agree that contemporary migrant and refugee narratives, such as the ones of Sophie in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Nuri in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, and Niloo in *Refuge,* are far from employing "postmodern self-irony" (2022: 576). Nevertheless, I suggest interpreting Niloo's story as a narrative identity structure that struggles to imitate and represent the experienced and imagined discontinuity, disjointedness, and disunity of life. It can be seen as a narrative identity that does not necessarily transform into a smoothly progressing narrative self, but imagines and configures the refugee's life as "chaordic": incorporating both a desire for order and acceptance of chaos within the awareness that both are significant and can contribute to a meaningful identity construction. As stated by the third-person narrator in one of the Amsterdam chapters, for Niloo, "nothing feels finished enough, ever" (Nayeri 2017: 87). Implying that meaning can be created only through integrity, coherence, continuity, and traditionally understood intelligibility of self – a philosophy that resembles those of MacIntyre, Taylor, and McAdams – can be seen as a perspective that limits the representations of migrants' and refugees' fates in literature. Nayeri's *Refuge* does not aim to impose a sense of wholeness and coherence upon Niloo's experiences of displacement, refugeehood, and immigration. Her narrative identity construction is certainly not a postmodern ironic mockery; it is a sincere representation of a migrant's life's fragmentation through non-linear narrative configuration and polyphonic narrative.

If not for the four chapters narrating Baba's visits, the novel could be read as a linear representation of events happening from June to October 2009. However, the family reunion chapters are positioned within the novel in such a way that they break the continuity of the main plot when the recollection of the events that happen during these visits becomes relevant in the context of the main narrative thread. As a result, the novel is a non-linear narrative whose structure demonstrates how difficult or nearly impossible it is to incorporate traumatic experiences of displacement, addiction, loss, and grief into one's narrative of the self. Such a traumatised narrative identity longs for wholeness, coherence, and integrity but can scarcely see these qualities as a future

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potentiality. Niloo indeed learns to return to her Iranian cultural identity through narrative re-evaluation and retrospection[16], which makes the *ipse* identity interpretation possible (Shymchyshyn and Chernyshova 2022: 584–586), but her narrative identity does not achieve an unproblematic closure and wholeness towards the end of the novel. The proleptic dimension foreshadows hope for Niloo's reunited family as the last chapter ends with the words: "But now they were three. He trembled with gratitude, with the urge to kneel and kiss the ground. They were three and three was enough. They were a village" (Nayeri 2017: 320), invoking Bahman's dream of being like the mythical Ardestoon village founder from one of his stories. However, the ending of the novel also alludes to further problems in the family's life and further *peripeteia* concerning Niloo's marriage, her academic position at university, and her father's status as a refugee in Amsterdam. These matters are far from closed, and symbolically, they shatter Niloo's desire for narrative identity completion and integrity.

Yet another argument against interpreting Niloo's narrative identity as a coherent whole is that Niloo's refugeehood in Dubai and Rome and her family's asylum period in Oklahoma are only hinted at in the novel, but they are never given an extended narrative. As Shymchyshyn and Chernyshova rightly state, "Niloo ultimately realizes that her identity is conditioned by her refugee experience" (2022: 588). However, the story of her family's flight from Iran through Dubai and Rome to the United States is repressed in the narrative. Ultimately, the details of her refugee experience are unavailable to the reader, who can gather that the family spends almost two years in a hostel in the suburbs of Rome, and then a single night at Jesus House, a homeless shelter in the United States:

> If one were to write Niloo's story, one shouldn't dwell on that black interlude night. Except that it returns every time she wastes an hour, a dollar, an opportunity. It returns when life offers a break from the striving. The very fact of that night (and the two wandering years that led to it) warns her that she can never be too vigilant. (Nayeri 2017: 37)

This is arguably the most detailed description of the family's refugeehood in the novel. It seems that Niloo's refugee years are too traumatic for her to narrate in full. As a trauma, the Dubai and Rome years cannot be incorporated into the whole of the protagonist's experience. They constitute a major disruption of her narrative self, and they remain almost absent from the narrative in the sense that they are not retold in any extended form. Niloo's refugee itinerary and life conditions in the refugee accommodation where her

[16] For a deepened analysis of Niloo's cultural identity positions and practices, and their significance in *Refuge*, please see Chapter V.

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family stays are not directly narrated but only mentioned in fragments throughout the novel.

All things considered, it is difficult to unambiguously classify Nayeri's *Refuge* as a refugee or migrant novel. It can be interpreted as a refugee narrative because Niloo is a former refugee and an asylee in the United States. The novel also discusses the situation and status of Iranian refugees in the Netherlands in the first decade of the 21st century. It refers to the strenuous physical work that refugees often perform in the West, their poverty or near-poverty, harsh living conditions, and poor accommodation. The stories of Mam'mad and Karim, two Iranian asylum seekers in Amsterdam whom Niloo befriends, characterise their situations as lives suspended in limbo and doomed to everlasting waiting and separation from their loved ones[17]. At the same time, Niloo is a naturalised American citizen and can enjoy her French husband's privileged life in Europe as a legal migrant. Moreover, her cultural identity development, although marked by refugeehood, is problematised in terms of transcultural encounters and hybridity, which indicates that Niloo's narrative can also be studied as a migrant novel. Imposing an interpretation of integrity and wholeness on such a non-linear, fragmented, polyphonic, and multifaceted narrative that does not reach a symbolic closure might be a misconstruction.

Another contemporary novel that problematises migrants' traumas is David Chariandy's second novel, *Brother* (2017), which presents young Michael and his mother, Ruth, haunted by the death of their older brother and son, Francis. The novel is set in the 1990s and the early 2000s in Scarborough, Toronto, a district of migrant and so-called "visible minority" families. Michael and Francis's trauma is originally caused by the racialisation of their bodies and the experience of precariousness induced by several factors: their financial instability, the lack of a father figure, unequal access to education for Black boys, regular police surveillance of their neighbourhood and its multiracial community, as well as, to use Chariandy's own words from an earlier article, "their belief […] that they eternally will be regarded, in their country of birth, as outsiders", even though the brothers are Canadian citizens (2007: 825). The novel can be described as what Chariandy calls "Second-Generation Black Writing" (2007: 818; capitalisation original).

[17] Niloo's and other refugee characters' political status in Europe, as depicted in *Refuge,* is further discussed in Chapter IV of the dissertation.

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The central traumatising event of *Brother,* which symbolically and grammatically cuts the novel's temporality in half, is Francis's death in a police search and shooting. Chariandy, similarly to El Akkad, structures the story into chapters narrated in the past tense that are interwoven with parts in the present tense. The past interchanges with the present: every other chapter is a fragment of Michael's memories. Michael is the novel's narrator; the remaining sections form a narrative about trying to understand and explain the grief and trauma after the eponymous brother's death. As Gugu D. Hlongwane notices, the sixth chapter of the novel focuses solely on the past (2021: 176). It narrates the family's visit to Trinidad, a racist assault at a shopping mall involving the boys' mother and three white bullies, and it concludes with the story of the day when Francis is killed by a white policeman. The disrupted and fragmented narrative continues throughout the entire novel. Its "choppy rhythm that mimics the lives of the novel's central characters" is closely connected not only with the trauma and grief but also with "the ways in which casual institutional violence sabotages their [the characters'] sense of normalcy and designates where Black bodies do and do not belong" (Hlongwane 2021: 176). The narrative structure of *Brother* seems to represent a traumatised mind's fractured temporality as well as a sense of racialisation and racial hatred, which traumatises and permeates, like "weather" (Sharpe 2016), through social relations and the language of interactions into the narrative construction of a racialised person's comprehension of time and space.

The reader gets to know the full story of how Francis is murdered almost towards the end of the novel[18], and only then can they begin to reconstruct the whole plot. It seems that both the narrator and the reader struggle for coherence in *Brother*. The reader can become disoriented by the novel's structure, disrupted temporality, and initially unclear connections between events while Michael tries to comprehend the past:

> I know that Aisha is talking about "complicated grief." I've heard the term used by doctors, and I've read books from the library. There are losses that mire a person in mourning, that prevent them from moving forward by making sense of the past. You become disoriented, assailed by loops of memory, by waking dreams and hallucinations. I don't need any of this explained to me, but I'm reminded by Aisha's face that she's grieving too. (Chariandy 2019: 66)

His narrative identity is scarred and haunted by his brother's death and the racialisation that he feels on his skin. Michael seems to believe that these two factors constitute

[18] In the 2019 Bloomsbury edition of *Brother*, the story of the events that lead directly to Francis's murder is concluded on pages 157–159 (Chariandy 2019). The novel is 177 pages long in this edition.

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the meaning of his identity and the structure of his life story. Chariandy's novel is an example of a narrative in which the body and its image in the eyes of others are translated into narrative time: the plot construction, the chapters' structure, and the grammar of their language.

Moreover, Chariandy's article from 2017, the year when *Brother* was published, suggests that Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, released the year before, influenced the author's thinking about being Black in Canada (Chariandy 2017b: 6–8). The story presented in *Brother* is part of what Sharpe calls "wake work": the cumulative effort to resist "the push […] toward Black death" (Sharpe 2016: 106) made by Black communities and individuals with the awareness of and despite the fact that Black lives exist in a hostile climate of antiblackness. It is also creative work performed "by representing the paradoxes of blackness within and after the legacies of slavery's denial of Black humanity" (Sharpe 2016: 14). Chariandy admits that Sharpe's work does not turn to a promise of utopian hope because it does not envision constant, uninterrupted, and institutional progress for Black peoples' rights. Instead, Sharpe's publication asks what new understanding can be gained if one realises that racialisation and "living in the wake" are "the ground on which we stand" (Sharpe 2016: 7–15; Chariandy 2017b: 8). Despite that, Chariandy states: "*In the Wake* helped me make sense of my efforts" (2017b: 8).

If Chariandy's *Brother* is influenced by Sharp's academic analysis, one can argue that the grief depicted in the novel is complicated because its closure for Michael and his mother is deferred: they live metaphorically and literally "in the wake". They cannot finish mourning Francis until they revisit their memories of him, and they know that his death is an element of the indefinitely prolonged effects of slavery and its "denial of Black humanity". A new opportunity for Michael and his mother to remember Francis arises when his friend Jelly and Michael's former girlfriend, Aisha, reappear in the family's life. They insist that Michael should face not only Francis's death but also their past as Black boys in the multiracial community of their local barbershop, Desirea's. The memories that have lain dormant are made to resurface, and Michael experiences this process as painful, even though it may lead to a positive outcome. Jelly's return and his presence in Scarborough are challenging for Michael because he is a part of the past that Michael cannot easily incorporate into his life narrative to make it a coherent whole.

Although Jelly and Aisha become "a powerful force and catalyst for positive change in the novel" (Hlongwane 2021: 195), the ending of *Brother* does not suggest any

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potential for unambiguously positive closure in the future. When asked about positive change for his characters, Chariandy answers:

> I'm already getting questions where well-meaning people are asking me, "Why couldn't you tell a story that's more optimistic? Why didn't Michael become a doctor?" But that's not fair to another experience […]. I'm not knocking those who have to play the role of the example, but I'm not really interested in that. I think sometimes an audience is looking for a story that makes Canada feel good. I'm more interested in the stories of past and ongoing vulnerability because those are the most important stories to tell about the nations we live within. That's the character of our nation, not the few who managed to achieve success. (Chariandy 2017a)

These words seem to align with Chariandy's understanding of Sharpe's *In the Wake* in the sense that projecting hope and "setting an example" towards the end of Michael's narrative would falsify his and his mother's experience, in which Francis's death "will never simply be 'gotten over.' Some mourners will never quite again 'be themselves'" (Chariandy 2019: 175). The novel ends with Michael, Ruth, Jelly, and Aisha spending time in the family's Scarborough apartment, eating Jelly's homemade food, and listening to old records of Black musicians. *Brother* does not offer a clear, hopeful conclusion. Instead, it tries to come to terms with "ongoing vulnerability" (Chariandy 2017a) and "[t]he push and pull between hope and despair" (Hlongwane 2021: 185), which constitute a vital part of "wake work": "hard emotional, physical, and intellectual work that demands vigilant attendance to the needs of the dying, to ease their way, and also to the needs of the living" (Sharpe 2016: 10).

The stories told in Lefteri's, El Akkad's, Nayeri's, and Chariandy's novels are structured in such a way that their temporality becomes altered and distorted. Postmodernist narrative techniques used by these authors, such as fragmentation, non-linear temporality, *analepsis*, and *prolepsis*, contribute to a growing tendency to compose migrant, second-generation, and refugee stories beyond the limits of traditional narrative structures. The literary devices employed in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, *Brother*, and *What Strange Paradise* aim at representing political violence and the resulting trauma as damaging the self's integrity, distorting one's sense of order and temporality, and fragmenting one's narrative identity. Moreover, the structures used by El Akkad and Chariandy suggest that racialised embodiment also plays a role in one's narrative identity construction. If one internalises their racialisation, the fact that they feel hyper-visible, discriminated against, and socially "othered" is also reflected in the way their identity is narrated. Finally, the pseudo-autobiographical narrative convention and interrupted composition employed in Nayeri's *Refuge* help to represent one's refugeehood as having

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a deeply traumatising and fragmenting influence on a person's narrative identity development in fiction.

Although El Akkad's and Chariandy's novels work in different cultural fields – Amir's Syrian origin, exile in Egypt, and refugeehood on a Greek island are distinct from Michael and Francis's Canadian experience of antiblackness, hypervisibility, and loose ties with their mother's country of origin – they both use unconventional, non-linear narrative structures without unambiguously optimistic resolutions to demonstrate that a story's construction affects how the characters' identities are depicted. Amir's, Michael's, and Francis's narrative selves struggle for coherence: they are tossed back and forth between remembering and living in the present, between traumatic memories of their or their parents' migration and the "now" marked by vulnerability, grief, and death. Moreover, *What Strange Paradise* and *Brother* are similar in the sense that they both narrate traumatic experiences that are directly caused by violent actions of the state. This may suggest that one's identity and how one understands their life story is affected or even distorted, made incomprehensible and incoherent because of how one is treated as a political subject and human being[19].

Last but not least, in the context of trauma, one should return to Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Although much has already been said about the depiction of trauma in this novel, at this point it is useful to notice that Sophie's and Martine's traumas are not directly connected to where and how they migrate. Their sexual traumas are caused by generations of violent patriarchal practices in their country of origin, which they still call their home. The personal traumas of Caco women and the traumas of generations of Haitian women reside within their bodies. Their embodiment leads to either the self's re-telling, reconstruction, and survival despite pain, as in the case of Sophie Caco, or to bodily harm and suicide, as in Martine's case. Traumatic Haitian history and historical traumas of Haitian women exist in the bodies of contemporary women who choose or are compelled to choose migration, which they often experience as sorrowful exile. However, life in the diaspora might enable them to reclaim and re-evaluate their relations with home and to narrate their traumas in such a way that they begin to forge renewed cultural and personal concordance within their narrative identities. Sophie works towards effecting change and rebuilding her narrative self's coherence by

[19] El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise* and Chariandy's *Brother* are preliminarily analysed here only to briefly describe their narratological features. Chapter IV of this dissertation offers a deepened political analysis of the novels.

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revisiting painful memories of her testing and her mother's rape, confronting Grandma Ifé and Martine about the practice of testing, attending counselling and group therapy to recover from bulimia, and insisting that she will not test her daughter, Brigitte (Rossi 2006: 211–212). Thanks to this, her narrative identity can be refigured as aspiring towards regained concordance despite the trauma and the feeling of exile.

To approach the question of whether narrating trauma in refugee, migrant, and second-generation fiction can lead to creating Ricœurian discordant concordance: organising a traumatised mind's incoherent memory into a well-configured story that regains concordance out of life's discordance, or to reflecting mere chaos: representing trauma as shattering life's continuity and dismantling easily comprehensible narrative structures and identities, one needs to realise that trauma is not only a psychological condition explored in fiction; it is also a cultural construct represented in contemporary literature. In other words, interpreting trauma in fiction is not only connected with a psychoanalytic approach; it is also a matter of analysing how trauma is constructed through narrative means of expression. In contemporary refugeehood, migration, and second-generation literature in English, trauma tends to be represented through postmodernist, non-linear, fragmented narratives, depictions of PTSD symptoms experienced by characters, and sometimes "a horizon of hope"[20] instead of closure. An example of a novel which features all three is *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*: it allows characters who suffer from war and refugeehood trauma to anticipate a form of closure signalled by an open but unambiguously positive ending. Literature constructs refugees' and migrants' trauma and attempts to find suitable means to make "the real" suffering comprehensible and available through the language of narrative configuration, symbols, and signs. The structures of *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, *Refuge*, and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* lean more towards a refiguration of debilitating trauma, recovery, or even regained concordance in life. In contrast, *Brother* and *What Strange Paradise* reflect in their constructions the discordance caused by trauma and, to use Chariandy's words again, "ongoing vulnerability" (Chariandy 2017a).

Therefore, refugee, migrant, and diasporic fiction cannot exactly recreate how trauma functions in a person's mind and what havoc it wreaks in their memory; however,

[20] Raffaella Baccolini (2004: 521) uses this term to describe open endings of dystopian novels that suggest that positive change is possible in fictional totalitarian societies. I believe that it can be used to describe a literary device employed by certain authors of migrant fiction to avoid imposing closure on migration stories and, at the same time, to allow for a possibility of recovery and closure in a future that stays outside the scope of the plot.

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narrative structures can bring people closer to understanding the traumatic experiences of certain groups of refugees, migrants, and diasporic subjects in particular cultural and political circumstances. There is always a degree of concordance in those structures: they are carefully considered, formed, and edited narratives. Nevertheless, they employ postmodernist techniques and culturally specific elements to deconstruct a story's time, distort "ordinary" temporality, and position characters in particular cultural storytelling traditions to explore how trauma alters a life story. If trauma violates memory and consciousness, escapes linearity, distorts the integrity of one's identity, and generates its own "trauma time", contemporary non-linear narratives may become allies of refugee, migrant, and second-generation stories that often have no beginnings and no ends, ambiguous or non-existent resolutions, and are marked by post-traumatic confusion. In conclusion, although it "only" constructs what trauma is like, contemporary refugee, migrant, and diasporic prose can help to make the unspeakable of war, death, refugee camps, racialisation, mourning, and exile meaningful through refiguring the lived experience of real refugees and migrants as fiction and thus representing migrating persons' trauma as a factor which greatly affects how they perceive their identities: their stories, their time, and the spaces they occupy in the world and in culture.

3.4. Postmodernist narrative structures and culturally specific diasporic narratives

This and the previous subchapters complement each other in the sense that some of the issues analysed above, for example, postmodernist narratives, are also partly discussed here, and because the problematic of trauma is also brought up here as a context. However, this subchapter presents several cultural contexts crucial for the selected works of literature in terms of the cultural fields and culturally specific narrative traditions in which these works are positioned. For Danticat's, Brand's, and Chariandy's fiction, the contexts are the Caribbean experience and "nonhistory" (Glissant 1999) together with the Black experience of the Door of No Return (Brand 2023b) and of life in North America; for Lefteri's, Nayeri's, and El Akkad's works, it seems relevant to mention certain storytelling conventions of West Asia.

Finally, this subchapter raises the Ricœurian question regarding the idea of distending the traditional narrative form to investigate whether and how literary narratives may become more open towards various people's lived experiences (Ricœur 1984: 38),

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not only the ones positioned within the Western cultural field. If the Aristotelian model of narrative order based on "completeness, wholeness" and "the ideas of beginning, middle, and end" (Ricœur 1984: 38–39) constitutes the foundation of Western literature, I ask whether it can be altered to include the lived experience of migration and refugeehood in the contemporary world. It is possible to say that the works of prose analysed here transgress the traditional boundaries of national literatures and exist as world literature. They are written and published in countries of the Global North, or "the West", and by writers educated at Western universities. Yet, they are strongly connected with non-Western and non-white cultures and narrative paradigms. Therefore, it is possible to ask how these narratives interrogate, resist, extend and transform the idea of the plot developed in Western culture.

3.4.1. Anglophone Caribbean fiction in the contexts of "nonhistory" and the Black diaspora

As Glissant declares: "My aim will be also to show that in History as in Literature Western thought […] has practiced [sic] this form of domination, and that it has not managed […] to resist the liberating force of diversity" (1999: 70–71)[21]. Glissant's reflection also leads him to state that "[l]iterature is not only fragmented, it is henceforth shared" (1999: 77). These two brief quotations set the direction for the following reflection: if Western narratives desire sameness and domination, Black and especially Caribbean narratives can resist them and lead the way towards emancipation through the diversity of shared lived experiences. Therefore, Ricœur's question may be rephrased: can traditional narrative structures and "the paradigm of order" developed in the Western tradition (Ricœur 1984: 38) be distended and liberated by the destabilising nature of migration and refugeehood stories, and by positioning those stories in close relation to non-Western narrative paradigms.

Coined in the specific context of the Caribbean, Glissant's concept of Black "nonhistory" can be defined as the erasure and disremembering of the history and

[21] Because of the original spelling and punctuation, it seems appropriate to provide the quotation without ellipses: "My aim will be also to show that in History as in Literature Western thought (since it is the one that prevails here) has practiced this form of domination, and that it has not managed (in spite of persistent advantages) to resist the liberating force of diversity" (Glissant 1999: 70–71, spelling and punctuation original).

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collective identity of Black slaves and their descendants brought from Africa to the Caribbean by force. As Glissant explains, nonhistory happens "in the context of shock, contraction, painful negation, and explosive forces" and takes the form of "dislocation of the continuum, and the inability of the collective consciousness to absorb" the violence exerted on bodies, cultures, memory, and stories (1999: 61–62). Because of the nonhistory of the Caribbean, the narrative ideas of wholeness and seemingly natural "mythical chronology" have not penetrated Caribbean people's minds (Glissant 1999: 63). In the specific context of Haitian culture, Carole Sweeney argues that "the repetitive nonhistory of its [Haiti's] unmemorialized experience of slavery, the descent into poverty, civil unrest, and internal terror and corruption" is what "more acutely occupies the present, as the past has not yet fully emerged as history proper" (2007: 55). Hence, Caribbean identity exists in the space between remembering and forgetting, between history and nonhistory, between retelling, repetition and oblivion. What seems to inspire the Caribbean collective consciousness and anglophone Caribbean literature is the lack of the Western ideas of progressive history and its wholeness.

The stories that Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* is composed of and the story of Caco women in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* follow "[t]he traces of violence, rupture and dislocation" (Sweeney 2007: 54). Nevertheless, they also attempt to "possess" and "embody" Haitian history instead of being possessed and haunted by the nonhistory (Sweeney 2007: 59). Despite the disorder and nonhistory, Danticat tries to reclaim the Haitian present through women's stories and writing. Women in *Krik? Krak!* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* often search for "a more redemptive narrative language" which can help them to re-evaluate the stories of violence, rape, and terror and conceive "a way of narrating a traumatic past without repetitively passing it on as *the only* tale" (Sweeney 2007: 59, emphasis original). The act of telling or writing a story may in itself save it from oblivion. For example, if it were not fiction, "Children of the Sea", the epistolary story that opens *Krik? Krak!*, would be lost and forgotten because it consists of letters written by a young refugee on a boat that is about to sink and by his girlfriend in Haiti under the Duvalier regime, which means that the letters could never be sent. Their story is redeemed because it is told not only as an account of death and terror but also as a tale of tender love and attention to other people's pain. Danticat transforms fictional lovers' nonhistory into tangible proof of Haiti's modern history.

However, Danticat's narratives also include traces of Caribbean "nonworlds". Originally, Glissant uses this neologism to denote the state of being "swallowed" by "the

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belly of the [slave] boat", the hold of a ship (2010: 6). "Nonworld" can also be used to mean the ocean, the Middle Passage, and the unknown new land to which Black African people were abducted (Glissant 2010: 7). The term "nonworld" can also describe the state of being "in transit", which causes physical and emotional pain. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Sophie Caco travels by plane from Haiti to the United States to reunite with her mother, whom she does not know. The journey not only distorts her life's stability and temporality; the plane also becomes her nonworld: a space in which she is forced to mature beyond her age and which carries her to an unknown life with a stranger. In *Krik? Krak!*, a boat which carries "boat people", refugees from Haiti, becomes their nonworld. They are forever suspended between life and death, the surface and the bottom of the sea, where they reunite with their African ancestors who died in the Middle Passage. These instances show that even the "redemptive" stories by Danticat include elements of refugees' and migrants' "nonhistory" and "nonworlds": spaces and situations in which dislocation causes a rift in one's life and narrative identity.

Brand's concept of the Door of No Return (Brand 2023b) is somewhat similar to "nonworld" and "nonhistory". Although Brand states that it is impossible to go back to the Door, that "there are no maps" which could take Black people back to "a spiritual location" from which they were uprooted (2023b: 1, unpaginated), she also admits that there exists a deep desire that is synonymous with "making sense" or "putting the senses back together" (2023b: 195). One means of satisfying this desire for sense may be political resistance against the push into nonhistory. In contrast to Glissant, Brand's terminology and politics are not positioned in any particular nation or region. While her desire to know "what people we came from" is frustratingly unsatisfied, she craves to make sense of the life of Black people in the diaspora: a space marked not only by the Door but also by an intangible and sometimes weak sense of community. In order to resist the nonhistory or the "No Return" to history, Brand attempts to devise "a Map to the Door". In her autobiographical reflections, sketching the Map is the work of a creative cartographer, whose memories, imagination, private discoveries, and aesthetic and intellectual experiences are all instrumental in the process of map-making. As Rzepa, Drewniak, and Macedulska state, the very process is "a discourse; and [Brand] places herself within the tradition of postmodern mappings in literary texts" (2018: 140). The literary map that Brand draws or the map-making story she emplots is a meandering, achronological mosaic of memoir-like images and intellectual reflections "with only a spectral beginning and, it seems, without an end" (Rzepa et al. 2018: 140).

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The (non)history of the Black diaspora begins at the Door with an unclear mythical narrative of origin and with "no such immediate sense of belonging, only of drift" (Brand 2023b: 118). The concepts of Black history and narrative are again inspirational, not because they provide structure and fix meaning, but because they liberate the narrative and enable Brand-storyteller to sketch a discontinuous, fragmented, and by no means conclusive map of Black diasporic life after the Door.

In *Sans Souci and Other Stories*, published thirteen years before *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand's narrators and characters strive to resist the "No Return" and revisit their colonial or even pre-colonial past. For the protagonists of "St. Mary's Estate" and "Blossom, Priestess of Oya, Goddess of Winds, Storms, and Waterfalls", the past cannot be transformed into a fixed narrative because it is present in the body. History is always-already there because it is embodied, which also means that the past never fully becomes history because the Black body lives in the present with the transhistorical trauma and violence inflicted on it. The body in Brand's early short stories carries the colonial "trauma time" and embodies the impossibility of coherence and wholeness. This is why almost all narratives in the short story collection seem fragmented and without closure. Yet, they often convey an urge to fight against disremembering and nonhistory. Nevertheless, it appears that the aim of the confrontation is not, as Katie L. Mullins claims, to "overcome" the past (2012: 16). To resist Black nonhistory and the "No Return" is to raise the question if history, understood as a ghostly presence within the body, can be revisited with the awareness of a narrative desire to "make sense" of it and, at the same time, without a promise of reaching finality.

Brand's early short stories and her seminal memoir demonstrate that the diverse experiences of Black people in the diaspora and their shared (non)history can significantly affect Black writers' narrative sensitivity and be inspirational in the process of creating Black anglophone fiction. Black (non)history changes the possible ways in which one can make sense of the past through writing. It seems symptomatic that Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return* is drawn "as series of fragments and sections, with no 'legend' in the form of a list of contents" (Rzepa et al. 2018: 146), and Glissant's philosophical and theoretical writings take the form of multi-genre, digressive reflections which heavily rely on symbols, images, and anecdotes. Moreover, according to Saidiya Hartman, the author of the new afterword to *A Map to the Door of No Return*, the concept of time in Brand's memoir is based on the idea that "a state over and done with" is a "delusion" and that Black history cannot be resolved (Hartman 2023: 227–228). As Hartman poetically

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articulates: "[Brand's] *now* is filled with the *then* and the *before* and the *not yet* and *might be*" (2023b: 228, italics original) and her "quality of time" is "entangled, incomplete, manifold, a vessel of each and every moment, a now of *the all and the everything*" (2023b: 232, italics original). Theorists of the Black diaspora, such as Hall, Gilroy, and Glissant, frequently mention such notions as the Derridean *différance*, hybridisation, syncretisation, and creolisation. They would almost certainly agree that these processes can never be conceived of as leading to a point of completion. They should rather be understood as describing ongoing and dynamic practices. Similarly to Brand's memoir, the theory of the Black diaspora suggests that plurality, heterogeneity, and open-endedness are the prevailing features of life in the diaspora. Generally speaking, certain Black narratives in the diaspora and their concepts of time tend to be non-linear and fractured, but not in the way postmodernist deconstruction of temporality and structure can work. The non-chronology and fragmentation of contemporary Black fiction, non-fiction, and philosophy are organic features, whose origin may be traced back to the dislocation and violent ruptures of continuity that still exist as transhistorical "trauma time" and deep-time narrative re-memories of the Middle Passage.

3.4.2. Refugee novels in the context of West Asian theory and practice

Another narrative tradition that should be discussed in this subchapter is the narrative theory and techniques developed in West Asia, especially in the context of the selected novels that come from this cultural field, that is, the refugee narratives by Lefteri, Nayeri, and El Akkad. One can approach this topic by looking into two areas: the ancient narrative theory created by Arabic scholars and selected West Asian oral storytelling traditions. According to *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, the Aristotelian tradition strongly influenced the Arabic world. In their response to Aristotle's work, Arabic thinkers, following a clearly normative intention, believed that a story and all its elements should be indirectly and nonforcibly didactic. In their view, fiction ought to spontaneously shape one's conscience and feelings, especially those of "piety and compassion" (Hogan and Pandit 2010: 16–17). If one applies this philosophy to contemporary refugeehood literature whose primary cultural reference is West Asia, it is possible to interpret refugee fiction in terms of effecting social change. For example, Lefteri admits that she hopes that her novel can "help to create a slight shift in perception or perspective" and "be a catalyst

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for change" (2020b). Refugee literature often conveys social criticism. It indirectly advocates individual compassion and institutional support for migrating persons from the war-torn regions of West Asia. Nayeri's *Refuge* can be read as a serious criticism of European asylum procedures, which are denounced in the novel as unnecessarily involved and lengthy. Although they do not offer unproblematic images, Lefteri's, Nayeri's, and El Akkad's works portray refugees in marked contrast to the media coverage that frequently depicts inhabitants of West Asia in the context of terrorism and Islamic extremism. Idealistically, these novels' social impact and emotional appeal can be described as influencing and shaping readers' consciences.

Another element of the Arabic narrative tradition is its storytelling. One example that shows how important this domain is for West Asian identities is the custom of *hakawati* storytelling. The *hakawati* is a way of spending free time: a group of people, adults or children, listen to stories told by a professional storyteller. The stories can be based on the Quran, well-known Arabic fables, and myths. The structure of a *hakawati* story is often that of a multiple-frame narrative, a story within a story within a story: "the storyteller begins one tale, deftly leaves it mid-way to pick up another and then has a third story emerging from a subplot of the first and so on" (Chaudhary 2014). This type of narrative construction relies on free associations and digressions. With this in mind, one may ask whether *What Strange Paradise*, *Refuge*, and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* are – in addition to their postmodernist structures resembling traumatised minds' fragmentation – in any way inspired by oral storytelling traditions, such as the *hakawati*. Although they do not employ oralisation strategies, the three works include scattered fragments which provide background information about the characters' lives before they become refugees. The idea behind these parts may be that it would be impossible to comprehend the present: the journey and the exile, without knowing the causes of the exile and the life before it. As Nayeri argues (2020: 243), such long introductions belong to, for example, the Iranian way of beginning stories. *Refuge* includes various references to Persian lyrical poetry, instances of poetry recitation, and Iranian storytelling performances by the protagonist's father and other Iranians. Moreover, the broken structure of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*'s chapters brings to mind the way digressions are made in oral storytelling, not only a distortion of traumatised memory.

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3.4.3. Culturally specific narratives and the distension of the narrative form

At this point, one can hypothetically interrogate what lack of respect for diasporic and culturally specific narrative traditions would mean for migrant and refugee fiction. One possibility is that it would gravely disrespect migrants' and refugees' traumatisation. For Black people in the diaspora, for refugees from West Asia, and for migrants and refugees from the Caribbean, a plot construction that moves forward through adversity, death, war, rape, a dangerous journey, state violence, and racism towards a clear "horizon of hope" or closure may be considered prejudicial. "Host societies" that set expectations of migrants' gratefulness and industriousness or romanticise refugees' journeys as "quests" for safety and success despite hardship can exert pressure on migrant and refugee fiction to be more optimistic. The effect of such an approach is likely to be fiction that uses linear plots of progress and final resolution. Such narrative constructions can, in turn, lead to re-traumatisation and politico-cultural violence. Such stories ignore culturally specific narrative structures of migrants and refugees, disregard their struggle for subjectivity, which is rarely complete and therefore cannot achieve closure, and forget that trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder cannot be healed only by narrating stories, albeit doing so might help in the process.

On the one hand, *Brother*, *Refuge* and *What Strange Paradise* seem respectful of contemporary migrants' and refugees' life narratives because they are not structured as stories of modern progress in the West. On the other hand, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* could be examined as a narrative which promises a fair amount of positive closure potential. Even though the four novels rely on postmodernist narrative devices in a similar way, Chariandy's and El Akkad's novels are not given a symbolic denouement. Francis is killed by a police officer, and Michael does not become a doctor, as certain readers expect (Chariandy 2017a). The brothers experience little social advancement, and although Michael begins to address his grief, the hope he expresses at the very end is faint and gained by great effort. In like manner, even though Nayeri's protagonist, Niloo, experiences a vague hope that rebuilding her life and her father's symbolic "village" is possible, this feeling is overshadowed by grief, depression, and a looming divorce. Similarly, El Akkad's Amir is left to experience further migration and vulnerability in the diaspora, or he is left to die on the beach. In contrast, the ending of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* fulfils a desire to generate a positive "horizon of hope" that helps to envision a better future for the characters, one in which their problems are resolved, and life

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improves. A romantic image of a dispersed family reuniting and dreaming of a new life in the United Kingdom or going back to Syria appears in the final conversation between Nuri, Afra, and Mustafa: "When you come, Nuri will help me with the groups, and we will split the colonies and build new hives. […] One day we will go back to Aleppo and rebuild the apiaries and bring the bees back to life" (Lefteri 2020a: 359). One might even criticise Lefteri's novel for failing to "distend" its form, as Ricœur suggests (Ricœur 1984: 38), beyond a standard Aristotelian plot in which the main crisis is fairly resolved. Although the reader does not know whether Afra and Nuri are granted asylum, the lost cousin returns, and Nuri finally confronts his hallucinations as a symptom of trauma.

