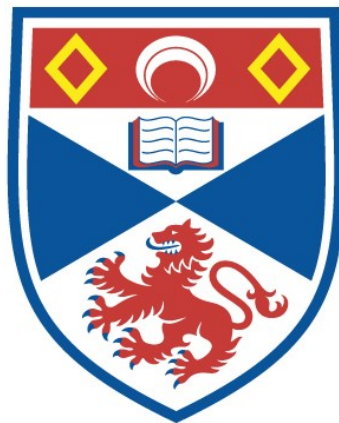# God in the eyes of a refugee:
emic perspectives on religion and resettlement of
Syrian Muslims in North East Scotland

Marjorie Grace Gourlay

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

2024

Full metadata for this item is available in
St Andrews Research Repository
at:
https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/

Identifier to use to cite or link to this thesis:

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17630/sta/796

Candidate's declaration

I, Marjorie Grace Gourlay, do hereby certify that this thesis, submitted for the degree of PhD, which is approximately 78,000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree. I confirm that any appendices included in my thesis contain only material permitted by the 'Assessment of Postgraduate Research Students' policy.

I was admitted as a research student at the University of St Andrews in January 2017.

I confirm that funding was received for this work.

Date   Signature of candidate

27.10. 23

Supervisor's declaration

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree. I confirm that any appendices included in the thesis contain only material permitted by the 'Assessment of Postgraduate Research Students' policy.

Date   18.02.2024   Signature of supervisor

Permission for publication

In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews we understand that we are giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. We also understand, unless exempt by an award of an embargo as requested below, that the title and the abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made and supplied

to any bona fide library or research worker, that this thesis will be electronically accessible for personal or research use and that the library has the right to migrate this thesis into new electronic forms as required to ensure continued access to the thesis.

I, Marjorie Grace Gourlay, confirm that my thesis does not contain any third-party material that requires copyright clearance.

The following is an agreed request by candidate and supervisor regarding the publication of this thesis:

Printed copy

No embargo on print copy.

Electronic copy

No embargo on electronic copy.

Date   Signature of candidate

27.10. 23

Date   18.02.2024   Signature of supervisor

Underpinning Research Data or Digital Outputs

Candidate's declaration

I, Marjorie Grace Gourlay, hereby certify that no requirements to deposit original research data or digital outputs apply to this thesis and that, where appropriate, secondary data used have been referenced in the full text of my thesis.

Date   Signature of candidate

27.10. 23

ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study prioritises the emic perspectives of Syrian Muslim refugees resettled to North East Scotland by means of conversations about God. Beginning with a model borrowed from the monastic tradition that has an approach towards the other of *dilatato corde*, an expanded heart, it explores the implications of employing a model of inter-religious dialogue that inverts existing power dynamics and brings to therefore a peripheral voice. The purpose of this study is to challenge paradigms of exclusion, by learning directly from those who have been uprooted by war and resettled as refugees in Scotland, and to understand theological perspectives of those at the margins. The narrative approach in Part II of the thesis interweaves the voices of refugees with fieldwork observations and existing literature that verifies the themes. Echoing the theological meta-narrative that emerged in conversation with the informants, Chapter Three considers the experience of resettlement through the prism of "estrangement" (*al-ghurba*), Chapter Four focuses on the concept of "homeland" (*al-waṭan*) from a position of exile, and Chapter Five seeks an understanding of "God" (*allāh*) as seen through the eyes of the refugee. The study provides a written record of the life narratives, at a particular moment in time, of a people whose voices are not readily heard, offers insights into the inner world of a small number of Muslim refugees, and illustrates the extent to which Islam, and religion more generally, has an influence in, and implications for, the field of refugee resettlement.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The Arabic transliteration used throughout this thesis is based on the system followed by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (ITJMES) and by the *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, with some occasional modifications, when borrowing directly from the words of others, or with the English spelling that is most widely used. Transliterated words are usually placed in *italics*, in the same way that is used in *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. See below:

<u>Consonants:</u>
Arabic - Transliteration

		ر	r/R	ف	f/F
ء	ʾ	ز	z/Z	ق	q/Q
ب	b/B	س	s/S	ك	k/K
ت	t/T	ش	sh/Sh	ل	l/L
ث	th/Th	ص	ṣ/Ṣ	م	m/M
ج	j/J	ض	ḍ/Ḍ	ن	n/N
ح	ḥ/Ḥ	ط	ṭ/Ṭ	ه	h/H
خ	kh/Kh	ظ	ẓ/Ẓ	و	w/W
د	d/D	ع	ʿ	ى	y/Y
ذ	dh/Dh	غ	gh/Gh		

<u>Vowels:</u>

◌َ	a/A	◌ِي	ī/Ī
◌ِ	i/I	◌ُو	ū/
◌ُ	u/U	اَ and ىَ	ā/Ā

<u>Diphthongs:</u>

◌َوْ	aw	(e.g., يَوْم *yawm*)
◌َيْ	ay	(e.g., بَيْت *bayt*)
◌ُوّ	uww	(e.g., قُوَّة *quwwa*)
◌ِيّ	iyy	(e.g., خَارِجِيَّة *khārijiyya*)

<u>note</u>: When ◌ِيّ (*iyy*) comes at the end of a word, it is usually written *ī* (e.g., نَبِيّ *nabī*).

<u>Special rules:</u>   Initial *hamza* is not written in transliteration
(e.g., أَذَان *adhān*, آيَة *āya*).
    definite article: اَلْـ *al-*   (e.g., اَلْكِتَاب *al-kitāb*, اَلرَّسُول *al-rasūl*)
    tāʾ marbūṭa: ة *-a* (e.g., كَعْبَة *kaʿba*);
             -at after long *ā*, or in construct (e.g., صَلَاة *ṣalāt*, رَحْمَة □للّٰه
             raḥmat Allāh)
    alif-waṣla   □   dagger *alif*   ◌ٰ

For Hanein,

three times a refugee.

Processu vero conversationis et fidei,

dilatato corde inenarrabili dilectionis dulcedine

curritur via mandatorum Dei…[1]

---

[1] "As we advance in the religious life and in faith, our hearts expand and we run the way of God's commandments with unspeakable sweetness of love." Rule of St Benedict.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

"Christianity revolts against an alienated life." [2]

This piece of research came out of a period of time spent working with Syrian Muslim refugees resettled to my native North East Scotland. The thinking behind the research question and the method of approach to the subject were informed and shaped, however, by earlier research into the relationship between Syrian Muslim refugees and Lebanese Christians in Beirut, as well as previous experience of life and work in the Middle East where I began to understand both Christianity and Islam in their original contexts. Additional knowledge of the Arabic language enabled me to enter into the lived experiences of those arriving as refugees and to assist in reassuring host communities at a time when anxieties about migration and Islam in Europe were particularly high.

Firstly, conversations and observations at the time revealed polarised responses, on the one hand, fear of the other, intensified by narratives in mainland Europe and the brutality of "ISIS" in Syria, on the other hand an unhesitating compassion, naïve to the dangers and consequences of unquestioning hospitality. Secondly, it was evident that the matter of religious belief, and in this case Islam in particular, were now central to discourse on the design and implementation of the refugee resettlement project, forcing local authorities to use language and consider themes that were unfamiliar to them. I saw a need for an informed middle ground that could consider the factor of religion directly, in order to enable more holistic resettlement and integration of these new communities

---

[2] Excerpt from Thomas Merton's final speech before his death. See "Thomas Merton," Mary Jo Chmielewski, January 31, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywE6bhApcSk&t=13s (Accessed 20.10.22)

without "homogenising" or "othering" them. This study is a small-scale effort to that end.

This research therefore sought to consider the role of religion in the resettlement of Syrian Muslim refugees to North East Scotland, addressing the gap in knowledge observed in resettlement programmes in the region, as well as the lack of academic literature that offers emic perspectives on the experience of resettlement from a Muslim religious viewpoint. The advantage of an anthropological approach, such as that employed in this study, is that it allows for participant guided research with the benefit of extended time, during which the subjects themselves define Islam, and research questions are derived from personal questions in an organic fashion that adds "ground-up" perspectives to discourse. Thus, over time, knowledge is revealed (in this case, relating to the ideas of estrangement from homeland and the hope offered by belief in the afterlife) illustrating lived experience of theology by people who are not themselves theologians. The accounts represented here are therefore not necessarily reflected in the existing literature but are dynamic and adaptable, and are captured here at a certain moment in time, during one of many stages in a much longer process of resettlement.

The primary contribution of this work to academic knowledge is consequently that of life narratives conveyed by the voices and language of the refugees themselves, and is an argument for the value of paying attention to the marginal voice. The diversity of perspectives expressed within these voices, even in a small sample such as this, supports a secondary argument against presuming uniformity among migrant communities, even when they are ethnically and religiously the same. Furthermore, these diverse voices illustrate that generalisation is neither advisable nor possible, and thus the temptation to categorise or draw broad conclusions is diminished in a smaller sample in which each voice speaks only for itself. This ethnographic method was time-consuming,

unpredictable, and depended on patience, language learning, and the slow work of building trust, as well as the conscious willingness for existing power dynamics to be recalibrated.

Framing these research conversations loosely as inter-religious dialogue is another means by which this power shift was achieved, as each party entered the dialogue recognising difference, and yet with a willingness to learn something of the other, while paying attention to the other in their "otherness" without minimising their difference. This way, the researcher becomes an equal, as a learner in the exchange, and directly engaging with the matter of religious belief in this way liberates the discourse from the usual paradigms of migrant and host or, likewise, vulnerable refugee and support worker.

The term "inter-religious dialogue" is used throughout the thesis as a broad term to signify the taking account of religion in the context of refugee resettlement in various ways. In reference to the data collection, the term becomes narrowed to refer primarily to the nature of the conversations with the research informants and, in particular, with the lead subject who contributed to a series of in-depth sessions that explored her understanding of the Divine and how it related to her daily life in an alien land. These discussions lean towards what has become known as one of the four classic models of inter-religious dialogue, which is that of experience, and the sharing of the lived out spirituality of religious practice. Although these conversations with her in particular developed into a dialogically interactive discussion between two people from differing religious traditions, Christianity and Islam, and thus the expected frictions between the two perspectives did arise, the original purpose of data collection was to hear and articulate a marginalised voice, not to reiterate my own, and so those moments of theological debate were not pursued, as conventional inter-religious dialogue was not the

primary aim, and my own position in the dialogue was not relevant to the written thesis. These ideas are addressed in the following chapters in discussion of the research question and method and are returned to for a consideration of how this work contributes to the field of studies in inter-religious dialogue in the final reflection and conclusion.

A further point for clarification on the matter of religion is to stress that this thesis does not set out to make any new contribution to the study of Islam but, rather, by exploring the religious perspectives of the subjects, to seek a narrative that is not exclusive and instead leans towards the possibility of inclusion. As Bede Griffiths is quoted as saying: "in each religion, as you go deeper into it, you converge on the original source" which is, I would suggest, our shared humanity and the sense of transience and search for meaning that is an inescapable part of human life.[3] The people who are the focus of this study may be described as "Muslims who happen to be refugees," as perhaps the Muslim communities hosting them do, seeing them as fellow members of the worldwide Muslim community (*Umma*), while others view them as "refugees who happen to Muslim," such as, for example, the secular authorities invested with the responsibility for their resettlement. While the use of these descriptive terms is unavoidable in identifying those who are the focus of this work, this research has however sought to avoid these contrasting perspectives which both prioritise their "otherness," either in terms of nationality, religion, or political status and right to belong. Rather, the aim of this study has been to the see the refugees primarily as human beings, who happen to be uprooted from a different ethnic and religious context, yet essentially are no different, and perhaps even have a deeper understanding of the fleetingness of connection to place and life itself.

---

[3] Quoted by Judson Trapnell, *Bede Griffiths: A Life in Dialogue* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 188.

The outcomes of this study have a contribution towards informing resettlement policy by their demonstration of the fruits that come from time spent entering the refugees' lived experience, and illustrating the dangers of homogenisation, as well as contributing to a small degree to expand inter-religious dialogue in a way that that takes into account the living out of religious belief and the consequent relationship with neighbour, and land. Future avenues for research could pursue deeper into these particular conversations, over time and generations, to see to what extent the narratives expressed here may adapt and change. There is also an opportunity to pursue this with other migrant Muslim groups to compare and contrast these views with those of other expressions of Islam in Scotland. Equally, the method of listening to life narratives sought through inter-religious dialogue could be applied to other religious migrant groups, such as Christian Ukrainians (who would very likely give quite different narratives) to seek an understanding of how religious belief supports or hinders resettlement and integration into an unfamiliar context. Finally, in an era of what could be described as endemic displacement and uprooted-ness among all nations and nationalities, studies such as this are relevant in such an age of mass migration and disconnection from the communities in which we live.

Part I of the thesis comprises two chapters that explore the research question and the research methodology. Chapter One situates and frames the research by establishing the particular context of refugee resettlement and the background for this study, together with a review of existing literature that relates more widely to Syrian Muslim refugee resettlement, in order to illustrate the gap in the available literature that this study seeks to address. The research problem is then defined, with an indication of the main aims and objectives of the work, as well as brief mention of the implications and significance of the findings, recognition of the research limitations, and the definition of some key terms.

Part of this chapter is given to a discussion of aims, requirements and challenges of inter-religious dialogue, particularly between Christianity and Islam. Chapter Two outlines the research method used in this study, and identifies the ontological, epistemological and methodological positioning for the study, as well as identifying and describing the particulars of the research sample, including a portrait of the primary informant who becomes significant in later chapters. The ethical considerations for such a project are discussed, and a description of the final ethnographic method is provided.

Part II of the thesis presents the research findings resulting from dialogue with the informants, and is divided by themes that echo the meta-narrative that emerged in conversation with the refugees. Chapter Three explores what it is like to become, and be, a refugee, through the prism of the key concept of estrangement (*al-ghurba*) and interweaves the voices of the refugee narratives themselves. Chapter Four is a more theoretical chapter that considers the notion of homeland (*al-waṭan*) from a position of exile, in an effort to seek the foundation of varied religious perspectives on homeland that relate to life in resettlement. Also included in this chapter is a section on the Syrian Kurds. Chapter Five turns its focus to the heart of the Muslim faith and seeks God (*Allāh*), in the eyes of the refugee, in a final stage of the search for the implications of such a religious worldview on refugee resettlement. This chapter depends chiefly on the contributions of the primary informant, whose story and voice are introduced in Chapter Three.

Chapters Six and Seven constitute Part III of the thesis, and offer a synthesis and analysis of the overall research findings, as well as some wider reflections on the implications for religion on resettlement for this particular group of refugees. The final chapter closes by offering a few suggestions for future research to conclude the study.

PART I

1. The Research Question

I planted a jasmine plant,
I hoped it would grow up the walls
Over my house
I said to my mother in law
"Please take care of this jasmine plant"
As if I would return in a month.[4]

The influx of refugees to Scotland, as a result of the protracted conflict in Syria, has necessitated new forms of inter-religious engagement in the region. There is, however, an overall lack of research that considers either the role of religious faith in the resettlement process, or how best to support the resettlement and integration of Muslim refugees into a society that has become increasingly suspicious of religion in general, and of Islam in particular. This ethnographic study prioritises the emic perspectives of the refugees themselves by means of life narratives that resulted from dialogue with the refugees themselves in the form of conversations about God.[5] Beginning with a model borrowed from the monastic tradition, whose approach towards the other is one of *dilatato corde*, an expanded heart, it continues by exploring the implications of engaging with a model of inter-religious dialogue, which brings to the fore a peripheral voice.

---

[4] Anonymous poem taken from Rissa Mohabir, *Leaving our Homeland: Syria to the Isle of Bute* (Bristol: Trauma Awareness, 2018), 11. This is a collection of poetic and prosaic narratives collected from the Syrian Women Listening Project, Isle of Bute.

[5] The use of life narratives is a growing practice of research methods that are based on the autobiographical narrative identities of the research subjects. See: Dan P. McAdams and Kate C. McLean, "Narrative Identity" in *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 22:3 (2013), 233–38; also Kate C McLean and Moin Syed, "Personal, Master, and Alternative Narratives: An Integrative Framework for Understanding Identity Development in Context" in *Human Development* 58:6 (2015), 318–49.

This chapter situates and frames the research, firstly by establishing the background to, and context for, the study. This is followed by an overview of the relevant existing literature in the field. The research problem is then defined, together with the aims, objectives and questions of the overall study. The implications and significance of the findings are briefly explored, as well as recognition of the project limitations offered. The chapter concludes with a brief outline of the subsequent chapters.

Situating the Research

This study began as a theological response to the refugee crisis that (had, by that time) reached the UK in the form of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, first launched in 2014, and, hereafter, referred to by the acronym, SVPRS.[6] Prime Minister David Cameron's further commitment in 2015 expanded the programme to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees over a period of five years. This prompted the establishment of a large-scale operation, involving multi-agency cooperation between the Home Office, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as well as local authorities and civil society partners.[7] In Scotland, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon committed to resettle ten

---

[6] Terry McGuinness, *The UK Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis,* (14 June 2017), House of Commons Library, 3. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06805/ (Accessed 20.10.22); "Scheme" and "Programme" appear to be used interchangeably, as I will also do throughout. Also referred to, in the early days in Scotland, as the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, and still referred to as such in Wales and Northern Ireland. See: Community Housing Cymru Group, October 2015, *Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme In-Depth Briefing* (https://chcymru.org.uk/cms-assets/legacy/general/Syrian_vulnerable_persons_relocation_(VPR)_scheme_-_in-depth_briefing.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22); and Department for Communities, Northern Ireland, *Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme,* (page updated 20.02.20) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/syrian-vulnerable-persons-relocation-scheme (Accessed 20.10.22).

[7] Announced on 17.09.15. See Home Office *Fact Sheet: Government Support for Vulnerable Children* 24.02.17 URL:

per cent of that number and, by November 2017, two thousand refugees had already been resettled north of the border, fulfilling that commitment.[8]

This was an unprecedented programme, in that previous waves of refugees who sought asylum and refuge on our shores had had to do so independently of formal government initiatives created to assist them. Witness the example of the many refugees who received no support: the Thai "Boat People," Chileans escaping the Pinochet regime, Lebanese fleeing civil war, Indians and Pakistanis following Partition, not to mention those who sought new lives and better prospects from other parts of the Commonwealth, including Africa and the Caribbean.[9] In these cases, a prior knowledge and understanding of Britain and "British-ness" aided in resettlement to some degree, and, as often was the case for those from Chile and Lebanon in particular, they were

---

https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2017/02/24/fact-sheet-government-support-for-vulnerable-children/ (Accessed 20.10.22); See also: Home Office "Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS): Guidance for Local Authorities and Partners, July 2017 URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/631369/170711_Syrian Resettlement_Updated_Fact_Sheet_final.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22).

[8] See: *Refugee Resettlement: Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS),* Migration Scotland. https://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/our-priorities/current-work/syrian-refugee-resettlement (Accessed 20.10.22) Migration Scotland is the website of the Strategic Migration Partnership for Scotland (CSMP), a function of the Migration, Population and Diversity team at COSLA, (the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities). In fact, Scotland continued to take in cases as "family reunions" until March 2021, contributing to nearer one fifth of the UK total (and continuing beyond the initial five year scheme due to a delay in resettlement cases resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic). See also: Home Office *Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2022 - Resettlement by Local Authority* https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets (Accessed 20.10.22).

[9] The only other recorded arrivals in the twentieth century are fifty Chileans taken into the city in 1976 when the Allende government fell to Pinochet. In the early 1980s, a small number of "Vietnamese Boat People" who had been rescued from the South China Sea by a Scottish ship, the Wellpark, were also relocated to the city from the surrounding areas. See "With Open Arms: Warm Welcome to Refugees," The Courier and Advertiser (Dundee Edition, 11.12.15), https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-courier-advertiser-perth-and-perthshire-edition/20151211/281930246921762 (Accessed 20.10.22). The article highlights the warm welcome offered to several refugees in the late twentieth century in Tayside.

aided by their own resourcefulness and a readiness to adapt, but also had the advantage

of being less conspicuous in appearance, or religious background.[10]

The design of the SVPRS was such that the UNHCR identified families for

relocation, and made referrals to the UK Home Office who, in turn, once the case was

accepted, liaised with local authorities in Scotland to find possible accommodation,

depending on available and suitable housing, and access to appropriate medical

facilities.[11] Once confirmed by local authorities, preparations were made for the family to

be relocated, and they usually arrived with a larger group who were coming to the same

region. The IOM offered preparatory training prior to departure, and provided an escort

on the journey, until representatives of the local authorities receiving them would meet

the refugees at the airport. In North East Scotland, this brought local authorities and

communities into a larger project from which they were previously absent. The direct

arrival of refugees to this region necessitated the establishment of new projects and

partnerships, in order to provide the relevant support and signposting towards existing

agencies, thus creating significant collaboration and network development between

organisations. Despite the prevalent tenor of anxiety surrounding Islam and immigration

(particularly at that time, when Islamic State was dominant in the news), it was also

evident that there was an exceptionally positive response from civil society and

---

[10] This is a generalization, of course, based on the fact that these were majority Christian groups. The adaptation of Lebanese migrants is considered in: Nadyh Alawfi "A study of Adaptation to Life in the UK among Lebanese Immigrants in London and Manchester." (Applied Linguistics Doctoral Thesis, University of Central Lancashire, 2019).

[11] In England, the resettlement scheme is sometimes delivered by individuals, churches, or other community groups. See, for example, Home Office publication: "Community Sponsorship: Guidance for Prospective Sponsors" URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/626810/Community_sponsorship_guidance_for_prospective_sponsors_July_2017.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22).

individuals in Scotland.[12] It may be argued that the arrival of the Syrian refugees, through

the various schemes noted above, opened up the possibility of richer inter-communal

dialogue, hospitality, and understanding between a variety of local communities, faith

groups and individuals; and the SVPRS provided a reason for mosques, churches, and

others to offer cross-community events and participation.[13]

In the case of the Syrians of the SVPRS, there are several studies that consider the

success of their initial integration, and much of the early discourse viewed the project in

a very positive light.[14] However, a truer picture will emerge over time, as children born

here, second and third generations, will influence and shape the communities they

inhabit.[15] Given that the SVPRS offered a route to resettlement that prioritised the most

vulnerable, being those who had sought refuge, and registered with the UNHCR, as

refugees in camps and other temporary locations outside Syria, the beneficiaries of the

scheme were often from rural backgrounds, of limited formal education, or suffering

poor physical health, and were predominantly Sunni Muslim: all of which factors would

tend to inhibit free and natural adjustment, adaptation and integration, in the broadest

---

[12] One (of many) which was active in North East Scotland Scottish Faiths Action
for Refugees (http://www.sfar.org.uk), an inter-faith initiative working to build a network
of refugee and asylum seeker support across different communities in Scotland and
offering a resource to groups and individuals who want to take action and participate in
hospitality.

[13] For example, The One World Centre, funded by the Scottish Government and
DFID (Department for International Development), which exists to provide education on
global and environmental issues, https://oneworldcentre.org.uk. For example, creating
with, Professor Ian Baron, a planning framework "Refugees and Resiliency An Inter-
professional Leaning and Planning Tool: A Trauma-informed Lens" University of
Dundee, 2016. URL:
http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/portal/files/10954422/Refugees_and_resiliency.pdf
(Accessed 20.10.22).

[14] See "Situating the Research," below.

[15] Not forgetting subsequent schemes, including the Vulnerable Children's
Resettlement (VCR) Scheme (which was delivered in addition to the VPR), The Dubs
Amendment, and the Children at Risk scheme. Terry McGuinness, "*The UK Response:*
12-16.

sense, into the communities into which they were resettled.[16] Furthermore, these

complicating aspects were compounded by the fact that the majority were primarily

identified in the resettlement process as "Muslims," presenting the host communities

with what was often seen as an obstacle: one that was addressed in differing ways by

different local authorities.[17]

Locating the researcher

In the course of this study, I had dealings with three local authorities: Angus,

Dundee City, and Aberdeenshire, as well as a broader engagement, through former

employment in Humanitarian Resettlement as part of the SVPRS, which brought me into

contact with Fife, Aberdeen City, Perth and Kinross, and Argyll and Bute, with

connection to some additional colleagues and refugees in the central belt through

COSLA (the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities); New Scots Refugee Integration

Strategy conferences; hospitality events and collaborations; as well as speaking

engagements: all of which encounters contributed in some way to the foundation of this

thesis.[18] My presence in the field therefore started before data collection, but informed

the thought processes that led me to pursuing research, and refined the research question

to that of the role of religion in resettlement.

---

[16] This is developed in Chapter Three. The SVPRS initially prioritised the elderly, those with disabilities, and victims of sexual violence or torture, and included some Yazidis and Christians under those criteria. See McGuinness, *The UK Response* 3, 11.

[17] Religious affiliation became the primary identifying factor. I argue this "othering" has multiple origins, due to the negative influence of Islamophobia, the neutral stance of ignorance, or the fear of giving offence, which is a positive intention with a negative result. (See below).

[18] New Scots" was the name given to those resettled through the SVPRS and is also the refugee and asylum seeker policy of the Scottish Government which was informed, in part, by a series of collaborative consultations with refugees and partner agencies https://www.gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/new-scots/ (Accessed 20.10.22). A consultation to gather the views of the refugees themselves was held in the Caird Hall, Dundee, in August 2017, and the data contributed to the early stages of the formulation of this thesis, [FN.23.08.17]

This study takes a close examination of the details of lived experience through ethnographic research, from a "high altitude" viewpoint, as suggested by Esler: a viewpoint from which patterns and shared characteristics can be discerned.[19] In this way, the study is approached from both an emic and an etic perspective; in part from the inside (as an active participant in the resettlement process, an Arabic speaker, and observer of daily lives of the refugees in the early stages of the SVPRS), and in part from the outside (as a non-native Arabic speaker, and non-Muslim Scot).[20] These two perspectives are mutually influential and are concurrent, thereby, I would suggest, enabling the fullest possible picture to be created of the refugees' narratives of displacement and relocation. Of course I am not a refugee, nor have I ever experienced what the people of this study have experienced as refugees: to be forced to flee my country, with no certainty of return. However, having lived and worked in the Levant for four years, and having begun there neither knowing anyone, nor any word of the language, I have a degree of understanding of the difficulties relating to establishing oneself in an unfamiliar context, and of the estrangement of feeling "other." I therefore know what it means to be alienated as a foreigner, to arouse suspicion and anger, and to feel the isolation that accompanies being misunderstood.[21]

In my former employment with the SVPRS Humanitarian Resettlement programme, I was recruited for my familiarity with, and knowledge of, both the Arabic language, and customs of the particular people group, and was sometimes viewed, by the

---

[19] P.F. Esler, "The Context Group Project" in *Anthopology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach*, L.J. Lawrence, and M.I. Aguilar, (eds.), (Leiderdorp: Deo Publishing, 2004), 58.
[20] See: Figure 2, "Interplay between Emic and Etic research," M. Morris, K. Leung, D. Ames, and B. Lickel, "Views from Inside and Outside: Integrating Emic and Etic Insights About Culture and Justice Judgment" in *Academy of Management Review* 24, no.4 (1999): 789.
[21] On one occasion stones were thrown at me in a refugee camp (Summer, 2009) and on another I was accused of being a spy (Spring, 2011).

research sample, as close to being one of them, having also lived for a time in the same city as some of the refugees, and recently returned to Scotland. As researcher, I was once again caught somewhere between insider and outsider. I recognise that I could not be "value free," due to my work role, but that was one reason for seeking a greater understanding of the refugees' wider experience, rather than observing and critiquing the resettlement project itself, so I did not present a threat to them.[22] Being the only Scot in the direct support team (all the others being native Arabic speakers who were already established in Scotland), I often found myself at the intersection between three contrasting communities: Council, Church and Mosque; and found myself acting as a kind of "culture-broker," translating not only language, but also behaviours and expectations of all parties. Furthermore, I often found myself placed as an advocate for both Scottish society on the one hand, and for the religious beliefs and culture of the refugees on the other, and, occasionally, for religious belief in general.[23] That unique locus was the genesis of this study.

Initial observations informing this research

The structure of the SVPRS was such that each local authority could design its own programme for resettling this new wave of refugees. In Aberdeen, for example, the project was run by the Housing Department, assisted by a refugee-led initiative; in Angus, Adult Learning headed delivery of the resettlement programme; and in Dundee it

---

[22] See: Robin Legard, Jill Keegan, & Kit Ward, "In-depth interviews" in *Qualitative Research Practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (ed.) J. Ritchie, and J. Lewis, (Sage Publications Ltd.: London, 2003), 138-169.
[23] For example the council worker who, in conversation with a refugee about their beliefs, said: "No-one under the age of fifty in Scotland believes in God." [FN.12.01.16 40:6ii]

was directed by the Health and Social Care Partnership.[24] In Dundee and Angus, the areas with which I was most familiar, the factor of Islam was addressed by what was, effectively, the ushering of the refugees into the peripheral Muslim community by designating delivery of refugee support to two third-sector Muslim organisations.[25] Although perhaps grounded in good intention, and justified in terms of community networking and potential long-term support systems, the decision had the resulting effect of impeding wider involvement for the refugees in the neighbourhoods and communities outwith their religious or ethnic groups, thereby reinforcing the natural tendencies of ghettoisation and xenophobia.[26] As observed by a colleague at the time: "It must be asked why the authorities are so eager to appease those who are the least likely to facilitate positive integration."[27] I wonder whether such approaches to religion are a result of the prism of ethnicity being an easier way to consider theism in a secular context. Knowing the secular, verging on anti-religious, stance of local authority employees who lead many of these projects, I suggest that religious faith perhaps becomes tolerable when accepted as a cultural peculiarity.

Apart from the problematic imposition of labels on those whose ways we do not fully understand (being religiously, linguistically and culturally far removed from our own), the expectation that all those who were formally identified as "Muslim" would best belong in the existing Muslim community was, I believe, short-sighted.[28] What emerged

---

[24] See "New Scots' Refugee Integration Strategy" https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/communities-and-events/refugee-integration-strategy/ (Accessed 20.10.22); [FN. 16.09.17 23:2]; [FN 23.09.17 23:3]**.**

[25] In Dundee, the project was seconded to two third sector Muslim organisations for the first three years of the SVPRS, Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre (MWRC) and Yusuf Youth Initiative (YYI).

[26] I discussed this in greater detail in a paper presented at "Research in Religion" conference, New College, Edinburgh, 2018.

[27] [FN. 12.10.17 15:4]

[28] In Syria, a person is assigned religious affiliation at birth, inherited from the father. Thus, a person may be Syriac Orthodox or Shia Muslim yet at the same time

in early conversations, with refugees and others from the wider community, was the

apparent unease and discomfort of both the Syrian new arrivals, and also of the pre-

existing Muslim community, which was predominantly South Asian. A friction arose

between the two, revealing what could be described in very general terms as a Pakistani-

Arab divide.[29] On the one hand, the new arrivals appeared to have assistance and support

that had never been offered to the earlier arrivals.[30] The Syrians were seen to possess a

certain degree of entitlement that did not sit well with those who felt they had,

themselves, carved out a place for Islam to be practiced in this region: building and

developing mosques and communities where they had not been before.[31] On the other

hand, those arriving as refugees were met with a culturally different expression and

practice of Islam than those with which they were familiar, and it was expressed to me

several times, in conversations during the early stages of the programme, that this was a

cause of tension in the Muslim community.[32]

The original hypothesis for this study was that narratives of displacement and

resettlement, gathered from the Syrian refugees in North East Scotland, would articulate

a common thread of searching for new allegiances and social connections, having been

---

agnostic or even secular in all other matters of life (not necessarily believing in God, although God is an integral part of the Arabic Language, as will be discussed in Chapter Five). This attitude is more prevalent among the young and perhaps more so in urban areas. See "Religious and Secular Identity in Syria," Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University.
https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/religious-and-sectarian-identity-in-syria (Accessed 20.10.22).

[29] The same observations were made by another researcher in the same field. Jennie Portice "Exploring the Relationship between Diversity and Social Cohesion." (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of St Andrews, 2021).

[30] I discussed (in a paper prepared for a panel at EuARe 2019) whether such "care" was in fact a form of surveillance.

[31] [FN. 23.08.17 14:7ii] mentioned by a Muslim colleague.

[32] This is considered in Chapter Three through the voices of the refugees.

cut off from kith and kin.[33] This research sought to demonstrate that there was, indeed, a question of belonging that needed addressing within the refugee experience, and the research would therefore intend to provide the groundwork for how the question would ultimately be answered.[34] However, what began as a search for narratives of belonging, evolved over time to become a discovery of the role of religion in the resettlement process, as emerging patterns were identified that contributed to a deeper understanding of the religious beliefs behind the actions observed.[35]

It was expected that the outcomes of in-depth interviews might reveal that the Syrian refugees have a more liberal theological approach to belonging than those in the established Muslim community, who do not themselves have a pre-existing physical connection to *al-Shām* (Greater Syria—the Muslim homeland) and yearn to go there

---

[33] Used here in the original sense of native land, as well as neighbours and family. See Oxford Reference: https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100039323;jsessionid=6A0547360A306761FFA277FE98AC2534 (Accessed 20.10.22) This was based on the general trends observed in observations and conversations over the first three years of the SVPRS and was affirmed by the findings of the Scottish Government's Report, "New Scots: Integrating refugees in Scotland's communities, 2014-2017" URL: https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/3000/https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00439604.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22). The report's publication resulted in social connections and community engagement becoming the focus of follow up consultations in which I was involved as both organiser and informant.

[34] See, for example, Zeki Saritoprak, "Migration, Feelings of Belonging to a Land, and the Universality of Islam" in *Islam and citizenship Education,* A. Ednan, and M. Hermansen, (eds.) (Springer: Wiesbaden, 2015), 45-56; Alexandra J. Cutcher, *Displacement, Identity and Belonging: An Arts-Based, Auto/Biographical Portrayal of Ethnicity and Experience* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers 2015); Paolo Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home: Mapping Domestic Space in Migrants' Everyday Lives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Jan Willem Duyvendak, *The Politics of Home: Belonging and Nostalgia in Europe and the United States* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[35] See: Robin Legard, Jill Keegan, and Kit Ward, "In-depth interviews" in *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers.* J. Ritchie, and J. Lewis, (eds.), (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2003), 28. See also Chapter Two: The Research Method.

permanently (to make *hijra)*.[36] Coherent Syrian Muslim refugee narratives of belonging would therefore be key to understanding the tensions observed within the Muslim community itself, as well as the obstacles to building relationships with the wider local community, and would be important for recognising and valuing the place of Islam in Scotland and the UK.[37] This search later became narrowed to an examination of the notion of "homeland" (*al-waṭan)*, which is considered in Chapter Four.