If one examines whether the Aristotelian narrative form "is capable of extension and transformation" (Ricœur 1984: 38) in the context of migrant and refugee fiction, it is not enough to analyse non-linear postmodernist narratives in which beginnings, middles, and ends are scrambled and chapters fragmented. Although these devices already unsettle the Aristotelian idea of narrative order, genuine distension – non-standard development of the narrative form in migrant and refugee literature – is possible when a narrative is open to stories and themes that depict refugees' and migrants' suffering in the nonworld and liminality between happiness, closure, hope *and* death, open-endedness, and life-distorting trauma. The enlargement of what a story is in the context of migration and trauma requires not only achronological narrative experimentation but also openness towards non-Western and non-white narrative traditions and their literary repositories of structures, symbols, and stylistic means of expression. The distension of the narrative form may be achieved by merging postmodernist narrative devices with culturally specific, non-Western narrative sensitivity. When one abandons a characteristically Western, often artificially positive and culturally ignorant desire for a migration narrative of progress, success and a "generative" closure, and makes an effort to incorporate incoherence, uncertainty, culturally specific narrative elements, and a lack of closure and hope into their narrative structure, they can genuinely attempt to distend their narrative, a novel or a short story, beyond a standard Western plot.

In culturally sensitive narrative structures, there seems to be limited space for the category of hope because in West Asian, Caribbean, Black diasporic, and trauma-affected stories, there is often no concept of linear, progressively unfolding history. Glissant's ideas of Black nonhistory and multiple histories instead of one unifying History are just two examples of how migration, traumatisation, and displacement can affect not only individuals but also entire communities. Even if there are positive elements in migration

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narratives, such as the mother-daughter reconciliation in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* or Black women's struggle for dignity in *Sans Souci and Other Stories*, they do not necessarily lead to or guarantee final happiness, freedom, closure, or relief from trauma. This does not mean that all pessimistic endings are culturally specific and resistant to Western influence. It is only to say that certain narrative forms in contemporary migration literature that are considered non-standard and without closure by some readers in the West are inspired by non-Western and non-white cultures and traditions. It seems that the disrupting, destabilising force of those stories becomes a factor that can help to distend the narrative form.

One may ask what insights they can gain by considering depictions of racialisation, traumatisation, and state violence in the migrant and refugee fiction that disrupts ordinary temporality and does not resort to simplistically positive endings. The insight might be that the outside world can be re-understood and seen differently because certain migrants and refugees write stories and compose unique narrative structures within the Western culture surrounding them. Even though most of the authors discussed here are educated, live, and publish in the West, their prose attempts to distend not only the narrative form but also the Western mind and conscience. Danticat's, Brand's, Chariandy's, Lefteri's, Nayeri's, and El Akkad's works differ from one another, but their common denominator is the narrative desire to tell migration stories and expand their audiences' perspectives on migrants' and refugees' lives.

3.5. Narrative as empowerment?

In this subchapter, the central question, as posed in its title, is whether migrant and refugee fiction can be empowering for certain individuals and communities and work as a tool for (re)gaining their political subjectivity and autonomy. Empowerment in this context can be understood in several ways. First, it is the sense that one is no longer an object of power and becomes a political subject: an independent person who makes their own political decisions. Second, it is the feeling, however subjective, that one can achieve self-determination and make their own life choices. In addition, empowerment can also be an element of the process of healing from trauma. In this sense, it often signifies the willingness to take action that can lead to recovery. Narration as a process of identity formation can influence one's sense of political subjectivity and empower them to take

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an active part in relations of power, and, together with the narrative desire to tell one's distorted life story, it can help an individual to re-evaluate their traumatic experience without forcing it to become a coherent, orderly plot, as postulated in Ricœur's theory of narrative emplotment and temporality.

When examined from such a perspective, Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* seems to yield an ambiguous result. On the one hand, it is a story that contains a strong mother-daughter reconciliation theme and depicts Sophie as re-evaluating her relationships with her mother, grandmother, aunt, and, as a result, their understanding of Haitian culture. Moreover, Sophie actively seeks recovery from trauma: she participates in group therapy and travels to Haiti with her little daughter to confront the women in her family. On the other hand, these empowering elements can be contrasted with the final question of the novel: "'*Ou libéré?*' Are you free, my daughter?" (Danticat 1998: 234, italics original), to which Sophie does not have an unambiguous reply. She is, in a sense, free only when her mother, Martine, dies: "the daughter is never fully a woman until her mother has passed on before her" (Danticat 1998: 234). Sophie does not need to be her mother's guardian or her *Marassa*: spirit twin sister anymore. However, her story: her conception through rape, her relocation to the United States, and the sexual trauma inflicted by her mother still bind her.

Sophie's narrative is connected with countless other stories of young Haitian girls and boys who left Haiti to reunite with their parents in exile, and as such, it remains unresolved[22]. Even though it contains a strong closing scene, the novel does not anticipate a definite end to Sophie's problems: her mother commits suicide, and she still struggles with bulimia and practices "doubling" while having sex with her husband: she tries to escape her body and become a different person to withstand bodily and mental pain (Danticat 1998: 200). Only Brigitte, Sophie's daughter, who seems to symbolise a new generation of Haitian-American women, can be seen an element of the hope of breaking with transgenerational trauma. Overall, it seems that the question "*Ou libéré?*" can be empowering because it is addressed to a whole generation, or generations, of Haitian women, and it is inherently linked with their stories that demand to be told. Nonetheless, the answer is never entirely clear, and their narratives do not always provide the strength to survive trauma.

[22] It also echoes Danticat's story of immigration to the United States, which the author describes in her family memoir, *Brother, I'm Dying* (2007).

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Another perspective on the empowerment of Black Caribbean women can be found in Dionne Brand's short stories. When examined from such an angle, Brand's early short fiction appears to be charged with political energy and an atmosphere of political struggle for equality in racial and class relations. Generally speaking, *Sans Souci and Other Stories* is a collection about the sovereignty and subjectivity of Black women. According to Kathleen Renk, Brand's short stories and their language are substantially inspired by the tradition of women's storytelling, which gives them the power to start transforming the past, present, and future that have been "disfigured by colonialism and neocolonialism" (1996: 98). Brand's characters are often female fighters who, for example, organise a picket line in front of the house of a white rapist and attack him in his car (Brand 2023a: 44); who imagine an old colonial mansion "ablaze" (2023a: 68); establish a Caribbean speakeasy in Toronto to cultivate African Yoruba traditions and beliefs there (2023a: 41); and who reflect that they "*should have killed*" a white man who called them a whore (2023a: 37, italics original).

As Johanna Garvey puts it, women's stories and their voices in Brand's fiction express a desire to leave the spaces in which their bodies "resemble occupied territory" and are objects of men's power and neocolonial subjugation in order to seek agency, "a space of empowerment", and political subjectivity (2003: 486). Brand's stories depict Black women who are aware of their sociopolitical situations and racialisation, and who want to actively, sometimes even belligerently, change their circumstances. They are not passive housewives but rather "political animals" who find empowerment among themselves and in excavating the colonial nonhistories of their peoples. As such, Brand's entire collection of short stories is an attempt to empower Black women through narratives.

The force of empowerment through narration is much subtler in Chariandy's *Brother*. There is a desire for empowerment in the novel; however, it is not as manifest and direct as in Brand's short stories. In Michael's narrative, in Canada in the 1990s, a young Black person can find few ways to gain a sense of agency in life. For some, empowerment might be found in education, as in the case of Aisha, who leaves Scarborough for university and later enjoys a well-paid job. Empowerment can also come through culture, for instance, hip-hop music and Caribbean food. Jelly, the DJ, seems to

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be fascinated by the two cultural practices. While staying with Ruth, Michael, and Aisha, he experiments with Caribbean-Canadian food and plays Ruth's old records[23].

Perhaps the most empowering scene of the novel is its very last. After a dementia-related incident and a short stay in the hospital, Michael's mother comes home and, instead of asking Jelly to turn off the record player, "Mother shakes her head. Gestures upward. 'Volume,' she says" (Chariandy 2019: 177). Although it might be an irrelevant detail, it is arguably the most tangible proof that the process of healing begins for Ruth. It is a sign that she has not surrendered despite unprocessed grief over Francis's death. Ruth's request to turn up the volume is not an open declaration of empowerment or recovery. Instead, it is a subtle and indirect suggestion that, in a certain way, healing from trauma is possible even if the process is extremely slow, does not have a proper beginning, and one cannot know whether or when it might come to an end.

It is difficult to study the theme of empowerment in refugee literature, such as Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo,* Nayeri's *Refuge*, and El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise*, because one's political status as a refugee and their sense of agency are complex issues. First of all, Nuri, Afra, and Amir receive help and guidance from others. It significantly weakens their autonomy as political subjects and human beings. Nuri and Afra cannot leave their temporary accommodation, and, in a sense, Amir has to follow Vänna through the island and beyond it. Moreover, to be given asylum, safety, and help, Nuri and Afra have to present their stories to immigration officers in a coherent and credible way, which seems to be an impossible task for traumatised Nuri. Even though his narration is fragmented and non-linear, and his PTSD-afflicted mind generates hallucinations to help him to survive the loss of his son, Nuri's narrative ends with a wish for restoration signalled by Mustafa's return.

In her novel, Lefteri mixes the characters' political disempowerment and an early stage of their psychological empowerment. Despite the fact that Nuri and Afra remain in political limbo[24], live in temporary accommodation, and do not know whether or not they will be granted asylum in the United Kingdom, in the bed and breakfast, Nuri begins to understand which elements of his life and memory are symptoms of trauma, and Afra partially regains eyesight. It may be paradoxical that these two seemingly irreconcilable

[23] The thematic concerns regarding food, music, and other cultural practices are analysed in Chapter V of this dissertation.
[24] Further discussion of refugee camps and the political status of refugees is developed in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

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states – political uncertainty and psychological recovery – coincide. Nevertheless, this can also be a way in which Lefteri's novel eludes expectations of a "typical" refugee story. The characters experience empowering moments in spite of their situation and the difficulties they have in telling their story. Nuri and Afra's narrative is achronological and distorted by trauma, and, at the same time, it may lead them towards a sense of regaining rudimentary control over their lives and thoughts.

Recounting her father's visits throughout the years in first-person narratives signals that Niloo, the protagonist-narrator of *Refuge*, is willing to work towards regaining a sense of personal empowerment. The chapters narrated by the homodiegetic narrator can be interpreted as following the process of healing from the trauma of refugeehood and her shame of being an Iranian in the West. Niloo's narrative identity re-evaluation and her growing acceptance and rediscovery of her Iranian culture empower her to face her refugeehood trauma when she meets and offers help and guidance to Iranian asylum seekers in Amsterdam. As Shymchyshyn and Chernyshova state: "Niloo's revolt against a comfortable life, when she leaves her fancy apartment and moves to an unfinished renovated one, ultimately signifies her call for an oppositional identity, not the one branded according to the disciplinary power of identity" (2022: 586). Narrative confession, retrospection, and identity development act as factors which, through the sheer act of telling her story, empower Niloo to accept herself as a former refugee and a migrant, rebuild a meaningful relationship with her father, and decide to move to her still unfinished apartment without her husband.

El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise* problematises the theme of a refugee's subjectivity and independence and offers a metaphor for the kind of disempowerment that refugees can experience as objects of humanitarian care. Vänna's character is crucial in aiding Amir through his journey: she helps the boy to escape an overcrowded refugee camp and the soldiers tasked with finding him. At the same time, she becomes the one who guides Amir through the island and directs the boy further to join a diaspora on the mainland. The boy does what she wants and what she believes is best for him. Therefore, Vänna can be read as an ambiguous character: she is helpful and compassionate but sometimes deprives Amir of the freedom to make his own decisions. At the end of their adventure, she enters Amir's boat and tries to leave the island with him, as if she could join his refugeehood and share his experiences of loss, separation from family, and exile. One can only speculate that if they reached a Syrian diaspora,

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the girl's needs and sociopolitical status would be different from Amir's. He would still be an underprivileged refugee and a missing child in a foreign country.

Vänna is Amir's ally and, perhaps inadvertently, the person who takes away the boy's autonomy and freedom of choice. Her character can serve as a metaphor for and a critical commentary on the relations between humanitarian agencies, refugee camps, foundations, non-governmental organisations and refugees, who lose their self-determination when they receive help in a manner that does not address or goes against their needs and expectations. When one becomes only an object of help, they may be deprived of their subjectivity and the right to co-decide their fate together with the ones who provide help. Although Vänna does not make Amir learn her language or stay at her house, she does not listen to his needs. They go where she leads them; the idea to migrate further is facilitated by her as well. Like many other refugees in Europe, Amir is deprived of his basic agency: the power to exercise his intentions is taken away from him when he is guided and taken care of.

A sense of empowerment for migrants and refugees can come through narratives, but it is hardly ever unambiguous, unproblematic, or direct. The characters of migrants and refugees in the works of fiction discussed here search for empowerment in the form of telling and revisiting their stories, even though they are frequently connected with histories and memories of enslavement, war, exile, sexual abuse, racialisation, police violence, refugee camps, and objectification. Most of the abovementioned works include first-person central narration, which is sometimes discontinuous and non-linear. Despite the non-linearity and temporal ruptures, a sense of empowerment can be found thanks to the sheer fact that the narrators' stories are told, and the migrants and refugees, who are frequently without representation, are given an opportunity to speak. In works of fiction, migrants', refugees', and racialised people's powerlessness can be transformed into one's will to regain political subjectivity and agency in life.

Nevertheless, their stories often feature characters and themes that testify to the feeling of disempowerment. Sophie Caco's mother commits suicide because she cannot stand the traumatic memories that pregnancy evokes; the main character of Brand's "Train to Montreal" does not shout back at the white man who insults her; Francis is killed because, as a Black man, in the eyes of white Canadian policemen, he is dangerous; Afra is raped by a smuggler in Athens and Nuri joins a mob that lynches and kills a paedophile; Niloo feels that her marriage is coming to an end, she withdraws from her academic work, and suffers from depression; Amir either continues his migration on

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another boat or is found dead on the seashore. These are only a few examples from the selected works that show how empowerment intermixes with suffering. If a migration or refugeehood narrative is empowering or discusses the theme of sociopolitical empowerment, it is rarely a story of uninterrupted, continuous progress. On the contrary, it often contains elements that rupture one's sense of agency, stability, and cohesion in life. Therefore, one could argue that an empowered self has at its foundation a discontinuous narrative identity marked by changes and trauma and is emplotted with non-normative and non-Western narrative configurations.

3.6. Coda 1: coherence and incoherence of migrants' and refugees' narrative identities

The concluding subchapters of this and the following chapters are titled "codas" and not "conclusions". To call these subchapters conclusions would be to misuse the word. The philosophy behind the analyses above is to make way for open and non-conventional structures and endings. The concept of a closed ending or an outcome does not agree with some of the theories and literary practices discussed here. Hence, naming these subsections codas suggests that the coming reflections are only further analyses or theoretical proposals and are not definite results or conclusions of the studies. Additionally, although a coda summarises a piece of writing, it is usually different in structure from the main parts and has its own focus.

This coda addresses the problem of categorising narrative identities as coherent or incoherent. Generally, coherence often signifies unity, stability, continuity, and unchanging orientation in life. In contrast, incoherence can be a sign of an identity crisis, instability, discontinuity, and disorientation (Taylor 2021). In the context of migrants', refugees', and their descendants' identities, these categories appear to be highly controversial. If one applied these concepts to the idea of narrative identity, it would mean that an identity assumes an unchanging, unfaltering position, which comes first, before a crisis makes it incoherent. This, in turn, could imply that there is an essence of a narrative identity: a primary state of purity and unity which has never undergone changes, development, or growth. The existence of such a narrative identity would be illogical since, as Ricœur asserts, for a story to occur, an event needs to provide it with *peripeteia*: a rupture that moves the narrative forward.

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Instead, one of the categories a researcher can examine in migrant literature is the degree to which a narrative identity can incorporate changes and alterations. The mutations of narrative identity can take the form of an *ipse* identity, which undergoes changes, reconfigurations, and revisions but retains a sense of self-constancy without remaining exactly the same (Ricœur 1988: 245–249). A narrative identity can also be a palimpsestuous identity that exists as a process in which stories, the past and the present, are written one on top of another. In a palimpsest of identity, no element is ever fully erased, lost, or forgotten: they are always present and contribute to who a person is. Identities of migrants in contemporary literature are often configured as *ipse* identities or palimpsests. Sophie Caco's character in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* changes and re-evaluates her life, but the narrative form in which her identity evolves is fairly conventional and emplots her identity's refiguration with relative self-constancy.

Moreover, migrant, second-generation, and refugee narrative identities in fiction tend to elude final resolution and closure. Therefore, another category useful in studying migration and refugeehood literature is open-endedness. The problem one can focus on is whether or not an open ending is genuinely unresolved and without elements that would suggest a possibility of narrative closure. It is especially important in the context of migrant and refugee fiction because imagining a definite end to one's complicated journey and traumatic story can be synonymous with imposing artificial coherence upon their life. If coming to a resolution or closure is a feature of narrative coherence and unity, migrant and refugee characters are rarely given "coherent" narrative identities. For example, although female characters in Brand's early short stories strive for empowerment, they do not reach a point of satisfaction and closure. The identities of Blossom, Ayo, and the protagonist of "St. Mary's Estate" are palimpsests of Black women's histories and their "here and now" as migrants and racialised bodies. Their lives in the diaspora are haunted by the colonial past, which is made present and can never be fully concluded in their Black bodies. Narrative identities are not "stable and seamless" (Ricœur 1988: 248); narrative identities of migrants and refugees are also hardly ever "sewn up" and able to achieve closure because of haunting memories, trauma, and the Western world's expectations of what constitutes closure.

Yet another element that can be analysed in contemporary migrant and refugee literature – instead of the categories of unity, wholeness, and coherence of identity – is the distortion of one's perception of time caused by trauma, never-ending precarity, and travel. It is possible to examine the ways of representing this distortion in narratives.

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It appears that postmodern narrative structures and techniques, such as *analepsis*, *prolepsis*, fragmentation, unfinished or abruptly finished chapters, and non-linear narratives, serve to imitate what trauma-induced temporal distortion can be like for contemporary migrants, refugees, and their children. Furthermore, migrant and refugee fiction can employ various culturally specific non-Western narrative devices, themes, and elements to generate its unique "trauma time". The content and structures of the fiction analysed here frequently indicate that these works use non-Western narrative paradigms and traditions as their close contexts, which makes them less limited in their formal experimentations and less prone to the hegemonising influence of the Western paradigm of narrative unity and wholeness. Non-Western narrative theories can inform and inspire works of anglophone literature to help their narrative structures to represent a perception of time, life, and the world that is different from what Western culture deems as "standard". Therefore, one way to see the world through a migrant's or a refugee's eyes is through the methods used to narrate their experiences. It appears that postmodern narrative techniques are often employed together with non-Western narrative references and devices to represent migrants' and refugees' narrative identities in fiction and to convey their sense of disorientation in time.

Studying contemporary works of migrant, second-generation, and refugee literature can lead one to the inference that coherence and continuity of identity are essentially white, Western-centric concepts that can not only limit imagination but also cause re-traumatisation. Migrants and refugees experience difficulties in telling their stories as cohesive narratives. In Nayeri's memoir, she recounts the story of an Iranian asylum seeker whom she calls Darius: "When asked to describe his journey, Darius forgets things. He recalls details out of order. […] But he stumbles into dark patches; he loses details as a liar would. He is rarely believed" (2020: 19). This excerpt describes a situation similar to Nuri's asylum interview in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. The social worker who helps Nuri and Afra in their asylum application advises them to "get your story straight. Think about what you're going to say to the immigration officer. Make sure it's all clear and coherent and as straightforward as possible" (Lefteri 2020a: 27). Neyeri's *Refuge* depicts stories of Iranian refugees, Mam'mad and Karim, whose asylum applications are rejected by Dutch authorities multiple times. If a refugee or a migrant is asked to tell their story in a coherent and intelligible way, they might feel confused and embarrassed or guilty because their narrative identity undergoes a crisis and cannot meet this requirement. Contemporary migrant and refugee fiction embraces the crisis

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of identity that migrants and refugees often experience to offer narrative structures that attempt to recreate meandering, disjointedness, inconsistency, inconclusiveness, and open-endedness. Elements of life as painful as forced migration and traumatisation can become major sources of inspiration for authors who have worked with or have themselves been migrants or refugees.

3.7. Coda 2: migration time: human time, narrative sensitivity

Ricœur asserts that narratives, history as well as literary fiction, help people to understand their lived experiences and due to this, he calls narrated time "human time" (1984: 3). In contemporary migrant and refugee literature, lived experiences of migrancy and refugeehood of people who leave their homes in search of safety, asylum, and better conditions of life or improved economic situation are reconfigured into narrative time and narrative structures which try to embrace and be faithful to trauma time. In other words, the narrative techniques that aim to deconstruct linear temporality are employed in certain works of migrant and refugee prose to depict the crises of migrants' and refugees' narrative identities without postmodern irony. Narratives help people to make sense of lived experience and comprehend the incomprehensible: loss, suffering, trauma, confusion, and chaos of life. To achieve this, they resort to narrative configuration and "human time" and emplot events into more or less orderly stories. However, narrative time can also include narrative sensitivity: specific methods of emplotment that pay attention to how people perceive time and thus deepen narrative understanding. Most of the works of fiction analysed in this dissertation use postmodern narrative sensitivity to represent the fragmentation of identities and to attempt to understand migrants', refugees', and second-generation individuals' complicated identity positions.

If fiction interweaves narrative configuration with the effort to represent lived or imagined experiences of migrants and refugees and their unique perception of time, it might arrive at a certain kind of the chronotope: "migration time". This is a term I propose to be used to define the effort to comprehend how migrants, refugees, and some of their descendants perceive life and time: the effort to construct, in literature, a type of story or structure that brings one closer to understanding what time is for the ones whose lives are marked by abrupt changes and trauma, who are deprived of the stability and order of national borders, political subjectivity, and home, and who need to negotiate their

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cultural identity positions in the diaspora. Migration time is human time because it is constructed in narratives, and it is close to migrants' and refugees' experiences because it does not try to simplify their complicated life stories distorted by forced migration and trauma. Instead, migration time can be described as narrative time that learns from, is inspired by, and sometimes even includes trauma time and distortions of narrative identities. One should remember, however, that migration time is a literary construct: a collection of narrative structures, devices, motifs, and themes that only attempt to represent the complex reality of migrants' and refugees' experiences, perceptions, and identity formation.

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Chapter IV:
Refugee and Migrant Experience from a Political Perspective

4.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses selected narratives of refugee and migrant literature from the perspective of the theory of modern biopolitics and sovereign power. It also employs several other concepts of philosophers and researchers, such as Hannah Arendt and Jenny Edkins, who refer to methods of resistance against biopolitics and the degeneration of human beings. This section's primary aim is to interpret literary narratives of the political status of refugees and immigrants and to examine the characters of migrants, second-generation individuals, and refugees who are represented as suspended in life, put into the condition of the camp, silenced, and turned into *homines sacri* and bare life. The theory of racial embodiment also plays a crucial role in the following analyses, as it affects migrating persons' subjectivities and narrated identities. The two questions that help to form the scaffolding of this chapter are how contemporary anglophone fiction imagines the influence of biopolitics on the narrative identity constructions of refugees, migrants, and second-generation children of migrants, and how characters of migrating persons and second-generation individuals strive to resist sovereign power and racialisation in the states and societies in which they live.

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4.2. The refugee as a *homo sacer* in fiction

Agamben believes that the figure of the refugee is capable of laying bare the workings of biopolitics and exposing the true intentions of modern states when they segregate people, declare states of emergency and exception, manage migration crises, and devise and enforce their migration policies (1998: 131– 134; 2000: 21–23). He states that "[t]he refugee must be considered for what he is: nothing less than a limit concept that radically calls into question the fundamental categories of the nation-state, from the birth-nation to the man-citizen link" (1998: 134). By turning selected groups of people into *homines sacri*, the state can control and govern them in the name of national security, treating a country's nation as a sovereign. Contemporary fiction offers various portrayals of refugee characters as outlawed "sacred" people: segregated, controlled in camps, vulnerable to harm, and exposed to the threat of death.

Agamben is not the only political philosopher who sees the link between the figure of the refugee and the archaic concept of the *homo sacer*. Jenny Edkins and Véronique Pin-Fat discuss resistance to biopolitics by referring to, among others, an Iranian asylum seeker who, in 2003, refused to eat and "sewed his own eyes, ears, and mouth with coarse thread" in a form of protest against the United Kingdom's asylum policies. By using this example, Edkins and Pin-Fat acknowledge that the sovereign power of the state turns asylum seekers and refugees into bare life governed not through politics but through violence (2004: 15–17). Although Achille Mbembe does not use the term *homo sacer* in his 2020 critical inquiry into the global condition of techno-modernity titled *Brutalism*, the Cameroonian theorist states boldly that "[t]he treatment of migrant bodies, which were likened to virulent bodies or to human waste, gradually came to appear as measures of social prophylaxis" because one way to tackle migration crises is to expel migrants and refugees "from the ordinary spaces of life" (2024: 82). This statement follows a thought similar to Agamben's analogy between *homines sacri* and refugees since it views migrating persons as excluded from "the normal order" (Agamben 1998: 174). There are also other scholars, such as Shiyu Jiang and Bülent Diken, who theorise that a refugee is "open to sovereignty's biopolitical determination of whether or not they are worthy of human life" (Jiang 2022: 24) and "socially a 'zombie'" who lives "in a condition of 'social nakedness' characterized by the lack of social definition, rights and responsibilities" (Diken 2010: 87–88).

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This subsection aims to analyse selected refugee characters depicted as *homines sacri* and to argue that contemporary refugeehood literature often portrays refugee camps and other temporary types of accommodation for refugees as reincarnations of the concentration camp. Even though it uses the *homo sacer* analogy, the subchapter's scope of analysis is not limited to it. While discussing contemporary migrations, it is essential to remember that the status of refugees is often inextricably linked to issues of racialisation, ethnicity, and culture. The final question in this subsection is how the political status of refugees, as presented in fiction, influences their narrative identity constructions.

4.2.1. Refugees depicted as *homines sacri*

Christy Lefteris's characters of Afra and Nuri from *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* are refugees whose lives are constantly vulnerable to death and excluded from the ordinary ways of life in the cities they stay in. One can speculate that if they died or disappeared along their itinerary through Turkey and Europe, their deaths would be lost among vast statistical data concerning missing or dead refugees. They may die at any point when they cross the Aegean Sea on a smuggler's boat. Such danger is illustrated by what happens to another refugee dinghy in the story: "[it] had toppled over and the people were lost at sea. Only four survivors were pulled from the water, and eight bodies were found" (Lefteri 2020a: 119). Another event, which Nuri probably hallucinates about, can be equally meaningful: the imaginary boy, Mohammed, is thrown overboard, and Nuri starts searching for him in the water, risking his own life. When Afra and Nuri take the flight through Madrid to the United Kingdom, they are instructed by their smuggler to throw away their fake Italian passports as soon as they land. A lack of identification or a passport, even if counterfeit, deprives them of political protection and turns them into stateless people.

As refugees in Istanbul and Athens, they never take part in the regular day-to-day life of ordinary citizens. In Turkey, they live in a smuggler's apartment, which Afra refuses to leave. Nuri works at a car wash, "scrubbing away the soot and grit of the city" for a very small wage (Lefteri 2020a: 95). In Athens, they are forced to live in their smuggler's flat. The man objectifies and abuses them. He rapes Afra when he has the occasion. Moreover, he exploits and blackmails Nuri by making him deliver drugs at night. As Nuri narrates: "I was awake only at night, I no longer saw the sun. Afra and

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I existed in darkness" (Lefteri 2020a: 325). This short excerpt shows that Afra and Nuri's life in Athens is not "normal" or safe. They live on the margin of the general population. Nuri cannot work an ordinary job and is forced to become an accomplice in crime instead. The "darkness" they exist in is both literal, as Nuri goes outside only at night, and political – they are excluded from society and "the normal order" of life.

In the United Kingdom, when they officially become asylum seekers, Nuri tries to register his wife to see a doctor. He is refused because the asylum letter he gives to a receptionist lacks an address. Even though Nuri reminds the woman that official National Health Service regulations "say that a practice cannot refuse a patient because they do not have identification or proof of address" (Lefteri 2020a: 132), she replies that she cannot schedule an appointment because of the practice's "policy". This is yet another example of how Lefteri's novel depicts refugees as living in a space of exception and outside a social "norm". Despite having valid asylum documentation, Afra and Nuri can be excluded from the privileges and rights to which they are entitled.

Furthermore, their status as refugees and asylum seekers deprives them of political agency and leaves their lives to be decided upon by government institutions and humanitarian agencies. On Leros island, they cannot leave the refugee camp "until the authorities g[i]ve [them] clearance to leave for Athens" (Lefteri 2020a: 159). However, if one does not have the money to buy ferry tickets, they may be stranded on the island. The place where Afra and Nuri stay when they arrive in the United Kingdom, the bed and breakfast turned into asylum seekers' accommodation, is also politically ambiguous. Afra and Nuri can go outside whenever they need to, but they cannot move out. The bed and breakfast is a space of care, meaningful relationships, and hope, but it also signifies governmental control over asylum seekers. As Maximiliane Brandmaier notices, social workers assigned to work with and help asylum seekers in reception centres find themselves in a position of "dual mandate" to care and control, which can result in refugees becoming dependent upon and disempowered by social workers' help (2023: 150, 155–156). Afra and Nuri's agency and self-determination are restricted by their political status in the United Kingdom and by the lack of freedom to make decisions about their occupation and place of residence as independent people. To a certain extent, their lives depend on their social worker's help and ability to process their asylum application with care and a sense of solidarity. As Nuri narrates:

> There are about ten of us in this rundown B&B by the sea, all of us from different places, all of us waiting. They might keep us, they might send us away, but there is not much to

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> decide anymore. […] The social worker will be here at 1 p.m., and all meetings take place in the kitchen. She will want to know how we got here and she will be looking for a reason to send us away. (Lefteri 2020a: 5–6)

In this passage, Nuri conveys a sense of abandonment and exclusion in the B&B. Although the refugees who live there are not detained, their lives are confined to the place and its surroundings, as if they were in a refugee camp. The outcome of the interviews with immigration authorities that Afra and Nuri have to undergo is supposed to determine whether they are granted asylum and permission to stay in Britain. The decision regarding their life and possible deportation to war-torn Syria depends on their ability to construct a clear, linear story about why they needed to escape their homeland, and it rests with English immigration officers who know about the situation in Syria only from official reports.

Afra and Nuri, as refugees under asylum law, are not and, for the time being, cannot become citizens of the United Kingdom. In a political utopia, an idealist vision, they would be able to vote, participate in elections, be members of local councils, and exercise their political rights. Critics of the current political order, such as Agamben, could claim that Afra and Nuri are objects of power and government policies. As refugees, they can be helped and protected by law only outside their political life, that is, only as bare life and not as speaking and acting members of the *polis*. Afra and Nuri cannot participate in genuine power relations with the state and other subjects since they are only objects of government officials' decisions. Arendt states that to have a political existence, one should be able to speak and act in public (2018: 175–188). Agamben's social "form-of-life" (*bios*), in turn, is based on the assumption that one is a member of the *polis* if they live among other citizens and take part in political decision-making (2000: 3–4, 138). Afra and Nuri do not take political action or tell their story publicly. Moreover, as asylum applicants, they live in the B&B, outside ordinary citizens' places of residence, and they do not have the power to choose their place of stay, which limits the power they have over their bodies. Afra and Nuri, as refugees, are included in the law only through their exclusion from the "norm" and the "regular" life of citizens.

Finally, even though the B&B is not a refugee camp or a detention centre, as a "communal reception centre", it may be called a "total institution" (Goffman 2017), in which partial confinement, an exception from the law, becomes the rule of Afra and Nuri's daily life. Erving Goffman's concept of "total institutions" is used by Brandmaier to discuss how refugee accommodation institutions that are less restrictive than refugee

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camps also enforce "a system of exclusion and organised disintegration" (Brandmaier 2023: 149). When compared with Goffman's definition of total institutions (Goffman 2017: 6–12), Afra and Nuri's B&B can also be regarded as such a place, where "all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority", and in direct company of other residents, who are at first strangers to one another and who need to follow certain rules and a daily schedule together (2017: 6). In such an institution, refugees are not viewed as individuals but as "whole blocks of people" and forced to satisfy their "human needs" in a depersonalised context (Goffman 2017: 6). According to Goffman, total institutions "are the forcing houses for changing persons; each is a natural experiment on what can be done to the self" (2017: 12). During their stay at the B&B, Afra and Nuri's relationship is strained as they cannot be a family in the privacy of their home. They are forced to live as a married couple among other people. Their social, cultural, and professional opportunities are limited because they are excluded from the ordinary life of British citizens. The B&B, as a refugee institution, instead of being a place of help and empowerment for Afra and Nuri, becomes one of the reasons why they feel disempowered and lose connection with the outside world. To borrow Goffman's term once again, one may argue that Afra and Nuri suffer from "disculturation" (2017: 13). Although they are in the United Kingdom, they are prevented from participating in its society's culture and may be "temporarily incapable of managing certain features of daily life" (Goffman 2017: 13) when they are granted asylum and finally permitted to live and earn a living on their own.

Throughout their itinerary from Syria to Europe, Afra and Nuri become *homines sacri*: their lives are taken care of and managed by the state in a refugee camp in Greece and then at the aforementioned B&B in the United Kingdom. Their existence becomes insignificant for the state when they stay at smugglers' flats in Athens and Istanbul. Their bodies may be prevented from dying, but, at the same time, the sovereign power of the state can let them die as refugees or "undocumented" migrants without legal consequences. If they are helped, they can only be regarded as bare biological life, subjected to humanitarian organisations' benevolence. In the United Kingdom, the state and the law see them as human life but deprive them of the qualities of "a citizen's life". They live in a state of exclusion from the "norm" since they are asylum seekers, and the state reserves the right to care for and control their lives, thus assuming a dual and paradoxical role. The social order in which they find themselves is a state of exception, and although they do not live in a refugee camp, one can argue that their lives in the B&B

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are subjected to camp-like conditions, in which societal norms and the possibility of living a "normal life" are suspended for an indefinite period.

As mentioned in Chapter III, El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise* is intended as a Peter-Pan-inspired fable, and, due to its elements of the fantastic convention, it rarely mentions geopolitical details. However, the narrative clearly states that Amir's family first migrates to Egypt, where Syrian refugees exist as an underclass, often discriminated against by Egyptians because of their skin colour, ethnicity, difficult financial situation, and Syrian pronunciation. Amir's mother, Iman, watches Egyptian soap operas on television to learn the Egyptian accent. She believes that "to avoid the immigrants' markup, every last trace of home in her voice had to be wiped clean" (El Akkad 2021: 33). Amir's family and their Syrian community in Egypt experience intense uncertainty as they apply for refugee status. The "representative of the United Nations' refugee-resettlement arm" neglects them or visits without notice. The neighbours talk about the official "as one talks about the weather—predictively and with great uncertainty" (El Akkad 2021: 31). For Amir's family, living in Egypt is an in-between state. They remain in suspense, unable to return or move further. Without proper institutional help, they cannot exercise their right to be formally declared refugees. Due to this, Amir's uncle-stepfather turns to smugglers to travel across the Aegean Sea.

Further on, young Amir's situation on the European island becomes peculiar. The boy does not stay in the island's refugee camp. Instead, he runs away from it and from the military men who are searching for him. If Amir dies when he flees from the soldiers and attempts to escape the island, nobody can be held formally responsible for his death. At the same time, he is not a citizen of the island; once he reaches it alive, he becomes the responsibility of the government and refugee services. Amir can die almost without any repercussions for anyone in particular, yet his biological life can be protected only if he is detained. The situation of the boy is that of a refugee and a fugitive. He suffers from a double exclusion. He is not a part of the island, not a citizen, and he does not stay at the refugee camp, where he could receive institutional help.