In summary, it became apparent over time that, firstly, the policies and strategies of refugee support projects in Scotland would be lacking if they failed to recognise the importance of religious belief for these Syrian Muslim "New Scots," as they became known.[38] Secondarily, the way in which Muslim religious faith was being addressed by some refugee support schemes was in fact reinforcing societal divisions and limiting the possibility of the refugees' freedom to establish their own networks and communities. It is not within the parameters of this research to critique either British policy on refugees, or the particulars of the SVPRS in Scotland. Rather, by offering an evaluation of the religious ideologies and perspectives of the refugees themselves, it is hoped that supporting agencies might be able to see these new arrivals as an "other" that beckons acceptance.

---

[36] Interpreted by many as echoing the Prophet Mohammad's own migration from Mecca to Medina (from the land of *shirk* (polytheism) to the land of *Islam*) See, for example: Fazlur Rehman Shaikh, *Chronology of Prophetic Events* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 2001), 51–52; Lucinda Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Duro-Europos: A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 1999) 76; first revealed in conversation with a colleague [FN. 14.07.17 12:6].

[37] These tensions were expressions of frustration from both communities, and at least one violence anti-Kurdish incident perpetrated by another Syrian refugee family outside a mosque. [FN. AM. 09.15.17]; [FN.HF. 15.10.17]; [FN. MS. 20.06.17].

[38] There is acknowledgement given to communities and social connections but there is no evidence in any of the reports of any enquiry into the role of religion in the integration process, which is another reason why I saw this as an area to pursue. All previous reports can be found at the Scottish Government website: "Refugees and Asylum Seekers," https://www.gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/new-scots/ (Accessed 20.10.22).

The Muslim Community in Dundee

It is worth giving a brief outline of the Muslim community in Dundee, as an illustration of the context of the observations made above. Dundee serves Muslims from across the wider Tayside region, which includes Angus and Perth. Unfortunately the most recent Scottish census information is not yet available. However, Scottish Government Statistics from the 2011 census suggested that 6 per cent of the population was from minority ethnic groups, 2 per cent of which were "other" ethnic groups (which would include Middle Eastern and Arab populations), against 84 per cent white Scottish.[39] In Dundee, there is a growing Arab and Muslim Community, composed of students and their families, as well as economic migrants from the Middle East and North Africa. The census suggested that, in 2011, 1.4 per cent of Scotland's population identified themselves as Muslim (approximately 77,000 in total). The majority of the Muslim population in Scotland was South Asian, due to the wave of arrivals following the partition of India. However, it is important to note that the Muslim communities throughout Scotland are by no means homogeneous, and comprise Muslims from Türkiye, Iran, Malaysia, Bangladesh and North African States.[40] In 2011, Dundee was home to approximately 5% of Scotland's total Muslim population and the Muslim community in Dundee had fewer members of Pakistani origin than other cities in

---

[39] Scottish Government, "Ethnic Group demographics," from the 2011 Census URL: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Ethnicity/EthPopMig (Accessed 20.10.22).

[40] Mona Siddiqui, "Islam in Scotland after 1945" in *Scottish Life and Society*, C. MacLean, and K. Veitch, (eds.) Vol. 12, (Edinburgh John Donald, 2006), 281-294; See also Reza Baghieri, "Halal Scots; Muslims' Social Identity Negotiation and Integration in Scotland." (Doctoral Thesis, University of Edinburgh 2015). From my knowledge, I would also add Indonesia. Turkey has been officially known by the UN since 26th May 2022 as Türkiye, by formal request from Ankara, and will be spelled accordingly throughout. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/member-states/turkiye. (Accessed 20.10.22).

Scotland: 50% compared to Glasgow's 70%.[41] In 2011, 3% of the population was

Muslim, compared to 2% in 2001.[42] Despite the number of new arrivals through the

SVPRS and other Humanitarian Schemes, the Muslim community was still relatively

small when the Syrians began to arrive, and the Arab population was still a minority

ethnic group, contributing 15% of the Muslim Community in Dundee.[43] Statistics on

ethnic diversity suggested only 1% of the city's population was from "other ethnic

groups," which would include Kurds, such as those participating in the research.[44]

There are four main places of worship which act as the focal points of the Muslim

community in Dundee: Jam'i Mosque Bilal on Dura Street; Al Maktoum Mosque and the

attached College of Higher Education on Wilkie's Lane; Taj Dar e-Medina Mosque on

Victoria Road; and Dundee Central Mosque on Miln Street. The Dundee Central

Mosque is affiliated to Deobandi (Hanafi) branch of Sunni Islam, and is influenced by

the Tablighi Jama'at movement.[45] Originating in Deoband, India, where the Darull

Uloom School is established, it has adherents in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh,

and now also in South Africa and Europe where *madāris* (schools), based largely on the

---

[41] London School of Economics, Religion and the Public Sphere "Muslims in Scotland Demographic, Social and Cultural Characteristics," 2016,
URL: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionpublicsphere/2016/11/muslims-in-scotland-demographic-social-and-cultural-characteristics/ (Accessed 20.10.22).
[42] See National records of Scotland "Scottish Council Areas 2001 to 2011 Census Profile Comparator Tool: Dundee City" 15th February 2017 URL: http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/council_area_profiles/Dundee_City.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22).
[43] Figure 1.2, "Ethnicity of main Muslim groups in Dundee," Stefano Bonino, *Muslims in Scotland: The Making of a Community in a Post-9/11 World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 32; Other Humanitarian Schemes include the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement (VCR) Scheme which included families of vulnerable children from the wider region, including Iraqis and Sudanese. This scheme was later absorbed into a broader project of Humanitarian Resettlement.
[44] Bonino, *Muslims in Scotland*, 32.
[45] An outreach movement of the Deobandi movement, which has a focus on social action. See J. Birt. "Locating the British *Imam*: The Deobandi 'ulama between Contested Authority and Public Policy Post-9/11" in *European Muslims and the Secular State* J. Cesari, and S. McLoughlin, (eds.) (Ashgate: Burlington, 2005), 183-196.

prophetic traditions (*Ḥadīth*), have been established by graduates of Deoband.[46] In 2011, statistics suggested that the congregation was comprised of 47% Pakistani and 11% Arab members.[47]Al Maktoum, established in 2013 with Emirati funding, is the most "Arab" ethnically and theologically, adhering to the Madhabi tradition, which recognises the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence acknowledged by the Amman Message in 2005, in a statement clarifying Islam given by H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Amman, Jordan.[48] The Muslims in Britain directory is critical of this ethnic monoculture stating: "It would be Islamically immoral to label *masaajid* [mosques] as 'belonging' to a given ethnicity, yet this is the reality of most *masaajid*."[49] The other two mosques, however, are predominantly Pakistani. Though originally they were one mosque, they split over Masji Bilal's association with Minhaj-ul-Qur'an International, a Pakistan-based organisation working to promote peace and equality, countering terrorism, and promoting women's rights.[50] Perhaps a natural consequence of an emerging community, composed

---

[46] Tablighi Jam'at is a controversial movement seen by some as a subversive and deviant sect encouraged by western authorities to fragment Islam and divert attention from colonial powers. See, for example, "Tableeghi Jamaat Exposed," Islamic Academy, URL: http://www.islamicacademy.org/html/Articles/English/Tableeghee%20Jma%27at.htm (Accessed 20.10.22); See also T Abdulkader, I. Niehaus, and W. Weisse, (Eds.) *Muslim Schools and Education in Europe and South Africa* (Berlin: Waxmann, 2011), 87; Darul Uloom School website, URL: http://www.darululoom-deoband.com/english/index.htm (Accessed 20.10.22); and Tahir Abbas, *Islamic Radicalism and Multicultural Politics: The British Experience*. (London: Routledge, 2011).

[47] See: Yusuf Youth Initiative Scoping Exercise commissioned by the Dundee City Council: "Youth Work Support Needs for Black and Minority Ethnic Young People," (2011), publication_2778.doc - Dundee City Council, (Accessed 20.10.22) 11.

[48] Official Website of The Amman Message 2017, URL: http://ammanmessage.com/the-amman-message-full/ (Accessed 20.10.22).

[49] See: "Muslims in Britain" Mosque directory, Al Maktoum, Dundee URL: http://mosques.muslimsinbritain.org/maps.php#/mosque/1083 (Accessed 20.10.22) Sectarian tensions within the Muslim community will be explored more fully in Chapter Four.

[50] See: Scottish Islamic and Cultural Centre Dundee: Jam'i Mosque Bilal, URL: http://www.siccdundee.co.uk/introduction (Accessed 20.10.22); Minhaj-ul-Quran International URL: http://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/1799/Minhaj-ul-Quran-International.html (Accessed 20.10.17) Figures suggest 90% Pakistani members at both.

of multi-generational diaspora peoples, is the re-definition of the distinction between religion and culture.[51] As observed in the course of this study, the Syrian refugees are, like those migrants who arrived before them, in an intense process of adaptation as they re-evaluate their religious tradition and social norms in a new context: both the secular society and the Muslim community.

Framing the Research

Syrian Refugees

A simple Internet search on "Syrian refugees in the UK" today generates over 10 million results. When the search is narrowed to "Academic publication on Syrian refugees in the UK," the results number over 9 million.[52] These numbers are not only overwhelming, but illustrate the widespread interest generated by the protracted conflict in Syria, the resulting mass migration of Syrian people, and the effects of such migration on the wider world. An extensive search of online databases, libraries and journals over the period of this study was regularly conducted throughout the process of the research, and produced increasing volumes of literature that explored the field of refugee resettlement with respect to Syrian refugees. Given that this is a nascent field of study and addresses the contemporary lived experience of the refugees, and those resettling

---

See Yusuf Youth Initiative, "Youth Work Support Needs," 2011, https://www.dundeecity.gov.uk/reports/reports/265-2011.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22).

[51] Steven Vertovec, "Diaspora, Transnationalism and Islam: Sites of Change and Modes of Research" in *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and across Europe* S. Allievi, and J. Nielses, (eds.) (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 316.

[52] 14,200,000 for "Syrian refugees in the UK", and 11,000,000 for "academic publication on Syrian refugees in the UK." A wider search on "academic article on Syrian refugees" gives a result of 22,600,000. (Results true to Google, 20th October 2022). These figures are of course not an accurate representation, but a periodic check of these searches indicates a constant rapid increase in available literature, up by several thousand since the previous check on 5th October 2023.

them, it may be several years before a full picture of the impact of the Syrian war, migration, and resettlement starts to form.

A UNHCR map indicating the number of displaced, stateless people by country identifies, as of 2021, 13,857,059 people as having originated in the Syrian Arab Republic.[53] More detailed UNHCR statistics suggest that, in 2021, a total of 6,848,865 Syrians were currently registered under UNHCR's mandate; 139,754 persons from Syria were identified as Asylum seekers; 6,865,308 were internally displaced persons (IDPs); and another 3,102 people were recorded as being other people of concern to the UNHCR.[54] Another UNHCR source states that, in 2022, 6.6 million people were registered as refugees outside Syria, and although those escaping war in Syria have sought asylum in over 130 countries worldwide, 5.6 million of them were accommodated in the neighbouring countries surrounding Syria.[55] It is estimated today that Lebanon hosts approximately 1.5 million people who have fled from Syria, 844,056 of whom were registered with the UNHCR in 2021.[56] Another 676,164 Syrian refugees are currently registered with the UNHCR in Jordan.[57] A further 262,756 Syrians are currently registered in Iraq, and Türkiye hosts the largest share with Turkish Government statistics

---

[53] "Heat Map" UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=3DSOb0 (Accessed 20.10.22).

[54] This includes stateless people and returness. See: UNHCR "Persons of Concern," https://www.unhcr.org/ph/persons-concern-unhcr (Accessed 20.10.22); also UNHCR Refugee Data Finder https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=7nC3JG (Accessed 20.10.22) These are people known to the UNHCR, although, naturally, there are others who for whatever reason have not registered for UN support.

[55] See: USA for UNHCR "Syrian Crisis Explained," https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/ (accessed 20.10.22); and UNHCR "Syria Emergency," https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html (Accessed 20.10.22).

[56] ReliefWeb Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2022 -2023 https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-lcrp-2022-2023 (Accessed 20.10.22) .There are no statistics available yet for 2022.

[57] "Syrian Refugees in Jordan – 31 July 2022," found at Operational Data Portal: Refugee Situations https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/94587 (Accessed 20.10.22).

reporting 3,651,428 refugees as coming from Syria, a figure which accounts for 65.1% of all UNHCR registered, externally displaced Syrians.[58]

In the eleven years since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria, and the first waves of refugees seeking refuge beyond its borders, the focus of academic research and published literature has necessarily evolved over time, as the needs and questions to consider have arisen and developed.[59] As António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, and formerly UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees (2005-2015), stated in 2013: "Syria has become the great tragedy of this century—a disgraceful humanitarian calamity with suffering and displacement unparalleled in recent history."[60] Indeed, the Syrian crisis has been called the world's greatest migrant and refugee crisis, and has necessitated unprecedented humanitarian response and, therefore, has raised new challenges for provision, resettlement, and integration.

Religion in Syria

Although the Syrian conflict did not begin as a sectarian war, religious identity is nevertheless significant for understanding the dynamics of how the conflict developed. Indeed, as Tomass states: "In the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, or multi-sectarian settings of the Fertile Crescent, wherein religious or sectarian affiliation is the predominant

---

[58] Operational Data Portal: Refugee Situations https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria (Accessed20.10.22). Due to the constantly changing nature of human migration, these statistics are likewise in perpetual flux, and the timings and purpose of report publication can lead to discrepancies between figures. The UNHCR has multiple publications and data portals, not all of which exist for the same purposes or are updated concurrently. As a consequence, it can be difficult to find reliable current statistics.

[59] I use the term "refugees" loosely here to mean those who have become uprooted and have sought safety outwith their homeland. A definition is given below.

[60] Tom Miles, "Syrian refugee numbers reach 2 million in tragedy of century - U.N" Reuters, 3rd September 2013, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-syria-crisis-refugees-idUKBRE98204I20130903 (Accessed 20.10.22).

source for social values, individuals prioritize their religious and sectarian identities."[61]

He further submits that religious belonging, in the context of the Middle East, is a source

of security, protection, employment, as well as recognition and friendship, and that often

these allegiances take priority over allegiance to the State.[62] It is unsurprising then that,

with the outbreak of war, societal fractures opened along these lines. Tomass gives one

chapter of his work to the outlining of the Muslim sects present in Syria and the region,

including the four groups within the *Shi'a* (in which he also includes the Druze), and the

four groups within the mainstream *Sunni*.[63] The main line of his argument is that the

foundations of these sectarian divisions are key to understanding the dynamics of the

present day political scene. In a separate chapter, he argues that although the Arab

Spring, which was the original ignition of conflict in Syria, was largely seen in the West

as an uprising of the youth against the State, many Syrians themselves saw it as what he

terms a "revolt of the Sunna," and a continuation of several decades of struggle between

Islamists and the State that was further intensified by urban versus rural economic

disparities.[64]

Another paper corroborating these themes is that of Lakitsch, who also highlights

the importance of religion as the primary factor in community cohesion and belonging,

and stresses the heterogeneity of religion in Syria.[65] Beyond this, he also considers other

roles of religion in the war: firstly as a source of discourse, citing, for example, jihadist

---

[61] Mark Tomass, *The Religious Roots of the Syrian Conflict: The Remaking of the Fertile Crescent* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 5.

[62] Tomass, *The Religious Roots*, 5

[63] Twelver, Ismāīlī, Durūz (Druze), and Alawī; the Sunna: Mainstream, (i.e. Ḥanafī), Sūfī, Wahhābi, and the Muslim Brotherhood. See: Tomass, "Formation of Muslim Sectarian Identities" in *The Religious Roots*, 65-95.

[64] Tomass, *The Religious Roots*, 6, 151-185.

[65] Maximilian Lakitsch, "Islam in the Syrian War: Spotting the Various Dimensions of Religion in Conflict" *Religions* 9:8 (2018), 236.

apocalyptic narratives, which have also been explored by others, such as Pratt;[66]

secondly, religion as a source of spirituality; and thirdly, religion as a source of potential

reconciliation, but is also a means to demonstrate the complexity of religion, and its

multidimensional roles in conflict in Syria. Although this study seeks to examine the role

of religion in the resettlement of refugees, sources such as these can offer insight into the

role of religion for people in their home territory, and contribute to a better understanding

of the allegiances, tensions, and expectations that are carried with the refugee in flight to

second and third countries.

Refugee Resettlement

In turning the focus to the area of refugee resettlement, there are, again, many

sources from which to draw for a study such as this. For example, Stevens explores the

concept of "protection," as applied by the UNHCR in its policy in the Middle East, and

also the contemporary "rights-based approach" to delivery of humanitarian support, in

particular in the context of the Syria and Iraqi mass exodus. She further considers

whether in fact the language of "protection" is more problematic than useful, when

considered in the long-term support of refugees.[67]

In Europe, which faced the migration crisis long before refugees began arriving in

the UK, there is a wealth of literature which considers refugee policy in the region. For

example, Mustafa explores the waves of migration as symptomatic of systematic failure

to protect the vulnerable. She argues that the failure of resettlement programmes to

respond proportionately to the high numbers of applications is a primary cause for the

---

[66] See Douglas Pratt, "Christian Encounters with Islam: An Historical Precursor" in *Christian Engagement with Islam*, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 9-28.

[67] Dallal Stevens, "Rights, needs or assistance? The role of the UNHCR in refugee protection in the Middle East," in *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 20, no.2 (2016): 264-283.

high numbers who arrived and sought asylum in Europe by illegal means.[68] Another

article which cites the inadequacies of the European asylum system as a factor

encouraging migrants to seek refuge by dangerous independent means, is that of Hatton

et. al., who suggest the need for reforms that would enable a "substantial joint

programme of refugee resettlement [that] would eliminate the risks to refuges and …

command more widespread support."[69] A further critique of Western response to the

Syrian crisis is that of Bashur, who goes so far as to suggest that "some European

politicians may have opted for a trade off: making their taxpayers shoulder the short-term

cost of hosting refugees in exchange for profits to the arms industry."[70]

Considering the resettlement of refugees in the UK, Gilgan, for example,

considers refugee resettlement in the light of the international community's Right to

Protect (R2P).[71] She recognises and addresses a gap between the scholarship informing

Responsibility to Protect, and the delivery of local actors, and considers it within the

context of the UK. She examines the fact that the UK did not link its humanitarian

responses (including the SVPRS), to this agreement, a result, she argues, of conflicting

understandings of the agreement within different Government departments and civil

society.[72] In the context of Syrian refugee resettlement, Karyotis *et. al.* offer a

comparison of, and highlight a disparity between, those Syrians who have sought refuge

---

[68] Maissaa Almustafa, "Reframing refugee crisis: A 'European crisis of migration' or a 'crisis of protection'?" in *Politics and Space* 40 no.5 (2022): 1064–1082.
[69] Timothy J. Hatton, "Refugees and asylum seekers, the crisis in Europe and the future of policy," *Economic Policy*, 32 no.91 (July 2017), 447–496.
[70] D. Bashur, (2018). "What the West owes Syrians" *Syria Studies*, 9(2), 31-59.
[71] Chloë. M. Gilgan, Exploring the Link between r2p and Refugee Protection: Arriving at Resettlement, *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 9 no.4 (2017): 366-394.
[72] Chloe Gilgan, "Localising the 'Responsibility to Protect'?: The UK and Syrian Refugees." (Doctoral Thesis, University of York, January 1, 2018).

in the UK through the SVPRS, and those who arrived through other means.[73] They

expose what they identify as the constructions of refugee "legitimacy," but also reveal

differences in the characteristics of those who arrive through the SVPRS resettlement

programme, and those who seek asylum independently.[74] The most significant factor,

related to this particular study of refugees, is their level of formal education. In very

general terms, higher levels of education are noted among those who arrived via the

asylum route, whereas those prioritised by the SVPRS are generally of lower levels of

formal education.[75] Furthermore, those who arrived independently have been found to

have a tendency towards higher levels of confidence, as they adapt and adjust to life in

the new context.[76]

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

In a deeper examination of the SVPRS, an early critique and analysis of the

programme was offered by Martin, who explored the basis of refugee rights in the

systems in place to support resettlement, and provided suggestions for their future

---

[73] Georgios Karyotis, Gareth Mulvey, and Dimitris Skleparis, "Young Syrian Refugees in the UK: A Two-Tier System of International Protection?" Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies 47, no. 3 (February 15, 2021): 481–500.

[74] Karyotis, et al. "A Two-Tier System," 484-486; his disparity is also considered by: Samantha Kelly, "Who deserves compassion? A corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of the discursive construction of Syrian refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants in UK newspaper reports published between October 2014 and September 2016." (Doctoral Thesis, University of Nottingham, 2020). See also, Robin Vandevoordt and Gert Verschraegen. "Demonstrating Deservingness and Dignity. Symbolic Boundary Work among Syrian Refugees" In *Poetics,* 76 (October 1, 2019). This research considers how Syrian refugees in Belgium deal with a sudden loss of social status and draw symbolic boundaries among themselves and other communities.

[75] Karyotis, et al. "A Two-Tier System," 491.

[76] Suzanne Mawson and Laila Kasem, "Exploring the entrepreneurial intentions of Syrian refugees in the UK", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research,* 25 no.5, (2019): 1128-1146.

development.[77] In another article, also published in 2017, Farani *et al.* considered the tension between (and divergence of) British foreign policy in Syria, and the humanitarian response to refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.[78] More recent publications, which have the advantage of a longer period of observation, include a piece of research by Perreault and Paul. Their examination of the role of the British media's narrative framing of the refugee crisis in Europe identified four narrative frames: a "humanising frame," a "saviour frame," a "dehumanising frame," and a "redemption frame," into which they argue all refugee discourse falls.[79] Xu offers a comparison between media representation in the UK and Canada, and finds that the humanising approach is usually offered by more politically "left" leaning publications, but states that "these attempts to 're-humanize' refugees do not invalidate the Orientalist image of refugees as passive victims without agency and history."[80]

In a further discussion of the UK's focus on "vulnerability" as the key identifying factor for deservedness of resettlement, Smith and Waite are critical of what appears to be an increased narrowing of protection for refugees by this requirement. Furthermore, they go so far as to suggest that such policy can even have the effect of generating vulnerability, and that such models reveal exclusion as much as inclusion.[81] Armbruster

---

[77] Martin Jones, "The rights of resettled refugees in the UK: lessons for 'new' resettlement states and rights based advocacy for refugees" in *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies* 3, no.1 (2017): 67-97.

[78] Muhammad Najam-ud-din Farani, Iram Khalid, and Muhammad Rizwan Abbassi, "United Kingdom's Foreign Policy towards Syrian Refugees." *Journal of Political Studies* 24, no.1 (2017): 97–112.

[79] Gregory Perreault and Newly Paul, "Narrative Framing of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in British Religious News" in *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 8, (2019): 276-297.

[80] Man Xu, "Constructing the refugee: Comparison between newspaper coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis in Canada and the UK." *Current Sociology* 69, no.5 (Sep2021): 660-681.

[81] Kate Smith, and Louise Waite, "New and enduring narratives of vulnerability: rethinking stories about the figure of the refugee." *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, 45 no.13 (Oct 2019): 2289–2307. Citing Anderson, they agree that "…[the]

argues that this approach has had the negative effect of "exceptionalising" a minority

group of Syrians as worthy of compassion, while simultaneously "constructing

compassion itself as a rationed resource in a climate of anti-immigrant hostility, austerity

and Brexit."[82] Although Brexit discourse is less prominent today, there are still

implications of Britain's decision to leave the European Union that have an effect on the

lives of minority and ethnic communities in the UK. Çınar considers, in particular, the

effects on the freedom of religious belief for those communities, and asks whether British

policy on hate crime is sufficient to protect such groups.[83] Finally, Abbas explores the

extent to which the Muslim refugee has been conflated with the terror suspect, and

resettlement to have become viewed through the lens of security as opposed to human

rights.[84]

Scotland and the New Scots

In Scotland, there has, throughout the SVPRS, been a largely positive attitude

towards the resettlement of Syrian refugees, due to a number of factors that underlie the

drive of the current Scottish Government towards public demonstrations of diversity and

---

focus on those believed to be the so-called most vulnerable reveals that all our models inevitably exclude as they include." (Anderson, B. "The migrant and refugee crisis – a panel discussion on responses and solution." A joint event by the Oxford Martin School and the International Migration Institute, an Oxford Martin School Institute, October 27, 2015); 2289.

[82] Heidi Armbruster, "It was the photograph of the little boy": reflections on the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme in the UK" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 42, no.15 (2019): 2680.

[83] Özgür Heval Çınar, "Brexit and its Implications on the Freedom of Religion and Belief in the UK" in *International Journal of Religion* 3, no.1 (2022): 37-48.

[84] Madeline-Sophie Abbas, "Conflating the Muslim refugee and the terror suspect: responses to the Syrian refugee 'crisis' in Brexit Britain," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42 no.14, (2019): 2464. In the Northern Irish context this manifested itself differently, as explored by Cameron D Lippard and Catherine B McNamee, "Are Refugees Really Welcome? Understanding Northern Ireland Attitudes Towards Syrian Refugees," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 34 no.3, (September 2021): 3091–3112. This critiqued the idea of social cohesion and found that Northern Irish identity politics encouraged discriminatory attitudes towards the Syrian refugees.

inclusion. In 2019, the Scottish efforts were even recognised in a publication of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).[85] Two examples of academic publications, which analyse the Scottish delivery of the SVPRS, are Weir, *et al.* and Martzoukou and Burnett, both of which recognised the same issues that arose in observations of the programme in North East Scotland. Weir *et al.* is an Edinburgh based study that focuses on access to healthcare and counselling provision for the refugees, and on support workers or translators, who also may have a migration (and possible trauma) history.[86] These are findings that have been reflected in a number of other studies of the SVPRS in the wider UK and, although their area of focus differs, the general findings are consistent in their acknowledgement of the needs for improvement to overcome barriers to available support, and to make healthcare accessible and appropriate for such a traumatised and vulnerable population.[87] Martzoukou and Burnett also recognise access

[85] European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) News: "Scotland Leading the Way on UK Resettlement Scheme," 21st March 2019, https://ecre.org/scotland-leading-the-way-on-uk-resettlement-scheme/ (Accessed 20.10.22).

[86] Katherine E A Weir, Sheila J Wilson, and Dermot R Gorman, "The Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme: evaluation of Edinburgh's reception arrangements," in *Journal of Public Health* 40, no.3, (September 2018): 451–460.

[87] Other sources supporting this include the work of Annemarie Lloyd,"Stranger in a strange land; enabling information resilience in resettlement landscapes," *Journal of Documentatio*n 71, no.5 (2015): 1029-1042, which discusses information resilience and the importance, for example, of library support; also, a study of Syrian refugee bereavement: Meherangiz Press, "The inaudible bereaved: a critical narrative analysis of the voices of bereaved Syrian refugees in the UK." (Doctoral Thesis, Regent's University, London, 2019); P., Paudyal, M. Tattan, and M. J. F. Cooper, "Qualitative study on mental health and well-being of Syrian refugees and their coping mechanisms towards integration in the UK" in *BMJ Open* 2021, 11:e046065. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2020-046065 (Accessed 20.10.22); Faten Sabouni, "Exploring the Psychosocial Needs of Syrian Refugees in the UK: Accounts of Community Service Providers." (Doctoral Thesis, University of Manchester, 2018); Maximillian Wood, et al. "Trauma and resettlement: lessons learned from a mental health screening and treatment programme for Syrian refugees in the UK" in *International Review of Psychiatry* (May 2022): 1-8; Raoom Qureshi, "An Exploration of Syrian Refugees' Coping Strategies during the Syrian Conflict : A UK-Based Study." (Doctoral Thesis, University of Manchester, 2016), which explores cultural barriers to psychological support; and Mujahid Asmal-Lee, "Understanding Refugee Experiences : Mental Health and Acculturation." (Doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 2020), which considered acculturation of Syrian refugees

to healthcare in Scotland but in the context of accessing information. Their article stresses the need the refugees themselves identified for better English language provision, in order to equip them to access information, and increase understanding of socio-cultural differences, and the improvement of personalised information tailored to the individuals resettled.[88]

Other research that has been significant in the context of the SVPRS in Scotland is that of the "New Scots," mentioned above, which was a series of consultations with refugees and service providers to identify areas of development, and ways of adapting to support the needs of those resettled through the VPRS. The New Scots strategy reports have found information consistent with other areas of the UK, resulting in similar recommendations for six areas of refugee support, which are now identified as:

---

as encompassing aspects of "belonging, racism and Islamophbia," and advised that service delivery and professional support of those resettled could benefit from "cultural curiosity, sensitivity, and trust, to avoid exacerbating trauma." 38, 106.

[88] Konstantina Martzoukou and Simon Burnett, "Exploring the everyday life information needs and the socio-cultural adaptation barriers of Syrian refugees in Scotland," *Journal of Documentation* 74, no. 5, (2018): 1104-1132. This is supported by a study of English language provision in other parts of the UK, see: Amina Al-Dhaif," Identiti(es) and investment in learning English: an ethnographic study of Syrian refugees in the UK." (Doctoral thesis, Northumbria University, 2020); Bronagh Ćatibušić, Fiona Gallagher and Shadi Karazi, "An investigation of ESOL provision for adult Syrian refugees in Ireland: Voices of support providers" in *ESOL provision in the UK and Ireland: challenges and opportunities* Freda Mishan, (ed.) (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019)(no page numbers); Stefan Vollmer, "The Digital literacy practices of newly arrived Syrian Refugees: a spatio-visual linguistic ethnography." (Doctoral Thesis, University of Leeds, 2020); Randa Najjar, "Refugee Families, Schools and Cultures of Dialogue." (Doctoral Thesis, University of Winchester, 2021), which considers the voices of two Syrian refugee families and their positive experiences of integration; and Melanie Cooke and Rob Peutrell. *Brokering Britain, Educating Citizens: Exploring ESOL and Citizenship*, Bristol, (Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters, 2019). https://doi-org.ezproxy.st-andrews.ac.uk/10.21832/9781788924634 (Accessed.20.10.22), which critiques the expectation of ESOL teachers to "broker official narratives" in place of the minority perspectives themselves.

Employability and Welfare Rights, Housing, Education, Language, Health and

Wellbeing, and Communities, Culture and Social Connections.[89]

Other research considering Syrian refugee resettlement

Other areas of research, which relate to areas of concern observed in the context

of Syrian refugee resettlement to Scotland, include the processes of identity negotiation

and trajectories of integration, which are beyond the remit of this particular research

project but are worth recognising, as they informed early stages of this study. These

include the edited volume by Iner and Yucel on refugee identity negotiation in different

contexts around the world, and Ballentine *et.al.* on identity change and the multiple

identities of five Syrian refugees resettled to Brazil.[90] The areas of children and parenting

were other fields that prompted academic study of Syrian refugees, in order to better

understand the challenges and opportunities for supporting Syrian parents in a

resettlement context. For example, a recent digital analysis of children's drawings was

---

[89]Scottish Government website "New Scots: refugee integration strategy 2018-2022" January 2018, https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy-2018-2022/ (Accessed 20.10.22). Earlier versions of the strategy divided these differently, for example: "Access to housing," "access to welfare benefits," "connecting through language," "social connections," "independence and confidence," and "employment and education," in Dr.Alison Strang, Helen Baillot and Elodie Mignard "Rights, Resilience and Refugee Integration in Scotland: New Scots and the Holistic Integration Service: A report sharing insights from the Holistic Integration Service 2013-2016" (June 2016), Scottish Refugee Council, https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RRRIntegratScot_FINAL.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22). Other research on welfare rights in Britain which echoes the same findings is Hannah Haycox,"Policy Paradoxes and the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme: How Welfare Policies Impact Resettlement Support." In *Critical Social Policy*, 0:0 (April 14, 2022), 1. DOI:10.1177/02610183221088532. (Accessed 14.10.22). This article identifies two particular areas in need of reform and are reinforcing poverty and undermining efforts at resettlement support, namely, the Benefit Cap and the Two-Child limit.

[90] Derya Iner and Salih Yucel, *Muslim Identity Formation in Religiously Diverse Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2015); Susie Ballentyne, John Drury, Emma Barrett, and Sarah Marsden, *Lost in Transition: What refugee post-migration experiences tell us about processes of social identity change*. (J Community Appl Soc Psychol. 2021); 1–14.

tested as a possible means of identifying psychological distress, and predictors of

violence, in resettlement countries, and a study was conducted of the provision of

education for the first cohort of Syrian children resettled to the UK via the SVPRS.[91]

An interesting piece of research that explores the wider processes of identity,

belonging, and homemaking in the context of resettlement, is that of Habash, which

looks at the resettlement experiences of Syrian musicians in Istanbul. The paper reveals a

discrepancy between outward agency and inward struggles, brought about by

displacement. She warns against regarding apparent success in resettlement, without

considering the internal and emotional costs involved for the refugee.[92] Another key

contributor to this area of refugee identity negotiation, and the ways in which refugees

are viewed, is Haile, who discusses the limitation of labelling that does not take into

consideration the fluidity of lived experience and consequent change over time.[93] She

then provides an interesting discussion of invisibility, often perceived as a result of

power imbalance drowning out migrant voices but, as she argues, invisibility can be a

strategic choice of the refugee themselves, as a means to navigate their new contexts, and

[91] Sarah Baird, Raphael Panlilio, Jennifer Seager, Stephanie Smith, and Bruce Wydick, "Identifying Psychological Trauma among Syrian Refugee Children for Early Intervention: Analyzing Digitized Drawings Using Machine Learning" in *Journal of Development Economics* 156, (May 2022). doi:10.1016/j.jdeveco.2022.102822 (Accessed 20.10.22); Roda Madziva and Juliet Thondhlana, "Provision of Quality Education in the Context of Syrian Refugee Children in the UK: Opportunities and Challenges." *Compare* 47 (6): (2022), 942–61; also Aala El-Khani, Fiona Ulph, Sarah Peters, Rachel Calam, "Syria: coping mechanisms utilised by displaced refugee parents caring for their children in pre-resettlement contexts" in *Intervention* (15718883) 15, no.1 (March 2017): 34-50; and Fay Huntly, "The Refugee Parenting Experience: From Flight to Resettlement." (Doctoral Thesis in Clinical Psychology, University of Manchester, 2017).