One should also problematise Amir's agency as a refugee child and under Vänna's care on the island. He is not independent in his actions but guided and taken care of by other people, who claim that they want to help him. It is unclear whether Amir avoids being transported to the island's refugee camp of his own will or because of others' decisions. Madame El Ward, the main coordinator of the camp and Vänna's former French teacher, instructs the children to find a boat that can take them to the mainland of

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the country, which is probably Greece. The woman does not want to take the boy into the refugee camp because she believes that he would be safer with "his people", other refugees from Amir's country of origin. This conviction might come from El Ward's experience and knowledge of the conditions of life for children in the camp. A report prepared by a Greek institution, Refugee Support Aegean, titled "Excluded and Segregated. The vanishing education of refugee children in Greece", indicates that children in Greek refugee camps live in precarious conditions and are often forced to migrate with their families to other refugee reception centres within Greece (Refugee Support Aegean 2021a). In another report by the same institution, Lida Stergiou states that refugee children who stay in camps are traumatised, "deprived of the right to education", and live in conditions that "dimini[sh] [their] mental and intellectual potential" (Refugee Support Aegean 2021b). In addition to poverty and isolation, if Amir stayed on the island, he would not have any family or support system to look after him inside the camp. Amir is a refugee child and should be under special protection from the authorities; however, he is being brutally forced to grow up. He is one of the youngest refugees, who are "broken in ways that rendered them unable to continue as children" (El Akkad 2021: 96). Although he is a minor, he should enjoy a degree of self-determination, a sense of agency, and the right to education, of which, as a refugee, he has none.

Amir is turned into a *homo sacer* child. Comparing the boy's situation with Agamben's definition, one can notice that Amir's death during migration and refugeehood would be officially seen as nobody's fault, and the island's military searches for him as if he were a criminal. Although people cannot kill Amir with impunity, everyone on the island is entitled to capture him. He is partially isolated from social life in Egypt and excluded from the social order when he becomes a refugee. On the island, he lives not on the margin of society, but completely outside of it, hiding in caves and stealing clothes from people in a hotel. As the reports by Refugee Support Aegean suggest, if Amir were admitted into the refugee camp as a refugee child with no family, it is possible that he would have little help or support with his basic needs, including food and education. El Ward believes that Amir "stands a better chance" if Vänna "can take him where there's a community of people from the same place he came from, a community of people who can help him" (El Akkad 2021: 101). Looking at the character of Amir from Agamben's perspective, one observes that his existence is reduced to bare life. To receive institutional help, Amir would have to be excluded from society and deprived of personal relations,

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and his life would be dependent on the actions of the administration and soldiers in the refugee camp. In the camp and on the island, Amir finds himself in a situation, as Agamben explains it, in which "fact and law are completely confused" and where "*the state of exception begins to become the rule*" (1998: 168–169, italics original) and the new "norm" of the refugee's life.

Using Jenny Edkins's terminology, one can say that Amir is not treated as "a person-as-such" (2011: 11). He is perceived as unworthy of care and hunted by the authorities. His sense of agency is irrelevant to the state and inadvertently limited by those who genuinely sympathise with him. In addition, the fact that he is a missing person to his mother is neglected by the refugee camp's coordinator and Vänna, who assume that the boy wants to travel further to the mainland as a refugee. They forget that Amir is an independent individual with meaningful relationships and that his closest relatives, to whom he is important just because he is a person, a son, and a sibling, may look for him and hope for his return. Using Arendt's perspective, one can observe that both the state authorities and Madame El Ward see Amir as an *animal laborans*. Their primary concern is only to secure the boy's survival and his most basic biological needs. Furthermore, in Agamben's terminology, Amir is not perceived as a "*homo*" – a person whose *bios* – way of life – is important. He is regarded only as a "*corpus*" – a naked body (Agamben 1998: 124, italics original), whose mere survival and presence can be managed and protected, while his personhood is largely overlooked.

In Dina Nayeri's *Refuge*, Niloo, her mother, and brother are refugees for two years before they are granted asylum in the United States. In Oklahoma, Niloo is still perceived by others and thinks of herself as "a refugee kid" (Nayeri 2017: 271). Although the novel reveals few details about their refugee period, Niloo's refugeehood creates a lasting impact on her identity and self-image. She remembers that she "started having nightmares around the time we arrived in the first refugee hostel. The dreams changed over the years, but never disappeared" (Nayeri 2017: 97). The nightmares can be interpreted as one of the first symptoms of trauma that Niloo experiences as a child. Before seeing her father in Istanbul in 2008, Niloo reminisces:

> A part of me delighted in showing Baba all that I now had. See? I've made a good life. Who would imagine that I was once a refugee kid in Oklahoma? That I had ever stood in a breakfast line in a hostel outside Rome, or worn ill-fitting clothes from the Salvation Army, or spent a night in Jesus House? This is happiness. (Nayeri 2017: 271–272)

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The hostel in the suburbs of Rome is perhaps a reference to Hotel Barba: the refugee accommodation where Nayeri's family stayed when they arrived in Italy as asylum seekers. In *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You*, Nayeri describes the place as "'a good refugee camp', a temporary safe space for transients seeking asylum outside Italy" and remembers that even though it felt like a place of confinement, the hotel was located on a picturesque hilltop (2020: 3–4). Niloo in *Refuge* "can still conjure the tedium of standing in sweaty, smelly embassy lines in Rome, waiting for her mother to explain their situation. She recalls Maman's shaking hands, her nervous voice, her lilting English" (Nayeri 2017: 148). According to Niloo's mother, the family is granted asylum in the United States only because the immigration officials believe that Niloo and Kian are "raised as Christians" (Nayeri 2017: 148).

Despite the scarcity of details and the lack of a comprehensive description of their refugee situation, one can argue that Niloo and her family are not presented in the novel as *homines sacri*. The family receives help and sponsorship from an American family and is granted asylum in Oklahoma. After that, they live in a small apartment: "Our apartment was nothing remarkable as immigrant situations go, but to me it was a nightmare. Some time spent in typical pass-through countries, Italy and the United Arab Emirates, had depleted the funds. We had Manman's small income and a dark, two-bedroom apartment" (Nayeri 2017: 98). Although their financial and political situation is far from ideal, the family's refugeehood is not described in terms of camps or deprivation of civil rights.

Nevertheless, as far as affective and cultural aspects are concerned, Niloo feels ashamed of her refugee past. According to Shymchyshyn and Chernyshova, Niloo's embarrassment and shame have "put her into an incredibly vulnerable and precarious position and provoked her social isolation, especially from other Iranians" (2022: 587). Because of her refugeehood in Rome and asylum in Oklahoma, she rejects her Iranian culture and identity for a long time. She transforms her life and finds herself in a position of privilege: she is granted American citizenship, graduates from Yale, moves to Europe, marries an educated Frenchman, and works as an academic in the Netherlands. Not until she experiences a marriage crisis does she begin to look for an Iranian community. She finds one in Amsterdam in Zakhmeh, "the Persian squat and arts space", whose name is either "derived from *zakhm*, the word for *wound*" or simply means "a plectrum [a pick] for Eastern string instruments" (Nayeri 2017: 74, italics original). In Zakhmeh, Niloo faces her shame and uses the Farsi language again with people other than her closest family. Due to her new Iranian community, her cultural and political positions change:

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"She comes to think of herself as an Iranian immigrant again, a child refugee, not an American expat" (Nayeri 2017: 207); however, this time, she can rebuild her self-image without embarrassment.

In Zakhmeh, she meets and makes friends with Iranian asylum seekers, Mam'mad and Karim. Their status as refugees in the Netherlands is much more precarious than Niloo's family's situation in Italy and the United States. They are reduced to the position of *homines sacri*. Referring to Agamben's analysis again (1998: 174), one can claim that they are, metaphorically speaking, kept interminably in a *zone d'attente*. Karim is introduced as "a decade-long Iranian refugee, a quiet man" (Nayeri 2017: 145). Like Karim, Mam'mad and other asylum seekers whom Niloo meets in Zakhmeh wait for several years for their asylum cases to be decided. Mam'mad describes his and Karim's status:

> "I came with Scholars at Risk. They invite you to give a few lectures, and if it's too dangerous to go home, they help with asylum petitions. But I did the classes years ago, and no one's lifted a finger. I'm stuck," [Mam'mad] adds. "Karim is even worse off. Unskilled, illegal."
>
> "If not for my family," says Karim, the misery in his voice settling over the *sofreh*, paling food like a gauzy sheet thrown over it, "I'd go home today, right into Evin prison." (Nayeri 2017: 146–147)

Mam'mad lives in a rented flat and can avoid relocation to a refugee camp thanks to the help of a refugee aid foundation (Nayeri 2017: 146). In the final chapter of *Refuge*, in conversation with her parents, Niloo sums up the asylum seekers' situation: "My friends live here the way we did after we left Iran, everything temporary like you're always one day from being booted out" (2017: 311). The refugees miss their families in Iran. The endless cycle of asylum interviews, meetings, and rejections causes the prolonged separation of children from their parents and of spouses. In the meantime, to support themselves, the refugees are forced to perform black-market jobs, which are precarious and cannot provide them with a stable income. Moreover, the political atmosphere in the Netherlands towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century is depicted as veering towards open xenophobia and racism. Being perceived as a believable victim and one's ability to tell a compelling, coherent story of their escape are presented in the novel as key issues concerning asylum applications. *Refuge* depicts this process as unjust, racialising, "haphazard and subjective and ugly": "If your translator has an American or Dutch accent, like yours or Siavash's, your story gets believed" (2017: 147). Mam'mad criticises Dutch asylum interviews and argues that they are retraumatising interrogations: "Karim has told his story ten different times. Every time they ask for details, he flinches

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and says something vague, and they think he's making it up" (Nayeri 2017: 148). Inspired by Mam'mad's account, Niloo decides to help Karim as his interpreter during interviews. Because of racism and a lack of respect towards refugees' traumas and horrifying experiences, immigration officials perceive refugees not as persons but as official cases and problems to solve.

In the Netherlands, as depicted in Nayeri's novel, asylum seekers from West Asia are turned into bare life because of the asylum procedures they are forced to go through. Without work, which could allow them to regain a sense of dignity and self-worth, and separated from their families, relations with whom make their lives purposeful and meaningful, a refugee becomes an *animal laborans*, concerned only with their survival and biological needs. Continuing in the Arendtian tone, one can contend that refugees are deprived of their voice and speech, and their ability to take action is extremely limited. Viewing their status through Agamben's perspective, it is possible to say that refugees are politically speechless: the sovereign power withholds from them the remnants of their membership in the political life of the *polis*. Because of deepening depression and his position as a contemporary *homo sacer*, which he has to endure for several years, Mam'mad decides to commit suicide through self-immolation in a public square in Amsterdam. This act can also be interpreted as a form of political resistance against biopower, which is analysed further on in this chapter[25].

In Edwidge Danticat's "Children of the Sea" from *Krik? Krak!*, one of the two main characters is a boat refugee, drifting somewhere between Haiti and the coast of the United States. The refugees on the boat exist in liminality in two dimensions. Physically, they are between two countries and between terror and safety. Spiritually, they are suspended between life and death at sea, and between the future they hope for and the past of their ancestors who died during the Middle Passage as slaves. Danticat's epistolary short story salvages the young man's existence and the lives of countless Haitian "boat people" from silence and oblivion.

Krik? Krak!, as a collection about Black migrants and refugees, is a politically engaged work of fiction which satisfies Christina Sharpe's definition of "wake work" (2016: 14). As mentioned in Chapter III, "Children of the Sea", the collection's sole refugee story, connects the deeply historical perspective of Haiti's "nonhistory" with the refugees' present "nonworld" (Glissant 2010: 6). It is "wake work" (Sharpe 2016) because

[25] Specifically, in subsection 4.4.1.

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it does not allow the multiple stories of Haitian refugees to be "swallowed" by the sea and the boat as "a womb abyss" of oblivion (Glissant 2010: 6). Although Danticat presents only one refugee story in the collection, its characters can stand as representatives of a whole wave of migration. Speaking of the Middle Passage, Glissant states that "[t]his boat [is] pregnant with as many dead as living under sentence of death" and that Black people in exile have experienced "the deterioration of person" (2010: 5–6). Combined with Agamben's definitions of the camp and the *homo sacer*, Glissant's reflections can serve as commentary on the situation of the refugees in Danticat's story. They are all potentially dead, although the moment of the boat's sinking is not directly presented in the narrative. The pregnant girl who gives birth and dies during the passage can be symbolically linked with Glissant's poetic articulation: "This boat is your womb, a matrix, and yet it expels you" (2010: 6). The pregnant girl's story demonstrates that, from a political perspective, the refugees are *homines sacri*: the living dead. Perhaps narrating their stories through fiction, as part of the "wake work" after their deaths, can save them from becoming "nonhistory".

Contemporary refugee literature often brings to the foreground what is taken away from refugees: a specific place, social and political life, the right to speak and tell their stories, and their sense of agency, together with social and family relations. Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* emphasises friendship and family relations. It is not only a novel of political disenfranchisement and social exclusion of refugees as *homines sacri*, but also a narrative of rebuilding marriage and reuniting with lost relatives. Nayeri's *Refuge* stresses the importance of finding one's community, welcoming estranged family members back into their "village", and offering help to those refugees who still need it. Finally, by placing a refugee child in the centre, El Akkad's novel highlights the perspective and voice of a child as worthy of attention, political recognition, and individuality. The works of refugee literature that are studied here depict the refugee characters not only as Agamben's bare life and Arendt's *animal laborans*, but they also serve as Arendtian biographies: stories of the "who" question, in which the refugees are "heroes" (Arendt 2018: 186) and *zoon politikon*: persons who can speak with their own voices and act of their own volition so that their identities and political agency become disclosed through narratives (2018: 22–28; 178–184). Niloo's narrative in *Refuge*, albeit fragmented, can be a case in point. Her meetings with her father throughout the years are not narrated by a disenfranchised refugee but by a self-aware, mature Niloo, who knows

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how she can exercise her rights as an American citizen and use her education and privilege to help others.

I believe it is possible to research contemporary texts of culture and literature in search of other incarnations of the *homo sacer*, as Edkins (2011) does in her work on the representations of missing persons. As presented in fiction, the condition of contemporary refugees constitutes one of the modern types of the *homo sacer*. Contemporary fiction constructs the figure of the refugee as a person forced to live outside the social order and deprived of their subjectivity in relation to the state and its citizens. Fictional refugees such as Nuri, Afra, Amir, Karim, Mam'mad, and the young man from Danticat's short story "Children of the Sea" are taken care of or hunted; their agency is diminished; they live in limbo, acute uncertainty, or are doomed to death. Additionally, they are silenced and not treated as "persons-as-such", who have the right to meaningful relationships with others. From a political perspective, they exist as nothing more than bodies and pure *zoē*: bare life. Their *bios* is no longer available to them. Their lives become objects of power that can be upheld or discarded, cared for or denied asylum and deported. Ultimately, the works of fiction discussed here construct the figure of the refugee as a victim of contemporary biopolitics and the sovereign power of the state.

4.2.2. The refugee camp depicted as a *lager*

The purpose of the following paragraphs is to analyse the depictions of two refugee camps, one city encampment, and the overall living conditions of refugees in camps in Lefteri's and El Akkad's novels. Not all of the spaces analysed here as refugee camps are delimited, closed facilities. Their common denominator is that they are places whose purpose is to isolate, divide, depersonalise, and dehumanise refugees.

The refugee camp on Leros island is represented as a place of isolation, neglect, and national segregation. Although Nuri can go outside the camp during the day to visit a nearby village, go to an Internet café, and buy groceries in a convenience store, he and his wife cannot leave the island until they are officially cleared to do so. The camp is monitored by armed soldiers, surrounded by a fence with barbed wire, and its gates are locked during the night. It is a Foucauldian heterotopia which separates those inside from the outside world and forms a physical and symbolic barrier between the world of citizens and the space of foreigners. The refugees who live there have limited access to what

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citizens might consider ordinary life. One should realise that Nuri enjoys the village facilities only because he can afford to. Apart from that, Nuri senses that he is stranded on the island. Afra's life in the camp is spent in even more acute isolation. Because of her blindness, she neither leaves her cabin nor socialises with other refugees. Lefteri presents the refugee camp on Leros as, to borrow Mbembe's term (2024: 37), a "foreigners' camp".

Moreover, Nuri is overlooked by the camp personnel as he searches for the imaginary boy, Mohammed, claiming that his son has gone missing inside the camp. Nobody is willing to provide Nuri with practical advice or assistance. They seem to believe that the boy can return on his own, as if children in the camp were unsupervised, and a child missing for a day or two was not a reason for serious concern. At the same time, the camp is described as "[a]n empire of identification" (Lefteri 2020a: 159). It is, as Agamben (1998) and Diken (2010) note, a biopolitical space where people "[are] being transformed into verifiable, printable entities" with the use of biometrics so that they can formally exist in Europe (Lefteri 2020a: 157). Upon entry to the camp, national segregation, though unofficial, is also present. Refugees of a certain origin are favoured while "the ones who [are] the wrong nationality would get no papers – except for a ticket back to wherever" (Lefteri 2020a: 156). The refugee camp appears to be a deterritorialised space of biopolitics and a neocolonial centre for ethnic segregation. It realises, as Agier argues, "the totalitarian model (including confinement and discipline) within the colonial rationale" (2023: 88). If its primary function is to provide help to those who claim refugee status, its secondary purpose is to control and restrict foreigners in a heterotopic space excluded from the rest of the world.

In addition, refugees in the Leros camp face poverty and hunger. The same problems are also highlighted by Diken in his political analysis (2010: 91–92). Although Nuri can afford basic groceries, other refugees must rely on the camp's inadequate food rations. Left to their own devices, they search for food elsewhere. For instance, in the village, Nuri steals an octopus, cooks it over a fire, and shares it with Afra. While searching for Mohammed, Nuri receives clothes for Afra, a drawing pad, and pencil crayons from a clothing bank that the camp staff refer to as a "boutique". The living conditions in the camp and the precariousness undermine the refugees' dignity, reducing them to vulnerable entities, who are not so much helped as "managed". For Nuri, the layout and organisation of the camp make it appear as "a grim village" (Lefteri 2020a: 159), in which people are addressed as problems and not as individuals.

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The island and the camp are also portrayed as haunting, oneiric, and surreal spaces. As Nuri explores the village, he observes "half-finished crumbling properties, empty storefronts" and "[w]indows like eyes opened into dark uninhabitable buildings" (Lefteri 2020a: 163). He notices that the island is half-deserted. Due to its appearance and function in refugees' lives, it may be considered to be another heterotopia: a surreal space between reality and a dream. For refugees, the village is an intermediate zone between the camp and the free world. Symbolically, it is a reincarnation of "the *zones d'attente*", where whether or not refugees are welcomed and treated well depends solely on the will and attitudes of the village's inhabitants (Agamben 1998: 174). One of the volunteers in the camp informs Nuri that the island "was a leper colony once[.] This asylum [the central building in the camp] was like a Nazi concentration camp. People were caged and chained without names or identities" (Lefteri 2020a: 163). This description suggests that there is an analogy among three extreme heterotopias and total institutions: the leper colony, the refugee camp, and totalitarian death camps. By referring to Arendt's analysis of Nazi concentration camps (Arendt 1979: 437), one can argue that these three institutions function as places that test society's potential for the dehumanisation and exclusion of unwanted individuals. Nuri remarks that "[t]he old asylum [is] like some place from a nightmare" (Lefteri 2020a: 163), and Afra, though confined to her cabin space, feels that "[t]his place [the camp] is full of ghosts" (2020a: 182). Abandoned, dilapidated buildings, forgotten by time and people, and the former leper colony asylum turn the island and the camp into oneiric places. The camp and its surroundings seem dream-like for Afra and Nuri, although they spend only a few days there. The reality of the refugee camp is interwoven with the haunting past of the leper colony and evokes images of concentration camps. On Leros, Afra, Nuri, and other refugees become lepers of modernity, separated from the world by fences, barbed wire, the sea, and legal barriers. Similarly to people suffering from leprosy in the colony, they cannot leave and become disconnected from society.

Another camp in which Afra and Nuri are made to live for a short time is a city encampment for refugees in the Pedion tou Areos park in Athens. In Lefteri's novel, it is an extreme illustration of how unimportant refugees' lives are to the state. Although the encampment is an unofficial one and is not administered by any organisation, the authorities knowingly let it exist in the Greek capital and do not intervene. To paraphrase a quotation by Rudolf Diels, the first head of the Nazi Gestapo, which

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Agamben uses in his analysis of Nazi concentration camps[26], the city encampment "[was not] instituted, one day [it was there]" (Agamben 1998: 169). The quotation serves to demonstrate the ostentatiously spontaneous creation of the refugee encampment, which, in fact, is deliberately tolerated or even desired by the authorities. It is presented as a place of violence, crime, chaos, and destitution, in which the state lets refugees live or die without consequences. As Nuri enters the park, he relates: "beneath the ferns and palm trees we saw a small village of tents and people sprawled on blankets. The place was dirty, even in the open air there were horrible smells: rot and urine. […] A few people walked their dogs, pensioners sat talking on the benches and, deeper still, drug addicts prepared their fixes" (Lefteri 2020a: 219). Non-governmental organisations' workers bring refugees to live there, even though they know that the place is dangerous. In Pedion tou Areos, Nuri sees drug addicts and dealers, notices men whom he supposes to be gang members, and almost makes friends with a man called Nadim, who self-mutilates, cuts Nuri's hand with a knife, and turns out to be a paedophile.

In the park, even more profoundly than in the Leros refugee camp, "it seem[s] as if everyone had been forgotten" (Lefteri 2020a: 242). For Nuri, life in the encampment creates the impression that one is stuck and unable to leave. He wants to move to a safer place, but he feels as if he could not, as though held by a mysterious force. One night, a lynch mob chases and kills Nadim because they discover his crime. Nuri participates in the murder and strikes Nadim's head with a bat that someone hands him. Although Nuri is concerned that he will be punished for participating in the lynching, Nadim's death remains unnoticed by the authorities. Like the ancient *homo sacer*, he is killed with impunity, and his death is not considered homicide, which satisfies Agamben's definition (1998: 8). This event depicts refugees in the city encampment as lives inconsequential to the state. To use Mbembe's terminology, refugees in the Athenian park are "virulent bodies", "human waste", or "'surplus' people", who can be left to live, die, or be destroyed (2024: 82). The violence inflicted upon and dehumanisation of foreigners in refugee camps, as depicted in Lefteri's novel, is one of the signs of the brutalisation of modern politics and societies, as theorised by Mbembe.

[26] I am aware of the ethically dubious character of the quotation by Rudolf Diels used by Agamben in his work. Although it is a bold suggestion, I use it here because the words of the Nazi commander demonstrate yet another similarity between the concentration camp, its metaphorical potential as highlighted by Agamben, and the refugee camp.

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At one point, Nuri makes a disconcerting observation that for many refugees "Pedion tou Areos was becoming like a new home […]: shoes lined up next to the blankets and tents, clothes hanging from trees, games of cards and music and singing" (Lefteri 2020a: 296). It seems that the refugees have begun to accept their life there. They try to make the encampment look like an ordinary place to live: they cook, rearrange the space around them, and keep it tidy. The feeling of being forgotten and unable to leave may lead them to believe that they have no choice but to tolerate the inhumane conditions of life in the city camp and to agree to the destitution, precariousness, and marginalisation. The fact that they do not actively contest their position of *homines sacri* may mean that the biopolitics of the state influences their sense of self so much that their notions of a liveable place and home are distorted.

Despite all that, the Pedion tou Areos encampment is also depicted as a place of hope. Non-governmental organisations provide medical assistance and offer food to the refugees who stay there, which brings some relief and testifies to a sense of communal care. The relationships among refugees also help them to find consolation as they share the pain of dislocation and poverty. Afra and Nuri become acquainted and support one another with Angeliki, a Black woman, whose infant child has been kidnapped. Her grief and longing for the child are embodied through the fact that her breasts still leak milk. A sense of tragic irony is created when they encounter a woman who desperately needs to feed her baby, but her breasts do not lactate. A feeling of hope is generated when the woman's breasts begin to produce milk, and Angeliki's stains of milk on her shirt dry off for a day, as if there has been a symbolic exchange between them. Moreover, Nuri finds "*The Hope Centre*", where Afra can shower, drink tea, and where other refugees' children can play in a safe environment (Lefteri 2020a: 285, italics original). Discovering the place helps Nuri to regain the determination to escape the stagnation of life in the city encampment. Eventually, Afra and Nuri leave the park because they find a smuggler who promises them a passage to England. They believe that the smuggler's services can save them from a life of violence and destitution in Pedion tou Areos.

In El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise*, the description of the refugee camp on the unnamed island is sparse, but it contains details about the refugees' living conditions that lend themselves to a political analysis. The camp that Amir and Vänna visit to meet Madame El Ward comprises a sports hall and a soccer field, which used to be part of a nearby school and are now occupied by tents and "rows and rows of low steel cots" (El Akkad 2021: 95). Throughout several chapters, the place is called "a temporary

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holding center" (2021: 91), "a […] pen for those without country" (2021: 82), and even "that zoo" (El Akkad 2021: 81). The camp is heavily overpopulated. In the conversation with Colonel Kethros, El Ward estimates that the camp houses about six hundred people, whereas its primary purpose is to hold only three hundred refugees (El Akkad 2021: 114). It is guarded by police and coast guard officers and fenced, which makes it seem as if it were under "passive siege" (El Akkad 2021: 91).

The irony concerning the location of the camp is that a safe space for physical education, "originally designed to hold insolent teenagers" (El Akkad 2021: 91), is turned into a place of exclusion and uncertainty and, as a result, becomes unsuitable for children. It is a paradox: a school building is not an appropriate place for young boys and girls. Amir is visibly afraid of the camp and does not want to stay there. As El Ward describes it: "We have children who can't sleep through the night, we have people who don't talk anymore, who try to slit their wrists with canned-food lids. This place is hell" (El Akkad 2021: 114). As in Agier's observations (2023: 88–90), under the guise of humanitarian aid, the refugee camp is a place of control and exclusion.

The camp's main coordinator, Nimra El Ward, is a retired French teacher and a volunteer. Like Vänna, she is a daughter of immigrants. Her name can be read as her function in the camp and in the narrative. She is supposed to "ward", that is, protect and guard the refugees, but she may also be seen as a "warden". She lets Amir leave the camp with Vänna because she believes that the boy "stands a better chance" if he finds "a community of people from the same place he came from" on the mainland (El Akkad 2021: 101). However, in doing this, she does not provide Amir with any substantial protection. She merely attempts to "ward off" the danger of Amir's extreme isolation in the camp. She does not stall Amir on his journey, but at the same time, she does not guarantee him safety.

The camp depicted in El Akkad's novel is a place whose purpose is to transform migrating persons into nameless entities by erasing them from public space and dehumanising them in the eyes of the camp guards and the island's inhabitants. Referring to Diken's conceptualisation, one can see that the camp in *What Strange Paradise* is a space of "indistinction": a depersonalising "non-place" (Diken 2010: 91; Augé 1995). Refugees in the camp lose connection with the outside world. Their mobility is not just limited; it is non-existent. The scattered description of the camp and the events presented in the narrative suggest that, unlike in the Leros camp presented in Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, the refugees held in this camp cannot venture outside.

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They are detained in the facility while their asylum applications are being processed or because they await deportation. Moreover, the former gymnasium building neither bears any signs that it once belonged to a school nor does it indicate that it serves as a refugee camp now: "the wide, squat building stands absent public identity, a nowhere place" (El Akkad 2021: 94). The formal anonymity of the camp makes it disappear from the public realm. From the perspective of Foucault's definition, it is a perfect heterotopia: even though it occupies physical space and one may know its location, the institution does not officially have a name or function. According to the ancient concept of *sacer* invoked by Agamben (1998: 73–83), the whole camp is made "sacred", that is, separated and taken away from the world of ordinary life and other people. Being made sacred for a *homo sacer* is a form of infamy: it is a punishment that makes them vulnerable to harm since anyone can kill them with impunity. Consequently, the question that arises in this analysis is whether being made to live in a refugee camp is a form of punishment for being foreign and without a country.

Such a "colonial rationale" (Agier 2023: 88) behind detaining refugees in the camp is further emphasised by their dehumanisation. They do not develop any relations with the guards or the local population, to whom they remain unidentified people in "that zoo […] in the school gymnasium" (El Akkad 2021: 81). For instance, the company that provides supplies to the camp disregards refugees' health and lives. Amir and Vänna witness a phone call in which El Ward accuses the company of transporting drinking water in the same container in which it has previously delivered fuel, thus contaminating the water. It is a challenge for the administrator to create liveable conditions in the camp, as local suppliers and guards show indifference to the refugees' fate. The description of the camp explains that the officers and soldiers are "as alien to the people inside the facility as those people are to them" (El Akkad 2021: 91). Although the guards and the refugees stay in close proximity and see one another every day, they do not truly meet and remain strangers. The third-person narrator states that the soldiers stationed on the island to guard the refugee camp are not trained for this purpose, but for war and combat, which might result in their hurting the people whom they are supposed to protect: "For years these soldiers have been taught to wield hammers, only to come to the island and find not nails, but glass". This comment implies that the soldiers, who are conditioned to "be rid of a certain kind of human reticence" (El Akkad 2021: 92), might regard refugees as hostile and abuse them.

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The depiction of the camp in *What Strange Paradise* focuses on the political aspects of the institution and the sociopolitical status of refugees. It highlights the immobility and isolation of refugees and presents them as unlawfully detained. The fact that the camp is erased from the public space and does not bear any official markings, the overall atmosphere of danger and "passive siege" (El Akkad 2021: 91) engendered by the presence of soldiers and police officers whose training is inadequate for their posting, and the indifference of the local population contribute to the image of the camp as "a nowhere place" (2021: 94), in which human life cannot thrive. In the conversation with Vänna, El Ward explains to the girl that "[s]ometimes [refugees are] made to live in places like this gymnasium for a very long time, sometimes they're sent to places…" (El Akkad 2021: 100). This abrupt pause may indicate that some refugees from the island are deported or relocated to other camps. El Ward tries to tell Vänna that a child refugee like Amir can be left stranded in the camp and neglected by the authorities. Consequently, the refugee camp becomes a place where foreign individuals are interned for an unspecified time. The camp featured in El Akkad's novel is a heterotopia, a heterochrony, and one of the "spaces of banishment" (Mbembe 2024: 37), in which refugees are re-traumatised and subjugated as political objects and bare life.

The refugee camps presented in Lefteri's and El Akkad's novels are non-places where movement and time come to a standstill. Refugees' lives seem suspended. In the Leros camp, the Pedion tou Areos tent city, and the unnamed island's camp, the real interweaves and comes into a state of indistinction with the surreal. The half-deserted Leros village and former leper colony buildings are located next to modern-day accommodation containers. Ordinary life in the Athenian park continues beside numerous refugee tents and blankets, and not far from the criminal activities of gangs, drug dealers, paedophiles, and smugglers. Transformed into a refugee camp, the sports hall and football pitch now house steel beds and tents instead of school games. In these camps, the usual rules of social conduct and of what is considered "regular" behaviour do not apply. Moreover, refugees are aware of the fact that their dignity and political subjectivity are taken away from them. The living conditions and organisation of space in the camps depicted in the novels force refugees to live in a type of survival mode, which frequently means prolonged stress, a sense of constant danger, continued vigilance and wariness, a shortage of food, and recurring difficulties in satisfying one's basic needs.

To briefly compare the camps from the novels, one should observe that the Leros refugee camp is a heterotopia, but it is not completely erased from the public realm.

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The refugees from this camp can visit the nearby village and are welcomed by its inhabitants. For instance, a nearby café offers them free coffee and provides space for social gatherings. The refugees are confined to the island, but they may leave the camp during the day. In contrast, the gymnasium camp in El Akkad's novel is a closed facility separated from the island, and the refugees who live there are in fact detainees. It constitutes not only a heterotopia on the island and a heterochrony in the refugees' lives but also an extreme violation of their human rights.

The following quotation by Achille Mbembe can serve as a final reflection in the present analysis: "The intention of arresting them [refugees] and placing them in camps is rather—after subjecting them to a state of waiting in which they are stripped of common-law status—to make them subjects able to be deported, repressed, and even destroyed" (2024: 111). According to the critic, refugee camps are one of many signs which testify to the increase of brutalisation in social and political life around the globe. He observes that biopolitics and the domination of violence in political affairs co-occur with the constant growth of contemporary capitalism, rapid technological advancement, and a planetary climate crisis. In a world governed by biopolitics and the "quantifying logic" of modern technology, migrating persons become "debased bodies—in short, humanity in distress" (Mbembe 2024: 33–34). Drawing on Mbembe's anthropo-political theory, one can argue that the portrayals of refugee camps in the works of fiction analysed here illustrate the extreme biological desire to govern not independent human beings and "persons-as-such" (Edkins 2011: 11) but masses of bodies "in distress" that undergo the processes of "capturing, identifying, dividing, sorting, selecting, and classifying" (Mbembe 2024: 33).

4.2.3. How the status of the refugee-*homo sacer* influences narrative identity constructions

This part examines how the depictions of contemporary refugees as *homines sacri* influence the characters' narrative identity formation in fiction. It connects the methodology and concepts of Ricœur's philosophy of narrative identity with the problems of political philosophy. The link between Ricœur's notion of *ipse* identity and political concepts developed by Agamben and Edkins may not be immediately obvious. However, I suggest that a person cannot be fully free to construct and reconstruct

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their narrative self and maintain their *ipse* identity as an ever-developing self-constancy unless they are recognised and see themselves as free agents who can engage in genuine power relations with the state's administration and its citizens.

Not having a secure foundation of political subjectivity may translate into uncertainty and precariousness in forming one's narrative identity. Afra and Nuri, the refugees in Lefteri's novel, are constructed as fragmented and traumatised selves due to, among other factors, the fact that their political subjectivities and narrative identities are disrupted by the European system of official refugee camps, unofficial encampments, human smuggling, and asylum seekers' reception centres and accommodation. In these places and situations, Afra and Nuri function as contemporary *homines sacri*: sacred people. To be made "sacred" in this context means to be cut off from society, separated from ordinary places of residence and work, and excommunicated from the *polis*: the political realm. In this sense, it is "sacredness" *à rebours*, which verges on the profane. As a result, Arfa's and Nuri's narrative identities are constructed as lacking constancy, continuity, and stability.

The characters of refugees discussed here are not treated as and, as a result, do not perceive themselves as autonomous "persons-as-such". They are deprived of the opportunity to construct narrative selves and uphold their sense of identity and self-constancy because they can rarely tell their stories from their perspectives. Afra, Nuri, Amir, and other refugees in Lefteri's and El Akkad's novels are taken care of as numbers, "verifiable […] entities" (Lefteri 2020a: 157), and objects of care. Seldom are they perceived by the authorities, non-governmental organisations and other people as "persons-as-such", individual lives, and independent agents. For refugee and asylum institutions, they are problems which have to be managed, not people who can be cared for. Moreover, they internalise and embody their objectification and dehumanisation. They begin to perceive themselves as "what" rather than "who". Their personal narratives are reduced to stories of "what" they become – refugees, outcasts, undesirables, *homines sacri*, asylum applicants, or detainees – and they forget the "who" aspect, which includes such categories as mothers and fathers, someone's children, widows and widowers, sisters and brothers, cousins, friends, partners, and associates. Even Nayeri's protagonist in *Refuge*, Niloo, although she is not explicitly depicted as a refugee-*homo sacer*, experiences difficulties in establishing a coherent self-image and in constructing her narrative identity as uninterrupted, continuous, and uncomplicated. If the sphere of politics included such "unpolitical" relations and classifications as family

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and friendship, it would begin to transform itself from biopolitics into the politics of the "who" question (Edkins 2011: 9–13).