[92] Dunya Habash, "'Do Like You Did in Aleppo': Negotiating Space and Place Among Syrian Musicians in Istanbul" in *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no.2, (June 2021): 1370–1386.

[93] Semhar Haile "Voices to be heard? Reflections on refugees, strategic invisibility and the politics of voice" in *Refuge in a Moving World: Tracing refugee and migrant journeys across disciplines* Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (ed.) (London: UCL Press, 2020), 34-36.

often as a result of "misrepresentation of their identities through the monolithic lens of refugeehood."[94] Finally, she raises some important questions about whether a refugee at some point ceases to be a refugee, or if the refugee experiences of loss and displacement continue in the life of the individual, and she wonders to what extent the demand for refugee narratives are in part performative, and markers of legitimacy.[95] These are questions I have also considered in my dealings with those resettled through the SVPRS, and I am careful to speak of those who "arrived as refugees" as opposed to "the refugees" in our communities today, especially as some of those in the sample for this study have now been in Scotland for over seven years.[96]

Religion and Resettlement

There is a wealth of literature on migration and religion in general, some of which informed the early stages of this research.[97] However, narrowing the search for literature to that which directly considers the role of religion in the resettlement of refugees reveals a small but nascent field of research, especially so in the non-Muslim West. The majority of literature on Syrian refugees has been conducted in the countries surrounding Syria, where Islam is not a minority religious affiliation. One study, however, that takes religion into consideration of identity negotiation in the UK is that of Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh, who note that they find in their wider work of Muslim and Middle Eastern

---

[94] Haile, Voices to be heard" (20202), 37.

[95] Haile, Voices to be heard" (20202), 39-40.

[96] The narratives in Chapter Three of how those interviewed became refugees were stories shared of their own volition, in order to draw broader pictures of their whole lived experience, but were not part of the research methodology or questions for this reason. (See Chapter Two).

[97] For example: Ulrich Schmiedel and Graeme Smith (eds.) *Religion in the European Refugee Crisis* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Lucy Hovil *Refugee, Conflict and the Search for Belonging* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Roberta Ricucci *Ethnicity, Identity and Faith in the Current Migratory Crisis: Continuity and Change in Migrants' Religiousness in Southern Europe* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

asylum seekers that they can become exposed to three vulnerabilities, which they describe as "uncertain legal status," "voluntary or imposed religious identification," and "their exclusion from established Muslim communities."[98] The first of these areas is not felt so acutely by those resettled through the SVPRS because, although there has been uncertainty and anxiety surrounding their legal status, the programme provides protection for a period of five years (as mentioned above), a privilege not shared by those who arrive in the UK by different routes. Although the Fiddian-Qasmieyeh study pre-dates the SVPRS, the other findings interestingly reflect that which has been observed in the context of Syrian resettlement to North East Scotland. In particular the imposition of the primary identifying factor as that of "Muslim," regardless of whether the individual stresses that particular aspect of their self-identification, and the difficulties of relating to and fitting in with the existing Muslim community. The study examined the experiences of Muslim asylum seekers and refugees in Manchester and Oxford in early 2006 and focused on Palestinian and Kurdish voices. Interestingly they note that the Kurds, then, as indeed now, "are not recognised as a distinct nationality or ethnic group," being absent from statistics by their placement with those nationals of the same original country of residence (Turkish Kurds being recorded as Turkish, for example).[99] Like other studies, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh recognise the tensions felt by the refugees in terms of visibility and invisibility, as well as the challenges of negotiating "Muslim-ness" in an alien environment. In this light, distancing the self from the Muslim community may be an act of the refugee's strategic invisibility, as mentioned above. These themes are all

---

[98] Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Yousif M. Qasmiyeh, "Muslim Asylum-Seekers and Refugees: Negotiating Identity, Politics and Religion in the UK" in *Journal of Refugee Studies,* 23 no.3 (September 2010): 294–314.

[99] D.J. Griffiths, "Fragmentation and Consolidation: the Contrasting Cases of Somali and Kurdish Refugees in London." Journal of Refugee Studies 13, no.3, (2000), 302; cited in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh, "Muslim Asylum seekers and refugees," 297.

reflected in the narratives that comprise this study of religion and resettlement in the SVPRS in Scotland, in particular with the contributions of the Kurds in Chapter Three.

Another important piece of research in this field, which was published after I began this study, also comes to similar conclusions I did in my observations of the sample in Scotland, about primary identification of the refugees by the authorities as "Muslim," as well as the importance of religious faith as a key resource for resilience in resettlement. Hasan *et al.* conclude that "understanding the important role that the Islamic faith can have in providing a source of comfort, strength, and empowerment for Syrian refugees, and working to build infrastructure to support and sustain these faith traditions is an essential component of refugee resettlement in the United States."[100] The study found that: "Islamic faith was such an integral part of their lived experience as refugees that it provided a paradigm through which the world could be observed and experienced… an immutable and ever-present feature that guided them through the exodus from their homeland, sustained them while awaiting resettlement, and comforted them through the perils of adjusting to an unfamiliar life"[101] Participants also raised their concerns about influences in the lives of their children and parenting in a non-Muslim society.[102]

These findings are similar to those found by El-Khani *et al.* who discovered, in a study of twenty-seven mothers and two professional aid workers in refugee camps in Türkiye and Syria, that religious faith and belief in God offered a sustaining kind of perspective on their circumstances, and was a core coping mechanism for their own

---

[100] Nabiha Hasan, Diane B. Mitschke and Kristen E. Ravi, "Exploring the role of faith in resettlement among Muslim Syrian refugees" in *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 37, no.3 (2018): 223–238.
[101] Hasan et al. "Exploring the role of faith," 233.
[102] Hasan et al. "Exploring the role of faith," 230, 234.

wellbeing and that of their children.[103] This is supported by a study of Syrians in Jordan,

an earlier study of women refugees from Bosnia and Kosovo, and research on refugees

from Liberia, Sudan, and Palestinians in refugee camps, as well as other broader studies,

all of which found religion to be a significant source of resilience, and a key contributor

to mental wellbeing in adverse conditions.[104] Another significant piece of recent research

in the field is the work of Eghdamian on Syrian refugees in Germany, which explores the

relationship between religious identity and integration. Although this review of literature

has not included those studies which focus on long-term integration, her thesis is

important in that it recognises the wrongful assumptions authorities tend to make

regarding Syrian refugee identity and support requirements, which are indicative of

"homogenous, Orientalist, and political" undertones that are essentially secularised, and

have a direct impact on the experiences and opportunities of the refugees.[105] She also

---

[103] Aala El-Khani, et al. "Syria: Coping Mechanisms," 34–50.

[104] See: Karen Boswall and Ruba Akash, "Personal perspectives of protracted displacement: An ethnographic insight into the isolation and coping mechanisms of Syrian women and girls living as urban refugees in northern Jordan" in *Intervention* 13, no.3 (2015): 203–215; Amy L Ai, Terence N. Tice, Bu Huang, and Anthony Ishisaka, "Wartime faith-based reactions among traumatized Kosovar and Bosnian refugees in the United States" in *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 8, no.4 (2005): 291–308; Maura Busch Nsonwu "God-Talk in the Survival Epistemology of Liberian Refugee Women" in *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 34, (2015): 304–327; Robert Schweitzer, Jaimi Greenslade, and Ashraf Kagee, "Coping and resilience in refugees from the Sudan: A narrative account" in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 41, no.3 (2007): 282–288. Anthea Darychuk, and Suzanne Jackson, "Understanding community resilience through the accounts of women living in west bank refugee camps" *Affilia* 30, no.4 (2015): 447–460; and another study of a wide sample of varied origin refugees in different countries found religion to be one of six key tools of resilience. See: M Sleijpen, Boeije, H. R., Kleber, R. J., and T. Mooren, "Between power and powerlessness: A meta-ethnography of sources of resilience in young refugees" in *Ethnicity and Health* 21, no.2 (2016): 158–180.

[105] Khatereh Eghdamian, "Rethinking 'Religious Identity' in Refugee 'Integration': An Examination into Representations and Experiences of Syrian 'Religious Minority' Refugees in Berlin, Germany" relationship between 'religious identity' and refugee 'integration.'" (Doctoral thesis, University College London, 2019), 167–196.

recognises dynamics of relationships among the refugees themselves, which were, likewise, observed in North East Scotland.[106]

The Research Problem

The primary question at the centre of this search of existing literature was the role of religion in resettlement of Syrian refugees, and the aim was to seek literature that addressed that question. This brief overview of a broad variety of sources may appear to stretch beyond the remit of this thesis. However, it is evident that an examination of the current literature available on the subject of Syrian Muslim refugee resettlement, though abundant, shows an absence of material which considers the place of faith in the integration process, as well as a lack of research into the particular lived experience of Syrian refugees in Scotland or, indeed, Britain in general. This absence reflects what was observed as a lack of understanding and sensitivity towards Muslim refugees in North East Scotland and prompted this research. Over the course of the first few years of the SVPRS, questions repeatedly arose pertaining to Islam, its precepts, and its implications for Muslim refugee resettlement into Scottish society.[107] At the same time, as described above, the decision making of the authorities that identified the refugees primarily as "Muslim," ushered them into the existing Muslim community. While this is understandable, and perhaps demonstrative of a positive attitude that recognises diversity and does not discriminate, observations in the field suggested otherwise, and that, in fact, there was a general reticence to address matters of religious belief and practice, as it appeared in the context of refugee resettlement.

A literature review, undertaken in 2009 by Mulvey on refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland, highlighted a need for research which would explore both the

---

[106] Eghdamian, *Rethinking 'Religious Identity,'* 197 – 226; See Chapter Three.
[107] By the City Council, churches and local community organisations.

integration process in Scotland, and also the impact of factors leading to secondary

disadvantage besides ethnicity.[108] That need appears to still exist today, and has shown to

be especially necessary in the years since the arrival of the first Syrian refugees. In

particular, although there are some studies on Islam in Scotland, there is still a need for

research into Muslim religious belief and practice, and its implications for resettlement,

before longer-term studies on integration are possible. In fact, it is noticeable that much

available research into the experiences of refugees considers the idea of integration very

early after resettlement, when the reality is such that "integration," in whatever form is

expected, will take many years of negotiation and discovery in a constantly evolving

socio-political landscape.[109] Furthermore, I would argue that true integration also

requires a willingness on the part of the host society to adapt, and should not be solely

the responsibility of the incomer.

       The literature that does exist, however, acknowledges this, suggesting that

religion has a significant influence on the resettlement process for the refugees

themselves, as well as those receiving them. This is not only the case for those who find

great comfort and strength in their belief in God and belonging to the Muslim

community, but is significant also in the process of resettlement and adaptation for those

who do not primarily identify themselves as Muslim, as noted by Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

above. Although it is a growing field of interest, and new sources have become published

---

[108] Gareth Mulvey, "Refugee and Asylum Seeker Research in Scotland: A Literature Review" (Glasgow: Scottish Refugee Council, 2009), 44.

[109] Three models of democratic secularism into which refugee may be negotiating belonging have been identified as "French separationist," "established religion" (Such as in the UK), and the "positive accommodation" model of mutli-confessional states. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "International Politics after Secularism" *Review of International Studies* 38, no.5 *The Postsecular in International Relations* (December 2012), 943-961; Fabio Petito and Luca Mavelli, "The postsecular in international relations: an overview" in *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 5 (2012): 931-942; also cited in: Abdullah Sahin, "A Theology of Belonging: The Case of European Muslims Reconsidered," a conference paper published by Akademieder Diozese Ase: Rottenburg-Stuttgart, Germany (2014) 4/5.

during this research process, the lack of studies on the bearing of their faith on the

integration of refugees into the UK is indicative of a larger lack of contemporary research

that seeks to understand the diaspora experience from the perspective of the refugee in

general, and in particular for the Muslim. Steven Vertovec, in his analysis of diaspora,

transnationalism, and Islam, locates the notion of "modes of managing meaning" as an

area for further research that requires the inclusion of religious interpretation of concepts

of identity and community.[110] He continues:

> Such narratives can include what we may call: "narratives of cartography"…by
> which people describe who they are in relation to whom; narratives of trajectory
> used to describe a group's own history, current predicament, and vision of [their]
> future; [and] narratives of belonging which tend to mark social boundaries and
> set criteria of inclusion/exclusion…[111]

With that in mind, this thesis consequently set out to articulate theological

narratives of the refugee experience of displacement and resettlement, in order to identify

ways in which their religious faith perspective can be better recognised by the support

programmes available. Thus, such an informed perspective may contribute towards both

future refugee integration frameworks and broader interfaith engagement.[112] This

participatory research, therefore, was founded on the assumption that the research

participants themselves would be best placed to inform the research, and the research

method must therefore be flexible enough to gather those narratives in whatever mode

best suited the participants.[113] In this way, the struggles they experience personally, as

---

[110] Vertovec, "Diaspora," 323.

[111] Vertovec, "Diaspora," 323.

[112] In approaching the "otherness" of the refugees, I draw on the "hermeneutic of otherness" outlined in Lisa Isherwood and David Harris *Radical Otherness: Sociological and Theological Approaches* (Acumen: Durham, 2013), 51-53.

[113] This is explored in Chapter Two: The Research Method. See: John Swinton, and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.) (London: SCM Press, 2016), 227-253.

refugees, may be converted into public issues that might, in turn, enable the possibility of positive change in resettlement policy and practice in Scotland.[114]

Defining the Research

The overall aim and purpose of this study has therefore been to challenge existing paradigms of exclusion by learning directly from those who have been uprooted by war and resettled as refugees in Scotland. It is hoped that the approach taken in this study will be able to offer evidence-based reflections that could potentially inform public policy and future resettlement practice.

The primary objective of this thesis is to explore the role of religion in resettlement as understood by a sample of the Syrian Muslim refugees themselves. Secondarily, this thesis seeks to engage a simple model of dialogue that is rooted in the tradition of *dilatato corde*, an expanded heart, willing to enter into the mind and heart of the "other," as they share their life narratives and religious experience, and to consider the value of inter-religious dialogue as a tool for overcoming division, and nurturing community cohesion, discussed further below. The final objective is to articulate the voices of the refugees themselves, in order to offer a more complete picture of their experience that may be offered as a "balance to the official versions of reality."[115]

Inter-religious dialogue

Taking into consideration all the factors outlined above, this research has therefore been situated within the broad framework of inter-religious dialogue. This is primarily because the researcher is from the Christian tradition, as identified above, and

---

[114] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 227-253; Howard Becker, in S.J. Taylor, and R. Bodgan, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: The Search for Meanings* (2nd Ed.) (John Wiley & Sons: Toronto, 1984), 244.
[115] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology,* 244.

the research participants are firmly rooted in the Muslim tradition. Furthermore, this study seeks religious narratives, which therefore require conversations about God, and discussions that have the capacity to encompass the fullness of a religious world-view that touches every aspect of human life, provides an ethical code and guidance for life, and offers an understanding of suffering, hope for the future, and a broader perspective on living in the world. Only dialogue that is willing to bridge the gap between religious positions is able to do this to any extent, as this thesis demonstrates. Finally, as will be discussed in the following chapter, any conversation in Arabic is, to a degree, theological, as the language is deeply theocentric at its core, thus to engage in dialogue in Arabic, is to engage with the other theologically.

Additionally, it may be argued that refugee resettlement is essentially a form of inter-religious dialogue, even for the secular authorities, because, in order to step into the lived experience of another person and assist them to become independent in a new context, there is a need for an understanding of the other that is willing to go beyond the superficial. A theological approach such as this provides the tools to look further into that which is immediately evident, and search behind those demonstrations of otherness in order to find the other person's understanding of the Divine, which is the foundation for all other monotheistic beliefs and practices, but also reveals a simple, shared humanity. An approach such as this therefore transcends the usual frameworks of engagement with refugees, and releases the refugee from the usual narratives of powerlessness and alienation. Framing the interviews for this research as inter-religious dialogue re-balances, even inverts, the common power dynamics of such an exchange, and places the

refugee as teacher, the researcher as learner.[116]

Defining inter-religious dialogue

Inter-religious dialogue is essentially a form of intentional reciprocal encounter and engagement between parties from different religious of faith backgrounds.[117] The term "dialogue" suggests it takes the form of conversations, but that is just one aspect of a much larger concept that is hard to definitively describe. As such, inter-religious dialogue can take the form of theological discussion between religious leaders by means of formal lecture or debate, or perhaps as verbal dialogue between individuals, groups or as community visits, and it may have its focus on the doctrinal, spiritual or practical aspects of lived out faith. Inter-religious dialogue has thus generally been divided into three categories that can be identified correspondingly as "dialogue of the mind" (or "head"), "dialogue of the heart" and "dialogue of life" (or "hands"), in reference to the means by which each dialogue is undertaken.[118] In a further attempt at classification of such diverse means of interreligious engagement, the Catholic Church further distinguished what would become known as the four classic models of interreligious dialogue: dialogue of life (in a lived expression of neighbourliness), dialogue of action (towards a shared objective of the common good), dialogue of theological exchange (at

---

[116] This shift of power dynamics was particularly evident in this case, the researcher having formerly had an official support role with the refugees in question, as discussed in Chapter 2.