The sociopolitical status of refugees as contemporary *homines sacri* makes it difficult for them to construct fully coherent stories of the traditional beginning-middle-and-end structure, which can confirm Ricœur's doubts concerning the Aristotelian narrative paradigm of wholeness (Ricœur 1984: 38). This realisation inspires fiction that constructs refugee characters as fragmented and fractured selves whose political existence as bare life is one of the factors that affect the fragmentation and distortion of their narrative identities. Refugees are portrayed as persons whose biopolitical subjugation, objectification, and isolation in camps and other types of refugee reception accommodation render their identities discontinuous and unable to undergo the process of narrative configuration and refiguration into coherent and self-constant identities. Their identities cannot become *ipse* identities, whose *peripeteia* and episodes are reconnected and reformulated as one story, again forming an evolved identity that incorporates changes, reconceptualisations, and difficulties instead of being broken by them. Although certain narratives discussed here include open endings that may suggest a horizon of hope for refugee characters, their narrative identities remain in a state of politically induced uncertainty. Their status as contemporary *homines sacri* and their bare lives are depicted by contemporary fiction as exerting a negative influence on their ability to construct and develop coherent narrative identities. In this regard, refugees' identities exist in narratives and as narratives. Their identities are constructed and narrated in fiction as fragmented and damaged, partly due to the violent, controlling measures of sovereign power.

4.3. Migrants as bare life

This subchapter analyses the sociopolitical status of selected migrant and second-generation characters to study how they are constructed in fiction as transformed into bare life. I argue that racialisation and racial embodiment are the primary factors that greatly contribute to the phenomenon of turning migrants and certain second-generation individuals into bare life in modern societies. Migrants are often portrayed as stripped of their political existence as full members of the *polis* and as individuals dehumanised and brutalised as sheer biological *zoē* because of a social climate of racialisation.

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Furthermore, works of contemporary migrant literature tend to feature settings that can be characterised as diasporic or multicultural districts and neighbourhoods, in which migrants and their children can be transformed into bare life and prevented from returning to the position of freely speaking and acting agents: the Arendtian *zoon politikon*.

Catherine Mills critiques Agamben's work and points out that he fails to problematise racism in his theory of biopolitics. Agamben argues that any person can be degraded to the position of bare life, but he does not clarify "why that virtual exclusion and abandonment is actualized in some cases and not others" (Mills 2018: 75). According to Mills, describing the function of racism in biopolitics could improve Agamben's analyses (2018: 75). To some extent, all works of fiction analysed in this chapter present the processes through which racism produces bare life. Especially Brand and Chariandy emphasise that Black migrants' lives are heavily affected by racialisation and racial embodiment.

The first part of this subchapter concentrates on analysing the main characters of David Chariandy's *Brother* and interpreting the novel's depiction of Scarborough in the 1990s and early 2000s. The brothers' political status as Canadian citizens and, at the same time, "second-generation immigrants" is considered in the context of police surveillance and racialisation, which tend to permeate sociopolitical power relations of migrants and their children. The section also discusses a short story titled "Without Inspection" from Edwidge Danticat's collection *Everything Inside* (2019). The second subsection focuses on several instances of racialisation and racial embodiment as presented in Chariandy's *Brother* and Dionne Brand's "Train to Montreal", examining how they affect migrants' social and political status. The final paragraphs aim to reflect on the influence that racialisation and transformation into bare life exert on migrants' and second-generation individuals' narrative identity constructions in fiction.

4.3.1. Migrants and second-generation individuals under surveillance

In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Dionne Brand states that:

> In many senses the Black body is one of the most regulated bodies in the Diaspora. […] By regulated I mean that there are specific societal functions which it is put to, quite outside of its own agency — functions which in fact deny and resist its agency. It is as if its first appearance through the Door of No Return, dressed in its new habit of captive and

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> therefore slave, is embedded in all its subsequent and contemporary appearances. (2023b: 37)

She notices an analogy of captivity and deprivation of agency between the images of Black African slaves, who are forced as human cargo onto ships embarking on the Middle Passage, and people in the Black diaspora nowadays, whose racialisation and constant "regulation" of their bodies deprive them of their "function" as political subjects who can speak and act openly and demand equal rights.

Michael and Francis in Chariandy's *Brother* are Canadian citizens, born in Canada. Nevertheless, their physical appearance, certain features of their pronunciation, and their family's ancestry lead other characters to categorise them as "second-generation immigrants", even though, strictly speaking, they are not migrants. As signalled by Himani Bannerji (2000: 112), the core of the problem is that their skin, articulation, and Trinidadian descent are "read" by others as visible signs that they must have migrated to Canada with their mother. This alone constitutes a racialising dismissal of their rights as Canadian citizens in the eyes of other members of the nation and society that they are a part of. After a shooting in Scarborough, in which a young Black man, Anton, dies, newspapers "[write] in that old and ready-made language about 'immigrants' and 'ethnic neighbourhoods' and 'sending people back where they came from,' even though most in the Park knew that the suspects had all been raised in the surrounding city" (Chariandy 2019: 73). This phenomenon of denying young Black people their status of citizens is one of the areas of Francis and Michael's political existence in which they are racialised. How white Canadians perceive them, politically, becomes what they are forced to live as: not full members of the Canadian nation, but rather foreigners, and, in Chariandy's own words, "discomfortingly intimate stranger[s] born here [in Canada]" (2007: 819).

Another element of Francis and Michael's political reality is police surveillance, which forms a panopticon-like atmosphere in the multiracial neighbourhood of Scarborough, which is "a wasteland on the outskirts of a sprawling city" nicknamed "Scar-*bro*, a suburb that had mushroomed up and yellowed, browned, and blackened into life" (Chariandy 2019: 13, italics original). The Park, the part of the district where the main characters live, is a "cluster of low-rises and townhomes and leaning concrete apartment towers set […] against a sky dull purple with the wasted light of the city" (Chariandy 2019: 5). Michael, Francis, and other young people from Scarborough experience routine police stop-and-searches. As Michael recounts, when the police arrest him and his brother for a short time on the day Anton is shot, the brothers know how to

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behave because they "had been stopped by the cops before" (Chariandy 2019: 29). They "pla[y] along" and are "released, if not with [their] dignity, then at least with [their] skin" (Chariandy 2019: 29). The need to answer a police officer's call and comply with their orders may bring to mind Louis Althusser's concept of interpellation or "hailing". "[I]deology hails or interpellates [names, identifies] individuals as subjects" in society, just as a police officer stops a person in the street by calling on them to respond as "suspects" (Althusser 2001: 118–119). However, Michael and Francis are not hailed or interpellated as subjects but as Black bodies. Police interpellation in Scarborough does not produce subjects but rather racialised objects of power. This, in turn, resembles the instance of racialised interpellation recounted by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*. On a train, a white boy exclaims: "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!", which produces the Black man as an object within "a racial epidermal schema" (Fanon 2008: 84).

Police searches constitute routine "intrusions" into the life at Desirea's, the barbershop and club where Francis lives and creates music with a multiracial and multinational group of young people. The police "appear[e] in force", dressed "in bulky vests", and with their expressions "cold-eyed with purpose" (2019: 116). Their asking to be let into the barbershop "wasn't really a request" (Chariandy 2019: 116). The way a young policeman acts towards Francis and his closest friend, Jelly, discloses the officers' intention to harass, hidden behind the pretext of a drug search. When a policeman touches Jelly in a rapid gesture, Francis exclaims: "Don't touch him!" (Chariandy 2019: 117). He feels that the privacy and bodily integrity of his friends are violated and wants to resist unjustified physical coercion. When the police enter Desirea's again after Francis is severely beaten by "bouncers" at a DJ contest audition, "[there are] many cops this time, more than the last time, and they [are] geared up, sweating in their vests" (Chariandy 2019: 157). Although he is in excruciating pain, Francis demands that the officers tell him why they are being searched: "'What did we do?' […] 'You give me an explanation […] today'" (2019: 158–159). Francis is shot and murdered: "I'd seen a cop grab Jelly's arm. 'Don't *touch* him,' Francis said, and it was over" (Chariandy 2019: 159, italics original).

I believe that the situation, as Michael narrates it, indicates that Francis, a young Black man in Scarborough, lives in a certain sphere of exception before he is killed. He is always-already a racialised body in the eyes of white police officers. His rights are not the full rights of a citizen, and his privilege to demand an answer from the policemen and to protect his friends from police violence is suspended. Francis is turned into

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an object of power because the officers think him dangerous. The sheer description of Francis's appearance after the beating might connote certain biological or even animalistic features of a human being. His face is swollen, he is bleeding, and he cannot stand straight. However, his most important characteristic is his Black skin. He is "read" by the police through his Blackness as denoting inferiority, danger, and criminal behaviour. To borrow Bannerji's words, Francis is "labelled as a visible and minority body" by the police, and his Blackness, his bruised face, and the context of the barbershop are perceived as "signifiers of inferiority" (2000: 107–108). He is racially, culturally, and politically coded as a criminal and as an object of sovereign power. Later on, the way Francis is killed is called "lawful" by police investigators (Chariandy 2019: 171). This demonstrates that everyone, including citizens, can be deprived of their full civil rights and made bare life through racialisation. A racialised person is objectified and murdered without consequences if the state deems it necessary to protect the biological life of other citizens.

Yet another aspect of racialisation and racism that Chariandy discusses in his novel is overwork and humiliating working conditions that Michael and his mother endure. In her article on *Brother*, Basmah Rahman states that "[i]mmigrant labour as expendable is apparent through Mother's exhausted 'limbs' feeling 'like meat'; the constant overwork dehumanizes Mother" (2022: 87). The woman works as a cleaner and a part-time childminder to support her family. As Rahman puts it, the mother's "endless work ethic" places her in "the capitalist cycle for survival", in which she is objectified, unprotected, and made "expendable"[27] as a Black immigrant labourer (2022: 85–87). Michael endures humiliation in his workplace, an Easy Buy supermarket. Although also brought up in the Park, Manny, the store's assistant manager, derides and "lectures" Michael publicly. In addition, he "conducts surprise searches of our lockers for drugs and minor thefts, searches that never result in any finds" and which violate the rights of the staff (Chariandy 2019: 42). Even though Michael is not a new or part-time employee, he senses that his employment is precarious. He is afraid of being dismissed if he so much as arrives late to work or fails to show up for a shift.

Using Arendt's and Aristotle's concepts, one can argue that in the eyes of their employers and managers, Michael and his mother are reduced to the position of *animal laborans*, who work only to survive and secure their basic needs. When interpreted in

[27] According to *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, the secondary meaning of "expendable" is as follows: "more easily or economically replaced than rescued, salvaged, or protected" ("Expendable" 2025).

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such a framework, there is a sharp contrast between Michael's and his mother's jobs and Francis and Jelly's shared dream of becoming hip-hop artists. Francis desires to be a *zoon politikon*, a "political animal", who can speak publicly and create art, not only labour for survival and produce goods. Although Francis does not aspire to become a politician in the literal sense, he and Jelly want their music to speak for them. According to Aristotle, "voice" and "speech" are what distinguish human beings from animals. They make the former "political animals" and, as a consequence, members of a community and a *polis* (Aristotle 1.1253a[28], trans. Reeve 1998: 4). In the Aristotelian sense, the young men's music is their "speech" which demands not only that they be granted equal access to the means of cultural production and representation in Canada but also that their full rights as citizens of the state be recognised by other members of society.

The figure of a Black migrant from the Caribbean is also present in Danticat's short story titled "Without Inspection" from the collection *Everything Inside*. Arnold may be called a refugee or an "undocumented immigrant" who enters the United States "without inspection" ("Undocumented immigrant" 2022); that is, he does not meet any immigration officials upon arrival. Officially, he does not exist in the United States: "technically, he wasn't even here" (Danticat 2019: loc. 2531). He occupies a peculiar political sphere where the categories of refugee and immigrant enter into, to borrow Agamben's phrase from a slightly different context, "a zone of indistinction" (Agamben 1998: 4). He arrives by boat and swims to shore, is rescued by his future wife, Darline, and lives and works as a construction worker under a false identity: "Ernesto Fernandez from Santiago de Cuba" (Danticat 2019: loc. 2503). He leaves Haiti because he wants to escape poverty and violence. However, he is not an asylum seeker and settles down in Miami with Darline and her son, Paris, whom he symbolically adopts. At the same time, if the police captured him, he would be detained. As Darline tells him: "they would have taken you to Krome, […] [i]t's a prison for people like us" (Danticat 2019: loc. 2403). Krome Detention Centre features in Danticat's family memoir, *Brother, I'm Dying* (2007), as the place where the writer's uncle is imprisoned after claiming asylum and dies without proper medical help.

Politically, Arnold is reduced to naked life. When he dies at the construction site by falling off a scaffolding, the media identify him as Ernesto Fernandez. The only people who know and may mourn him as Arnold from Haiti are his family, Darline and Paris.

[28] The citation uses the system adopted by the translator, C.D.C. Reeve, to indicate specific positions in Aristotle's *Politics*. The position indicated here is located in Book I, Chapter 2.

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Danticat's short story highlights a sharp contrast between biopolitics, in which Arnold exists as bare life or does not exist at all, and the politics of the "who" and the "person-as-such" (Edkins 2011: viii–xiii). While he is dying, his body crushed by a cement mixer that he falls into, his consciousness detaches from his body and travels to see Darline at work and his son at school. As Edkins (2011) postulates, Arnold's relations are the most meaningful part of his identity. Nevertheless, as Judith Misrahi-Barak argues, his "immigrant's body […] cannot be accepted in the host country" (2021: 44). The Black migrant in Danticat's short story holds on to life and attempts to push himself out of the cement truck, but his body is metaphorically rejected "as though a wrathful hand had pulled the straps off him, tipped him on his side, and tossed him into the air" (Danticat 2019: loc. 2369). The racialisation and the state's biopolitics erase Arnold's true identity, force him to work under an assumed name, and eventually destroy even his bare life, his body "moving too fast to be identifiable as a human being" and then "evaporating" (Danticat 2019: loc. 2586).

4.3.2. Racialisation and racial embodiment

This section focuses on racialisation and the phenomenon of racial embodiment, aiming to further interpret Chariandy's *Brother* and, subsequently, Brand's "Train to Montreal", as these two works present instances of systemic, individual, and unconscious racism. In Chariandy's novel, Francis and Michael encounter systemic racialisation through the systems of public schooling and policing in Canada. The female protagonist and focaliser of Brand's short story meets individuals who racialise her publicly or do not realise why their behaviour and opinions are racialising. All these instances of racialisation affect the characters' self-perception and make them rethink their relation to their bodies, skin, and their positions in society as political subjects.

As students in a public school, Chariandy's main characters are discriminated against and never allowed to reach their full academic potential. Michael and Francis are "streamed out of an academic program into a basic one" (Chariandy 2019: 24), which means that they are placed in a group of students whose grades are similarly low to theirs, and who are perceived by teachers as unlikely to succeed. After Francis tells a teacher to "fuck off", he is "expelled with threats to call the police" (Chariandy 2019: 24). The discrimination against the young brothers at school causes them to believe that they

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are not academically gifted enough to excel in a standardised system of education, even though they are both interested in reading and culture. Michael remembers that "[f]rom the age of seven, Francis could read. He read books, of course, regularly and well into his teens" (Chariandy 2019: 16). Aisha and Michael often visit the public library in the Park. Michael is an avid reader himself, reading, for instance, several books about "complicated grief" after Francis's passing (Chariandy 2019: 66). As Rahman contends, young Black males depicted in *Brother* are criminalised within the system of public education in Canada, which means that they are not seen as children or teenagers who can be allowed to enjoy their childhood and youth (2022: 90).

Racialisation is also visible in how the Scarborough police treat and criminalise Black youth in the Park. First of all, Francis is killed by an officer because he and his friends at Desirea's are considered to be dangerous and have been accused of several minor wrongdoings, such as smoking marijuana (Chariandy 2019: 117). The police officers' racialising assumptions that young Black men are untrustworthy and that they should be subjected to frequent searches and police surveillance are some of the reasons why Francis is shot when he tries to question the police's motives and protects Jelly at the barbershop by physically preventing an officer from drawing his gun (Chariandy 2019: 171). Second, the police surveillance executed in the Park forms a racialising panopticon structure aimed especially at young people. Some time after the shooting in which Anton dies, Aisha and Michael spot as many as three police cars parked in close vicinity: "then a siren wailed […]. A cop car pulled up beside a group of young men who had been walking down the sidewalk" (2019: 60). Sounding a siren without need only to question the young men in the street "trigger[s] every one of us" and destroys "[t]he fragile peace" of the neighbourhood (Chariandy 2019: 60–61). This type of police activity presented in Chariandy's novel is a critical commentary on police racism in multiracial and multicultural districts, in which many residents are first-generation and so-called "second-generation" migrants. *Brother* not only discusses the problem of systemic racialisation of young Black people but also proposes a reflection on how racialisation transforms citizens into second-class subjects and reduces them to categories such as foreigners and strangers.

In the short story "Train to Montreal", Brand's protagonist, a Black woman, faces two different instances of racialisation, one of which seems to stem from an unconscious racialising ideology. On the train, a young white hippie man with a guitar sits beside the woman. As they talk about racism, colonialism, Africa, "the Panthers", and "the old

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days, the Soviet Union and the United States" (Brand 2023a: 27, 30), she realises that in articulating his views, such as: "I abhor violence of any kind. I don't care which side you're on" (2023a: 28), the young man never feels the need to think about his body and race. To the female protagonist, he appears to be free from such concerns as racialisation and resistance to it: "He was so comfortable with himself" (Brand 2023a: 28). The racialisation in the hippie's beliefs is not violent, and it remains in his unconscious because he does not perceive the world in terms of race or skin. Although he is "hippie-like" and one of "[w]hite liberals", as the protagonist derisively observes, and his views might seem anti-establishment for some people in Canada in the 1980s, he can hide in his whiteness as if behind a mask. As Frank Chouraqui expresses it, the white man lives in his "own pre-racialised context", in which "[r]acelessness is a fantasy of the dominant race" (2021: 190). Through free indirect speech, the narrator describes that "[h]e had a calmness in his body […] his look of firmness and belonging" (Brand 2023a: 29). The woman "find[s] him so settled in the comfort of his skin—his camouflage here, in the train, and in the city" (Brand 2023a: 30) that she knows she cannot build genuine rapport with the man. Despite his openness and superficial liberalism, he benefits from a racialising climate within Canadian society.

The other event of racialisation that the woman confronts once she gets off the train in Montreal is an instance of double discrimination: racism and misogyny. The men who shout racist insults at her on the escalator make her Black body hypervisible in the most violent way by calling her a "Nigger whore [sic]" (Brand 2023a: 36). Using the perspective of Linda Martín Alcoff's phenomenology of racial embodiment, one can see that the men usurp the power to judge the woman's racial identity and dehumanise her because, as they assume, her identity is "coded through visible inscriptions on the body" (Alcoff 1999: 23). To the young white hippie on the train, her Blackness and womanhood are invisible as he does not conceive of these qualities in a political way. To the group of drunk, "gray-suited and red-faced" men (Brand 2023a: 35), she is an object of racialisation and misogyny. Having its roots in colonial mentality, this specific type of individual racialisation targeted against Black women, or women of colour in general, attempts to deprive them of their freedom, confidence, and agency in social "micro-interactions in which racialization operates" (Alcoff 1999: 17).

The protagonist of the short story experiences her racialisation in the body. After the racist incident, the woman feels humiliated and is in shock, "[h]er ears ringing as if slapped" (Brand 2023a: 36). She wants "to be invisible […] to move herself,

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her head, without being noticed" (2023a: 36). Earlier on the train, she is uneasy and wary of the white passengers surrounding her. She senses that her Black body is the unwanted body: "[s]he anticipated all the other seats, except the one beside her, filling up" (Brand 2023a: 25). This literary portrayal of racial embodiment can be compared with a sense of alienation and displacement conveyed in a poem by Brand titled "Afro West Indian Immigrant", originally published in the author's debut poetry collection '*Fore Day Morning* in 1978, ten years before *Sans Souci and Other Stories* was published. The lyrical persona is "[s]cared, surprised / trying desperately to appear unperplexed", but despite the effort, they "feel like a palm tree / at the corner of Bloor and Yonge [a Toronto intersection] / in a wild snow storm" (Brand 1994: 183). Like the "Afro West Indian" in the poem, the protagonist of "Train to Montreal" is a Black immigrant who feels out of place in Canada. She is, "given all this time, […] alarmed […] still […] at the sight of white faces" on a crowded train (Brand 2023a: 25). The short story and the poem both communicate a sense of unbelonging and extreme self-awareness, which are experienced through bodily sensations.

Racial embodiment, understood as the corporeal internalisation of and bodily responses towards racialisation, is depicted in Chariandy's novel and Brand's short story in various ways. Alcoff's research into the phenomenology of racial embodiment, which draws, among others, on Frantz Fanon's works, emphasises the entanglement of three elements related to the notion of race: first, other people's "learned processes" and racialising "habit[s] of perception" (Alcoff 1999: 23); second, a person's capacity to sense their racialisation in the body; and third, the distortion of their sense of self that they experience as racialised objects: "Racial identity, then, permeates our being in the world, our being-with-others, and our consciousness of our self as a being-for-others" (1999: 25). The protagonist of "Train to Montreal" imagines that children on the train may start chanting a racist song. When she stands up from her seat to go to the washroom, "feeling the eyes of strangers turning toward her", she experiences "[f]ear, spreading fern-like through her. […] Back in the seat, she raised her hand to her hot face. She tried to make her breath even" (Brand 2023a: 33). Her body responds to racialisation even before her mind realises that what she feels is others' gaze upon her Black body. The narration in "Train to Montreal" often oscillates towards demonstrating the protagonist's bodily sensations. When she hears racist insults from the drunk white man, she feels paralysed and unable to respond and fight back: "*I should have yelled and*

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screamed. Should have answered, cursed, smashed his mouth. I should have killed him" (Brand 2023a: 37, italics original). Instead, she realises that she is stupefied and angry:

> This, bursting against her head and hot face. She followed. Unconsciously. Letting Jay take her bag and her shoulders. She tried to get the feeling back into her legs, by walking firmly. She had let herself be humiliated without saying a word. She had been astonished, not known what to say. Astonishment. The moment on the escalator. The silence of the others. The voice spitting up. The smiles. Just that moment when she looked back, hearing the rough, click, grind, hardness of the sound under her feet, sinistering to her ears like a shell pink, fleshy, red leering. The man's face. (Brand 2023a: 37)

These fragments illustrate how her response to racialisation and public humiliation unfolds in her body. Racialisation literally and metaphorically paralyses and disempowers her, and makes her body seem weak.

Chariandy's characters are also coerced into embodying their racialisation and into believing that what is assumed about them is true. Their skin is read in a racialising framework for so long and with such intensity that their bodies become the sites of struggle for subjectivity and agency. When the brothers are young boys, a television news program imposes on them an image of Black men as criminals and "the black murderers", of whom they should be afraid (Chariandy 2019: 155). Donna Bailey Nurse (2017) describes this moment in the novel as "[e]xcruciating", because "Francis and Michael will soon learn they are the black men society has taught them to fear". In this way, public and media discourses in Canada teach them to internalise their racialisation and sense of inferiority.

The characters' bodily reactions are also emphasised at certain points of the narrative. Aisha and Michael are "triggered" by a police siren, and the neighbourhood's peace is "broken" by it (Chariandy 2019: 60). When a policewoman, "a good cop", and her male partner visit Michael and his mother's apartment because of a "noise complaint", "[e]very nerve in [Michael's] body is alert", even though he knows that the woman is friendly and respectful towards the Park's residents (Chariandy 2019: 94). He may experience extreme nervousness in this situation as a post-traumatic reaction, not directly related to racialisation. Nevertheless, it is his body that carries the burden of trauma caused by Francis's death.

In Brand's and Chariandy's fiction, the bodies of the racialised characters are hurt, shot by the police, ignored, insulted, and made hypervisible in public spaces. Racialised people are forced to become self-conscious and hyper-self-aware of their bodies and of what they can and cannot do in society as individuals. Their perception, narratives,

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identities, and social interactions are deeply affected by how they experience and embody their racialisation.

To examine how the selected works of fiction problematise the relationship between narrative and identity in a political climate in which migrants experience coercion, surveillance, political subjugation, and racialisation, through which they are positioned as objects of power and bare life, is a task that cannot be completed in a single dissertation subchapter. However, it is crucial to reflect on how narrating fictional lives within a dehumanising and racialising climate affects the construction of immigrant identities in literature. Migrant and second-generation characters' narrative identities tend to be centred on the motifs of racialisation and racial embodiment, citizenship, policing, and an individual's struggle for freedom in a hostile environment. Racialisation paradoxically renders migrants both invisible and hypervisible at the same time. In Danticat's short story, Arnold, the undocumented migrant, is invisible as he cannot reveal his true Haitian name and identity. In Brand's story, the female protagonist senses her hypervisibility as she is brutally made to embody her racialisation.

The perspectives of Françoise Baylis (2003), William C. Pamerleau (2021), and Daniel Coleman (2006), as discussed in Chapter II, suggest that racism and racial embodiment, which are depicted in the analysed literature, influence migrant and second-generation characters' narrative identity constructions and can distort the Black characters' self-images and narratives. Racialisation deprives Black people of "adequate narrative resources with which to construct a desired identity" (Pamerleau 2021: 217). The racialisation of the Black body, which holds all its silenced histories of slavery and colonialism, is presented in Danticat's, Chariandy's, and Brand's works as a factor that affects and can cause rupture within the unity and the Ricœurian self-constancy of narrative identities of migrants and their descendants, whose bodies – in addition to the silenced past – carry the stories of migration and displacement.

Furthermore, narrative identities of immigrants and second-generation individuals in fiction are often configured through bodily imagery to draw attention to the characters' corporeality and physical experiences. In other words, migrant identities are embodied in narratives. How one experiences their inner sense of selfhood and identification from the outside is narrated through the language of bodily sensations. The racial embodiment of Black characters plays an important role in the works of Chariandy and Brand. The characters' identities and the social positions that they are forced to assume are narrated through their bodies. As the struggle for political subjectivity and freedom

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to speak and act in society occupies a pivotal place in migrant and second-generation characters' narrative identities in fiction, their responses to political coercion and racialisation happen mainly in the body. Chariandy, Danticat, and Brand do not discuss the political status of Black migrants only as a theoretical, intangible problem. All three writers include numerous references to and commentaries on the corporeal nature of their characters' sociopolitical experiences. The detrimental influence of biopolitics upon Black migrant and second-generation identities is not presented in abstract terms but depicted as lived in the body, its racialisation, and rejection.

4.4. Refugees' and migrants' resistance to biopolitics

Studying the depictions of resistance against biopolitics can play a crucial role in interpreting the narrative constructions and configurations of group and individual identities of migrating persons. The ways in which works of fiction portray the resistance of refugees and migrants against various kinds of subjugation can be analysed to understand how the characters' narrative identities are developed in the context of their political awareness. As Edkins and Pin-Fat argue, taking inspiration from Foucault's ideas, "power relations entail resistance" (2004: 2). The forms and practices of resistance and rebellion, be they large or small, communal and organised or individual and non-systematic, reflect how one understands their relation to the system of biopolitical power. Edkins and Pin-Fat note that if one insists that their existence is not only bare life but also political life, their resistance to biopolitics should be focused on regaining their place in political relations and asserting that their life and personhood are politically meaningful (2004: 7–8).

Furthermore, resistance against biopolitics tends to happen in the spheres of life that the state desires to oppress, stifle, or destroy the most. For instance, if biopolitics desires to control the body, resistance can also happen in the body. According to Edkins and Pin-Fat, the story of Abbas Amini, the Iranian asylum seeker who "sewed his own eyes, ears, and mouth with coarse thread" to indicate that he was overlooked, silenced, and unheard by British authorities, may serve as an example in which bare life is metaphorically "accepted", and the body is used as the space of resistance to return to genuine relations of power (2004: 16). Although Edkins and Pin-Fat focus only on the role of the biological body in resistance against biopolitics, I would like to extend

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their idea onto other domains and argue that the areas of life that are the most affected by biopolitics tend to emerge in fiction as the ones in which refugee and migrant characters find the strength and desire to resist.

The first section of this subchapter discusses the forms of resistance that refugees and other characters in refugee narratives employ to oppose biopolitical objectification, unethical practices of care, and the camp as the structures that only administer refugee bodies as bare life. The second part concentrates on migrant and second-generation characters' resistance to racialisation and the violence of sovereign power. The analyses in these sections focus on seemingly insignificant practices that nevertheless constitute forms of powerful resistance connected with narrative, resilience, hope, care, and communality. They also treat the selected works of refugee and migrant fiction as forms of literary resistance that can exert substantial social influence through the stories they tell.

4.4.1. Resistance of refugees – against biopolitics and the camp

The Beekeeper of Aleppo depicts the asylum system in the United Kingdom as oppressing refugees by forcing them to undergo a complex, interview-based process. The way in which the immigration officials attempt to elicit a straightforward, coherent, and well-ordered story of Nuri's victimhood is a form of violence aimed against refugees. Nuri's first-person narrative resists this and uses the incoherence and overlapping timelines to tell a story about the ruptured lives of Syrian refugees. The structure of Nuri's narrative can be read as a response to the Western asylum and immigration institutions that desire to strictly regulate which refugeehood stories may be considered believable. By employing the narrative techniques of *analepsis* and *prolepsis*, Christy Lefteri's novel acknowledges that discontinuity, disjointedness, and fragmentation, which are also depicted as characteristic features of refugees' narrative identities, can contribute to forming a refugee narrative that is not only believable but also sensitive towards the stories of traumatised individuals. This, in turn, can signal that the Ricœurian concept of narrative identity – free from the constraints of traditional linearity and intelligibility – is the emerging structure of the refugee narratives that may be intended as resistance literature.

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Lefteri's novel presents refugees who enter refugee camps and are admitted into asylum programs as people who are not treated as political partners in proper power relations but as objects of international humanitarian care. Afra and Nuri's story shows that the politics of care can at times be indistinguishable from biopolitics, whose purpose is to simultaneously protect and restrain lives. Nuri's narrative insists that refugees from West Asia and Africa are also persons and political subjects. Nuri and his cousin, Mustafa, dream of building new apiaries in Great Britain and becoming beekeepers and businessmen again. Nuri's status as bare life and his traumatisation can render him hopeless and passive at certain points. In contrast, Mustafa's vision, industriousness, and love for bees are the opposite of being inactive, cared for, and administered. This attitude is a form of resistance which asserts a refugee's right to take care of and provide for themselves without depending solely on the state's asylum system.

Last but not least, Nuri's narrative may be interpreted not only as portraying refugees in camps as *homines sacri*, but also as affirming their political significance as "persons-as-such". As Edkins (2011) postulates, if Afra and Nuri wish to regain their agency and return to genuine political relations, they can do so not as politicised refugee bodies lost in the international systems of camps and asylum, but as migrating persons whose meaningful family relations and friendships make them unique and important in the eyes of others. Lefteri's novel protests against perceiving refugees as stateless people whose lack of stability in relation to a particular fixed location transforms them into bare life and nameless entities. By choosing a traumatised refugee as a first-person central narrator, Lefteri lends credibility and gives voice to a member of an underrepresented social group, making the character of Nuri a specific individual: a husband, father, friend, cousin, and entrepreneur. Wherever Nuri can access the Internet, he receives and sends e-mails to Mustafa. The e-mail passages in the novel become points of symbolic fixity despite constant movement and pervasive uncertainty. However, it is not a fixity of place but of a person and a relationship. Nuri narrates:

> I found an Internet café because I wanted to see if Mustafa had replied to my email. I was nervous as I typed in my username and password – there was a part of me that didn't want to know, because if there was no email from him then I would find it even harder to keep going, but I was happy when I saw a stream of messages waiting for me: […] Dear Nuri, I finally made it to my daughter and wife in England. It was a horrible journey through France and I do not want to write about it here, but I will tell you when you arrive. I know that you will make it to us. We are waiting for you. I cannot rest until you get here. You are like my brother, Nuri. My family is not complete without you and Afra. […] I sat there and read and reread the email. *You are like my brother, Nuri*. (Lefteri 2020a: 167–169)

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Mustafa perceives Afra and Nuri as irreplaceable persons, who are important to him and his family simply by virtue of who they are. If the sovereign power of the state also recognised Afra and Nuri as "persons-as-such", the refugees would be able to negotiate their position as asylum seekers in a genuine relation of power. By insisting that refugees should be seen as "persons-as-such", *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* questions the biopolitics of refugee camps and asylum procedures.

If one reads El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise* as a reinterpretation of the fairy tale of Peter Pan and Wendy, it is possible to examine the novel as a modern political fable, which highlights the contrast between the world of wealthy holiday resorts and the situation of the refugees who reach the island by sea and are detained in the refugee camp. In such a setting, the story of Amir and Vänna features acts of resistance against biopolitics that stem from individual people's compassion. Instead of reporting Amir to Colonel Kethros, a hotel housekeeper gives the refugee and his companion "a handful of minibar provisions" and a full plate of leftover food, and then points the children towards the direction of beach showers, where Amir can wash the sea salt off his body (El Akkad 2021: 139–140). This small, seemingly irrelevant act of kindness is also an act of defiance against the state's biopolitics, which would imprison the refugee child.

Another instance of resistance against the sovereign power of the state in *What Strange Paradise* is the decision of Madame El Ward to ask Vänna to escort Amir off the island. As the refugee camp's administrator, she is aware that she breaks the law by respecting Amir's wish to leave the camp and aiding him in his escape. Although El Ward's act remains ethically questionable, as I discuss earlier in this chapter, it is perhaps the only point in the narrative when Amir is genuinely listened to by a representative of the authorities, and his personhood is acknowledged:

> Madame El Ward stands. She walks to the window and looks outside. A soldier patrols the perimeter fence, a pair of headphones in his ears. She closes the blinds.
>
> "Vänna, do you know what happens to people here?" she asks. "I mean, do you know how this process works?" Vänna shrugs. "They come here, they apply for—I don't know—passports? Then they get them and they go somewhere on the mainland."
>
> Madame El Ward nods. "Something like that. But it doesn't always happen that way. Sometimes they're made to live in places like this gymnasium for a very long time, sometimes they're sent to places…Listen, I want you to do something for me, Vänna. I want you take [sic] this boy somewhere." (El Akkad 2021: 100)

Amir finds himself in a double political exclusion since he is a *homo sacer* as a refugee and an unaccompanied minor, whose fate has to be decided by the authorities. When El Ward acknowledges the boy's will, she relinquishes her role as the camp administrator

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for a moment and perceives him as more than just bare life. Although Amir cannot fully take control of his life, his escape from the island can be interpreted as a sign of hope that even a refugee child might regain at least a portion of their agency and freedom.

The combined perspectives of Agamben, Arendt, Edkins, Mbembe, and Agier might lead one to an analysis in which the character of Amir is interpreted only as a refugee-*homo sacer* figure. However, the works of these philosophers and sociologists are all based on the premise that anyone reduced to the status of the *homo sacer* is, first and foremost, a person and an acting and speaking agent. Therefore, even though the children do not take any directly political action or officially challenge Amir's status, making a refugee child the protagonist and a teenage second-generation girl his ally is an act of resistance in itself. Despite the fact that Amir's ability to communicate with Vänna is limited, she tries to learn a few words in Arabic to understand the boy. Although, as I discuss in section 3.5 in Chapter III, Vänna's decisions remain questionable, she is the only person on the island who hides with Amir, breaks the law multiple times, and defies the military for him. She perceives Amir as what he is: a child and a "person-as-such" (Edkins 2011). Her political position throughout the narrative is tantamount to resistance:

> "I'm going to take you back to the camp, where you'll be fingerprinted and entered into the system," the colonel says, unaware of the shadow building in the doorway behind him. "We will do this properly, like civilized people. We will have good form."
>
> The colonel feels a small displacement of air, a gray sliver moving in the farthest periphery of his vision, and upon turning is too late to defend himself against the spade that collides with the side of his head.
>
> Colonel Kethros falls, his grip on Amir coming loose. On the ground, unmoving, he reveals to the boy the sight of Vänna Hermes, soaked and bloodied, a gash open across her left cheek. She tosses the spade on the ground. (El Akkad 2021: 231)

What Strange Paradise, as a work of fiction, can be read as a literary act of resistance. As a political parable, it interrogates the biopolitical structures of refugee management. Amir's story may be interpreted as an indictment of European and Western migration policies, which are depicted in the novel as obsessed with the government of biological life, even to the point of chasing a child across an island, and neglectful of the actual needs of refugees. Although the acts of resistance presented in the novel cannot make the system reveal its true intentions, they expose the camp as a humanitarian enterprise that serves as a disguise for a biopolitical tool of control over vulnerable and precarious bodies, which the state can recognise only as foreign and discardable.

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Last but not least, narrated in Nayeri's *Refuge*, Mam'mad's suicide by self-immolation also constitutes an act of political resistance against biopower. As shown by Edkins and Pin-Fat's account of Abbas Amini's story of resistance against British immigration policies, "Amini's protest suggests that he is an example of someone who, through acceptance, has transformed his bare life into a 'form-of-life' as Agamben suggests" (2004: 15–17). By symbolically accepting that he is perceived and protected through biopolitics only as a *homo sacer* and an *animal laborans*, Mam'mad uses his body – his bare life – as a politicised sphere, whose destruction can be noticed by the sovereign power of the state. Like Amini's desperate act of "sewing his own eyes, ears, and mouth with coarse thread" (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004: 16), Mam'mad, through self-immolation, exercises control over the only entity that is left for him to manage according to his will: his bare life. He burns his body as an act of revolt and resistance against the state's biopower, which perceives him as a disposable body that can be discarded, banished, deported, or left to live outside its political "form-of-life". The way he commits suicide – not silently at home but in Dam Square, a large and popular town square in the historic centre of Amsterdam – is arguably his only way to make his tragic act seen and heard by the public and noticed by the Dutch government, since it literally and symbolically disrupts the regular life, order, and peace of society. Mam'mad is "burning to be seen. 'I am here!' Mam'mad cried out in his final act. *We* are all here, still waiting" (Nayeri 2017: 223, emphasis original). As Nayeri admits in the "Author's Note" to *Refuge*, Mam'mad's story is inspired by real events: the life story and death of Kambiz Roustayi, who "was an Iranian asylum seeker who, after eleven years of uncertain living in Holland, was about to be deported" (2017: 321). As the author reports in *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You*, Kambiz Roustayi died on April 6, 2011, in Dam Square, Amsterdam. Out of the eleven years he spends in the Netherlands as an "illegal" immigrant, he is detained for almost a year because he presents himself to the authorities when he wants to reopen his asylum case (2020: 55–71, 217–228). As Nayeri narrates, Kambiz wants to "become a legitimate human" in Europe (2020: 221). After his death, one of his Iranian friends comments: "*It's a death only a refugee would want*" (Nayeri 2020: 226, italics original). Although it is tragic and grievous, one could argue that Mam'mad's suicide is a death through which a refugee can regain their last modicum of agency and control over their life and body.

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4.4.2. Migrants against racialisation and power – care, community, and politics

To fight racialisation, criminalisation, and police surveillance, Chariandy's characters in *Brother* practice several methods of resistance: interpersonal care, including family protectiveness, well-being, and preparation of Trinidadian food, and, as Rahman names it, "alternative models of resilience" centred around community and relationships (2022: 97). Even though these activities do not immediately appear as acts of open defiance, they carry a political potential to challenge the dominant discourses and demand a return to a politics of equal subjects.

Michael presents his elder brother as a perceptive young person, who "could read out mother" and knows when to "casually offer her a cool, damp cloth for her head, […] fetch a blanket in winter, or a fan and a glass of water in summer" (Chariandy 2019: 17). However, while taking care of their overworked mother when she comes home from work, Francis is "careful never to overdo his concern" (Chariandy 2019: 17), which could make the mother feel disempowered and weak in the eyes of her children (Rahman 2022: 87). Michael also remembers Francis as a protective brother, who intervenes when other boys try to humiliate him, and who can give him advice and "lectures on conduct and attitude, on 'getting it'" (Chariandy 2019: 21). The place that becomes special for the family is the Rouge Valley, "a glacial valley" that Michael sees as "a wound in the earth" and "[a] scar of green running through our neighbourhood" (Chariandy 2019: 18). As Hlongwane analyses it, for Ruth, Francis, and Michael, the valley is one of the "postcolonial clearings" in which they can "find respite from racial discrimination" and practice "self-care, and resistance" (2021: 172–173), as they visit it for family picnics, to "build forts and hideaways in the bush", and, as teenagers, to drink beer in secret (Chariandy 2019: 19). The family need such as place as the Rouge Valley to become, literally and symbolically, their hideaway and sanctuary to shelter them from racialisation and to give them space for repose away from menial and mentally straining physical jobs.

Another instance of care as resistance is depicted in the novel through Aisha and Jelly's return to Michael's life. Aisha and Jelly ask Michael to face his unresolved grief and confront his family's immigrant past and his brother's violent death. Jelly's presence reminds Michael of the barbershop, Desirea's, and the role it used to play in their lives. According to Hlongwane, Desirea's is another "clearing" that allows young people from Scarborough to find a space hidden from police surveillance and society's expectations (2021: 182–184). It is "a sacred ground" in which they can appreciate music and art

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(Hlongwane 2021: 184). When Jelly has an opportunity to establish a relationship with Francis and Michael's mother, he does it through music and old records, which help Ruth to access her memories and connect with her Trinidadian past and immigration to Canada. Moreover, Rahman notices that the barbershop's name suggests that it is a place where desire and hope become possible in "a collective space of hopes and dreams" (2022: 94). Desirea's is a place and a community of cultural and political resistance. It is "sacred" in the sense that it becomes young people's refuge. In the barbershop, they feel liberated from their parents' traditional cultural identities and normative attitudes towards life and protected against police surveillance and the racialising politics of the state.

Additionally, Jelly's stay with Michael and his mother introduces the motif of food experimentation and meal preparation as an act of care. Although the theme of food is further analysed as a cultural practice in Chapter V, it should also be mentioned here for its political significance. McKenna James Boeckner argues that, in all probability, the dishes prepared by the characters belong to Trinidadian cuisine. Because of this, food in *Brother* can be interpreted as a political practice and "an articulation of pain, of diaspora, of loss as much as it can act as an articulation of sustained and embodied difference" (Boeckner 2022: 149). The dishes, such as *callaloo* and *pelau*, symbolise "desires for distinctiveness" (Boeckner 2022: 149). They are a way of commenting on cultural differences in Canada and on the need of Black people in the diaspora to feel acknowledged and recognised as unique subjects in society.

As Rahman argues, within the racialising climate of antiblackness that oppresses Black lives and suppresses Black identities, a response to the sovereign power of the state and its biopolitics should not be based on "normative resilience", which prioritises the Western ideas of individualism and academic, professional, and financial achievement (2022: 81–84). Resistance to racialisation, as Chariandy's characters practice it, can be built on "collective resilience" (2022: 84), "collective action" (2022: 89), and "cultivating community support" (Rahman 2022: 92). Rahman observes that Francis, Michael, Ruth, Aisha, Jelly, and other characters from Desirea's form "networks of agency in which [they] work toward empowering one another" (2022: 92). Their methods of "alternative resilience", which include music, food, meaningful male relationships, mutual respect, intergenerational care, and "community solidarity" (Rahman 2022: 93), are ways to counter the dominant discourse of white, neoliberal success and to show their desire to "restructure political systems" through "collective resistance" (2022: 95–97).

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An array of more directly political forms of resistance is presented by Brand in the collection *Sans Souci and Other Stories*. In selected short stories, Black women are narrated as *zoon politikon*: "political animals", who vehemently demand to reestablish properly political relations of power and who reclaim their Black bodies. In "Blossom, Priestess of Oya, Goddess of Winds, Storms, and Waterfalls", women resist racialisation, misogyny, and patriarchy in several ways. One of them is open protest, for instance, picketing outside the house of the man who sexually harasses Blossom. Practising the Yoruba religion in "a obeah house and speakeasy on Vaughan Road" in Toronto (Brand 2023a: 41) may be regarded as a form of resistance against normalised white forms of worship. Furthermore, although the protagonist of "Train to Montreal" does not directly react to racism, her thoughts and emotions, centred on disgust, frustration, and anger, indicate that she possesses an inner strength that she can use to preserve herself in a racialising world. In the story "St. Mary's Estate", discussed in detail in Chapter III, another Black female protagonist, similarly angry towards the end of the narrative, chooses to confront her family's past and haunting plantation images in order to resist the discourses that would prevent her from remembering the experiences of Black slaves and their descendants. In Brand's short stories, to resist in the Black diaspora is to rage, to protest, and to remember.

4.5. Coda

According to Giorgio Agamben, the camp is an all-encompassing condition of life, even in neoliberal, democratic societies, spreading beyond the specific heterotopic places and total institutions that can be called camps. Edkins and Pin-Fat explain that within such a conceptualisation,"[w]e have all become homines sacri or bare life in the face of a biopolitics that technologizes, administers and depoliticizes" (2004: 9, lack of italics in original). In a globalised condition of the camp, the state can symbolically or literally reduce virtually every individual or group that it deems dangerous or undesirable to the position of the *homo sacer*. In such a biopolitical system, refugees and migrants "represent the vanguard of their peoples" (Arendt 2007: 274) in the sense that their experiences, as depicted in contemporary fiction, can serve as an illustration of what the sovereign power of the state is capable of: segregation, isolation, internment,

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criminalisation, and racialisation, all of which have a colonial rationale behind them to some degree.

Despite the pervasive biopolitics, resistance is presented in fictional narratives as limited but possible when it entails alternative, non-normative practices that underscore personhood, solidarity, community action, and the willingness to perceive oppressed refugees and migrants as persons and social agents. In the spaces and institutions where biopolitical objectification, surveillance, and disenfranchisement occur, refugee and migrant characters strive to regain their human dignity and political personhood, which allows them, at the very least, to hope that a renewed, properly political structure of power relations is conceivable and may be possible. However, the forms of resistance depicted in refugee, migrant, and diasporic fiction suggest that a truly political life cannot be achieved once and for all, and that it is a system of relations that should be constantly re-examined and carefully looked after, lest it be overpowered by violence and biopolitics again.

The forms of resistance depicted in the selected fiction contribute to the rebuilding of refugee and migrant identities and to the restructuring of political relations. A literary reflection on how writing and narrating may serve to restore migrant identities can be found in Danticat's "Epilogue: Women Like Us" from the collection *Krik? Krak!*. The epilogue discusses a young woman's desire to take up writing as a profession as a revolutionary idea:

> Writers don't leave any mark in the world. Not the world where we are from. In our world, writers are tortured and killed if they are men. Called lying whores, then raped and killed, if they are women. In our world, if you write, you are a politician, and we know what happens to politicians. (Danticat 2015: loc. 2070)

However, the young writer, whose "our world" is a disguised reference to Haiti, experiences an urge to narrate refugee and migrant stories in the diaspora because she hears "their whispers that pushed you, their murmurs over pots sizzling in your head" (Danticat 2015: loc. 2077). I believe that Danticat's imaginative monologue, although it predominantly reflects on women's intergenerational memory, can be read as a commentary on refugee and migrant writing in a broader perspective. If understood as a form of political resistance, narratives can help to rebuild and reintegrate the identities of migrating persons. Works that include the motif of resistance within stories of refugees' and migrants' lives have the potential, to use Ricœur's metaphor, to seam together

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the ruptured pieces of their narrative identities (Ricœur 1988: 248; 1984: 66). Through this, those who narrate become "politicians" in the purest sense.

Nevertheless, Ricœur's philosophy of narrative identity, combined with Arendt's political project in *The Human Condition,* suggests that even the refugee and migrant narrative identities that incorporate resistance cannot be interpreted as returning to unproblematic, seamless narrative unity. Similarly to Arendt's concept of action, which "is by definition unpredictable and its consequent effects unknown" (Mills 2018: 73), resistance against biopolitics can have a dual nature. It may lead to hope and help one to come to terms with grief and loss. On the other hand, it may withhold a positive resolution, delay narrative closure, or even make one impossible. This can happen because active resistance through storytelling and taking collective or individual action does not necessarily aid in unifying or completing a narrative. Instead, resistance works to enable new beginnings, new relations, and new politics despite adversity.

Most instances of resistance found in Lefteri's, El Akkad's, Chariandy's, Danticat's, and Brand's works are expressions of the hope that a restructuring of political relations is possible. Refugees' resistance in fiction also suggests, as in Nayeri's novel, that politics should not be reduced to biopower, which can understand only the language of the body and bare life. Depictions of indirect resistance and open defiance indicate the need for a structural rethinking of the position of refugees and migrants in contemporary societies and politics. Literary constructions of refugees' and migrants' narrative identities that include the element of resistance foreshadow significant social and political changes that may begin from quotidian interpersonal and communal interactions. Narrating the lives and identities of migrating persons in fiction is perhaps one of many steps in the process of establishing new, genuinely political relations of power.

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Chapter V:
Cultural Identities of Migrants and Refugees

5.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the selected corpus of migrant and refugee literature in search of cultural identity positions, perspectives, and practices. The interpretation of selected works of fiction begins with specific instances and examples of cultural practices related to food, music, folklore, culturally specific beliefs, and storytelling practices. It moves on to analyse the issues of home and homing, the cultural significance of the use of native languages in migrant fiction, intergenerational relations in migrant families, and cultural practices of refugees. The first coda proceeds towards a broader, more theoretically-oriented perspective, in which it considers the reciprocal impact of representing cultural identity positions on constructing narrative identities in migrant and refugee fiction. The second coda of the chapter is a reflection on the problems of cultural syncretism, multi- and transculturalism, and migrants' and refugees' search for, as Himani Bannerji and Arun Mukherjee put it, "something substantive" within their quotidian – both public and private – cultural positions and practices (1990: 147–148). This chapter draws heavily on Stuart Hall's seminal thesis that cultural identities exist as "the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*" (2003: 237, emphasis and punctuation original) in order to relate Hall's statement – through the analysis of the selected fiction – to Ricœur's philosophy of narrative identity and to consider it in the context of other theoretical approaches to cultural identity, such as hybridity, syncretism, and transculturalism.

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5.2. Food, music, folklore, and storytelling as practices of cultural identity

Perhaps the two most prominent cultural practices inextricably linked to the cultural identities of the migrant characters discussed in this dissertation are food and music. Food preparation, sharing it, and the family and community bonds that exist around food are often interpreted as forms of care, healing, resistance, resilience, and, last but not least, as articulations of cultural difference. Specific dishes or types of cuisine may be seen as cultural signs that bring certain people together and, at the same time, set them apart from others. As Rosalía Baena postulates within her category of "gastro-graphy", "food imagery and the process of preparing (and consuming) food […] invites the reader to read beyond the possibly 'exotic' representation of food to more complex itineraries of positionality, affiliation, and selfhood" (2006: unpaginated, para. 3)[29]. In her analyses of non-fiction, Baena engages with the metaphor of food as a symbol of transition and transcultural identification as well as a carrier of memory, which allows authors to transform literary depictions of food into "narrative strategies" that address "complex questions of cultural identity" (2006: unpaginated, para. 3–4). I believe that Baena's concept of gastro-graphy, closely related to the problem of transcultural identity positions, can also be applied for the purpose of interpreting fiction, as she rightly argues that "[g]astronomy is […] a strong identity marker for postcolonial and diasporic subjects" (2006: unpaginated, para. 3). Focusing on Anglo-Caribbean and Iranian-American migrant fiction, one can study the role of food in the cultural practices depicted in Edwidge Danticat's, Dina Nayeri's, David Chariandy's, and Dionne Brand's works.

Food has been an important theme in Danticat's writing right from her novelistic and short fiction debuts. In her diasporic fiction, cooking is traditionally a female domain in predominantly patriarchal Haitian culture. The "kitchen poets", as she calls them in "Epilogue: Women Like Us", are expected to combine family life with a career in writing, that is, if they want to and are allowed to have one. Danticat's prose is populated with women who cook Haitian and Caribbean food at home for their families or become chefs at Haitian restaurants in Caribbean neighbourhoods in New York and Miami.

[29] The article by Rosalía Baena cited here, published in 2006 in *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, was accessed through the EBSCOhost database, whose digital version of Baena's article does not include real page numbers. Therefore, I decided, by way of exception, to cite specific paragraph numbers in the article for easier navigation. Unfortunately, extensive research in other sources shows that articles published in *Canadian Ethnic Studies* before 2007 have been either digitised without real page numbers or not digitised at all.

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In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, people from Sophie's village, Croix-des-Rosets, continue the tradition of *konbit* potluck dinners, although they no longer meet to clear and plant fields together. They do it to uphold their community bonds, as their work in factories weakens their neighbourly connections. In New York, Martine's partner, Marc, takes her and young Sophie to a Haitian restaurant in Asbury Park, New Jersey. Martine comments on his choice of place: "Marc is one of those men who will never recover from not eating his *manman*'s cooking" (Danticat 1998: 53). For Marc, Haitian food is a symbol of home or an idealised version of what he remembers as home from his childhood in Haiti.

Haitian restaurants give the characters of *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Krik? Krak!* a sense of belonging, a home away from home. The primary transnational social fields for many of them are the New York City neighbourhoods of Flatbush, Little Haiti, and Little Caribbean. Darline, the rescuer and partner of Arnold in the story "Without Inspection" from *Everything Inside*, is a cook at a Haitian restaurant in Little Haiti, Miami, Florida. The names of dishes and ingredients, such as "cornmeal with red beans", "stewed codfish" (Danticat 2019: loc. 2533), *bodin* black sausage (1998: 55), and "bone soup" (2015: loc. 1442), are often used by Danticat as indicators of a Haitian food community and, as Baena suggests, as a form of transnational practice. In "Caroline's Wedding" from *Krik? Krak!*, the eponymous character's mother cooks bone soup, which is a cow bone stew prepared for occasions of illness or suffering. In the short story, it is supposed to ease the grief over the fact that Caroline is leaving her mother and sister to live with her Bahamian husband: "Ma believed that her bone soup could cure all kinds of ills. She even hoped that it would perform the miracle of detaching Caroline from Eric, her Bahamian fiancé" (Danticat 2015: loc. 1442). In this example, food is not only a cultural tradition and practice; it is also a symbol of cultural identity differences. For the mother in the story, Haitian food, depicted as distinct from Bahamian and American cuisines, is a marker of national and ethnic identity.

Anita Mannur theorises "culinary citizenship" as an "affective citizenship" and a cultural identity position which only ostensibly combines "national identity with culinary taste and practices" within "nostalgically-framed narratives" (2007: 13). These narratives not only speak of home and longing but also allow for reinterpretations of cultural identity, "hint[ing] towards the multiplicity of definitional possibilities" and encompassing food within "a complex web of affiliations mediated by class and sexuality" (Mannur 2007: 13). It appears that in Danticat's migrant fiction, Haitian food

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and the places connected with it are symbols of a nationalist type of longing and nostalgia, which position characters such as Marc, Martine, and Caroline's mother within traditionally conceived cultural identities. The problems of class and gender resurface in *Krik? Krak!*'s epilogue in relation to a young Haitian woman's desire to take up such an "unconventional" career as creative writing, which – if she insists on her choice – can only transform her into one of the "kitchen poets". This, in turn, speaks volumes about how patriarchal social expectations permeate transnational routes into the diaspora, even through such seemingly insignificant cultural practices as eating and cooking food.

In Nayeri's *Refuge*, food signifies the protagonist's gradual return to certain practices and positions of her native Iranian culture. It also symbolises community, togetherness, and sharing. Niloo and the Iranian refugees she meets in Amsterdam often serve and eat food on a *sofreh*: a floor spread or a low table. Their meals are usually served as several small dishes and include a main dish, rice, bread, eggs, pickled vegetables, and herbs. People sit on cushions around a *sofreh*. In *Refuge*, it is presented as a form of Persian hospitality, even if the food served is scarce and a *sofreh* looks modest. For example, although the *sofreh* meals that Mam'mad prepares for Niloo and Karim are "always humble egg dishes", Niloo "feels finally at home at Mam'mad's *sofreh*" (Nayeri 2017: 150, italics original). Gathering around food on the floor can happen in small or large groups. As Baena postulates (2006: unpaginated, para. 3), dining at a *sofreh* is not depicted as an "exotic" form of food consumption but as a rediscovered source of comfort and familiarity within Iranian culture and cultural belonging. It is a *sofreh* dinner that helps Niloo to reunite with her parents in Amsterdam. Even though the family, previously "scattered" for decades, forms "a failed village", they can sit "around a familiar *sofreh* as if drawn together by magnets in their shoes" (Nayeri 2017: 319–320, italics original).

Furthermore, Iranian spices in *Refuge* symbolise Niloo's past. The jar of spices prepared by her grandmother in her family village, Ardestoon, which she receives with a letter from her father, represents family tradition, a sense of fixed origins, and the myth of an idyllic Iranian village, shaped by Niloo's childhood memories and her imagination. However, in the context of a conflict between Niloo and her husband, Gui, provoked when he throws away the jar, dismissing it as trash, the spices can be interpreted as a sign of culinary and cultural difference between Iran and Europe. Against the backdrop of Niloo's marriage to Guillaume, the difference is depicted as irreconcilable and related to Gui's privilege. In another context, when Niloo's mother, Pari, teaches Gui how to cook

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lamb via a video call, the man is presented as an open-minded Westerner who enjoys learning new cultural elements from his wife's native country. However, on a deeper level, Niloo senses that they lack a deeper cultural connection and understanding: "It's not enough just to laugh at the same twisted jokes and to say we love each other enough to live under a bridge. We have no roots" (Nayeri 2017: 256). Gui knows Iranian culture only superficially. It might seem that it is because of Niloo's sense of shame and her reluctance to disclose her perspective on Iran to him. In fact, a plausible cause of their lack of "roots" is that Gui's point of view is a fixed class, cultural, and geographical position. When he, to Niloo's amazement, established rapport with her father, Niloo comments: "It must have been easy for them given the one vital trait they shared: neither had ever had a Jesus House [homeless shelter] night. They had held on to the untroubled ways of the native child, beloved by many, feet planted. Not the life Kian and I had lived" (Nayeri 2017: 284). Niloo believes that Gui can never understand a migrant's or refugee's cultural entanglement. For Niloo, his culinary citizenship, rooted in his Provençal childhood, represents wealth, comfort, and fixity, whereas her own culinary position, despite her longing for Iranian roots – represented by the *sofreh* and grandmother's spices – is unfixed and hybridised through refugeehood and migration.

Mannur's definition of culinary citizenship can also be applied to study the theme of food in Chariandy's *Brother*. From the description of the groceries that the brothers' mother, Ruth, brings home, McKenna James Boeckner identifies two possible national Trinidadian dishes: *callaloo* – a type of Caribbean stew which can serve as a sociocultural metaphor of the melting pot, and *pelau* – a single-pot dish in which the ingredients are clearly visible and distinguishable, usually with large pieces of poultry left intact – a metaphor of cultural mosaic and clear cultural distinctions (2022: 138). According to Boeckner, it is relevant to mention that, with "some ingredients felt untouched" (Chariandy 2019: 35), Ruth is unable to cook a coherent meal of *callaloo* or *pelau* from the groceries she buys (Boeckner 2022: 136). Boeckner also briefly analyses the meals prepared by Jelly. Francis's closest friend experiments with food in such a way that it is possible to trace his culinary inspirations to Trinidadian cuisine and the dish of *pelau*; however, his culinary citizenship is, as Mannur postulates, an open space of multiple possible cultural identity positions. He practices what may be called fusion cuisine and prepares transcultural dishes in which ethnic and national boundaries are movable, and ingredients from Caribbean and Chinese traditions are used together to form new tastes, relations, and culinary identities. Chariandy's characters do not view Caribbean food as

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a maker of national identity and a sign of nostalgia. On the contrary, their cooking is either somewhat unorthodox and incoherent or intentionally transcultural, with multiple culinary and cultural links.

Although it is difficult to trace any culturally significant foods in Brand's *Sans Souci and Other Stories* – save for a list of grandmother's dishes in "Photograph" that again mentions *pelau* – it is possible to analyse the diasporic and postcolonial significance of alcohol drinking in "Blossom, Priestess of Oya, Goddess of Winds, Storms, and Waterfalls" and "At the Lisbon Plate". As Charlotte Sturgess observes, in Brand's short stories, "[d]rinking mediates the transgression of borders and promotes 'alterity' as a recurrent narrative device" (1993: 223). For Blossom and for the female narrator of "At the Lisbon Plate", alcohol is a gateway to the metaphysical: the world of visions, spirits, Yoruba deities, and African ancestors. The transgression Sturgess speaks about is not only between two states of consciousness – sobriety and drunkenness – but also between the world of the living and the world of the spirits: those who died oppressed and dispossessed because of colonialism. In "At the Lisbon Plate", alcohol is a doorway through which the narrator can access the memory and knowledge of an old Black woman and remember, through her eyes, the Middle Passage and the hold of a ship, and plot violent revenge on the colonisers (Sturgess 1993: 229). Alcohol is a powerful tool for the protagonist-narrator. She admits that it "makes [her] introspective, if not suicidal" (Brand 2023a: 131), and, instead of making her forget, it gives her "even greater visions" (2023a: 140). As stated in Chapter III of this dissertation, the alcohol-induced visions dominate the narrative structures of the two short stories, allowing for seemingly incoherent *analepses* and *prolepses*, digressions, and deferred closure, "blurring the edges of reality and postponing confrontation with the self" (Sturgess 1993: 227).

The connections between music and literature have been widely researched; for example, by Calvin Brown in *Music and Literature* (1948) and Werner Wolf in *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (1999). Paul Gilroy (1993) in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* also discusses the countercultural, decolonising power and transnational ties of Black music. Although music in Chariandy's *Brother* does not directly influence the narrative structure

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of the novel, it is a practice of cultural identity that cannot be overlooked[30]. Music in *Brother* is a sign of transcultural hybridisation and openness towards alterity, both ethnic and generational. The characters, both younger and older, engage with music and its cultural significance for Black Afro-Caribbean migrants in Canada. Francis's taste in music is eclectic, and he searches for musical inspirations in Desirea's hip-hop community as well as in his short filial relationship with Aisha's father:

> He just wanted me to know that in the months before Francis died, perhaps a year or more, he and Francis had met to listen to music. […] 'We ended up spending only a few afternoons together, just listening to old music. Barely even talking. We must have played Nina Simone's version of 'Ne Me Quitte Pas' at least a dozen times.' (Chariandy 2019: 173–174)

Francis and Jelly's dream is to become professional DJs. It seems that Jelly chooses and plays music in a way that is similar to the way he cooks. Jelly's performance for an audition is full of intercultural and intergenerational samples and references: Somali love songs called *balwo*, "[s]oul, rocksteady, even calypso and Congolese rhumba" intermixed with *tabla* drums and disco music, blues, "Gladys Knight, Smokey Robinson, Etta James", and Jimi Hendrix (Chariandy 2019: 126–127). Jelly and Francis treat their music as a space in which ethnic boundaries and time constraints do not exist. Their performances fuse different cultures, genres, and epochs. The music, as described in the novel, is a sign of a cultural identity whose positioning is not just a forced, incongruous amalgamation of identity positions; it is a continuous, harmonious flow of cultural relations, which, in effect, constructs something relevant and substantial for the young Black characters.

Jelly and Francis's music is inextricably linked with the space of the barbershop, Desirea's. The Black barbershop and the traditions associated with it create a sense of community and solidarity that reaches beyond ethnicity, nation, and race:

> Our parents had come from Trinidad and Jamaica and Barbados, from Sri Lanka and Poland and Somalia and Vietnam. They worked shit jobs, struggled with rent, and often pushed just as chronically tired notions about identity and respectability. But in Desirea's, different styles and kinships were possible. (Chariandy 2019: 101)

[30] In relation to the theme of music, one should also briefly mention jazz and calypso music in Dionne Brand's short stories. Even though jazz and calypso do not play a culturally significant role in the characters' lives in *Sans Souci and Other Stories*, Black jazz musicians have always had a profound influence on Black culture in North America, and calypso music is a specifically Trinidadian style that shapes many Caribbean cultural practices. Jazz and calypso form a background for several characters' experiences, visions, and conflicts. For example, in "Train to Montreal", the protagonist listens to a piano concert in a club as she decides to visit her lover in Montreal.

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Desirea's, whose name suggests a place of desires and hopes (Rahman 2022: 94), exists as a political and cultural enclave within Scarborough. Hlongwane observes that within the Black diaspora in Canada, "barbershops have functioned as sanctuaries" (2021: 181) and interprets Desirea's and the music played in it as forms of "cultural recovery", thanks to which children of immigrant parents can forge intercultural relationships and, even further, transcultural and transracial identities (Hlongwane 2021: 185–186). The new "kinships" that Michael observes in the barbershop are formed not because the young people who visit Desirea's overlook their ancestries, histories, and race, but because they learn to see, respect and refer to them, like Jelly, through their art and music.

A set of cultural practices that connects Danticat's, Brand's, and Chariandy's fiction may be gathered under the umbrella term of Caribbean folklore and beliefs. Although several Trinidadian folklore figures and stories are only mentioned in Brand's *Sans Souci and Other Stories* and in Chariandy's *Brother*, their connection to Trinidadian history is clear. Both Brand in her 1988 collection and Chariandy in his 2017 novel name *soucouyants* and *legahoos* (Brand 2023a: 50; Chariandy 2019: 142), and *duennes* (Brand 2023a: 59; Chariandy 2019: 142). The creatures and spirits are presented in their fiction in the context of Caribbean women's storytelling, which is a vital cultural practice, and it is also given more attention further on in this subchapter. In *Brother,* the names of the Caribbean ghosts can be interpreted as a reference to Brand's short stories and as a link to the title of Chariandy's debut novel, *Soucouyant* (2007). The brothers do not believe in their mother's "tales of ghosts and spirits that foolish little children walking alone in her birthplace might imagine themselves encountering" (Chariandy 2019: 142). For them, the meaning and cultural significance of the stories are diluted and "too strange to be truly fearful" (2019: 142). The mother's tales are given a direct reference to a specific place only when the family visits Trinidad. There, Michael fears "[s]omething old and unburied in the darkness" at night (Chariandy 2019: 142), the "old and unburied" being not only folkloric ghosts but also the Trinidadian past marked by enslavement and indentured servitude. In Brand's short stories, Trinidadian spirits are given a stronger, metaphorical meaning – as discussed earlier in Chapter III – and they serve to conjure re-memories of colonial history. For instance, in "At the Lisbon Plate", the old Black woman is depicted as a Caribbean witch, whose desire for vengeance signifies a radical, revolutionary vision of postcolonial justice. She possesses the female narrator and leads her to murder several white men, who – although it is unclear in the story – used to be, are descendants of, or are reincarnations of colonisers involved in the slave trade.

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In Danticat's early prose, Haitian folklore and *Vodou* beliefs play a significant role in the characters' lives and cultural identities. In *Krik? Krak!*, Danticat uses folkloric figures and Haitian superstitions in a way that emphasises the ties of Haitians in the diaspora with their homeland's culture and history. In "Nineteen Thirty-Seven", the narrator's mother, Défilé, is imprisoned because she is "accused of having wings of flame" and considered to be a "[*l*]*ougawou*" or a *soucouyant*, a vampire-witch (Danticat 2015: loc. 350–394), whereas, in fact, she is incarcerated because she participated in secret rituals commemorating the Parsley Massacre of 1937. The vampiric spirits become an important part of the narrator's family story. The woman's Haitian roots are narrated as both historical, linking her to her "great-great-great-grandmother Défilé" and "a French man who had kept her as a slave" – a reference to the Haitian national hero, Dédée Bazile – and metaphysical, creating a connection between Haitian history and its spiritual beliefs (Danticat 2015: loc. 342). According to Jennifer Donahue, a "lougarou" is also a symbol of "resistance and transgression" (2020: unpaginated, Chapter One: "The Immigrant Experience"). The imagery of shedding one's skin and shapeshifting into pure light or growing "wings of flame" symbolises a desire for revolution and resistance against patriarchal control over women's bodies (Donahue 2020: unpaginated, Chapter One: "The Immigrant Experience").

The family narrative of Haitian women in the diaspora presented in "Caroline's Wedding" also includes references to Haitian beliefs and superstitions. In the story, after their Papa's death, the mother tells her two daughters to wear only red underwear so that in their sleep, "Papa, and all the other dead men who might desire us, would stay away because the sanguine color of blood was something that daunted and terrified the non-living" (Danticat 2015: loc. 1564). The sisters never wear "the red panties that Ma had bought for [them] over the years" (2015: loc. 1586). Through this folkloric detail and the sisters' disobedience, Danticat signals that although their ties with home remain strong, Haitians in the diaspora rewrite and redefine their identities into new, less traditional cultural positions. As Donahue states, folklore "affords a means of connection" with Haiti for the parents' generation; however, at the same time, it "affords a means of subversion" for their children (2020: unpaginated, Chapter One: "The Immigrant Experience").

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, even though Sophie, the first-person narrator, undergoes a narrative refiguration of her identity and her relation to Haiti, the symbols of the re-evaluation are still deeply rooted in Haitian culture and *Vodou*. The twin spirits, *Marassas*, as mentioned in Chapter III, are two beings of the same essence, whose image

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is used by Sophie's mother, Martine, to narcissistically control her daughter. As Maha Marouan claims, the way Martine presents the story of *Marassas* and the practice of doubling goes against their original meaning in *Vodou*. Danticat evokes *Marassas* not to depict a close mother-daughter bond but to question it (Marouan 2013: 54). The twin spirits and their closeness and love are the opposites of the harm and trauma that Martine causes. The novel uses the Haitian folkloric spirits to introduce an element of disagreement between two cultural positions: Martine, who harbours the feelings of exile and longing for a romanticised vision of home, and Sophie, who struggles to navigate her way towards a redefined notion of transnationalism.