[117] Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Christ" Joint Document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples, Rome, 19 May 1991; OR. 21 June, 1991. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html (Accessed 12.05.23)

[118] Freek L. Bakker, "Inter-Religious Dialogue and Migrants: The Case of the Netherlands" *Mission Studies* 31 (2014): 231. See also Sergey Melnik, "Types of Interreligious Dialogue" *The Journal of Interreligious Studies* 31 (Nov 2020), 50.

an intellectual level) and dialogue of religious experience (in which individuals "share their spiritual riches" from personal faith and encounter with the Divine).[119] The document then notes the interdependence of these four forms, as well as the dispositions required for positive dialogue and possible obstacles.[120] These categorisations are arguably limited in their scope and in reality are much more nuanced due to other factors such as intention, goal, and underlying principles, as explored by Melnik (using the terms "polemical," "cognitive," "peacemaking" and "partnership").[121] Some scholars have sought to include additional forms as an attempt at further clarification, such as King who identifies seven forms, while others such as Aguilar would say that, in its simplest form, inter-religious dialogue can be defined as being "no more than an expression of togetherness that begins with the simple act of exchanging a word and holding hands in friendship."[122] These ideas will be returned to briefly below in relation to this particular study.

The development of inter-religious dialogue

Although inter-religious relations are not new, and the genesis of dialogue between religions is attributed to the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, the notion of inter-religious dialogue, as it is known today, did not emerge more practically until the 1970s, largely prompted by the publication of *Nostra Aetate* in 1965,

---

[119] *Dialogue and Proclamation* 3.42, "The forms of dialogue."
[120] *Dialogue and Proclamation,* 4-5.
[121] Melnik,"Types of Interreligious Dialogue", 54-65.
[122] Sallie B. King, "Interreligious Dialogue," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity*, ed. Chad Meister (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 102.; Mario I. Aguilar, *Interreligious Dialogue and the Partition of India: Hindus and Muslims in Dialogue about Violence and Forced Migration" (*London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2018), 141.

the declaration of the Catholic Church on relations with other religious.[123] Despite the

focus of the document being on its relations with Judaism, it recognises the "ray of that

Truth" in other religions.[124] Regarding Islam, the document states that:

> The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and
> subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who
> has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable
> decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself,
> submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a
> prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with
> devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts
> to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and
> worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.[125]

This continues to the present day to be a bold statement of embrace in an era when the

world Church is not always willing to recognise shared humanity, or to consider the

Muslim God as the same divine being at the heart of Christianity. Continuing, the

document recognises that:

> Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between
> Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work
> sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the
> benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.[126]
> The Catholic Church has continued to be a leader in the field of inter-religious

dialogue since then, most recently exemplified by the Document on Human Fraternity,

signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb on 4

---

[123] 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions
,https://parliamentofreligions.org/parliament/1893-chicago/ (Accessed 20.10.22);
"Declaration on the Relation of The Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate,
Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28 1965" Available in the Vatican
Archive Council Documents "Nostra Aetate:"
https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-
ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html (Accessed 20.10.22).
[124] *Nostra Aetate,* 2.
[125] *Nostra Aetate,* 3.
[126] *Nostra Aetate*, 3.

February 2019 in Abu Dhabi.[127] The document begins "In the name of God who has

created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to

live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of

goodness, love and peace" and states as part of its conclusion that "this Declaration may

be a witness to the greatness of faith in God that unites divided hearts and elevates the

human soul."[128] The document is not only a powerful statement promoting unity, but is,

in itself, an exercise in the dialogue and fraternity it promotes, and is overt in support of

women, the young, and the marginalised. It is also one of the foundations of this research

on Syrian refugees in Scotland, which also seeks to defend the marginalised, and work

towards unity and mutual understanding in its subject matter as well as the method of

approach.

In 1971, the World Council of Churches founded an office of Interreligious

Dialogue and Cooperation which recognised four original guidelines:

- Dialogue begins when people meet
- Dialogue depends upon mutual understanding and mutual trust
- Dialogue makes it possible to share in service
- Dialogue becomes the medium of authentic witness.[129]

Today, these are absorbed into the principles, which are now identified as:

"strengthening relationships," "deepening reflection," and "widening engagement."[130] As

Cheetham, Pratt and Thomas say of inter-religious dialogue and relations, they are "not

---

[127] Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to the United Arab Emirates (3-5 February, 2019) "A Document of Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together", Vatican Archives, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html (Accessed 20.10.22).
[128] Ibid. "Document on Human Fraternity."
[129] Taken from: Martin Forward *A Short Introduction to Inter-religious Dialogue* (Oxford: One World, 2001), 11.
[130] World Council of Churches "Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation," https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation#what-we-do (Accessed 14.10.22).

just warm fuzzy liberal sentiments," but rather "constitute critical dimensions of inter-communal and international social realities," and are thus an essential element in the work of overcoming division and building bridges towards mutual understanding in our increasingly diverse societies.[131]

The purpose of inter-religious dialogue

It has been suggested that the purpose of inter-religious dialogue is that is can be a means to deepen each person's own faith and understanding of the Divine, as well as the self in relation to creation.[132] Furthermore, others have described this approach of dialogue as an opportunity to give the other a hearing: *ut altera pars audiatur*, a fundamental rule for attempting to understand the other.[133] In an era when Islam is still often "considered to be a barbaric peril," this need for dialogue and mutual understanding is all the more urgent.[134] Returning then to the idea of dialogue as an act of friendship, Mitias argues that, "the primary aim of interreligious dialogue should be to create a bond of friendship between the various religions of the world."[135] The essential elements of the basis of friendship in their different forms he outlines as being: advantage, and mutual benefit; pleasure, recognised in the sorry-ness of parting; and goodness, as essential orientation and basis of true friendship.[136] This goodness has no objective other than the

---

[131] David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt and David Thomas (eds.) U*nderstanding Interreligious Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

[132] For example, Ryan J. Williams & Tinu Ruparell "On Being in the Middle: Interreligious
Dialogue and Network Centrality" in *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 29, no.3 (2014): 486.

[133] Jacques Waardenburg, "Louis Massignon (1883-1962) as a Student of Islam" in *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Facets of Orientalism, 45, no.3 (2005): 341.

[134] Alain Badiou, *Migrants and Militants* (Trans. Joseph Litvak) (Cambridge: Polity, 2020), 10.

[135] Michael H. Mitias "Possibility of Friendship Between Religions" *Dialogue and Universalism* 31, Special Supplement (2021), 9-38.

[136] Mitias, "Possibility of Friendship," 27-28.

other's wellbeing, as he says: "they become friends because they are good and seek good, not because they seek advantage or pleasure from each other."[137] He then defines true friendship in terms of mutual affection, giving, and social service because, he argues, good people are other-oriented, outward-looking and, therefore, considerate of society beyond themselves.[138] Mitias discusses these principles in relation to friendship between religions, and adds a fourth element to justify his argument, that: "friendship exists as a potentiality in the spiritual being of religions, that is, the possibility of religions forming friendships is inherent in their very essence as spiritual realities."[139] It is this thinking that is the foundation of this thesis, that both Christianity and Islam are "united by the spirit and light that emanates from the being of God."[140] Thus the method employed in this study is one that stretches out the hand of friendship, and seeks to listen intently to the other, and learn from them something about God.[141]

The requirements and challenges of dialogue

One of the most useful resources as a companion to this study has been *The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* by Catherine Cornille, in which she directly addresses the fact that religions are not naturally inclined towards dialogue with each other.[142] She identifies five conditions for dialogue that are to some degree in tension with traditional religious teaching and, in particular, she highlights the paradoxes in her own Christian tradition. The conditions are doctrinal humility, commitment, interconnection, empathy and hospitality. Doctrinal humility arises from what she

---

[137] Mitias "Possibility of Friendship," 28.
[138] Mitias "Possibility of Friendship," 30.
[139] Mitias "Possibility of Friendship," 37.
[140] Mitias "Possibility of Friendship," 37.
[141] The research method is fully explored in Chapter Two.
[142] Catherine Cornille *The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2008).

describes as "humble awareness of the limitation of one's own understanding and experience and of the possibility of change and growth," which requires a dual expression, both towards the other and about the self, and is one of the foundational principles of this study, as mentioned above.[143] Commitment is another condition that can simultaneously be an obstruction to dialogue in that there must be a balance between the fastness of held beliefs and the openness towards those of the other.[144] Indeed, she argues that dialogue that does not come from a place of religious commitment (and is perhaps practiced by those at the margins of their traditions) is "interpersonal dialogue" and cannot rightly be called "interreligious."[145] Interconnection is the principle that assumes some commonality between religions, perhaps in the form of external challenges such as climate change, or internal shared ground such as the bridge provided by mysticism, or perhaps thirdly by the common concept of an "transcendent ultimate reality," which most accurately represents the basis of dialogue in this study (as will be explored in Chapter five, "On God."[146] However, once again, she acknowledges an inherent tension between that which is similar and that which is distinct.[147] The fourth of Cornille's conditions is empathy, for any learning from the other that is able to go beyond gathering of information requires the willing transposition of the self into the experience of the other.[148] As Simone Weil wrote (and is also referenced, among others, by Cornille): "the study of different religions does not lead to a real knowledge of them unless we transport ourselves for a time by faith to the very centre of whichever one we

---

[143] Cornille, *The Im-possibility*, 9.
[144] Cornille, *The Im-possibility*, 59.
[145] Cornille, *The Im-possibility*, 60.
[146] Cornille, *The Im-possibility*, 96-97.
[147] Cornille, *The Im-possibility*, 113.
[148] Cornille, *The Im-possibility*, 138,143-146.

are studying."[149] The final condition is that of hospitality, or "the generous openness to

the (possible) presence of truth" in the religion of the other, which she says "involves the

recognition of the other as other an openness to the possibility of being transformed by

the experience.[150] Perhaps this final condition that is hardest to achieve, particularly

given the exclusivity of certain religions and theologies, of which there are many in

Christianity alone, as well as the tendencies towards apologetics, or mutual affirmation or

suspicion discussed by Cornille.[151] Furthermore, it holds the greatest risk to the familiar

self but also the greatest possibility of transformation. These five conditions are again

reflected on with respect to this particular research with Syrian refugees in Part III of the

thesis.

Inter-religious dialogue from the perspective of Islam is outlined by Thomas, who

demonstrates the core belief in the oneness of God in Islam (*tawḥīd*), and offers insight

into Muslim teaching on Christianity, which is, of course, not consistent with the

teaching of Christianity itself, including the Muslim understanding of Jesus, and the

suggestion that the Bible has been corrupted.[152] These two themes (as well as discussions

of Mary, mother of Jesus) emerged during data collection but were not pursued as lines

of discussion, as theological debate itself was not the purpose of dialogue, and are

therefore alluded to in the course of the thesis, but not represented directly in the writing.

Thomas concludes that:

> It is the criterion of *tawḥīd* that has operated in Muslim attitudes to other faith traditions.
> Assuming that all religion comes from the one God, as the Qur'ān declares, Muslim

---

[149] Simone Weil, *Waiting for God,* trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: HarperCollins Books, 2001; first published in 1951), 118-9.

[150] Cornille, *The Im-possibility*, 177, 178. This is what I refer to below in later chapters as "intellectual hospitality,, the willingness to allow space for something of the other to enter and be added to my worldview.

[151] Cornille, *The Im-possibility*, 183-189.

[152] David Thomas, "Islam and the Religious Other" in *Understanding Interreligious Relations* David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt and David Thomas (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 153.

authors throughout history have tended to criticise other faith traditions for their lack of scrupulousness in observing belief in the absolute oneness and majesty of God. This remains central in Islam, and will do so for as long as the Qur'ān, is read. In consequence, Muslims are likely to find they can appreciate or condemn other faiths according to the extent they detect in them the vestiges of this fundamental of their own belief.[153]

This is observed to be true also in the course of this research, and is reflected on in Chapter Six. It presents a point of frustration in dialogue between Christianity and Islam. For such an attitude becomes an insurmountable obstacle, impeding any real attempt at understanding the other as the other understands their own religion. Ali-Dib highlights the difficulties associated with inter-religious dialogue in Syria, one of which is the undertones of the term ḥiwār, a term used to mean dialogue, but carrying a connotation of convincing the other.[154] Pratt also explores this issue, and his discussion of da'wah (or the "call to Islam" at the centre of the lived out Muslim faith) reveals some obstacles to dialogue that include the shared missional objective of Islam and Christianity.[155] He highlights some important points that are obstacles in the mind of the Christian to dialogue with Muslims. These are: the fact that Islam post-dates Christianity; the perception of Islam as aggressive and militant; questions around whether the two religions worship the same God; righteous arrogance; prejudicial ignorance; and the tendency towards evangelical missioning.[156]

These tendencies, as well as the central concept of proselytism in both Christianity and Islam, are important points to note when engaging in dialogue with Syrians in the UK. The Muslim view of Christianity has perhaps been exacerbated by the perceived liberalism of, and division within, contemporary expressions of Christianity.

---

[153] Thomas, "Islam and the Religious Other," 171.

[154] Edith Szanto Ali-Dib, "Inter-religious dialogue in Syria: Politics, Ethics and Miscommunication" in *Political Theology* 9, no.1 (2008): 93-113.

[155] Douglas Pratt, *The Challenge of Islam: Encounters in Interfaith Dialogue* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 193-202.

[156] Pratt, *The Challenge of Islam* 171-188, 193-202.

Furthermore, the widespread belief, especially among the lesser educated of the Middle East, that the West is essentially Christian, becomes confused when presented, for example by resettlement, with that which is seen as "godless." However, this study is based on the premise that dialogue is still of great value, even if it seems truncated, and even if nothing appears to be changed, or "achieved," by the process.

Some examples of Muslim-Christian Dialogue

Returning then to the Catholic tradition, which has inspired this research, there is the idea of the expanded heart *dilatato corde,* which is central to the Rule of Benedict, being the principle with which one lives out the commandments and the life of faith in love.[157] This is the foundation of this study with Syrian Muslim refugees. One voice which exemplifies this attitude and is a key influence in this particular study is that of Thomas Merton, a man familiar with the mystical unity of religions, who joyfully demonstrated an openness to the "other" in a remarkable "ministry of listening," as described by Poks.[158] Despite not engaging much with Islam outwardly, there is mention of some of the ideas of Islam several times throughout his work.[159] Thurston, who has looked into the full canon of his work, identifies repeated evidence of his "great appreciation and understanding of Islam," and Sufism in particular.[160] Moreover, Merton

---

[157] "The Rule of Saint Benedict," Translated into English. A Pax Book, preface by W.K. Lowther Clarke. (London: S.P.C.K., 1931); Solesmes Abbey, https://www.solesmes.com/sites/default/files/upload/pdf/rule_of_st_benedict.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22).

[158] See Naomi Burton, Brother Patrick Hart, and James Laughlin, eds., *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1973), 308; see also Malgorzata Poks, "Thomas Merton's Re-Visioning the New World" *CrossCurrents* (2008): 580-583.

[159] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* 2nd edition, (London: Sheldon Press, 1977), 87, 190-191.

[160] Bonnie Thurston, "Thomas Merton's Interest in Islam: The Example of *Dhikr"* in *Merton and Sufism: The Untold Story: A Complete Compendium* Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999), 40-41. There are several interesting chapters confirming this in the same volume.

was reading Massignon at the time of this death, had been corresponding with him for two years, and was engaging with his work in his notebooks.[161] It can be assumed that his attitude towards others, that was demonstrated in his life and work, would have extended further into Islam, had he lived longer and been granted the opportunity. I discuss Merton again briefly in Chapter Two as a personal model for engaging with the other, and the basis of my own theological positioning in this encounter, but now turn to a brief discussion of Massignon.

Massignon presents an interesting example of a form of engagement with Islam that deepened his own faith and, in fact, prompted him to fully adopt the religion of his heritage, Catholicism, following a mystical encounter with God as the result of a period of crisis in Iraq.[162] It is undeniable that in his life and work he demonstrated unwavering commitment to the study of Islam that encompassed Islamic mysticism, and deep study of Arabic, in which he sought the roots of the language used in the texts he explored.[163] HIs profound knowledge of Islam was exemplary, and a model for all scholars engaging with Islam. Indeed, Waardenburg states that, following the example of Massignon, "scholarly study of Islam and Muslim societies should include studying not only empirical facts but also the significance and various meanings that specific data had or have for particular persons or groups of people, including the ways they interpreted or interpret them."[164] He continues that, "Louis Massignon's further work and life meant a radical break with the rigid antagonistic structures accepted at the time of 'Islam' versus

---

[161] Sidney H. Griffith, "Merton, Massignon, and the Challenge of Islam," in Merton and Sufism: The Untold Story: A Complete Compendium (Rob Baker and Gray Henry (eds.) (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999), 40-50; See also: Gordon Oyer, "Lous Massignon and the Seeds of Thomas Merton's 'Monastic Protest'" in *The Merton Annual: Studies in Culture, Spirituality, and Social Concerns* David Joseph Belcastro and Joseph Quinn Raab (eds.) 26, (2013): 86, 89.
[162] Waardenburg, "Louis Massignon," 314.
[163] Waardenburg, "Louis Massignon," 312.
[164] Waardenburg, "Louis Massignon," 339.