Another *Vodou* spirit evoked in Danticat's novel is the *loa*[31] *Erzulie*. According to Marouan, *Erzulie*'s three "manifestations" are: *Erzulie Freda,* a goddess of love, purity, and chastity; *Erzulie Danto*, a Black Madonna with a child, a symbol of suffering and single motherhood; and *Erzulie Jewouj*, a *loa* of fury, revolution, and revenge (2013: 40). The three images of *Erzulie* – the white Virgin Mary of purity and ideal motherhood; the suffering Black Virgin Mary, an image brought to Haiti in the 19th century by Polish Napoleonic soldiers (Kępa 2015); and the angry and sensual *Erzulie* as Jezebel – can be interpreted as forms of Haitian cultural and religious syncretism (Marouan 2013: 41–42). Sophie undergoes a narrative transformation in which the *loas* serve as symbols of change and as catalysts for women's strength and freedom. Grandma Ifé presents Sophie with her own statue of *Erzulie Freda* in a gesture of apology "for the pain we have caused you" (Danticat 1998: 157). The *Vodou* statue becomes a symbol of reconciliation and coming to terms with her Haitian heritage (Marouan 2013: 44). Furthermore, when Sophie prepares her mother's funeral in Haiti, she chooses "a bright red, two-piece suit" for Martine to wear when she is buried (Danticat 1998: 227). In her coffin, the mother looks like "a Jezebel, hot-blooded Erzulie who feared no men, but rather made them her slaves, raped *them*, and killed *them*" (Danticat 1998: 227, emphasis original). In death, Martine becomes an incarnation of *Erzulie Jewouj*, a symbol of angry, independent womanhood. This point in the novel represents Sophie's readiness to rebel against the patriarchal oppression of the female body and her willingness to transform Haitian traditions and religious beliefs into significant elements of her healing process. Although Sophie's relation to Haiti, its folklore, and customs is profoundly changed and critically re-evaluated in the narrative, her primary cultural references are still deeply rooted in her

[31] *Loas* or *lwas* are the most important spirits of the Haitian *Vodou* religion. Similar to *orishas* in the Yoruba religion, they are often believed to act as human beings' assistants and guardians (Mazama 2017).

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Haitian cultural identity. *Vodou* spirits accompany Sophie on her journey of reconciliation with her mother and grandmother, and they are powerful symbols that help her in the ongoing process of healing from sexual trauma. As Marouan notes, their meaning in the novel is positive, and it "challenges the idea in popular culture that associates these belief systems with harm and black magic" (2013: 44).

Last but not least, analysing the practice of folktales and oral storytelling in Danticat's and Brand's works can help to underscore the importance of folklore for constructing diasporic cultural identity themes in Afro-Caribbean literature in North America. Édouard Glissant's theory of the Caribbean folktale presents it as a potent form of narrative resistance against the West's paradigm of linear, continuous thinking, which imposes a unifying sameness upon the cultures and identities it colonises. Its foundation in storytelling does not make the folktale less stable and easily perishable, but rather gives it the potential for adaptability, inclusiveness, and immediacy. The title of Danticat's short story collection *Krik? Krak!* is a customary beginning of a storytelling meeting, the question and response being an invitation for a tale master to speak. In "Caroline's Wedding", the sisters consider their parents' "bedtime stories" to be their "sole inheritance" (Danticat 2015: loc. 1668). The tales that the women inherit are intangible artefacts of Haitian culture in the diaspora, and they work as a link between generations. As I argue in Chapter III and elsewhere (Dudek 2022: 90), in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Grandma Ifé's folktales might stifle positive change for the narrator's cultural and narrative identity, as exemplified by the tale about a lark that abducts a young girl from her home. Ifé is a tale master, telling her stories to her daughters, granddaughter, and a group of village children. Her tales are warnings whose main theme is often the social and sexual freedom of women. The tales' morals suggest that to liberate themselves, women need to surrender their lives (Marouan 2013: 38). For instance, Sophie evokes a Haitian story about a bleeding woman, who could be cured by *Erzulie* only if the *loa* turned her into a butterfly, "but she could no longer be a woman" (Danticat 1998: 87–88). The folktales inherited by the Caco women are based on a patriarchal view of womanhood, which is obsessed with sexual purity. As Marouan asserts, Danticat uses Haitian folktales to expose the oppression of women in Haiti and in the diaspora, and puts the symbols and plots of the tales in a context that transforms them into stories of women's strength and resistance (2013: 50). The cultural rootedness in Haitian storytelling is given a new, ambiguous meaning in Danticat's early fiction: Haitian tales, as the narrator of "Caroline's Wedding" describes it, both haunt the characters and make

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them laugh. They speak of suffering and, at the same time, of empowerment. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Krik? Krak!*, Danticat "is the real 'tale master'" (Marouan 2013: 50), who refigures the practice of folktales into a crucial element of cultural and narrative identity transformation, which does not break with folklore and oral tradition but rewrites them as spaces in which women are free to reinterpret their cultural and political positions on their own. She returns the folktales to the Haitian women, as they have always belonged to them.

In the short story "Photograph", Dionne Brand presents the character of a Haitian grandmother, who is also a tale master for her grandchildren. The children she looks after are abandoned by their mothers, who are "[a]way-away or in the country-away" as external or internal migrants, struggling to provide for their family (Brand 2023a: 72). Similarly to Aunt Atie and Grandma Ifé in Danticat's novel, the Trinidadian grandmother in Brand's story uses storytelling as a way to mediate elements of her cultural identity to the grandchildren. The oral tradition of storytelling and folklore shapes the language, beliefs, and knowledge of the children: "All of the words which we knew belonged to my grandmother. All of them, a voluptuous body of endearment, dependence, comfort and infinite knowing" (Brand 2023a: 97). The grandmother is the primary cultural figure in the young narrator's world. The children consider their estranged mother and aunt, whom they know only from stories, to be a nearly legendary character from London. When she returns home, she is unable to communicate with them and resorts to violence. Migration to and return from England transform the woman into an angry, disillusioned person, whereas the children remain enveloped in the culture passed onto them by the grandmother. The elderly woman's intangible inheritance carries an ambiguous meaning. The children are intimately familiar with their Trinidadian culture, and their imagination is shaped by it. Nevertheless, they are dependent on and entrapped in their grandmother's interpretation of it. Their house is a place of Caribbean folktales, folkloric spirits, and Trinidadian food, but it is also a house of hunger, poverty, violence, and shame.

Danticat's and Brand's works present Caribbean folktales as a source of knowledge and as a space in which traumatic experiences can be transformed into understandable symbols and characters. The ways in which the tales are used in their fiction suggest, however, that their role is an ambiguous one, especially for migrant characters. For migrants, Caribbean tales signify a strong connection with home, but their content also bears witness to women's cultural identity negotiations and sociopolitical struggles. Women's position in society and among relatives is the actual theme of

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the folktales embedded in Danticat's prose. The ghosts and spirits present in the Trinidadian grandmother's tales in Brand's story are a reference to the women who cannot live with their family and need to change their skin like a *soucouyant* to survive and work in other places, "away-away" from their children (Brand 2023a: 72). The Caribbean folkloric creatures can also serve as illustrations of the "real ghosts": the overwhelming hunger and shameful poverty that, as the narrator claims, make certain people from the grandmother's family mentally ill. The indirect causes of hunger and poverty are the ghosts of the silenced past: colonialism, slavery, and the neocolonial United States military presence in Trinidad during the Second World War.

Although it is culturally distinct from Caribbean folktales, in the context of storytelling practices, one should also mention the stories told by the protagonist's father in Nayeri's *Refuge*. Bahman Hamidi, Niloo's father, gathers and tells Iranian stories from his native village, Ardestoon, and from the lives of his relatives. His most important story is about Niloo's great-great-grandfather, which transforms into the foundational myth of Ardestoon. Bahman's stories are often closely connected with photographs, which he collects and displays at home and in his dental practice. Bahman treats photographs as stories. For example, when her parents learn that there are no photographs from Niloo's wedding, they are puzzled and demand: "'How can there be no photos?' […] 'It makes no sense. Who gets married without photos?'" (Nayeri 2017: 234). Only Niloo's brother, Kian, defends his sister's decision: "'Leave her alone, you guys,' […] 'Niloo's not into artifacts like you two'" (Nayeri 2017: 234). Niloo is an anthropologist, and her brother intends his remark to be an ironic joke. In Bahman and Pari's view, photographs testify to the traceable, tangible elements in stories. They provide a link between fiction and reality and symbolise stability and permanence through time. The Ardestoon foundational myth, photographs, and stories of formative events in their lives often become the content of Niloo and Kian's meetings with their father. As a homodiegetic narrator, Niloo retells Bahman's foundational myth of Ardestoon in the confessional chapter that recounts the father's visit to Madrid in 2006.

In *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You*, Nayeri's discussion on Iranian storytelling practices and narrative structures emphasises the importance of recounting background events and incorporating deep-time references that may sometimes seem only relatively relevant to the present. To understand Niloo's cultural and narrative identity, one should realise that, as Nayeri herself claims, Iranian storytelling patterns elude simple linear focus, and understanding them requires a certain

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degree of openness towards non-linear, non-Western narrative paradigms (2020: 242–243). This can suggest that Niloo's story does not begin when she leaves Ardestoon and Isfahan for the last time, but when Ardestoon land is bought, and the village is established by her legendary "great-great-grandfather Hamidi" (Nayeri 2017: 177–178). This can lead to the interpretation that Niloo's story in *Refuge* is not solely centred upon the issues of refugeehood and migration. It also reaches for a broader context of Iranian history, such as the Iranian Revolution of 1978 and 1979, and a deep-time perspective of family myths to construct the protagonist's complex cultural positioning. The cultural mosaic of stories and histories in Nayeri's novel demonstrates that traditional customs and cultural practices, such as collecting photographs and storytelling, can be redefined and become meaningful again in the context of refugee and migrant cultural identities.

The cultural practices connected with food, music, folklore, and storytelling often serve as metaphors and symbols of various aspects of diasporic life in migrant literature from North America. The cultural identity positioning involved in those practices is usually synonymous with enacting and articulating the tension that exists between the traditional bilateral transnationalism of the home-exile kind and the contemporary multi- or intercultural transnationalism of the mosaic and the *pelau*. In the former, practices, meanings, and relations are translocated from home into the country of migration, but they can be reinterpreted, recontextualised, and rewritten, as it is presented in Danticat's early works and in Nayeri's *Refuge*. In the latter, cultural elements and meanings are creatively hybridised within chaordic diasporic social fields, as shown, for instance, in Chariandy's fiction. All in all, the cultural elements and practices discussed here are methods of unsettling and subverting the colonial and neocolonial narratives. Among the works analysed here, Brand's early fiction is perhaps the most expressive in using Caribbean folklore as literary ammunition in the rebellion against ossified and oppressive ways of thinking about Black and migrant people in North America. Last but not least, Nayeri's references to Iranian storytelling and non-Western narrative patterns highlight the importance of tales and stories that introduce historical and mythical perspectives into migrant fiction and are relevant to the constructions of gradually hybridised cultural identity positions of migrants in the present.

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5.3. Home, homing, and "markers of home" – hybridity and ethnicity

The issues of home, homing, and, as Homi Bhabha and Klaus Stierstorfer phrase it, "markers of home" (Bhabha and Stierstorfer 2015: 15) continue to be placed among the most crucial elements of the cultural identity problematic. There is a large number of scholars in various fields who engage with the categories of house and home, and whose perspectives frequently refer the category of home to the issue of identity. As Bożena Shallcross states, "the discourse on the home is a truly cross-, inter-, and multidisciplinary entity that has evolved simultaneously from anthropology, sociology, philosophy, psychology, architecture, and cultural studies" (2002: 1–2). Analysing Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958), Joe Moran states that, in Bachelard's view, home is more than a physical building. In fact, what people inhabit is "an imaginary entity" that exists – shaped by memories and the unconscious – beyond "the Cartesian, three-dimensional space mapped out by the builder or surveyor" (Moran 2006: 28). Moreover, as Rowland Atkinson and Keith Jacobs put it, "[m]any assumptions we make about homes are linked to cultural or national reference points" (2016: 2). Moving away from the physical realm and locating the category of home in the spiritual, the Polish scholars Tadeusz Sławek, Aleksandra Kunce, and Zbigniew Kadłubek (2013, 2019, 2020) develop the field of oikology, claiming that "home thinking leads to oikology" (Kunce 2019: 9). As Kunce synthesises the definition of the concept, "[o]ikology in this understanding leads not only to metaphorical recognition of the home content but also to revealing experience, and through the latter – spiritual, emotional and intellectual capacity, as well as traces of events, relations and an authentic encounter with another human being" (2019: 9). Moreover, the category of home is linked with the problems of religion and spirituality. This aspect is signalled by Kadłubek (Sławek et al. 2013: 176–179) and by David Morley, who discusses the "the unity of the spiritual and the domestic" and argues that "place has a supreme value as the home not only of a people, but of their gods and guardian spirits, and the ruin of a settlement implied the ruin of the corresponding cosmos" (Morley 2000: 40). The relation between home and homesickness, longing, and belonging problematised by Roberta Rubenstein (2001) locates the category home within and at times even at the centre of migrant and refugee studies. As Rubenstein explains,

> In a fragmented postmodern world in which exile and migration are increasingly common and as entire populations are displaced by ethnic wars, genocide, famine, and other

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> destructive forces both human and natural, the definition of home—and the meaning of homesickness—may depend on where one stands not only psychologically and ideologically but geopolitically. (Rubenstein 2001: 2)

She understands postmodern subjectivity fragmentation in relation to human migration and displacement, and analyses homes through this connection. Finally, Rubenstein views the fixity of home in two distinct ways. First, home as fixity is shaped only "in the imagination" (2001: 6). Second, fixity, related to the word "fix", is not a point but a dynamic process of revision and restoration (Rubenstein 2001: 6). In migrant and refugee literature, multiple meanings and renditions of home lend themselves to interpretation that notices home and identity as immediately correlated concepts.

The category of home, the fields of home studies and oikology in literary studies, Brah's "homing desire" (Brah 2005: 177), and Bhabha's concept of "markers of home" are all connected with the Ricœurian concept of narrative identity. Home and homing are not only observable cultural processes that shape people's cultural identity positions. Migrant and refugee characters frequently do not live in the places that they call home, but they inhabit stories about these places. Figuratively inhabiting a narrative of home is often presented in contemporary migrant and refugee fiction as a vital element of one's narrative self. If home is not only a physical place and an affective, intellectual, and spiritual capacity within imagination but also a narrative, it can be theorised and analysed as an integral part of one's narrative identity, especially when home as a narrative and as a symbol affects the structure and composition of a fictional character's narrated experience. When discussed in the context of cultural identity, Ricœur's concept of narrative identity – as one that does not collapse under the weight of changes, re-evaluations, and ruptures – may incorporate the idea of narrative home as one of its key parts. Such a narrativist view of the category of home within literary and cultural studies can provide an important interpretative point of view. The literary analyses of selected migrant and refugee fiction that follow this short introduction constitute a modest attempt at implementing this method.

Studying homes, real or imagined, practices of homing, and the development of positions and "markers of home" in migrant and refugee fiction can allow one to discuss the themes of hybridisation and ethnic belonging. The reasoning behind placing these problems in one subchapter is that it seems impossible to analyse homes and homing of migrants and refugees without referring to hybridity. The desire to avoid presupposing the existence of cultural and ethnic purity, which are imaginary ideals in themselves, leads

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this interpretation towards a critical evaluation of the ideas of hybridity and ethnicity. These concepts exist in creative tension, which is visible in the imagined domestic spheres and in the ways of conceptualising homes in fictional narratives.

In Brand's "Sketches in transit… going home", the protagonist's home is not a nation or a specific country; it can be a region – the Caribbean – or even a broader concept that equates home with a community of like-minded people: revolutionaries from Grenada. Even though Ayo is a Trinidadian who lives in Canada, she is "really going home" (Brand 2023a: 178), not only for the Carnival or a vacation, but to support the revolutionary effort in the neighbouring country:

> Ayo was going home. Not home to Trinidad, home to Grenada. Trinidad was actually home, but right this minute she could not identify with the affected happiness on the plane. […] Stretching her legs up the aisle, she had discovered a friend, Diana, also going home. […] They didn't talk about why she was going to Grenada. Ayo skirted the issue, expecting the usual disapproval about the revolution. (Brand 2023a: 185–186)

If the following story in the *Sans Souci* collection, "… seen", is the continuation of Ayo's narrative, as one can easily imagine, the concept of home presented in it is a sensation of uneasy comfort. The protagonist's "severity" is "forced, coaxed to ease" as she learns to understand the island's way of life: its slow pace, patience, and "the custom of everyone living by the day and the night and not by the artifice of wealth or superiority" (Brand 2023a: 196). Her work and new relationships become her "markers of home". Her home is where her people are, and what constitutes "her people" is not defined by nationality or ethnicity but by political kinship. The woman experiences home as an image and a feeling; it is not a specific place or a building. It is the island, its natural environment, streets, markets, and people. The story is concluded with the words: "She had come home. A year ago now. To live here, to understand this" (Brand 2023a: 198). The concept of home for Ayo and for the protagonist of "… seen" is in flux. It no longer connotes only Trinidad, and it has perhaps never been Canada. Home transforms because the protagonist gains a renewed understanding of human connections, which have been corrupted for her by the North American notions of hierarchy and financial success. In Grenada, the concept of home is connected with the body, and they both seem to be in the process of healing, as if the protagonist were undergoing an uncomfortable treatment. She overdrinks rum and suffers from insomnia, but goes to work every day and learns to appreciate the Caribbean island. The home she chooses for herself is a home she has to grow into.

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In “I used to like the Dallas Cowboys”, while still in Canada and apparently before the revolution and American invasion in Grenada, the protagonist experiences a “homing desire” that is never fulfilled and is often frustrated by the past and the present. The protagonist celebrates watching American football games on television as a homing ritual:

> I’d prepare for Sunday’s game, beer and my pillows at the ready. Rushing to the kitchen between commercials, burning the chicken or the boiled potatoes, depending on whether there was money, or making split pea soup, scraping up the last grain of garlic and the onions growing stems in the dark corners of the cupboard below the sink. I’d neglect the dishes from the night before or the week before, depending on the week, set up a phone line with Tony or Jo as the case may be, put the bottles of beer in the freezer, if I had beer, and wait for the game, sit through the pre-game or the highlights, have a fifteen minute nap, time permitting. (Brand 2023a: 155)

Although the protagonist desires to be part of the American ritual of football games, her awareness of the imperial tendencies and the history of slavery in the American South, including Dallas, together with the present situation – “a groaning F16 circling the sky like a corbeau” over Grenada, whose revolution is being extinguished by an American invasion – make it impossible for her to name Canada or the United States as her home (Brand 2023a: 156). In the narrative, the Dallas Cowboys are transformed, figuratively or even literally, from celebrated football players into United States Air Force soldiers, whose presence signifies war and the end of the atmosphere of freedom in Grenada: “Because when they’re not playing, the Cowboys can be deadly” (Brand 2023a: 170). The “homing desire”, the homing practices she enacts, and the sports she follows on television as a young Caribbean migrant in Toronto are disrupted by the memory of colonialism, and by racism, American exceptionalism, and neocolonialism:

> And boxing, I liked that too, and track. Never liked hockey, except when the Soviets came to play. And golf, would you believe. That’s to tell you how far I’d go to escape the dreariness of Sundays in the winter. I’d even watch an old, lazy, white man’s sport. […] The war was inside the house now. The light from the flares ignores the lushness of this island turning it into an endless desert. (Brand 2023a: 161–162)

The two homes which the protagonist attempts to create – one in Canada and one in Grenada – begin to merge in the narrative, and their boundaries blur as the narration changes the setting and focus abruptly from one short paragraph to another, without clear signalling, as shown in the excerpt above. In both homes, cultural homing rituals, such as watching American football on television or participating in a cricket match as a spectator in Grenada, can no longer be perceived as entertainment and are forever marked by the images of plantations and military invasion. Eventually, the protagonist comes to hate

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"the Dallas Cowboys coming down [her] hot tropical street, […] pointing their M16 weapons" at her and other revolutionaries (Brand 2023a: 172).

The "homing desire" which she experiences while sitting in front of the television in her Toronto apartment and, unexpectedly, while crouching in a corridor of a house in Grenada is never satisfied, and the spaces she inhabits in Canada and the Caribbean cannot become places of security and fixity. Instead, they are transformed into places of affective, intellectual, and spiritual frustration, alienation, and painful recollection. Due to this, one can argue that the protagonist inhabits not buildings and places but her nostalgia and longing for a sense of fellowship and cultural and political belonging.

Although Brand's "St. Mary's Estate" is discussed at length in Chapter III of this dissertation, I return to it here because of the homing tensions and the houses and homes present in the short story. The satisfaction of the protagonist's "homing desire" is again frustrated by haunting re-memories as well as the present moment's affect. It is implied in the narrative that the Black woman's "markers of home" are located elsewhere, where she, her sister, and their friend now live, and they simultaneously remain strong in her imaginary childhood home on St. Mary's Estate plantation[32]. One can claim, following Rubenstein's work, that the protagonist is not exiled from her native island or the plantation as much as she experiences a sense of exile from her childhood (Rubenstein 2001: 4–5). Although the plantation is a place of her Black relatives' struggle, suffering, and subjugation, she approaches it "with a mixture of fear and curiosity" and still calls "the house where [she] was born" home: "This entrance gives you a sense of coming home, the same sense I've always had upon seeing it" (Brand 2023a: 60). The places and spaces she inspects on the plantation: the housing barracks, "the overseer's shack", and the lagoon, cause affectively and intellectually aporetic states. The place is "old and familiar": the protagonist is "feeling comfortable and awestruck at once" (2023a: 61). She experiences envy, anger, and nausea, but also senses a certain "completeness of the scene" (2023a: 60). Although related to events and images from her childhood, her emotions are "fresh and sharp" (Brand 2023a: 63). Being an exile from her plantation childhood and still "marking" the place as home in her memory, despite it being a place of martyrdom, is a complex, identity-disrupting and, simultaneously and aporetically, identity-forming issue. As Brah suggests, while the protagonist physically returns to her

[32] As indicated in Chapter III, "I used to like the Dallas Cowboys", "St. Mary's Estate", and other short stories by Brand interpreted here bear strong connections with the ideas and histories that she discusses in *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*, especially the concept of the Door of No Return.

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home, it remains "a place of no return" and lives on as a myth of plantation childhood, in which nostalgia blends with the consciousness of pain, vulnerability, and Black people's death (2005: 188).

The haunting myth of "the house where I was born" (Brand 2023a: 60), an affect-laden phrase repeated and rephrased several times throughout the short story, is finally deconstructed when the woman learns that the white plantation owner still possesses the place and the land at the time of the action: "This estate has been here for hundreds of years. Papa was the overseer. It is the end of the twentieth century and the slave barracks are still standing; one, with people living in it; the other refusing to drop into the earth, even though it has no walls" (2023a: 67). The plantation owner's "huge green house, hidden from the wood house by trees but visible on the sea side" (2023a: 65) is now imagined "ablaze" by the protagonist (Brand 2023a: 68). The woman realises that to re-evaluate and restore her identity, to shatter and regain a sense of fixity, she needs to destroy not only the white owner's house but also her home: "the house where I was born" (2023a: 60). In Brand's "St. Mary's Estate", the "homing desire" transforms into a desire for vengeance and a sense of postcolonial justice. However, the protagonist of the story never sees the revenge realised or the justice satisfied, as she leaves the plantation, and the image of fire remains "in [her] head" (Brand 2023a: 68). Through the image of home in "St. Mary's Estate", Black identity in exile is constructed as one that needs a disruptive force to be reborn. Attempting to reach the Door of No Return and re-member the suffering of the past, Black migrants' identities unmute the fragile "markers of home" they carry in their minds, spirits, and emotions, and they "de-silence" the stories that these homes store and shelter.

In Danticat's *Krik? Krak!*, Haiti is often called home; however, its meaning and position can change, as what counts as home is translocated to the United States and can be redefined. In "Caroline's Wedding", the mother and father migrate to America with their eldest daughter. There, they feel not only foreign but also unwanted. The Haitian-born daughter and the story's narrator, Grace, recounts that her mother has experienced hostility from immigration officials and was arrested for a few days during a "sweatshop raid" (Danticat 2015: loc. 1437). The mother does not consider the United States to be her home. Instead, she translocates her Haitian customs, beliefs, cuisine, and way of life to her country of exile. As a result, it seems that she has left her home only in a geographical sense. Culturally, her home migrates with her, as her "markers of home", while not physically located there, are still strongly connected with Haiti.

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The mother has another daughter, Caroline, who is born in the United States. Although the sisters are both members of the second generation, young, American-born Caroline and older, Haitian-born Grace define their "markers of home" in different ways. Grace demonstrates symbolic loyalty to her Haitian roots through her strong connection with her mother. While Caroline distances herself from her mother's point of view, the narrator sympathises with her, accompanies her to church services, and does not voice her objections to the mother's opinions and habits. By contrast, Caroline shows defiance against her mother's cultural practices. In the mother's eyes, Caroline's marriage to a person from outside the Haitian community is the ultimate symbol of her rebellion and Americanisation. The woman views her younger daughter's engagement to a Bahamian man as an act of betrayal against her personally and against her Haitian identity. As a result, Caroline believes that her home desires to control and confine her within a unified narrative of culture and unalterable identity. In general, the short story presents home as an entity that translocates language, stories, beliefs, old photographs and suitcases, and other tangible and intangible elements of Haitian culture across borders. For the characters, home is constituted by symbols, narratives, and artefacts, and it is not necessarily a physical place, or it is a place, as Avtar Brah postulates, of no return (2005: 188). The mother, who has lived in the United States for many years, figuratively inhabits Haiti as a fixed location, even though it exists solely as her memory of the country and its people. She desires to live in her memory as her home, whereas her daughters, experiencing a tension between remaining Haitian and being or becoming American, redefine their home. The story begins as the older sister receives her naturalisation certificate[33] and shows it to her younger sister, who was born an American citizen and takes her Haitian-American identity for granted. The three women in the story, although they live in one flat, inhabit three different lifeworlds. As a consequence, their concepts of home also exist in constant tension.

An image of a Haitian migrant mother is also present in "New York Day Women". Another daughter-narrator, Suzette, is surprised when she sees her mother in the city centre. It turns out that she babysits a young white boy. The narrator believes that her mother lives a secluded life, isolated in her New York house and afraid of venturing

[33] The naturalisation certificate that the narrator receives, based on which she can file a passport request, is also yet another instance of biopolitical control. The name itself – "naturalisation" – suggests that it can remake a person in their biological form, changing their biological status in order to grant them a new political identity.

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outside. When she follows her mother and discovers her secret occupation, to her astonishment, she sees that the woman can skilfully navigate the city. Although her daughter perceives her as an alienated immigrant in a large metropolis, she proves that she can make the American city her home. One may speculate that it is financial necessity that drives the mother outside and into the city, but it also demonstrates that the woman is capable of overcoming her fears and redefining long-harboured beliefs and habits. Her Haitian identity does not confine her but becomes a home from which she can step out and – not without difficulty – regard other places as possible homes.

As one reads *Krik? Krak!* and, especially, "Epilogue: Women Like Us", several questions can be formulated to complete the interpretation of the collection: whether home is Haiti or the United States, or both; whether a Haitian identity can remain intact and kept "pure" in exile; and whether the stories presented in the collection could have been voiced if they had not "emigrated" from Haiti to be published in North America. Perhaps what Danticat articulates in an interview can help to construct an answer: "Home is not a place anymore but an idea, an attitude, an ideal" (Candelario et al. 2004: 72). After one migrates, migration itself becomes home: "Home, I mean, it is migration", as Danticat asserts (Candelario et al. 2004: 72). The migrant characters in Danticat's stories inhabit their migration as their new home, and some of them attempt to translocate their cultural identity from Haiti to the United States. As a result, their home is shaped by both hybridity and ethnicity. Danticat acknowledges that physical distance from Haiti, although the country is often referred to as home, allows a migrant to process their experiences and understand home from a different perspective (Candelario et al. 2004: 76, 82). For many migrants, home ceases to exist as a physical location and becomes a narrative, which hybridises with other places, homes, sets of customs, and stories, while at the same time retaining and rewriting ethnicities, histories, memories, and various modes of belonging. Home, as Danticat's fiction presents it, is not hybrid *or* ethnic. I propose my own neologism: "hybroethnic" – both hybrid and ethnic – to describe this intriguing situation. Home becomes a narrative because the stories about it are more important than the objects of material culture brought from a geographical home. Home as narrative dominates home as location.

Chariandy's *Brother* presents a more radical redefinition of the concept of home between generations than Danticat's early stories do. Francis and Michael's mother, Ruth, can still call Trinidad home even though she feels an obligation to contribute to her new country as a "good migrant" in Canada. By contrast, her sons do not have any particular

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ties to Trinidad as home, and they do not consider Canada to be their home either. Their "homing desire" is placed elsewhere and realised differently: through new relationships and the formation of new, transcultural and interracial communities and solidarities. Such a perspective on home might be an answer to Steven Vertovec's question about the transnational ties with home maintained by migrants' children (2001: 577). Francis and Michael visit Trinidad once with their mother. However, they experience the place as tourists on vacation. Even after the trip, they are left to imagine and reconstruct the scattered bits and pieces of Trinidad from their mother's stories. As Chariandy theorises in his 2007 article about Black literature in Canada, "the second generation awakens to its diasporic legacy not through conscious communication, but through an unconscious transmission of affect" (2007: 826). Paraphrasing Chariandy's words from a 2007 interview, one can say that the mother's place of origin is available to her sons as an amalgamation of unconscious and semi-conscious affects, through which they can sense but not actually know their mother's home (Chariandy and Dobson 2007: 811).

Although they are born in Canada, Francis and Michael do not articulate a sense of cultural belonging to the country as their homeland. The statistical data that Chariandy analyses elsewhere show that "the Canadian-born children of visible-minority immigrants were progressively identifying less with Canada" (2007: 818). For Francis, Michael, Aisha, Jelly, and other children of migrants from Scarborough, "markers of home" are located both in particular physical places, such as the Rouge Valley and the barbershop, Desirea's, as well as in symbols and cultural practices, in which their "homing desire" is realised along with a spontaneous, unforced cultural syncretism and intercultural alliances. Especially through music and food, the characters figuratively inhabit the fissures and breaks within the fixed meanings of ostensibly unified cultural identities and official Canadian multiculturalism. The young people's transcultural and interracial solidarities form a Scarborough community of resistance and new modes of belonging, which they can call home.

In one of the refugee narratives analysed here, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, the notions of home and homing take traditional forms that can be connected with the phenomena of forced migration and exile. In this novel, home as a geographical location is imagined as precarious. A place can be bombed, destroyed, and abandoned. When this happens to Afra and Nuri, they experience relationships with people as their metaphorical home. In this sense, Nuri's home is fixed; it is his wife, Afra, and his cousin, Mustafa – his family. The refugee characters carry their home with them as it becomes

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an unattainable dream of return to Syria. As Brah phrases it, home turns into "a mythic place of desire" and "a place of no return" (2005: 188). Nuri and Mustafa share a conviction that their aim in life is not to stay and be assimilated in the United Kingdom, but to return to their homeland to rebuild their lives and beehives there. Their sense of violent discontinuity in their refugee lives leads them to believe that life can be made coherent and whole again in a rebuilt Syria. In Lefteri's novel, home can exist despite the destruction of the physical place and continue within people and their relations. The people who make a home in exile never cease to dream of the geographical location that they left as a mythical place where restoration is possible. This desire and myth of home shape their cultural identity wherever they migrate.

In the refugee/migrant narrative in Nayeri's *Refuge*, as Niloo moves homes several times, she locates her "markers of home" in numerous places, all of which seem to hold certain significance. Niloo's homes include Isfahan in Iran, Oklahoma City in the United States, and Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, she sets her "markers of home" in several other places: the village of Ardestoon, the refugee hostel near Rome, Yale University, and the Iranian refugee squat in Amsterdam, Zakhmeh. This multiplicity of homes may suggest a hybridised identity. However, Niloo's dislocation from Iran, refugeehood, her attempt to assimilate in the West, and the "markers of home" that she situates in the United States and the Netherlands indicate that the reality of her cultural identity eludes definition solely in terms of hybridity. As a teenager in Oklahoma City, she dreams of going to college and escaping to "[her] own apartment in a big city" (Nayeri 2017: 96). In the chapter that recounts her father's first visit, Niloo admits: "this sleepy flatland was no home to me, and it would be worth any hard work and indignity now if I could just find my own" (2017: 96). In the United States, Niloo embraces a Western idea of financial achievement and academic success. She also desires to erase Iran, the first place she calls home, from her identity, which situates her in opposition to her parents' cultural belonging: "after Yale and graduate school and decades among savvy nomadic second-generation peers […], she understood that the scent of home would never fade from her parents as it had faded from her" (Nayeri 2017: 40). Years later in Amsterdam, she realises that her Americanisation, rejection of Iranian culture, and her attempt to disappear in the melting pot fragment her identity's self-constancy and cause anxiety:

> After the evening's mourning, Niloo lifts her tingling legs off the cushions. "I am going home," she says. Is it her home, this place she's headed? For decades she's tried to make

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> homes for herself, but she is always a foreigner, always a guest—that forever refugee feeling, that constant need for a meter of space, the Perimeter she carries on her back. Over the years, she has learned to adapt, to start over in each new place and live as if she belongs there. It feels like lying, even more so now [after Mam'mad's death]. (Nayeri 2017: 222)

She begins to gradually reincorporate her Iranian homeland and family relations into her homing in Amsterdam. She struggles to construct a cultural identity position based on many homes and "markers of home", which she creates on three continents over a few decades. One of the factors that affects her identity formation is her experience of refugeehood: "When you've lost something, you return to the place you last saw it and you search, turning that room upside down. Where else would Niloo search for her lost joy, her wild, childish heart, when last she saw it in a refugee shelter?" (Nayeri 2017: 319). It appears that refugeehood disrupts her sense of self so deeply that it is extremely difficult for Niloo to feel at home anywhere she lives. In a sense, refugeehood itself becomes a form of belonging and a home for the protagonist. Niloo's husband notices it and comments: "For ages I thought we were making a home, but you're still waiting with your backpack all packed and ready to go" (Nayeri 2017: 249). After a period of living with her husband in a rented flat, she decides to move into their unfinished apartment in Amsterdam on her own. This not only demonstrates her financial stability and privilege but also means that various elements of her life are falling apart, and she has an opportunity to rebuild her home, both physically and culturally. In terms of home and homing, *Refuge* presents how a seemingly incoherent mosaic of homes and "markers of home" can enable one to build a new type of continuity within their cultural identity. In such a structure, hybridisation is only one element among many, and it coexists with one's renewed identification with their homeland, which, albeit redefined, may again symbolise belonging and roots.

Home remains a valid category for discussion in the context of migrants' and refugees' cultural identities. Home can be a geographical location, a specific place or building, as much as it can be a narrative of belonging and the location of one's "markers of home". Migrants' homing is presented as a set of various practices that establish individual and communal "markers of home", which are the tangible and intangible objects, artefacts, symbols, affects, and stories that help one to create and experience a substantial connection with usually not one, but two or three homes simultaneously. Due to this, in contemporary migrant, refugee, and diasporic fiction, homes are, figuratively speaking, stories within stories. They are imagined narratives and dreams

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about places and people narrated within the imagined lives of the characters. This plurality of homes and "markers of home" that one can incorporate within their narrative of belonging testifies to the fact that homes, as elements of cultural positioning, are presented as both ethnic and hybrid – showing a longing for a lost home: a mythical place of origin one cannot return to, even if they can visit the location (Brah 2005: 188–194), and adopting or generating new, often less traditional and less conventional homes, whose "markers" are usually not physical objects but beliefs, cultural and political views, and meaningful interpersonal relations. A migrant character can figuratively inhabit such a hybrid home as they live in their "mini-universe" – a lifeworld that spans various cultural references, including old forms of belonging and new attachments and allegiances.

5.4. Intergenerational conflicts and hopes – second-generation migrants?

Literary representations of the perspectives of migrant parents and second-generation children often provide material for cultural identity-oriented analysis. The themes of intergenerational conflict and reconciliation recur in migrant prose. Many works of contemporary fiction present the first and second generations as experiencing migration, diaspora, and belonging in ways that can be so different that they generate cultural tensions and new identity positions. However, in the selected works by Danticat and Chariandy, generational conflicts can also lead to situations and events that suggest a hope of reconnection and reconciliation.

When one considers the cultural aspects of the characters' identity positions, it is possible to argue that the mother and daughters in Danticat's "Caroline's Wedding" represent not two but three different generations of Haitian-Americans. The narrator of the short story is a representative of a transitional generation. Her mother identifies with Haiti – her folkloric and culinary practices, social customs, and religious beliefs suggest a strong sense of belonging to Haiti, despite her permanent residence in the United States. The mother feels as if she were a limb "amputated" from her homeland (Danticat 2015: loc. 1855). Caroline, the younger sister, navigates between Haitian culture and language, which she knows only through her parents' perspective, and the American cultural environment, in which she has been educated. She does not perceive her parents' Haitian origin, as her mother does, as a cultural position that determines her life choices.

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Aware of her Caribbean roots, she feels that she can freely explore other forms of belonging. She is not a religious person and perceives her mother's Christian beliefs and Haitian customs as superstitious and unreasonable. Her cultural identification is neither national nor ethnic, and it is open to change.

Grace, the narrator-focaliser and elder sister, experiences an in-between state: a liminal cultural space between being "only" Haitian and "fully" American. She is uncomfortable and feels that she cannot easily celebrate intercultural relations as part of her identity. Grace attends a Haitian parish church in New York with her mother. She speaks both Haitian Creole and English fluently. As she discusses Caroline's wedding with her mother, she makes the effort to maintain a meaningful relationship with her. Nevertheless, Grace also perceives some of her mother's customs and habits as irrational. For example, Grace and Caroline never wear the red underwear their mother makes them put on to deter their father's spirit from their dreams. In fact, the narrator is glad to see her father in her dream visions. Moreover, she supports Caroline in her decision to marry Eric, her Bahamian fiancé, during a civil ceremony, rather than a religious one, and she organises a wedding shower for Caroline, which the mother views as a deeply American tradition. While her mother considers her to be Americanised, and Grace is happy when she receives her American citizenship, she does not feel free to fully embrace a transcultural identity position. She lives between the cultural field of a traditional Haitian diaspora and a hybrid position, in which the role of Haiti diminishes to accommodate other forms and "markers" of belonging in America.

Through Grace's narrative perspective and her mother's utterances, the two "purities" – Haitian and American identities – are presented as unable to enter a peaceful cultural dialogue towards reconciliation. However, Grace seems to forget that cultural purity as such does not exist. Even her mother's cultural position is already a hybrid – the mother is Black, Haitian, and Christian. In the context of Haiti, Christianity is the white coloniser's religion that was often imposed on Black slaves as a form of control and oppression. Therefore, as "purity" of identity seems to be a cultural myth, there is space for change and dialogue. In the story, Caroline's wedding sparks not only conflict. It also becomes an incentive for the mother to reconnect with her youngest, American-born daughter. She attends Caroline's civil ceremony, to which she initially objects, and she buys Caroline a piece of lingerie as a wedding shower gift, even though she thinks it is inappropriate. Eventually, she is visibly happy for Caroline as the young woman departs for a honeymoon trip to the Bahamas.

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Towards the end of the short story, Grace performs a symbolic act of reconciliation with her mother and her Haitian identity by throwing a bone into her mother's stew, which might symbolise that Grace chooses her Haitian heritage over her American present. However, the act does not resolve the diasporic cultural tensions in the story. At the very end, Grace asks: "What kinds of lullabies will I sing at night? What kinds of legends will my daughter be told? What kinds of charms will I give her to ward off evil?" (Danticat 2015: loc. 2037), which demonstrates her cultural awareness and already suggests that Grace's daughter will inherit different lullabies, legends, and charms because they are going to be altered by her diasporic and hybrid practices and identity positioning.

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the problem of diasporic cultural identification is often left to be interpreted through silences, absences, and through what is missing from the narrative. Sophie's alleged Americanisation is only hinted at by her mother, who considers her daughter's serious eating disorder to be a sign of a Western culture of abundance, even though she is aware that Sophie's bulimia stems from her trauma caused by the testing practice. Sophie's home and life with Joseph in America are not addressed at length in the novel. After Martine's funeral in Haiti and the final question – "'*Ou libéré*?' Are you free, my daughter?" (Danticat 1998: 234, italics original) – Sophie returns to the United States, to her husband and to her therapy, which means that her problems are far from resolved, and that she is not, in fact, free. What is barely addressed in the narrative is the influence of the American cultural field, in which the actual healing process can begin for the protagonist. As Maha Marouan notes, Sophie's sexual trauma therapy group is a multicultural one. Its leader is a therapist and a Santeria priestess. The participants of the therapy draw inspiration for healing practices from their cultures. The group therapy is a transcultural experience in which the meanings of folkloric customs and artefacts are transformed (Marouan 2013: 44). Sophie's statue of *Erzulie Freda*, the white Virgin Mary manifestation of the *loa*, is used in a therapy session that resembles a *Vodou* ritual. The statue's symbolic meaning is redefined for the protagonist in a therapeutic way, as it empowers her to challenge the image of "pure" mother- and womanhood (Marouan 2013: 44). Although it is not emphasised in the novel, the United States is the place where various Black diasporic traditions and religions of many nations and communities can come into contact and be understood in new ways. In the context of Sophie's group therapy, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* presents cultural hybridity and intercultural relations as fields of redefinition, rewriting, care, and resistance.

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In Danticat's early works, the characters of mothers are frequently presented as the ones who criticise the increasing "Americanness" of their daughters. Like Martine, they encourage their children to learn English and adapt to life in the United States as quickly as possible. Yet, like Grace and Caroline's mother, they often struggle to conform to American culture themselves and disapprove of Western customs. The diasporic and transcultural identity positions of the Haitian migrants' daughters, members of the so-called second generation, are not represented as solutions but as points of cultural tension. In general, Danticat's early fiction presents the first generation of Haitian migrants in New York as a traditional diaspora, whose members harbour feelings of exile and cultural "amputation", and translocate many symbols, objects, and practices from Haiti to the United States. In *Krik? Krak!* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the second generation consists almost solely of daughters, born in Haiti or in the United States, who find ways of (re)building relationships with their parents despite the generational conflicts that arise due to cultural differences. The daughters experience identity changes, and their cultural positions become increasingly complex. The role of traditional Haitian diasporic culture does not disappear, but it fades in relevance and, as I argue elsewhere, changes its place on the diasporic "transnational maps" (Dudek 2022: 94). The young women's identities undergo a process of hybridisation because they engage not only with American culture but also with members, objects, and practices of other diasporas in the United States.

Although it is not as directly articulated as in Danticat's works, a type of generational conflict between the mother and her sons is presented in Chariandy's *Brother*. Francis and Michael, who can be described as second-generation Black Canadians, are likely to consider themselves neither Caribbean nor Canadian. As mentioned in Chapter IV, their modes of cultural belonging can be interpreted as unconventional and non-normative. However, they are by no means less meaningful than traditionally diasporic forms of identification. As Bannerji and Mukherjee postulated (1990: 147–148), members of the Black diaspora and other people of colour in Canada can envision and practice alternative, meaningful, and "substantive" models of interracial and transcultural relations, rather than participate in official forms of Canadian multiculturalism. Bannerji and Mukherjee emphasise the role of everyday and seemingly ordinary acts and encounters between people whose cultural practices and identities are not a hybrid of preexisting "purities" but rather new forms of domestic and communal life that cannot be easily categorised within existing terminology. For the main characters of *Brother*, the dynamic form of cultural life at Desirea's barbershop is as substantive and

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meaningful as Trinidadian culture is for their mother. Despite her close ties with Trinidad and its culture, Ruth strives to maintain an image of propriety and wants to earn her place in Canadian society by adhering to social norms and insisting that her sons should receive an education. By contrast, Michael and Francis do not have any substantial transnational links with Trinidad despite the trip they make with their mother as young teenagers. At the same time, they sense that Canada rejects them; they experience, as Christina Sharpe phrases it, "a pervasive climate of antiblackness" (2016: 106). As children of migrants and within a weather of white supremacy that marks Black citizens as migrants, Michael and Francis are racialised and socially constructed as unwanted aliens.

Brother presents this kind of generational conflict as a wider phenomenon that is true not only for the brothers but also for most of their friends in Scarborough. Michael observes that their immigrant parents "worked shit jobs, struggled with rent, were chronically tired, and often pushed just as chronically tired notions about identity and respectability" (Chariandy 2019: 101). Michael's words and the cultural practices and attitudes of the members of Desirea's barbershop clearly demonstrate that the parents' notions of assimilation and respectable behaviour in Canada are not acceptable and do not offer a meaningful cultural position for their second-generation children.

Another form of potential intergenerational conflict, which never reaches a point of resolution and is presented only through an anticlimactic encounter, is the lack of a relationship between the brothers and their father. Although Michael and Francis find the man's address and visit it, they never meet their father and never know whether they actually discover his place of residence. The absence of the father may be read as a sign of the discontinuity of migrant lives, which are broken not only by immigration but also because of cultural, social, racial, and financial discrimination and hardships. The fact that Michael and Francis try to contact their father, even though this could open another generational conflict, suggests that they have a desire to make their lives and their mother's story symbolically whole. Presenting this part of the brothers' story as unresolved contributes to the way in which the novel attempts to imitate life with its chaos, discontinuities, and ruptures.

From their mother's perspective, it seems that Michael and Francis experience a type of "neither-nor" position of cultural (un)belonging. Trinidadian culture and national identity are elements which they do not know and cannot identify with, and Canadianness is a cultural position that rejects them because of their Blackness. As mentioned earlier, Francis and Michael's new modes of belonging include such

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cultural practices as experimental food and music. They are also spheres of possible reconciliation with their mother, as exemplified by the final scene of the novel in which, despite Ruth's progressive dementia, she positively responds to the music that Jelly plays at her home. In *Bother*, the theme of care is closely linked to intergenerational cultural reconnection. Even though taking care of Michael's dementia-afflicted mother is a domestic, ordinary, unspectacular, and potentially long-term process, it is also a substantive and meaningful act which possesses an identity-forming potential for Aisha, Jelly, and Michael.

Immigrants' children, the so-called second generation, are not, strictly speaking, a generation of migrants. Nevertheless, their lives are presented in contemporary fiction as strongly influenced by their parents' cultural identities, migration stories, and circumstances. Even if Danticat's Grace, Caroline, and Sophie, and Chariandy's Michael, Francis, Aisha, and Jelly reject some or all of their mothers' and fathers' cultural identity positions and beliefs, their own identities are still entangled with the parents' "chronically tired notions about identity" (Chariandy 2019: 101). During Caroline's wedding lunch, her sister raises a toast: "'A few years ago, our parents made this journey,' I said. 'This is a stop on the journey where my sister leaves us. We will miss her greatly, but she will never be gone from us'" (Danticat 2015: loc. 1952). Grace's words not only articulate her attachment to Caroline but also somewhat inadvertently testify to the fact that her life is profoundly affected by her parents' journey. The characters who belong to the second generation are simultaneously insiders and outsiders. Their diluted ties with the parents' homelands and their sense of unbelonging in the new country, which still does not seem like home, make it possible for them to search for and experiment with hybridising and transcultural practices and positions. Interestingly, in Danticat's and Chariandy's fiction, it is the characters of the mothers who reconsider their traditional cultural positions thanks to their children. The daughters and sons of migrants help and empower their parents to open up to new, unconventional, and hybridising cultural elements, which they find when they interact with members of other diasporas in the United States and Canada.

5.5. The use of migrants' and refugees' mother tongues in anglophone fiction

The problem of native language use in contemporary anglophone migrant and refugee prose could be divided into two subcategories. The first one consists in using languages

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other than English for various reasons that can be analysed and reflected upon. The second language-related phenomenon discussed here is the use of migrants' and refugees' first languages that is concealed by way of English-language narration and dialogue, despite the fact that the reader is aware that a character's mother tongue, such as Haitian Creole, Arabic, or Persian, is spoken. This subchapter focuses on analysing both phenomena in the selected fiction by Danticat and Nayeri, and it references Brand's, Chariandy's, and El Akkad's prose to provide a wider perspective.

The language used by some of the characters of Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is Haitian Creole, a French-based Creole language developed by Black Haitians: slaves, former slaves, and their descendants. In the novel, certain words, such as "*Manman*" (Danticat 1998: 132), phrases, and, albeit rarely, entire sentences are written in Haitian Creole. One can suspect that these expressions and utterances are "preserved" in the characters' mother tongue to prevent the loss of certain untranslatable nuances of meaning, culturally specific references of certain terms, such as *loa*, and affect-laden structures. Retaining the original emotional impact of certain sentences, such as the aforementioned "*Ou libéré*?" (Danticat 1998: 234, italics original) – which can be translated to "Are you free?" – leads to a creative merging of English prose and the Haitian linguistic context. In consequence, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is a representative of anglophone Caribbean literature, whose conceptual framework not only moves beyond the geographical borders and linguistic boundaries of American literature, but also extends and augments the national categories[34].

Using Haitian Creole in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* – an anglophone work of fiction originally published in the United States in 1994 – is also a sociopolitical act. Most likely, the novel was primarily addressed to literate Haitians living in the United States and in other English-dominated countries. Although one may find several French phrases uttered by Danticat's characters in dialogue, Haitian Creole is the mother tongue of the protagonist and the female characters. French in the Haitian context is the language of the coloniser and the wealthy upper class. Using Haitian Creole instead of French in the novel, especially in the geographical context of impoverished villages in the Haitian mountains, is a political choice. It might make the work of fiction more accessible to English-speaking Haitians. However, the reason behind using certain Haitian words and

[34] A similar concept of extending and going beyond the geographical and conceptual national boundaries of the United States is expressed in Wai Chee Dimock's *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (2006: 1–4).

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phrases may also be to resist the colonising and classist influence of French and the globalising, homogenising dominance of English. Moreover, I intentionally call Haitian Creole the main characters' mother tongue because *Breath, Eyes, Memory* presents it as the language of Haitian-born women, who are the bearers of meanings and symbols of the language, both at home and in exile.

Brand and Chariandy use expressions from Caribbean Creole languages to name folkloric figures, such as the *soucouyant* and the *lougarou*, and to name Caribbean foods and dishes, such as the aforementioned *callaloo* and *pelau*. Although they do not use Creole words and phrases in their fiction as often as Danticat does, the Caribbean terms and concepts they employ illustrate the untranslatable uniqueness of certain aspects of Trinidadian culture. As it is analysed here in subchapter 5.2, the words denoting Caribbean folkloric ghouls and the names of dishes are significant cultural symbols and metaphors. Their use in Brand's and Chariandy's fiction is never just an "exotic" cultural curiosity. The Caribbean shapeshifting creatures and the Trinidadian dishes Brand and Chariandy refer to are not only emotionally important foreign words. In Brand's short stories and Chariandy's *Brother*, they serve as symbols of identity transformations and as metaphors of cultural hybridity and resistance to the melting pot.

The Persian words transcribed in the Latin alphabet and used in Nayeri's *Refuge* can be interpreted as indicating a certain cultural and political position inscribed in the novel. A number of them are also connected to food, such as the aforementioned *sofreh*: dining cloth (Nayeri 2017: 150) or *barbari*: Iranian flatbread (2017: 172, italics original). As mentioned in Chapter IV, *Zakhmeh*, the name of the refugee squat and cultural space in Amsterdam where Niloo attends, is also a Persian word that denotes a plectrum for Eastern stringed instruments, which evokes associations with music, poetry, and artistic freedom. However, as Niloo notices, the term is also "derived from *zakhm*, the word for wound" (Nayeri 2017: 74, italics original), which can indicate the place's relation to refugees' suffering and traumatisation. Another group of Persian words in the novel are titles added to names, such as *khanom*: miss or missus, *agha*: mister (2017: 196), and *joon* and *azizam*, which may be translated as equivalents of "my dear" or "my darling" (Nayeri 2017: 170–171, 183). One more meaningful example of a Persian word used in *Refuge* several times is *manghal*. It is the Persian term that denotes a small West Asian decorative charcoal brazier used specifically to heat pieces of charcoal for an opium pipe. A *manghal* is often a piece of decorative art; it is made of brass and engraved with flower designs. A *manghal*, together with a particular type of pipe, is used as a cultural form of opium

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smoking. It is unclear why the narrator uses the Persian word to refer to the father's opium addiction. However, one can understand that the *manghal* is a directly opium-related name which carries a clear Persian cultural reference. Using it might be considered to be a cultural and political choice, demonstrating the distinctiveness and richness of Iranian culture, which is either unknown or orientalised and seen as "exotic" in the West:

> He tried to remember a time when he didn't need the wretched plant, when he could travel to the other side of the earth and simply wander, to have a coffee or a sandwich outside, speak to a stranger, not bothering or panicking about how to procure some. He thought of his first time around a *manghal*, when he tried opium with a group of young friends in a sour cherry orchard in Ardestoon just before he set off for university. They sat in a rustle of trees munching on sour plums and pistachios, and someone lit the *manghal* and filled it. (Nayeri 2017: 199, italics original)

Refuge makes several references to the significance and richness of Iranian culture, especially Iranian food, nature, and Persian poetry: mystic poetry by Jalal al-Din Rumi, as well as state propaganda songs and nursery rhymes. Altogether, the Farsi words used in Nayeri's *Refuge* do not appear to be random or accidental. Together, they may be interpreted as forming a curated mini-dictionary of Persian cultural references in the novel.

The Arabic word used by the young protagonist of El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise*: *yallah* – "let's go" – may be perceived as a universal sign of migrancy:

> "*Yallah*, *yallah*!" Amir yells. The word is foreign to Vänna's ears but its meaning clear—it speaks of restlessness, movement. That she understands what the boy means on some instinctual level doesn't surprise Vänna, nor does the subconscious realization in that moment that it is natural for certain words to be subject to universal understanding—that, following its phrases for greeting and introduction, every culture's first linguistic export should be the directive *Let's go*. (El Akkad 2021: 133, italics original)

This emotional cry uttered by Amir signifies fear, movement, and fleeing from danger; however, it can also speak of togetherness. "*Yallah*" and "let's go" signify words or phrases common to perhaps all languages on Earth. For the narrator of *What Strange Paradise*, they indicate that "restlessness, movement" (El Akkad 2021: 133), and migration connect people. In Amir and Vänna's story, *yallah* is a sign of the movement and displacement that make people interconnected as humans. The use of this common yet strong Arabic word in El Akkad's novel may be seen as a declaration of the universality of migration in the contemporary world. It can also be interpreted as a linguistic sign of the fragmentation of cultural and narrative identity and the disruption of livelihoods caused by forced migration and refugeehood.

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Using English narration and dialogue to conceal communication in other languages, such as Haitian Creole or Persian, is common in Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and Nayeri's *Refuge*. Most probably, it is practised by authors and publishers to make the fiction accessible to the English-dominated world readership. However, an analysis of the situations in which the characters' first languages are used may reveal that their mother tongues are spoken mostly in private and domestic spheres. For many characters of Nayeri's and Danticat's fiction, Farsi and Haitian Creole are languages of family relations. They experience their first languages as familiar, domestic, and homely elements of their lives in exile. Nevertheless, the mother tongues are often used in *Refuge* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* in moments full of tension and emotion and in conversations that disclose strained relationships between characters. For instance, during Niloo's father's first visit with his family in Oklahoma City in 1993, Bahman notices that his daughter has an accent in her native tongue, and asks his former wife whether she speaks Farsi with their children, to which she replies: "Yes, we speak Farsi, […] but they speak English all day at school" (Nayeri 2017: 102). This scene represents the complexity of cultural positions and language politics in migrant families. The issues of fixity, hybridity, and cultural interconnectedness are negotiated and navigated in and through the languages that migrants choose to speak or not to speak at home and outside. It is a personal politics and a positioning of language identity. In Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Sophie speaks Haitian Creole with her mother and grandmother when she confronts them about the traumatising practice of testing, which is another example of a situation in which the characters' first language is used in the context of domesticity intermixed with anxiety and trauma.

In "Caroline's Wedding" from *Krik? Krak!*, the mother speaks Haitian Creole to her daughters at home, but she switches to English when other people are present. She also attends a Haitian church in New York, where the services are held in Creole. Grace, the elder daughter and the narrator, whose "full Haitian name" is Gracina (Danticat 2015: loc. 1740), recalls her father's stories related to his village's vernacular: "He remembered calling strangers 'Mother,' 'Sister', 'Brother,' because his village's Creole demanded a family title for everyone he addressed" (Danticat 2015: loc. 1639). In "Caroline's Wedding", Haitian Creole is presented as a home space: a domestic domain within language. It is usually associated with family relations, comfort, and memory. Still, it also signifies secrecy, a sense of exile from home, and the experience of marginalisation in the United States. In "Epilogue: Women Like Us", despite the social

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exclusion of its users and the language's devaluation in the English-dominated West, Haitian Creole is elevated as a language of resistance and a means to gain one's voice through creative expression: "These women, they asked for your voice so that they could tell your mother in your place that yes, women like you do speak, even if they speak in a tongue that is hard to understand. Even if it's patois, dialect, Creole" (Danticat 2015: loc. 2078). For Danticat's female characters in *Krik? Krak!* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Haitian Creole is an ambiguous linguistic space of home and exile, in which the feelings of safety, familiarity, belonging, and personal stories and memories are mixed with feelings of uncertainty, shame, grief, fear, and traumatisation.

In conclusion, single words and entire utterances written in migrants' and refugees' first languages in contemporary anglophone fiction can be interpreted as carriers of cultural meanings, which would be unavailable if conveyed through their English equivalents. The mother tongues of migrant characters in Danticat's and Nayeri's prose are among the bearers of cultural identity, enriching and expanding the ways in which their narrative identities are constructed. Moreover, the characters' first languages, whose use may be concealed in anglophone prose, highlight the fragmentation of and the fissures within one's identity, demonstrating the impact of migrants' language politics on their sense of self. In contemporary migrant and refugee fiction, language can be presented as one of the major factors that shape the narrative identities of the characters. Last but not least, from a sociopolitical perspective, the use of migrants' and refugees' mother tongues in anglophone literature is also a political decision because language plays a significant role in the characters' cultural and political positioning. In other words, their cultural identity positioning is virtually bound to be negotiated in and through not one but usually two or three languages.

5.6. Cultural identity positions in refugee fiction

Cultural identity practices and positions are not the main focus of Lefteri's and El Akkad's refugee novels. However, challenging though it may be, it is possible to interpret the cultural elements present in the novels. Scattered in various countries, the diasporas of Syrian war refugees are depicted as mobilising and forming more or less organised communities in order to prevent stagnation and encourage further mobility and relocation among refugees. Their relations with "host" societies and other diasporas are

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sometimes presented as uneasy, and they can be analysed through the lens of the aporetic concepts of hospitality and hostility, which, as Jacques Derrida suggests, are inseparable (Derrida 2000a, Derrida 2000b). The cultural themes that are most often discussed in refugee fiction are forced assimilation, intercultural relations and animosities, and a sense of cultural objectification and alienation.

By contrast, Nayeri's *Refuge* focuses on and highlights certain practices that are crucial for the cultural positions of the refugee characters in the novel. Although *Refuge* cannot be unambiguously classified as refugee fiction, it portrays the Iranian diaspora of refugees in Amsterdam as an active, well-organised group. Despite their mobilisation and a sense of unity, Iranian refugees who gather in the refugee squat, Zakhmeh, strive against unjust immigration policies, the dubious hospitality and the racist hostility of Dutch society, and their own internal conflicts.

5.6.1. Cultural positions in *What Strange Paradise* and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*

El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise* devotes little attention to the young protagonist's Syrian home and the cultural practices Amir and his family develop there. However, their refuge in Alexandria, Egypt, together with the cultural and political situations that they find themselves in as war refugees, is a background against which the narrative discusses such issues as cultural alienation, assimilation, and fear of stagnation. At first, it seems that Amir's home migrates together with his family. For the boy, family is home: where they go together, he can find "markers of home". Even Egyptian soap operas on television seem familiar to Amir: "though the accents were different and the geography different, this new place reminded Amir of home" (El Akkad 2021: 32). Although Egypt might seem geographically and culturally close to Syria, it is in fact "different", and the family feels culturally alienated. Amir's mother fears social ostracism and attempts to lose her Syrian Arabic accent in order not to be recognised as a refugee or migrant in public. She believes that passing as Egyptian can be a cultural and political form of individual freedom. In reality, it is an element of coerced assimilation and social control exerted over refugees.

In Egypt, even though he is a young child, Amir seems to be aware of his cultural position. He spends time on the street in the city, where he is not only a passive observer but also an active participant, immersed in Alexandria's street life. Along a crowded

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boardwalk, he notices financial and cultural inequalities. When white European tourists and wealthy Alexandrians buy food from food trucks, not far from them, a woman and her five-year-old daughter beg for money. Although Egyptian street vendors, food truck cooks, and the "fully veiled woman […] begging for change" communicate in several languages and serve a crowd of customers, the tourists are rude and at times violent (El Akkad 2021: 27). When Amir steals food for the woman, he immediately realises that he has only "given them [Alexandrian vendors and white tourists] an excuse" to inflict violence on the begging woman and her daughter. Syrian women in Egypt, Amir's mother's acquaintances, are convinced that what affects the cultural and class tensions experienced by refugees the most is "the color of one's skin, the country of one's birth, the size of one's inheritance" (El Akkad 2021: 33). In the cultural panorama observed by Amir in Alexandria, ethnicity determines one's social standing. Ethnic origin is racialised and treated as an essentialist and objective marker of personal value, which constructs a dehumanising perspective. Syrian refugees are transformed into cultural and political objects and commodities to be used by wealthy Egyptians and tourists.

Despite a dehumanising and racist social climate, a new Syrian diaspora of war refugees begins to form in Egypt. Their diasporic mobilisation, as depicted in El Akkad's novel, focuses on furthering their legal claims to be officially declared refugees and making an effort to be included in resettlement programmes. Syrian diasporic organisation in Egypt emphasises not only the group's separateness from the surrounding "host" society and culture but also their cosmopolitan ambitions. Their communal action is not presented as based on cultural or religious practices but rather as stemming from a sense of cultural alienation in a foreign country and a fear of stagnation. Because of this fear, the refugees imagine that movement signifies safety, and that the West symbolises stability, which is often an illusion.

The story of Vänna Hermes and her parents can be seen as an example of the Western degeneration of humanitarian values and the deterioration of cultural ties in the Global North. Even though Vänna's family are not native to the island they inhabit and are, in fact, immigrants, some of the girl's mother's utterances are xenophobic towards other groups. Moreover, the financial failure of their family business and the apparent disintegration of their family life suggest that they live in a state of stagnation, without meaningful cultural bonds on the island or anywhere else. Vänna's decision to join Amir's flight and migration may be motivated by her desire to find a community with which she could form a new, substantive relationship.

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The aporia of hospitality and hostility is a theoretical lens through which one can interpret Amir's journey. It is experienced by the boy not only on the political level but also on a cultural one. His family's ethnic origin and culture are orientalised and deemed "different" in Egypt and in Europe. On board the smugglers' boat, the conversations of the men in the "Before" chapters of *What Strange Paradise* prove that the refugees are painfully aware of the racism and hostility of Western authorities and societies. Some of the men believe that Europe and North America can welcome them and offer them a chance of prosperity. Others are disillusioned with the West and its hostility based on race, class, and cultural distinctions. Amir also experiences the "hostipitality" (Derrida 2000b) on the island. Nimra El Ward's and Vänna's hospitality and the soldiers' hostility are presented as inseparable, which is the logical aporia that Derrida analyses. The hospitality and hostility seem to stem from individual cultural positions and experiences of the characters. Although they are not, strictly speaking, cultural practices, they influence the identity positions of the refugee camp overseer, the teenage girl, and Colonel Kethros. Madame El Ward, as mentioned before, is an immigrant herself. Vänna is a second-generation child of white economic migrants. Kethros, the military commander who relentlessly searches for Amir on the island, is a veteran with a disability. Despite his experience of war and its atrocities, he shows unwavering determination in finding Amir, a war refugee child. The characters' behaviours and attitudes towards Amir illustrate the confusing mixture of "hostipitality" (Derrida 2000b). On the island, navigating complex identity positions of migrants, refugees, and native citizens becomes an increasingly politicised sphere of life. The arrival of the refugee boat and Amir's escape become a litmus test for the island's population, challenging their assumptions and highlighting their power relations, especially in the areas of race, ethnicity, and class.

The cultural positions and practices of refugee characters in Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* are even more difficult to analyse than those presented in El Akkad's refugee novel. In a sense, to use Hannah Arendt's phrasing, Afra and Nuri "represent the vanguard of their peoples" (Arendt 2007: 274) as Syrian war refugees. The woman is an artist, and her husband is a trained beekeeper and a businessman. Their actions and the plans which Nuir and Mustafa discuss in their online correspondence suggest that they intend to take refuge in the United Kingdom only temporarily. They do not believe that cultural assimilation in the British Isles is a valid choice. They dream of returning to Syria to rebuild their lives and their entrepreneurship there as soon as it is

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safe for them to do so. They consider taking up beekeeping in Great Britain only as a means of economic and cultural survival.

At the bed and breakfast, among refugees from several West Asian and African countries, Afra and Nuri initially experience a sense of alienation. Afterwards, it transforms into a community-building opportunity for the refugees. The refugee residents of the B&B form a complex cultural landscape. None of them assumes a cosmopolitan cultural position. However, despite initial intercultural tensions, they manage to build a community. A Moroccan man, Hazim, makes friends with several other refugees and attempts to bring them close to one another. He helps a young refugee from Côte d'Ivoire, Diomande, prepare for his asylum interview. The Moroccan man also supports Nuri: he helps him to reconnect with the world and brings him closer to a point from which his healing from trauma can begin. The group of refugees at the B&B, despite their distinctive cultural identities and positions, becomes an intercultural community built on interpersonal relations and mutual care and support.

Both Lefteri's and El Akkad's refugee novels question what is often considered to be European identity. The narrative presented in *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* interrogates the values that some Europeans view as core elements of their identity, including hospitality and acceptance of newcomers. Amir's story in *What Strange Paradise* amounts to an open indictment of European callousness, criticising Europe as a society that betrays its liberal values when faced with mass migration and a refugee crisis. Both novels represent politically and socially engaged literature. The cultural identity positions depicted in them show refugees as individuals and communities that need to face both open hostility and a type of hospitality that sometimes conceals a desire to control and impose expectations of cultural assimilation on those who claim asylum.

5.6.2. A diaspora of Iranian refugees in *Refuge*

The protagonist of Dina Nayeri's *Refuge* meets and becomes a part of a relatively small diasporic community of Iranian asylum seekers and migrants in Amsterdam. The Iranians gather in Zakhmeh: "the Persian squat and arts space" (Nayeri 2017: 73), which hosts poetry readings, storytelling nights, debates, and other "open microphone" events, often including a free meal for participants. Niloo believes that in Zakhmeh she can meet "newly arrived Iranians, people whose accents are still fine and whose memories of home

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are clear and unwarped" (Nayeri 2017: 74). During the first poetry reading night that Niloo attends in Zakhmeh, she observes people: "the room was filled with a mix of dreadlocked Dutch and Middle-Eastern hippies, artsy Persians, some *hijabi* women, and men in all kinds of dress" (Nayeri 2017: 75), which suggests that it a place of community and solidarity built beyond national, cultural, and religious differences.

At first, not knowing the word for a type of guitar pick used for West Asian string instruments, Niloo interprets the etymology of the word "Zakhmeh" as related to the Farsi word for "wound" (Nayeri 2017: 74). Indeed, it turns out that the squat is a symbolic wound in the Jordaan district in Amsterdam. Many of its residents and regular visitors are refugees and asylum seekers, whose official status, homelessness, and life "always under threat of deportation" are often sources of trauma and suffering (Nayeri 2017: 77). Moreover, at one point, Niloo learns that "her new friends are the sort of immigrant congregation that makes Dutch neighbours nervous", which is an indication of casual racism within white Dutch society (Nayeri 2017: 251). Once again, the aporetic pair of hospitality and hostility, as deconstructed by Derrida, can be used as an interpretative framework. As Derrida suggests: "When we say that 'We do not yet know what hospitality is,' we also imply that we do not yet know who or what will come, nor what is called hospitality and what is called in hospitality" (2000b: 11). Through the descriptions of life and friendships that develop in Zakhmeh, Nayeri's *Refuge* emphasises Iranian generosity and "hypersocial […] ways", which are, as Mam'mad argues, "a poor man's gift" (2017: 150–152). By contrast, the novel ironises about and ridicules Dutch customs, which the protagonist mocks: "When the Dutch invite you to lunch, they serve one slice of bread, ham *or* cheese, not both. Sour milk and then, on top off [sic] the insults, *one* cookie next to your coffee" (Nayeri 2017: 151, emphasis and spelling original). Analysing the Iranian refugees' situation depicted in *Refuge* from the perspective of Derrida's reflections, one can notice that the Netherlands' immigration policies and the political inclinations of Dutch society are a mixture of reserved hospitality and harboured hostility. The most explicit example of anti-immigrant sentiments and xenophobia, which recurs in Nayeri's novel, is the political figure of Geert Wilders, whose words: "No way, you will not make the Netherlands home" are one of the three quotations used as mottos of the novel (2017: unpaginated). The Netherlands and Europe as a whole are presented in *Refuge* as spaces where genuine hospitality, to use Derrida's phrase, is "not yet" realised.

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Despite the diasporic mobilisation, a sense of unity away from home, openness, and tolerance that Niloo experiences in Zakhmeh, it is possible to observe certain nuances and conflicts within the cultural positions of the squat's visitors. Niloo herself creates a pseudoscientific categorisation of Iranian migrants and refugees and divides them into four groups: "*Money Persians*", "*Academic Persians*", "*Fresh-off-the-boat Persians*", and "*Artist and Activist Persians*" (Nayeri 2017: 84–86, italics original). In her descriptions of the groups, Niloo stresses various issues related to class, education, politics, religion, place of birth in Iran, and attitude towards the "host" countries. In addition to Niloo's imaginative classification and the cultural positions that her ironic observations imply, the characters of Niloo and Siavash add another layer of cultural conflict through the way they are positioned by other Iranians in Amsterdam. Niloo's and Siavash's cultural positioning is a complex issue: Niloo is a former refugee and a migrant in Europe, and Siavash is a second-generation individual, born and raised in the United States. The people in Zakhmeh see Niloo and Siavash as Westernised individuals whose lives of privilege and education in the United States make them unable to understand refugees' and asylum seekers' perspectives. This is one of the reasons why Mam'mad believes that Siavash, who helps him and other refugees with their asylum applications as a human rights activist, "keeps stalling on the papers" (Nayeri 2017: 150), which Niloo thinks is Mam'mad's "paranoia" and "bitterness", probably caused by several years of asylum application rejections (2017: 161).