'Christianity,' or 'Islam' versus 'European civilisation,' or 'Islam versus the West'—

with rigid value judgments implied."[165] This was perhaps most evident with Massignon's

development of the *badaliyya* movement (meaning mystical substitution), which is based

on the Arabic root word *badala* meaning "to replace, exchange, substitute," a community

of Christians who would commit themselves to pray for, and spiritually substitute

themselves for Muslims, which continues today.[166] He thus dedicated himself to work

towards Christian and Muslim efforts to build trust and unity between the two

religions.[167]

As Griffith notes, one characteristic shared by Merton and Massignon was their

deep interest in other people, their insatiable curiosity and intellectual hospitality towards

the "other." It is these traits I would like to adopt for this study, and I believe them to

have continued value in our diverse communities today, especially in the resettlement of

Muslim refugees. For this is a context that is fraught with tensions and vulnerabilities,

and thus has a great need for such humanity, compassion, and intellectual and religious

flexibility, in order to create unity where the cracks of division more naturally fall.

Another article, which influenced the design of this study, was that of Orton,

whose seven questions assisted in consideration of a model with the refugees that would

maximise the opportunity for fruitful dialogue.[168] His questions encourage one to

consider who is absent from dialogue as well as who is present, what the purpose of

dialogue is, and whether diversity has been taken into consideration in the understanding

---

[165] Waardenburg, "Louis Massignon," 341.

[166] Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic: (Arabic-English)* J.M. Cowan (Ed.) 4th Edition, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979), 58.

[167] Griffith, "Thomas Merton, Luis Massignon," 157.

[168] See: Andrew Orton, "Interfaith dialogue: seven key questions for theory, policy and practice" *Religion, State & Society* 44, no.4 (2016): 349-365.

of the exchange. Finally, he promotes a consideration of what conditions enable effective dialogue, and how dynamics and representation are handled.[169]

Finally, no discussion of inter-religious dialogue between Islam and Christianity can fail to mention "A Common Word Between Us and You," an open letter from Muslim to Christian leaders, signed in October 2007.[170] This was a pioneering effort of Muslim solidarity, rooted in the scriptures of both Islam and Christianity, and yet extending a friendly hand toward Christians in an invitation to delve simultaneously into their own religion and that of the Muslims in communion with the other. The foundation of the document in the Qur'an and Bible which emphasises the shared call to love of God and love of neighbour, without minimising the obvious shared differences between the religions, is a significant step in the direction of dialogue for the intended Christian readership but also serves as an argument for the wider Muslim community to be willing to engage with Christianity in dialogue. It was a monumental statement with 138 Muslim signatories (including academics and religious leaders) and another 281 Christian signatories, that offered some hope when public discourse following the attack on the twin towers in 2001 had been so negative. The letter had a profound effect on dialogue and also inspired a variety of diplomatic conversation between religious representatives, academic research and publications.

The model of inter-religious dialogue employed in this study

In contrast to the official dialogue contributed to by A Common Word, this study applies the principles for which the document advocates, but instead in pursuit of dialogue that is imbalanced in terms of power. Rather than between academics, the

---

[169] Orton, "Seven key questions," 349-365.
[170] See: "The ACW Letter – A Common Word Between Us and You," https://www.acommonword.com/the-acw-document/ (Accessed 16.05.23)

dialogue in this study extends from academia to the ordinary refugee. This is considered in Chapter 2 and returned to in Part III. In balance to the majority of theological level inter-religious engagement and the presence of inter-religious violence, it has been suggested that what is "needed are deeper studies on social, moral and spiritual ways of dialogue among people of different traditions" and to that end this thesis seeks to make a contribution.[171] Were the focus of this study the field of inter-religious dialogue itself, there would be a need for an additional chapter on the subject, however, dialogue is considered only briefly here as part of the scholarly framing of the thesis, and in recognition of the fact that any anthropological study by a Christian researcher that involves the discussion of religion with Muslim refugees, will necessarily be to some degree inter-religious dialogue.

This brief overview of the field of inter-religious dialogue has therefore illustrated the diversity of human engagement that can be described as such, perhaps revealing inter-religious dialogue to be as complex as human relationships are themselves, and dependent on a multitude of factors including who participates and how, as well as power dynamics, purpose, intention, and underlying principles. In the overall context of Syrian Muslim refugee resettlement to North East Scotland, all four of the classic forms of dialogue have been observed, from the hesitant and sometimes clumsy attempts at common life and the desire to be good neighbours, as well as joint collaboration between the Muslim and Christian communities for a better world, as exemplified by hospitality events. Although dialogue at the level of theological discourse does occur in the communities into which the refugees are resettled, in particular between male religious leaders, it was not observed directly during this research (the researcher being female), only to a limited degree as part of planning sessions for the

---

[171] Kenan Çetinkaya, "Interreligious Dialogue" in Center for Cultural Dialogue *Key Concepts in Intercultural Dialogue* No. 96 (2020).

aforementioned hospitality events, which sometimes included Christian and Muslim prayer.[172]

As mentioned above, the term "inter-religious dialogue" has been very loosely applied in this research in reference to the method of data collection, which was by conversations with the refugees about God. Speaking across a religious and cultural divide, the content of these conversations naturally was such that was dialogically interactive as two strangers sought to bridge a gap in their own understanding and for the stranger to become more familiar. As the conversations during data collection became gradually centred on a solo voice, the research itself became an exercise in inter-religious dialogue that could perhaps be described best by the fourth classic type of dialogue, the sharing of religious spirituality and experience, including core beliefs, the practice of prayer, and the search for God in the context of exile. However, this was reached by means of a slow process of trust building and the conscious shifting of power dynamics that allowed such a development of dialogue to occur. A full discussion of the method employed in this study is given in the following chapter, with further evaluation and analysis of the research as dialogue in Part III.

Research Significance

While this research does not seek to solve the challenges posed by refugee resettlement, nor claim that inter-religious dialogue is always positive or successful, this study illustrates the value of the marginal voice, and the significance of understanding the roots of the refugee's view of the world, as well as an attitude towards, and relationship with, others in it. The original contribution to knowledge that this thesis offers is therefore the emic perspective of a resettled refugee and the focus on the

---

[172] These events were all observed prior to data collection, in Dundee, Angus and Aberdeenshire, 2015-2016.

marginalised voice, and framing the conversations within inter-religious dialogue, as a means of countering the negative effects of the existing narratives, which often reinforce loss and disempowerment, that characterise much of the literature surrounding refugees.[173] Finally, this thought behind this approach is summarised in the words of Paul Carter.

> "It becomes ever more urgent to develop a framework of thinking that makes the migrant central, not ancillary, to historical process. We need to disarm the genealogical rhetoric of blood, property and frontiers and substitute it for a lateral account of social relations (…) An authentically migrant perspective would, perhaps, be based on an intuition that the opposition between here and there is itself a cultural construction, a consequence of thinking in terms of fixed entities and defining them oppositionally. It might begin by regarding movement, not as an awkward interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but as a mode of being in the world."[174]

There is no intention to generalise from the particular examples referenced, but rather offer in-depth, rich perspectives of the refugees themselves, from which themes can be drawn out that relate to the wider sample and, consequently, can influence public policy and refugee resettlement strategy.

Study Limitations

This study is confined to an application of inter-religious dialogue to a small group of refugees resettled in Scotland through the SVPRS. The aim throughout has been to hear and articulate marginalised voices, in order to seek a better understanding of how personal religious faith affects the process of resettlement for the refugee, and what the implications of religious faith are on the resettlement process as a whole. This research

---

[173] Otieno Kisiara, "Marginalized at the center: how public narratives of suffering perpetuate perceptions of refugees' helplessness and dependency." *Migration Letters* 12, no.2 (2015): 162–171. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v12i2.250 (accessed 20.10.22).

[174] Paul Carter, *Living in a New Country* (London: Faber, 1992), 7-8, 101; cited in Nigel Rapport, *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts* 3rd Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 296-7.

does not address longer-term integration, or wider subjects of migration, or immigration to the UK, nor does it critique the SVPRS, or other Humanitarian resettlement schemes. Although inter-religious dialogue is used as the means of data collection, this is not a study about inter-religious dialogue *per se*. Neither is this research an exercise in Islamic studies, nor of the Arabic language, even though both of these fields contribute significantly to the process of seeking to better understand the worldview of the refugee, and are potential areas of misunderstanding between the New Scots and the receiving communities. This is a multi-disciplinary, mixed methods study that sits at the locus defined above, and is the result of the unique positioning I had during the first years of the SVPRS, at the intersection between Council, Church, and Mosque.

Definition of key terminology

Refugees

In the UK, Refugee status is usually granted to successful asylum seekers, who are already in the country, and who meet the criteria outlined in the immigration rules provided on the government website.[175] However, those refugees of the SVPRS were already recognised as refugees on arrival. Policy surrounding humanitarian protection for refugees in the UK has changed several times since the start of this research project, and the original guidelines for delivery of the SVPRS have been withdrawn from the Government website. However, those people interviewed for this study were directly provided with humanitarian protection, with the right to work and study, as well as rights

---

[175] "Immigration Rules," Government website, updated 22 August 2022, https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-part-11-asylum (Accessed 20.10.22).

for family reunion, and full recourse to public funds. They were granted leave to remain

for five years, after which they could apply for indefinite leave to remain.[176]

Resettlement

The refugees in the SVPRS are all Syrians who fled Syria as a result of war, and

sought temporary protection in a second State, where they registered with the UNHCR as

refugees, in order to receive support and, ultimately, were given the offer of resettlement

to a third State. The refugees included in this project, spent periods of time in Iraq,

Türkiye, Jordan and Lebanon in the interim, before receiving humanitarian protection in

Scotland.[177] The most recent definition of resettlement used by the UNHCR defines the

process of resettlement as:

> The selection and transfer of refugees, from a State in which they have sought treaty
> protection, to a third State that has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent
> residence status. The status provided ensures protection against refoulement and provides
> a resettled refugee and his or her dependants with access to rights similar to those
> enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually
> become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country. As such, resettlement is a
> mechanism for refugee protection, a durable solution, and an example of international
> burden and responsibility sharing.[178]

The SVPRS existed for a period of five years and has now closed. Those who

arrived as part of the scheme are still able to access some degree of support through the

---

[176] The latest available guidelines are found at "Concessions to the Immigration
Rules for Syrian nationals (accessible version) updated 5 September 2022,
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-syrian-nationals-in-the-uk-on-how-to-extend-their-visa/concessions-to-the-immigration-rules-for-syrian-nationals-accessible-version (Accessed 20.10.22).

[177] Others is the wider observed sample spent the interim period in Egypt.

[178] UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms "resettlement"
https://www.unhcr.org/glossary/#r (Accessed 20.10.22); Refoulement, in the same
source, is defined as: "The removal of a person to a territory where they would be at risk
of being persecuted (direct refoulement), or of being moved to another territory where
they would face persecution (indirect refoulement). Under international refugee law and
customary international law, refoulement is permitted only in exceptional
circumstances."

mechanisms in place for a wider Humanitarian Resettlement Scheme, into which the various earlier schemes have been absorbed.[179]

Religion

Religion, for the purposes of this thesis, is taken to mean the broad world-view of the individuals participating this this research, which includes the framework of ideas and beliefs that are the foundation of their philosophy of existence, as well as their sociological and functional relationship to the world and others in it.[180] Essentially, this is their epistemological position, which, in the cases represented, was inherited at birth, and provides guidance for their socio-cultural system of ethics, behaviours, moral code and practices, as based on religious text and tradition, and thus has influence on all aspects of life.[181] Throughout this thesis, general mention of religion refers to Sunni Islam, to which all the research informants belong. There are no informants belonging to the Shi'a sect, although among those resettled to the same region, as part of other related humanitarian schemes, some do belong to that sect.[182]

Community

---

[179] Latest guidance is available on the Government website: "Humanitarian protection in asylum claims lodged on or after 28 June 2022. Version 7.0" The five year aspect is now removed. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1085512/Humanitarian_Protection_-_claims_lodged_on_or_after_28_June_2022.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22), this includes the SVPRS, the VCR, the Afghan and Ukrainian Schemes.

[180] "World-view" here is used as defined by Rapport in Nigel Rapport, *The Key Concepts,* 447-457. See below.

[181] See below.

[182] For example, Iraqis who were resettled through the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) were supported together with the SVPRS and therefore are part of the wider sample. Friction between these two groups is not part of this study although observations of that dynamic were part of the conception of the original thesis.

Contemporary usage of the term "community" can have two tendencies that Rapport warns the academic to avoid. The first is of its being "political rhetoric—of solidarity and homogeneity," and the second is of its potential "indiscriminate application." [183] This thesis has, in part, arisen from the observations identified above of the negative consequences of such "rhetoric of homogeneity." In particular, the assumption, that those Syrian Muslim "New Scots" would most naturally fit into, and belong with, the existing Muslim population, proved to be limited in its understanding and consideration of the long term. Despite my own discomfort with the popular "indiscriminate application" of the term, I have used it throughout, in reference to those unified by their experience of resettlement, as well as to the established Muslim population, for the purposes of illustrating how these groups are viewed, and how they can be considered in relation to one another.

Society

The use of the term "society" throughout this thesis is taken to signify the conglomerate of multiple neighbourhoods, ethnicities, religious, origins and belongings called "communities," that constitute the totality of the multi-cultural urban centres, and less diverse rural areas, to which the refugees are resettled.[184]

Culture

The use above of "multi-culturalism" is simply in recognition of the diverse backgrounds, habits, and practices of those who make up our neighbourhoods. Culture is another notoriously difficult term to define, but where it is used in this thesis, it is to recognise those aspects of the refugees' lives as they are lived, that are founded in Islam

---

[183] Rapport, *The Key Concepts*, 83.
[184] Rapport, *The Key Concepts*, 399-410, offers a wider discussion of the term.

and originate in Syria.[185] In a similar vein, the term "exile" in this thesis is used, not as an example of "exoticism," as Rapport suggests, but rather to convey the sense of estrangement and alienation that was described by the refugees in the first years of their resettlement, and is also used by many Arabs living in the West to describe their condition.

Narrative

Narrative has become increasingly prominent in anthropological and other forms of research in recent times, and is not only story-telling, and a human means of remembering, and giving meaning to, human experience, but also serves as a useful tool for conveying rich and layered human lived experience.[186] The narratives referred to in this study are the stories of the refugees themselves, as they recall their memories, as well as the over-arching story that religious belief offers to the Muslim, in order to provide perspective and meaning to life. Thus, narrative is a tool in this study, as well as the subject matter. I recognise that narrative is fluid, and is influenced by the teller's positionality, and current lived experience. This is considered in the methodology in Chapter Two.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the context of Syrian refugee resettlement in Scotland, and identified the gap in the available literature, which this study seeks to address, namely discourse on the factor of religion in Syrian Muslim refugee resettlement. The chapter has presented the research objectives and questions, to challenge existing paradigms of exclusion and listen directly to those who have been

---

[185] See Rapport, *The Key Concepts*, 120-129.
[186] See Rapport, *The Key Concepts*, 317-325.

uprooted by war and resettled as refugees in Scotland in order to offer evidence-based reflections that could potentially inform public policy and future resettlement practice. This chapter has also argued the value of such a project, while at the same time recognising the limitations of the research. As Ivan Illich famously said:

> Neither revolution nor reformation can ultimately change a society, rather you must tell a new, powerful tale, one so persuasive that it sweeps away the old myths and becomes the preferred story, one so inclusive that it gathers all the bits of our past and our present into a coherent whole, one that even shines some light into our future so that we can take the next step… If you want to change a society, then you have to tell a different story.[187]

While this thesis does not claim to achieve all of the above, it does intend to tell a new story, one that removes itself from the details that divide, and finds a narrative that, by prioritising the refugees' own voices, is inclusive, illuminating, and essentially human.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, a study that places its focus on religion can, in fact, have a valuable contribution to offer wider discourse on refugee resettlement. The core argument of this thesis is that any study or project that involves Syrian Muslim refugees and does not take into account the role of their religious faith, will be lacking. Furthermore, religious faith is at the core of the Syrian Muslim worldview, whether or not, indeed, the person considers themselves "practising" or particularly "religious," due, in part, to the theocentric nature of the Arabic language. Consequently, religious faith has an impact on all other areas of life, including education, health, gender roles, and ideas surrounding the bringing-up of children. Accordingly, religious faith will have an impact far beyond this immediately resettled "first generation" of Syrian refugees. The narrative approach of Part II of the thesis,

---

[187] Quoted in Simon Springer, *The Discourse of Neoliberalism: An Anatomy of a Powerful Idea*, (London: Rowman and Littlefield International Ltd, 2016), 2; and Frank Viola, *From Eternity to Here: Rediscovering the Ageless Purpose of God* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009).

interweaves the voices of refugees with fieldwork observations, and cites existing literature substantiating the themes. It seeks to provide a written record of the lived experience of people whose voices are not readily heard, to offer insights into the inner world of a religious refugee, and to illustrate the extent to which religious faith has an influence in, and implications for, the broad field of refugee resettlement.