Despite the multifaceted sociocultural positioning within the Iranian community, Zakhmeh is presented as a place where everyone is entitled to have their political views, express themselves through art, poetry, and stories, and to give and receive help. It is not idealised in the novel as a perfect refugee diaspora. In spite of its internal frictions, it has a considerable impact on the protagonist's cultural identity re-evaluation in Amsterdam. Due to the people she meets in Zakhmeh, Niloo's positioning shifts towards Iranian culture, and the refugee squat becomes a place of care, where Niloo can heal from shame and accept refugeehood as part of her cultural and narrative identity.

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5.7. Coda 1: How representations of cultural identities and narrative identity constructions mutually affect each other

The premise of this coda is that the constructions of narrative identities of migrant, second-generation, and refugee characters in contemporary fiction and the representations of cultural identities of these characters are two mutually affecting spheres of narrative composition. Combining Paul Ricœur's philosophical perspective on identity and its creation in narrative with the methodology of cultural and postcolonial studies leads to an interdisciplinary inquiry into contemporary migrant and refugee fiction. The analyses presented above confirm Stuart Hall's, Avtar Brah's, and Homi Bhabha's theoretical propositions concerning the composition of cultural identities, cultural positioning, and the notions of home and homing. In the selected works of fiction by Danticat, Brand, Chariandy, El Akkad, Lefteri, and Nayeri, cultural identities are never whole, absolutely stable, or completely coherent. They frequently appear as fractured, in flux, and unchangeably dynamic. The characters in the analysed narratives create new intercultural connections and alliances with members of other nations, diasporas, ethnicities, and generations. Moreover, the stability of one's cultural positions and their dreams of returning home are often narrated as illusions. For most of the characters in Danticat's, Brand's, Chariandy's, and Nayeri's works, the wholeness of the original home or a mythical place of beginning and origin is not available, or can be imagined only in tales and legends. The "markers of home" that they locate in various places, real or imagined, anchor their narrative identities only temporarily. They cannot guarantee that the characters take root in specific territories and forms of belonging permanently. Therefore, their narrative identities hardly ever experience closure or are promised a possibility of one. Nevertheless, they are seldom depicted as experiencing the lack of clear mythical beginnings and closures as suffering. The fact that their hybridising and syncretic cultural practices, home positions and "homing desires", and generational conflicts unfold without the comfort of defined beginnings and definitive endings does not make their narrative identities unintelligible, incoherent, or devoid of meaning.

Intercultural and interracial relations of migrants and refugees are perhaps best understood through the metaphor of suturing, in which the seams are visible, the edges of materials remain unpolished, and scars remain. The visibility of the seams and the roughness of the edges – that is, the factors that can cause cultural tensions and disagreement – are paradoxically the elements that allow the characters to experience

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their cultural identity positions as distinctive yet interwoven and interdependent in a positive sense. The community-building potential that occurs when different cultural identities meet and coexist is depicted in Danticat's "Caroline's Wedding" through the friendship between the Haitian family and their Cuban neighbour, Mrs. Ruiz. Many of the migrant, second-generation, and refugee characters discussed in the above subchapters view cultural identity as a creative space that is capacious enough to contain several seemingly irreconcilable positions simultaneously. In migrant and refugee fiction, cultural identity may be presented as stable yet dynamic, ethnic yet hybrid, conservative yet syncretic, nationally and ethnically defined yet interracial and transcultural. More often than not, the awareness of differences is not the basis for discrimination and xenophobia but for peaceful encounters. Cultural tensions and animosities are often depicted as spaces that enable, to use Ricœur's terminology, narrative identity figuration and refiguration: construction and reconstruction.

Refugee characters' cultural positions are specific in the sense that they often need to resist systemic coercion, forced assimilation, and cultural alienation in their relations with "host" societies. However, the relationships among refugees of different origins and between refugees and other migrants are often presented as founded on mutual support, compassion, and shared vulnerability. This is true for the characters of El Akkad's, Lefteri's, and Nayeri's novels. The points of tangency between cultural identity and narrative identity in refugee fiction are often the issues of precarity, discontinuity, and disruption, which are caused by discrimination, racism, unjust policies, and a deep sense of alienation. The narrative selfhood and self-constancy of refugee characters are often fractured in such a way that their cultural positions are presented as defensive and focused on survival and resistance. They are not constructed as easily configured and refigured narrative *ipse* identities, but as fragmented, non-linear narratives. Correspondingly, their cultural positioning is also troubled by traumatic non-linearity, discontinuity, conflicts within diasporic communities, and feelings of displacement, uprootedness, and inadequacy, which are often caused by the mixture of hospitality and hostility that refugees experience in encounters with members of "host" societies.

Adopting the perspective of Ricœur's philosophy of selfhood and narrative identity can lead one to the realisation that narrative configuration need not always be linear to be intelligible. Achronological and non-linear composition – symbolic discordance – gives the events presented in a narrative additional meaning. When cultural identity appears as fluid, hybridised, unfixed, and syncretic, and cultural practices are not

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closed within clearly definable national or ethnic boundaries, narrative identity is free from the constraints of linearity, chronology, and rigid rules of traditional narrative composition, intelligibility, and coherence. The fluidity of narrative identity construction and cultural identity positioning in contemporary migrant fiction is not necessarily a negative factor which unambiguously depicts the suffering of the characters. It is usually a positive element that enables them to build and rebuild their identities through such cultural practices as food, music, folklore, storytelling, culturally significant linguistic practices, intergenerational care, and collective action towards cultural and political resistance.

5.8. Coda 2: Hybridity, syncretism, multi- or transculturalism, or "something substantive"? Notes towards de-essentialising cultural identities of migrants and refugees

To give these analytical and theoretical reflections a symbolic frame, one should refer to Stuart Hall's "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" once again. Hall does not dismiss the role of the practices that aim to rediscover historical, "stable, unchanging, and continuous frames" of a people's cultural identity. However, the importance of essential identities and narratives of cultural unity is only one side of the coin. According to Hall, the "being" and "becoming" of cultural identity coexist in one's quest for the unearthing of history as well as "the *retelling* of the past" (2003: 235–236, emphasis original). A reflection based on both Hall's and Ricœur's philosophies could show that cultural identity is "a *positioning*" (Hall 2003: 237, emphasis original) because "oneness" and "being" – historical, continuous, and unifying elements – exist in a relation of dialogue and tension with "becoming" – constantly transforming, configured, refigured, discontinuous, fragmented, and displaced narratives. To paraphrase, it is "[neither] an essence" (Hall 2003: 237), "[nor] a stable and seamless identity" (Ricœur 1988: 248), but a narrative of the self: of change, conflict, reconciliation, politics, agency, subjectivity, care, culture, meaning, and encounter with another human being, "the person-as-such" (Edkins 2011).

To de-essentialise the cultural identities of migrant and refugee characters, one can also stop seeing them only as migrants and refugees because they are not *essentially* migrants or refugees. The characters' migration and flight do not need to define their cultural practices. However, these elements do play an important role in how

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the characters experience their diasporic positions. Multiculturalism, especially in its Canadian form, is criticised for aiming to promote diasporic cultures as essentialised and commodified cultural export products, which are othered in relation to a "standard" white Canadian or European culture. The characters constructed in Chariandy's *Brother* practice culture as a form of interpersonal care, transforming hybridised cultural elements into "something substantive" (Bannerji and Mukherjee 1990: 147–148) – music that brings ethnicities, races, and generations closer together, and food that is prepared out of concern and with attention to other people's suffering. *Brother* does not present people as intentionally mixing preexisting pure cultural positions into a hybrid. Chariandy's novel does not discuss national or ethnic groups as separate entities occupying a common space. It depicts second-generation individuals as inherently free to create new meanings in the diaspora, without forgetting about their parents' histories and migrations. They can experiment, be open to otherness, and celebrate differences through their cultural production and politics of representation.

Another way to de-essentialise cultural identities is to view them all as already hybridised and to realise that cultural purity as such does not exist because even the most stabilised, hegemonic cultures are produced through intermixing and intercultural encounters. However, Danticat's early fiction presents characters whose cultural identities undergo transformation in the diaspora because their practices become "hybroethnic": simultaneously hybrid and ethnic. They long for a stable cultural identity that could remain unbothered by displacement and fragmentation. At the same time, they wish to develop syncretic cultural practices that can help them to heal their traumas and uncertainties and enable them to rewrite their traumatic Haitian histories. In other words, what Danticat's female characters desire is not a neutral cultural blend achieved through transculturalism, but a non-normative mode of intercultural encounter that generates a sense of meaning and new belonging without resorting to a melting pot logic, in which the beauty of differences would be forgotten.

De-essentialising the cultural identities of contemporary migrants and refugees should not happen at the cost of forgetting the histories of colonialism, racism, and slavery, or by looking away from the neocolonial practices of the liberal democracies of the 20th century. Dionne Brand's short stories are important in this respect because they imagine cultural practices and political positions which, albeit hybridised, do not lead to historical oblivion but to a renewed sense of diasporic belonging. Conjuring and rewriting the re-memories of Black slavery in fiction does not seal Brand's characters' identities

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under the labels of diasporic subjects and migrants. Instead, the awareness of their history and ancestry helps them to regain a strong sense of self-esteem and opens them up to new comradeships beyond nationality and ethnicity.

De-essentialising cultural identities of migrant and refugee characters can happen when fiction strives to present meaningful identities constructed through the (re-)memory of history and the ambiguities and ruptures within cultural relations and forms of belonging, which can be caused by displacement, discontinuity, disjointedness, and fragmentation. Migration and flight, as presented in the works of fiction analysed here, always make cultural identification and positioning problematic. Being a migrant or a refugee is almost always depicted as being forced to negotiate and navigate one's cultural positions through acts of resistance, survival, care, homing, diasporic mobilisation, and many other individual and communal cultural practices. Dina Nayeri's *Refuge* discusses the intricate cultural positioning of Iranian refugees, immigrants, and Iranian-Americans in Europe within the contexts of modern history, family legends, impermanent homes, hostile asylum procedures, and questions of class and privilege. Most of the analysed characters – migrants, second-generation individuals, and refugees alike – actively engage in the politics of cultural identity and thus maintain their cultural agency. To once again connect Ricœur's and Hall's perspectives and slightly paraphrase the latter's words, one can conclude that the works of fiction analysed here resist essentialising migrant and refugee identities because they refuse to unambiguously "impos[e] an imaginary [narrative] coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation" (Hall 2003: 235).

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Conclusions

As mentioned at the beginning of the first coda to Chapter III, the literary theory, criticism, and fiction presented and analysed here include the idea of open-endedness and, on a philosophical level, they do not agree with final, unambiguous conclusions. I title this part of my dissertation "Conclusions"; however, I am aware that, just as the narratives interpreted here, the discussion presented in this doctoral thesis is far from closed or settled. A definitive conclusion is barely possible.

Fictional events, people, and the impression of unfolding time presented in literature bear only a relation to the real. They cannot represent the realities of migrancy, refugeehood, diaspora, and trauma mimetically; therefore, the works of migrant, refugee, and diasporic fiction discussed here use many narrative structures and techniques to (re)present the real-life problems that migrating people, as well as settled migrants and former refugees, face. This dissertation argues that these migrant, second-generation, and refugee narratives in contemporary literature, to use Paul Ricœur's terminology, are "a distension of the soul" (1984: 16) of the narrative in anglophone literature. They reimagine the novel and the short story as it is known in the West; they renew and revive narrative structures by connecting Western narrative techniques and traditions of modernism and postmodernism with certain decolonising stories, non-Western and diasporic narrative structures and non-normative techniques, some of which might still be considered unconventional by certain traditionally-oriented scholars, such as, for instance, Dan McAdams.

The novels and short stories analysed here do not exactly revolutionise anglophone fiction or imagine it completely anew. However, the contribution of contemporary migrant, second-generation, and refugee literature proves that it is possible to merge different Western literary and non-Western narrative traditions to widen

228:7899247628

the perspective, expand the scope, and distend the form of the anglophone novel and the short story.

In consequence, from the perspective of migration studies in literature, one of the answers to Ricœur's question about the distention of the Aristotelian narrative paradigm of emplotment and mimetic activity (Ricœur 1984: 38) is that the narrative paradigm of the West is distended only if it allows itself to be challenged and reimagined by the cultural and literary imaginations of the people it welcomes: refugees, migrants, and their descendants. In this sense, the Arendtian biography of the "who" of refugees and migrants in literature is an answer to the "who" question of a slowly decolonising West within a postcolonial planetary perspective.

Certain migrant, second-generation, and refugee prose can "blow apart" the traditional linear narratives of identity. Through his definition of "the configurational dimension" (1984: 66–67), Ricœur proposes that a narrative does not need to be linear in order to be understood by human perception and cognition. This concept of non-linear human time in narratives, or "migration time", a term that I have created in the course of research, can be employed to examine the refugee, migrant, and diasporic narratives that exist in a state of tension and dialogue between linearity and non-linearity, between coherence and incoherence, and between unity and disunity.

Referring to Ricœur's concept of narrative identity again, one could compare it to the corpuscular, particle-wave model of light in physics. The corpuscular theory of light claims that light is "built" simultaneously of electromagnetic waves and particles – movement and matter. In like manner, narrative identity in fiction belongs to both *être* and *devenir* categories at the same time. It can be seen as a state of being: structured, concordant, and having a certain quality of continuity and self-constancy. However, observed from a different perspective, narrative identity appears to be a discordant process – just as cultural identity is for Stuart Hall (1992: 275–288; 2003: 234) – without a clear beginning, always in motion, and without a clear promise of conclusion: a narrative process of telling and re-telling, writing and rewriting on a palimpsest of places, practices, homes, positions, and memories.

I believe that Ricœur's concept of narrative identity can be developed in literary scholarship precisely thanks to the field's interest in migrant and refugee narratives. Beyond narrative coherence, beginning-middle-end structures, closure, and linearity, narrative identity can bring attention to fragmented migrant, diasporic, and refugee identities while simultaneously retaining a certain configurational dimension – a unifying

229:9402931318

thought that attempts to bond what cannot be made coherent: a broken life. Such a unifying thought can be the intention to depict and represent the incoherence, unintelligibility, trauma, disjointedness, and disunity of life affected by migration and refugeehood, either of oneself or others. The perspective I suggest here enables one to develop and expand upon the Ricœurian concept of narrative identity. It is a theoretical project for the future, and I believe it is made possible thanks to the recent evolution and proliferation of migrant and refugee literatures.

Anglophone Caribbean literature published outside the Caribbean, for instance, in the United States or Canada, has been interpreted through the ideas and concepts of the Caribbean theory of Édouard Glissant and the African perspective within the writings of Chinua Achebe. Although Glissant writes from the specific perspective of a Martinican, his ideas of the folktale, multiple histories, "nonhistory", "nonworld", and "errantry" are used by scholars to interpret the domestic and diasporic experiences of various Black Caribbean peoples and nations, especially those of the so-called French Caribbean (cf. Sweeney 2007). Achebe's Nigerian perspective allows one to acknowledge the influence of African narratives on the contemporary Black diaspora. The ideas of narrative uniqueness of multiple African perspectives and the non-linearity of histories of individual and communal development still inform the writings of Edwidge Danticat and Dionne Brand.

To focus on a different geographical direction, migrant and refugee literature that refers to West Asia has been read, for example, through the prism of Persian and Arabic narrative traditions. The works by Lefteri, El Akkad, and Nayeri have been characterised as indirectly and unobtrusively didactic and cautionary. Although they take a specific political position on migration and refugeehood, the works do not resort to open manifestos or political rhetoric. Lefteri's, El Akkad's, and Nayeri's novels are influenced by West Asian languages, such as Arabic and Persian, the region's poetic and literary traditions, such as Persian mystic poetry, the Muslim religion, and Arabic and Persian storytelling customs. Moreover, the three novels refer, to a varying extent, to broader West Asian historical and mythical perspectives beyond the contemporary moment, reaching for deep-time references to construct links between places and time periods, and between home and diaspora.

Interpreting the narrative identities embedded within migrant, refugee, and diasporic literatures with clear Caribbean, West Asian, and Black diasporic roots is not possible without referring to the written narrative traditions, storytelling customs,

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folklore, and narrative techniques and structures of those regions, peoples, and diasporas. I have argued that the narrative identities interpreted in this dissertation, whether stable and coherent or so disrupted that they verge on incoherence, do not belong only to Western or non-Western literary traditions, but rather become points of decolonising transethnic encounter within the field of world literature.

I further argue that in the works by Danticat, Brand, Chariandy, Lefteri, El Akkad, and Nayeri, narrative time is constructed in such a way that it goes beyond the Western time of the clock, the calendar, and the linear arrow of centuries. Thanks to tapping into and drawing upon Caribbean, Black diasporic, and West Asian imaginaries, time is narratively constructed through the Ricœurian "configurational dimension" so that the narrative identities of migrants, second-generation individuals, and refugees represented in those authors' works of fiction are never seamless, uniform, or monolithic. On the contrary, Danticat, Brand, Chariandy, Lefteri, El Akkad, and Nayeri narrate their characters' identities as bursting at the seams, full of hybridising contradictions and reconciliations, and heterogeneous elements, which – to refer back to Ricœur – the narratives can transform into a "synthesis of the heterogeneous" (Ricœur 1984: 66).

Apart from the narrative identities' potential for re-evaluation, transformation, synthesis, and "self-constancy" through changes, the works analysed here contain numerous "nonworlds" and "nonhistories", as defined by Glissant. They attempt to preserve, as diasporic *ipse* identities with non-linear plots and palimpsests of the self, the unspeakable tortures of trauma, oblivion, colonial exploitation, slavery, and the plight of contemporary migrants and refugees. Migrant and diasporic fiction also presents second-generation individuals, settled migrants, and former refugees as their narrative identities meander structurally and symbolically, again within non-linear plots and through frequent *analepsis*, and are forced to navigate culture and change in an unforgiving, hostile climate of political stigmatisation and systemic and quotidian racism. In the novels and stories interpreted here, migration and refugeehood may become the Glissantian "errantry" that leads to identity and self-formation (Glissant 2010: 18); however, it can also lead to trauma and the non-places and nonworlds of memory loss, fragmentation, and the camp.

The Aristotelian form of narrative configuration, prevalent in the West despite the philosophical propositions of postmodernism and poststructuralism, is not a natural or neutral form of narration. In fact, it carries meaning-making power and an imposition of cultural unity and European ethnocentrism. It may also carry the biopolitical and

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biopower-related assumptions inscribed in the policies implemented by modern states. By presenting the characters' non-normative models of resistance, resilience, and identity reconfiguration, the works discussed in the analytical chapters of this dissertation frequently propose a form of politics which is not based on biopower. Putting the person, the community, and the relationship at the centre, these narratives protest seeing politics only as biopolitics or biopower. Wielding their power to reimagine and resist, the authors of these works insist that politics cannot be reduced to power. Following the theoretical propositions of Jenny Edkins and Hannah Arendt, I have claimed that migrant and refugee characters in contemporary literature struggle to be partners and agents in political relations that are not founded solely on sovereign power and biopolitics. They are already depicted as acting and speaking agents, their voice and speech making them "citizens" in the ancient, broad sense: they are members of the *polis*: thinking and speaking beings whose "speech is for making clear what is beneficial or harmful, and hence also what is just or unjust" (Aristotle 1.1253a[35], trans. Reeve 1998: 4), and – in modern terminology – what belongs to political relations and what is merely the coercion of sovereign power and biopolitics.

In contemporary fiction, the migrant is not merely presented as bare life and the refugee is not only depicted as an Agambenian *homo sacer*. The bodies of the migrant, the second-generation person, and the refugee are elevated from the position of bare life and are represented as locations of power. The body – as the narrated body – is endowed with a narrative quality. The migrant body, the refugee body, the Black body, and the West Asian body are (re)presented as reasserted, reclaimed, and brought back to their position of subjectivity and human dignity through narratives. In the context of embodiment, the narrative can be seen as a space of politics for the body, in which the body is an integral part of narrative identity. The language and imagination of corporeality, bodily sensations, and physical experiences are frequently the media of expression of Black narrative identities, and they have also become the structures and means of literary expression for the narrative identities of refugees and migrants from West Asia.

Danticat, Brand, Chariandy, Lefteri, El Akkad, and Nayeri do not treat their characters' identities and subjectivity as abstract entities but rather narrate them as concrete, living bodies. The phenomena and processes related to racialisation and racial

[35] Book I, Chapter 2 in Aristotle's *Politics* as translated by Reeve (1998).

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embodiment are depicted through bodily imagery and affective bodily reactions, making the identities of migrants, second-generation individuals, and refugees embodied in narratives. Metaphorically speaking, the texts themselves embody their identities. The migrant body, the refugee body, the Black diasporic body, and the West Asian body are loci of resistance and political subjectivity. Therefore, it is possible to say that the political existence of migrants, refugees, and diasporic subjects in literature has a corporeal character, as the body endures "a pervasive climate of antiblackness" (Sharpe 2016: 106) and lives under the panoptical surveillance of sovereign power.

To any reader of Michel Foucault, it is clear that power entails resistance (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004: 2–6). However, drawing on Agamben's analyses, Edkins and Pin-Fat state "that sovereign power has developed to [such] an extent that the question has changed. It has become a question of whether any form of power relation is possible" (2004: 6). The works of fiction analysed here present the characters' resistance against reducing them to the position of bare life, against the refugee camp, against racialisation, and, eventually, against the brutalisation of politics into biopower. Their opposition and protest against biopolitics take the form of resistance that – through quotidian acts and practices of non-normative endurance, human dignity, and interdependence – can achieve a return to the relations of power. The practices, acts, and articulations of resistance in Danticat's, Brand's, Chariandy's, Lefteri's, El Akkad's, and Nayeri's works insist that for subjectivity to be restored one has to conceive of migrants, second-generation people, and refugees not only as migrants, second-generation people, and refugees but – to refer again to Edkins (2011) – as "persons-as-such".

Looking at the selected corpus of literature from the perspective of the sociology of literary production, one can argue, somewhat idealistically, that migrant, refugee, second-generation, and diasporic fiction is an artistic forum of representation for the politically deprived, victimised, and underrepresented groups. The literature by and about migrating persons studied here is a crucial element of political and cultural resistance in the real world, advocating for the inclusion of migrants and refugees into societies in which they arrive, without the unnecessary trauma of assimilation and without re-traumatisation. In the world of literature and in world literature, migrant and refugee fiction occupies its place among politically and socially engaged literatures, very often alongside feminist and LGBTQ fiction and non-fiction.

Moving on to the field of cultural studies, the works of fiction analysed here present cultural identities as, first of all, always plural. They are depicted as existing not

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as an abstract given but as sets of cultural practices of individuals and communities. These sets of practices of cultural identities are narrated as the tangible manifestations of belonging and unbelonging. Different cuisines, types of folklore, genres of music, and storytelling practices frequently intermix with one another and between cultures and ethnicities. Due to this, cultural identities may be presented as not merely hybrid formations which presuppose prior national and ethnic purities. Diasporic characters, even those that remain firmly rooted within their primary diasporic social fields, engage in rhizomic, syncretising practices of cultural identities and are often portrayed as ready to form new transethnic and cross-cultural interpersonal and intercommunal relations. These new relations and modes of belonging, in turn, create meaningful and substantive identity positions where old and ossified identities and forms of belonging are no longer seen as significant, relevant, or possessing the power to construct meaning-making communities. Moreover, the practices of cultural identities as presented in the selected corpus of literary fiction are frequently depicted as practices of care and communality developed where resilience has become a normative term denoting the expectations of white, middle-class "host" societies. Non-normative forms of belonging become practices not only of cultural identity but also of caring identity. This cultural and literary movement of care is further supported by political enunciations. For instance, in this context, one may mention *The Care Manifesto* (Chatzidakis et al. 2020) by The Care Collective. It is a short work of political philosophy published during the Covid-19 pandemic. It postulates revolutionary actions aimed at reorganising and restructuring the economic and sociopolitical relations as ones based on the principle of mutual and communal care.

The idea of homing and the figure of home stand out within the field of cultural identity studies. Home as a narrative category – as narrated in fiction and as a narrative in itself – is much greater than a building, a place, a village, town, or city, greater still than a country or region. As the field of home studies, or oikology, suggests, home is the spiritual, psychological, intellectual, emotional, and symbolic space of homing – making home – and home imagination. In the context of contemporary postcolonial studies and migrant and refugee literature, home is, as I postulate in Chapter V, "hybroethnic" – both hybrid and ethnic, both cosmopolitan and parochial. It also forms new, often unexpected, and non-normative forms of brotherly relations and belonging, which are not necessarily perceived as hybridised by the migrating and second-generation agents themselves, but rather as building substantive and liveable habits and environments. Homes of

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refugees, migrants, and second-generation people – although frequently irretrievable and "un-return-able"[36] – both translocate cultures from their countries of origin and transform cultures as living and dynamic practices and stories.

I believe that what binds the various points of this dissertation together is the theoretical and analytical quest for a phenomenology of subjectivity in literature. Whether interrogated as narrative, political, or cultural – all aspects of the subjectivity of migrants and refugees analysed together in the selected corpus of literary fiction yield an extremely complex image of a person *who* is traumatised, fragmented, postmodern without irony, beyond normative categories, and beyond exclusively Western conceptions of narrative subjectivity.

Referring to the central thesis of this dissertation, I maintain that identities in contemporary anglophone migrant, refugee, and diasporic fiction exist in narratives and as narratives. As a literary category, identity has a narrative nature that exists and is embodied in stories and texts. In literature, identities are complex, multifaceted stories with a tangible existence – text and language. As I have argued before, they are not the real, but they claim and bear a relation to the real. The authors of contemporary fiction discussed here employ numerous techniques – postmodernist and culturally specific devices – to embody the stories that are the identities of fictional individuals and communities in their works. Identity is a story – an incredibly complex, ungraspable element of life that can only be approached, approximated, and made tangible once it is told and re-told, written, overwritten, and re-written. The fact that colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial histories and deep-time perspectives are part of the entanglement of the narrative identities discussed here adds to the relevance of migrant, second-generation, and refugee fiction of all time periods – however measured – geographical locations, languages and dialects, cultures, belief systems, mythologies, and peoples.

What remains is perhaps to say that states, government systems, nations, regions, societies, and communities "do not yet know what hospitality is" (Derrida 2000b: 11). Although Western culture and its institutions have already welcomed, published, and endorsed numerous authors and narratives from what was previously considered the "periphery", we, as people in the Global North, collectively, have not yet learned what it means to really welcome the stranger, the newcomer, the migrant, the refugee and allow them to be different from ourselves, to cultivate and practice the differences, to celebrate

[36] My original neologism that deviates from the regular meaning of the word "unreturnable".

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and enjoy their unique cultural, political, and religious identities and varying positions. Moreover, we do not yet know *who* will come. This is not a question of whether or not someone will come – *people* will come. Our borders are often nothing more than just pencil lines on map projections. We do not yet know who will ask us for help and our hospitality in the future. This question, related to the figures of the migrant and the refugee in contemporary philosophy and literature, is an ethical and political challenge that requires new narratives and storytelling because the "who" question can be answered only with a story (Arendt 2018: 186). Whatever structure and composition, coherence or incoherence these stories incorporate and emplot, the work of scholars in the Global North has been to welcome these narratives as giving us yet another piece of information about the world, about human beings, about identities, selves, and their changes, journeys, transformations, and transgressions: their "acting and suffering", as Ricœur would have it (1984: 56).

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Abstract

My doctoral dissertation analyses the narrative identities, political subjectivities, and cultural identities of migrant, refugee, and second-generation characters in anglophone diasporic fiction published in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom between 1988 and 2021. The work's hypothesis is that identities in contemporary migrant literature exist in narratives and are themselves narratives. I focus on seven works of contemporary fiction – five novels and two short story collections – by Edwidge Danticat, Dionne Brand, David Chariandy, Dina Nayeri, Christy Lefteri, and Omar El Akkad. I analyse them from the perspective of Paul Ricœur's narrative identity, the political perspectives of Giorgio Agamben, Hannah Arendt, Jenny Edkins, and other scholars, and the postcolonial perspectives of, among others, Homi K. Bhabha, Avtar Brah, and Stuart Hall. I also employ a critical perspective towards "race" developed by Linda Martín Alcoff, Frantz Fanon, Himani Bannerji, and Christina Sharpe.

I find that migrant, refugee, and diasporic identities are frequently constructed in contemporary fiction as fragmented, discontinuous, non-linear, and trauma-affected stories. I argue that the textual and symbolic narrative structures of concordance and discordance in my corpus of primary fiction challenge the Western-centric Aristotelian paradigm of narrative coherence and contribute to the development, destabilisation, and symbolic "distention of the soul" (Ricœur 1984: 16) of fictional anglophone narratives. Contemporary migrant literature proves that it is possible to merge different Western postmodernist literary and non-Western narrative traditions to expand the scope and distend the form of the anglophone novel and the short story within a decolonising narrative perspective. In refugee, migrant, and diasporic prose, narrative identities exist in tension between linearity and non-linearity, coherence and incoherence, and unity and disunity.

I also analyse migrants', refugees', and second-generation individuals' political status as emerging from the colonial "nonworlds" (Glissant 2010) and "nonhistory" (Glissant 1999). I interpret how representations of sociopolitical practices and places, such as the refugee camp, which reduce the refugee to the position of the *homo sacer* (Agamben 1998) and the migrant and the second-generation individual to racialised bare life, affect the formation of narrative identities. Moreover, through the terminology

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developed by Edkins and Arendt, I explore the characters' potential for resistance against biopolitics, sovereign power, and racialisation. My findings in this regard suggest that contemporary migrant and refugee fiction portrays its characters as striving to reclaim their political subjectivity, agency, and bodies alongside their identities.

In terms of cultural identity, I propose interpreting migrant, second-generation, and refugee identities as not *only* hybrid or *only* ethnic, but as both hybrid and ethnic, both cosmopolitan and parochial, and as experiencing both chaos and order of belonging and unbelonging simultaneously. A large part of the cultural identity analysis focuses on home, homing, and home positions as both cultural and narrative categories.

This dissertation hopes to contribute to the effort to de-isolate research in migrant and Black studies across racial and cultural boundaries in academia. Furthermore, it aims to join the scholarly work to decolonise and de-essentialise the identities of migrants and refugees as presented in fiction. Finally, it also contributes to filling the niche in analysing the figure of the refugee in literature as a contemporary reincarnation of the *homo sacer*.

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Streszczenie

Moja praca doktorska analizuje tożsamości narracyjne, polityczną podmiotowość i tożsamości kulturowe postaci migrantów, uchodźców i ich dzieci w anglojęzycznych powieściach i opowiadaniach opublikowanych w Stanach Zjednoczonych, Kanadzie i w Zjednoczonym Królestwie pomiędzy 1988 a 2021 rokiem. Główną hipotezą dysertacji jest to, że tożsamości we współczesnej literaturze migracyjnej istnieją w narracji i że same są narracjami. Skupiam się na siedmiu utworach literackich – pięciu powieściach i dwóch zbiorach opowiadań – autorstwa Edwidge Danticat, Dionne Brand, Davida Chariandy'ego, Diny Nayeri, Christy Lefteri i Omara El Akkada. Wybrane utwory analizuję z perspektywy konceptu tożsamości narracyjnej Paula Ricœura, z politycznej perspektywy opartej na filozofii Giorgio Agambena, Hanny Arendt, Jenny Edkins i innych badaczy oraz z perspektywy postkolonialnej rozwiniętej przez badaczy takich jak Homi K. Bhabha, Avtar Brah i Stuart Hall. Wykorzystuję również krytykę pojęcia rasy i urasowienia zaproponowaną przez Lindę Martín Alcoff, Frantza Fanona, Himani Bannerji i Christinę Sharpe.

W badaniach odkrywam, że tożsamości migracyjne, uchodźcze i diasporyczne są często konstruowane w literaturze jako sfragmentaryzowane, nieciągłe i nielinearne opowieści dotknięte traumą. Argumentuję, że tekstowe i symboliczne struktury narracyjne zgodności i niezgodności, które znajduję w literaturze podmiotu, kwestionują zachodniocentryczny arystotelesowski paradygmat narracyjnej spójności i przyczyniają się do rozwoju, destabilizacji i symbolicznego „rozdęcia duszy" (Ricœur 1984: 16, tłumaczenie własne) anglojęzycznych narracji literackich. Współczesna literatura migracyjna udowadnia, że możliwe jest połączenie różnych zachodnich postmodernistycznych i niezachodnich narracyjnych tradycji w celu poszerzenia zakresu i rozdęcia formy anglojęzycznej powieści i opowiadania w ramach dekolonizacyjnej perspektywy narracyjnej. W prozie uchodźczej, migracyjnej i diasporycznej tożsamości narracyjne istnieją w stanie napięcia pomiędzy linearnością i nielinearnością, spójnością i niespójnością oraz jednością i rozłamem.

W dysertacji analizuję również status polityczny bohaterów – migrantów, uchodźców i ich dzieci – wyłaniający się z kolonialnych „nieświatów" (Glissant 2010) i „niehistorii" (Glissant 1999). Interpretuję przedstawienia socjopolitycznych praktyk

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i miejsc, takich jak obóz dla uchodźców – które sprowadzają uchodźców do pozycji *homo sacer* (Agamben 1998), a migrantów i ich dzieci do urasowionego nagiego życia – jako wpływające na formowanie tożsamości narracyjnych. Ponadto, stosując terminologię rozwiniętą przez Edkins i Arendt, badam potencjał bohaterów do stawiania oporu przeciwko biopolityce, suwerennej władzy i urasowieniu. Wyniki analizy w tym aspekcie sugerują, że współczesna fikcja migracyjna i uchodźcza przedstawia bohaterów jako dążących do odzyskania podmiotowości politycznej, sprawczości i ciała wraz z tożsamością.

Z punktu widzenia tożsamości kulturowej proponuję interpretację tożsamości postaci migrantów, uchodźców i ich dzieci jako nie *tylko* hybrydycznych lub *tylko* etnicznych, ale jako jednocześnie hybrydycznych i etnicznych, jednocześnie kosmopolitycznych i zaściankowych oraz jako doświadczających jednocześnie chaosu i ładu przynależności i braku przynależności. Znaczna część analizy tożsamości kulturowych skupia się na figurze domu, udomowieniu i pozycjach domu i traktuje je jako kategorie kulturowe i narracyjne.

Niniejsza dysertacja może przyczynić się do zniesienia barier rasowych i kulturowych w badaniach nad migracją oraz w tak zwanych *Black studies*. Jednym z celów tej dysertacji jest również dążenie do dekolonizacji i odrzucenia esencjonalizmu w odniesieniu do tożsamości migrantów i uchodźców prezentowanych w fikcji literackiej. Ponadto, poprzez analizę figury uchodźcy w literaturze jako współczesnej reinkarnacji *homo sacer* niniejsza praca przyczynia się do wypełnienia luki w badaniach nad tym problemem.

240:9582640725

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