The following chapter, which completes Part I of this thesis, offers an outline of the research method for this study. The chapter includes: the philosophical basis of the research paradigm; details of the research sample; the ethical considerations for the study; details regarding data collection and management; and a recognition of the barriers to the research. It goes on to acknowledge researcher hesitations, and identify theological positioning. Finally, an outline of the research design is offered, and the chapter concludes with some comments on vulnerability and the marginal voice.

2. The Research Method

We do not claim to hold the Truth,
nonetheless, we desire it, we seek for it, we yearn for it...
Our Shared Humanity escapes from attempts of normalisation,
since it unites us without any claim of making us uniform.[188]

As long as we cling to our religions, we blind ourselves to the divine that would show
itself in utterly new and unimagined shape from within our real world.[189]

The previous chapter outlined the context of the research and the central

questions for this study. It was established that there is a lack of research in the existing

academic literature on Syrian refugees in the United Kingdom that explores the role and

impact of religious belief and practice on the refugee resettlement process. Although

there is a wide variety of approaches available to the researcher seeking to address this

gap, a research method had to be developed within the limitations and constraints

surrounding access to refugees; ethical considerations of engaging with a vulnerable

sample, in particular to discuss sensitive matters; as well as the constantly evolving

environment of their resettlement. Furthermore, subject matter such as the resettlement of

refugees and societal implications of the religious tenets of Islam are highly contentious

and divisive topics that trigger heated debate in all areas of society, and a path for

research had to be sought among these challenges and sensitivities. Being already acutely

aware of the challenging aspects of Islam and some kinds of thinking prevalent in

minority British communities that have their roots in an Islamic world-view, it was

---

[188] Extracts from "A Woman's Declaration for a Shared Humanity," by Porsiana Beatrice, published in Mario I. Aguilar, *Interreligious Dialogue and the Partition of India: Hindus and Muslims in Dialogue about Violence and Forced Migration"* (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2018), 152.
[189] From *Zen Buddhism Today* 1988, quoted in William Skudlarek OSB (Ed.) *Dilatato Corde* DIMMID 1, no.1-2 (Brooklyn: Lantern Books, 2012): 82.

important, to me as researcher, that a path towards contributing to academic knowledge be found that could both overcome these difficulties, and offer something positive and practical to the complex field of refugee resettlement. Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the unique position in which I found myself professionally (often acting as a "culture broker" at the intersection of Council, Church and Mosque) in the early days of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) in North East Scotland became, naturally, the locus of the research.[190]

This chapter provides an outline of the research method developed for this particular study from that position. Firstly, a brief justification is offered for the ontology, epistemology and methodology that constitute the qualitative research paradigm. Secondly, the research sample is defined with key characteristics described. This is followed by some points for consideration that are given with regard to the ethics relating to the research, then challenges and barriers to the study are provided with a note on "vulnerability," and an acknowledgement of my hesitations in undertaking this project. The research project design is outlined with a detailed description of the ethnographic and case study approaches, and data collection achieved by observation and interviews. The chapter closes with a portrait of the principal informant, a discussion of data analysis, a consideration of the trustworthiness of the method, and the limitations and delimitations of the study.

The Research Paradigm

Aims and rationale for the research paradigm

As demonstrated in the literature review above, this study seeks to address the gap in the literature that explores the connection between religion and resettlement. The

---

[190] Rapport, *The Key Concepts*, 20.

aim of this thesis, as established in chapter one, is to articulate marginalised voices, and consider the value of inter-religious dialogue as a potential means to dissolve barriers, and contribute towards a shared understanding. Broadly speaking, the research paradigm fits within the interpretivist research philosophy (outlined below) and seeks to explore the lived experiences of resettled refugees from a theological perspective, one that does not bypass the question of religion and its role in resettlement. This study is therefore an exercise in empirical human enquiry into the lived experiences of refugees resettled to North East Scotland through the SVPRS, which explores the relationship between religion and resettlement, and narrows its focus to a single refugee's understanding of the Divine, in order to finally consider the implications of religion for resettlement.

Ontology

The ontological position which is the basis of such an enquiry, is one of "relativism," and holds that the nature of reality is multifaceted and, in fact, that realities are "multiple, constructed and holistic."[191] Flick states that "there is no single, tangible reality, instead there are only the complex, multiple realities of the individual."[192] The nature of reality is therefore highly individual and contextualised, and cannot be understood as universal.[193] Many studies of refugees and minority communities have the tendency to generalise and homogenise groups that are heterogeneous and diverse. Chapter One illustrated that this has particularly been the case in the design of humanitarian resettlement projects in North East Scotland. This thesis seeks to illustrate the short-sightedness of such an approach by articulating individual voices which

---

[191] Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research,* 2nd ed., (London: Sage, 2002); Alison Jane Pickard, *Research Methods and Information* 2nd Edition, (London: Facet, 2013), 12.

[192] Pickard, *Research Methods*, 12.

[193] Pickard, *Research Methods*, 12.

exemplify that diversity, so that, to borrow from Rapport, the world of refugee resettlement is made personal.[194]

However, while this ontological approach is true to a certain extent within the research paradigm employed for this study, the theological approach towards inter-religious dialogue adopted for this project is one which, at its core, seeks commonalities of human experience, by applying a model of dialogue rooted in mysticism that echoes, for example, the contemplative monastic thinking of Thomas Merton which seeks some reflection of the universal in the particular.[195] This "God-centred" ontological position is described by Mitias as the "most necessary requisite" for inter-religious dialogue, without which there is no means for, or justification of, the dialogue in the first place.[196] Indeed, he continues:

> A God-centered person experiences and interprets the scheme of nature and human life from the standpoint of God, that is, *sub species divinitas*. Inasmuch as it is ontological this orientation is the ground on which the interlocutors stand prior to and during the dialogue.[197]

He establishes this "ground" further, stating that: "standing on this ground is standing on a common sacred space."[198] The common sacred space was sought in dialogue with the participants but it is perhaps important to mention that, in the case of the conversation with the primary informant, described below, the ontological position of the researcher was not shared by the interlocutor. The God-centered approach, that the researcher holds is one which assumes that her God and the God of the Muslim are essentially the same "infinitely ineffable transcendent."[199] This position is an alternative

---

[194] Nigel Rapport, *Transcendent Individual: Towards a Literary and Liberal Anthropology"* (London: Routledge, 1997) 29.
[195] See "theological approach" below.
[196] Michael H. Mitias, "Mysticism as a basis for inter-religious dialogue" in *Dialogue and Universalism* 2, (2019): 89.
[197] Mitias, *Mysticism,* 90.
[198] Mitias, *Mysticism,* 90.
[199] Mitias, *Mysticism,* 90.

to what Mitias describes as a "religion-centred" orientation that in this case is held by the refugee.[200] This imbalance is problematic in conventional inter-religious dialogue in which mutual understanding is sought, and undermines the possibility of objectivity on the part of the informant, and rationality in conversation. However, as outlined in Chapter One, the model of dialogue emplyed in this study is neither intellectual nor philosophical debate with the informant but rather to enter fully into conversation with her in her otherness, an encounter that depends on all parties revealing their identity (position and beliefs) but, for the researcher, not seeking to be understood as much as to understand.[201]

Epistemology

The epistemological position (or philosophy of how that reality may be known) that is assumed in the interpretivist (or humanist) paradigm is one that has been termed as transactional or subjectivist.[202] This position recognises that the knower and the known (or the researcher and the subject of research) are not completely independent or uninfluenced by one another and, therefore, all actors in the exchange are simultaneously affected and transformed to some degree by the encounter. The knowledge resulting from this interaction is thus "time- and context-bound" and therefore is not universally applicable.[203] As mentioned above, framing this study within inter-religious dialogue required the overt identity of both the researcher and the research subject, and the equal

---

[200] The belief that Islam is the only true revelation of the Divine. Ibid. (90) As Mitias notes: "strange polytheistic positioning." Mitias, *Mysticism*, 104, 105.

[201] I would argue that in fact this is the only way to approach the other, as I have no greater claim to the Truth than her, and the Divine Truth surely does not depend on my defense. This approach to dialogue is considered further below.

[202] Pickard, *Research Methods* 6, 12

[203] Pickard, *Research Methods,* 12; See also: Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry (*London and Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1985).

willingness of the questioner to be questioned in response, as well as the acceptance of the risk of being misunderstood. This shared vulnerability is explored below.

Methodology

The methodology of such an interpretivist enquiry is therefore one that recognises the impact of the researcher on the subject, and *vice versa*, and consequently it must be recognised that the subject observed is not to be confused with the nature of the subject in itself, but rather understood as the subject as it responds to our investigation.[204] Consequently, an interpretivist methodology is one that can seek to find meaning behind that which is immediately evident. That is the strength of a theological approach, as inter-religious dialogue provides a means to understand the worldview, philosophy and religious foundation of words and actions, which might be misunderstood without this background. As stated in Chapter One, the overall purpose of this thesis is to illustrate that theology is extremely important in bridge-building and community cohesion, as well as in all the practical aspects for human life that the process of resettlement presents. This approach recognises the influence of context on the meaning produced, and any interpretation will take this into consideration by seeking to understand the context in its fullness.[205] Such a method depends, therefore, on what can be termed "empathetic interaction" which, I would add, includes the willingness to relinquish any pre-conceived notions, prior knowledge, bias, or readiness to defend one's own position, in order to allow the researcher to more fully absorb that which is being offered by the subject.[206]

---

[204] Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy,* (New York, NY: Harper Row, 1958), 228; Pickard *Research Methods*, 12.

[205] I. Dey, *Qualitative Data Analysis: a user-friendly guide for social scientists* (London: Routledge, 1993), 110; cited in Pickard, *Research Methods,* 13.

[206] This includes not jumping to defend Christianity or perceived "Western-ness" even when false or unjust claims are made: this is explored more fully in the chapter on God/ final chapter analysis.

The approach to research is therefore an iterative process that fully appreciates the particular in, and of, itself. Consequently, it can be said that this interpretivist research paradigm is, in fact, a form of in-depth story-telling, as it is my intention throughout this thesis that the story-telling be done as much as possible in the voices of the refugees themselves and, as discussed below, the primary informant becoming a story-teller in her own right was a pivotal moment in the research process.[207]

Qualitative research

It is clear from the description of the research paradigm outlined above that such an enquiry into contemporary, lived human experience must be based on qualitative research. An exploratory in-depth study of this kind required a process that was essentially "emergent" in nature, and a model of research had to be designed that would allow for the iterate nature of the enquiry.[208] As a result, the project design of this study constantly evolved throughout the research process, and data collection was adapted according to the analysis of data gathered earlier, as well as that of the ideas and themes that gradually became apparent over time.[209] This kind of approach was at times unnerving, as the method was unpredictable and required the readiness of the researcher to respond to what could be called the informants' sense of ownership or even, at times, personal agenda.[210] Pickard states that:

---

[207] J. C. Greene, "Three Views on the Nature and Role of Knowledge in Social Science." in *The Paradigm Dialog,* Guba, E. G. (ed.), (London: Sage, 1990): 227–4; cited in Pickard, *Research Methods*, 13.

[208] Pickard, *Research Methods*, 45; also Weber, in Legard, et al. *Qualitative research practice*, 28.

[209] "The research design must therefore be "played by ear;' it must unfold, cascade, roll, emerge.' Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 1985, 203. Pickard, *Research Methods*,14.

[210] This idea of agenda is addressed below.

The dialectic nature of qualitative research is accommodated by interaction with participants where they are encouraged to compare and contrast the researcher's constructions of reality by debate.[211]

The long-term time frame of this study, as well as the conversational style of data collection, allowed for what Pickard terms "negotiated outcomes" between researcher and primary informant.[212] The spacing between interview conversations allowed, and depended on, a natural re-telling in the words of the researcher of the data offered in the previous session, which served as a form of recapitulation and a reminder of where we had reached in our discussions; and as a comprehension check, both linguistic and conceptual.[213]

Human as research tool

Given that this study explores the experience of human life in its complexity, it is worth recognising that the key tool in a qualitative dialectic interchange, such as this, is the engagement of the human being as research instrument. The human being is an instrument that Maykut and Morehouse describe as "'the only instrument which is flexible enough to capture the complexity, subtlety, and constantly changing situation which is the human experience."[214] Pickard develops this notion further saying that, engaging the researcher to act as research instrument (gathering, interpreting, analysing and presenting the data) in fact enables a deeper understanding and iteration of those

---

[211] Pickard, *Research Methods*, 17.

[212] Pickard, *Research Methods*, 14.

[213] Pickard, *Research Methods*, 14. This is discussed further as "member checking", below. The term "comprehension check" is used in the teaching of English to speakers of others languages (TESOL) but equally applied here to the researcher engaging with Arabic as a second language.

[214] Pamela Maykut and Richard Morehouse, *Beginning Qualitative Research: a philosophic and practical guide,* (London: Farmer Press, 1994): 26. They continue: 'These complexities . . . cannot be figured out, cannot be understood by one-dimensional, reductionist approaches; they demand the human-as-instrument' (Maykut and Morehouse, *Beginning Qualitative Research,* 27); also Pickard, *Research Methods,* 16.

complexities, because of the human ability to apply tacit knowledge even in the moment.[215] Furthermore, if tacit knowledge is applied, with caution, and supported by evidence, it can contribute towards sensitive interpretation and the generation of theory.[216] This can be a time-consuming approach because it depends on a relationship between the researcher and the subject that is "mutual and dynamic."[217] As will be explored below, the relationship of the researcher with the research informants required adaptation and evolution over time and the pre-existing relationship described in the introduction was at once an advantage (in that trust had been earned which allowed for a depth of information to be gathered) and, at the same time, a disadvantage (in that there was at times confusion with friendship, and a relaxation of the lines, with perhaps all parties occasionally forgetting my role as researcher.)

A note on subjectivity

It is evident from the discussion above that research such as this, which depends on human relationships and dynamic engagement with the subject, cannot produce objective results, and therefore it is important to recognise the subjectivity of this study. Bernard calls this "trained subjectivity," in that one aspect of the interpretivist approach to research is a commitment to subjectivity, and the recognition of the researcher's feelings, values and beliefs, and their use in understanding the study of human experience.[218] However, despite the difficulties relating to data management (which are discussed below), it is hoped that this thesis can demonstrate that the results are not simply a result of the "observer's worldview, disciplinary assumptions, theoretical

---

[215] Therefore constantly updating throughout the course of an exchange. Pickard, *Research Methods* 16, 140.

[216] Pickard, *Research Methods*, 6.

[217] Maykut and Morehouse, *Beginning Qualitative Research*, 37.

[218] Bernard, H. Russell, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006).

proclivities and research interests," as Charmaz cautions.[219] Rather, the prolonged

involvement of the researcher in the field, the continued observation of the sample, and

the subject's sense of "ownership" of the direction of conversations, as well as the

framework of inter-religious dialogue as opposed to directed interviews, and the

recognition of the limits to the method and findings, as outlined below, all attempt to

compensate for this subjective leaning.[220]

Research sample and data sources

As outlined in Chapter One, the research sample for this study was identified

from among the Syrian Muslim refugees who were resettled to North East Scotland as

part of the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, established

by David Cameron in 2014. The purposive sample approached for this research consisted

of persons who were all known to the researcher, through her prior employment in the

early stages of the SVPRS humanitarian resettlement project.[221] The research sample was

limited to those among the initial cohorts who arrived between December 2015 and

December 2016 and, by the time of this study, had been resident for at least a year and

had, by then, achieved a level of autonomy. This ensured that relationships of trust and

respect had already been established with the participants, and allowed for the longest-

term possible observation of the sample to formulate the broadest possible picture of

trends and developments at the time, as well as ensuring their willing participation in the

study. It is also important to note that, in order to do the participants justice, it was

recognised that observations must be over a long enough period to allow for the

---

[219] K. Charmaz, "Grounded Theory" in *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*, Smith, J. A., Harre, R. and Langenhove, L. V. (eds) (London: Sage, 1995), 32.
[220] C. A. Mellon, *Naturalistic Inquiry for Library Science: methods and applications for research, evaluation and teaching (*London: Greenwood, 1990). 42.
[221] Pickard, *Research Methods,* 104.

observation of "normality," in addition to the peaks and troughs of human experience that usually are a part of interactions with support workers.

Due to the fact that I was still engaged in employment with the SVPRS at the time of starting research, natural observations had already begun, as I had the privilege of direct access to many resources which offered a detailed picture of the overall project, and the current policies, strategies, challenges, trends, and developments as they occurred in real time. Through that position I had access to, and relationships of varying degrees with, Syrian refugees resettled to multiple and diverse local authorities across North East Scotland including Angus, Dundee City, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Fife, Perth and Kinross, Argyll and Bute and the Central Belt. For the purposes of this study, the sample is narrowed only to those within North East Scotland (Dundee, Angus and Aberdeenshire), although observations of and conversations with refugees and the agencies supporting their resettlement, as well as with those representing the existing Muslim communities, all contributed to the original formulation of the thesis.

Demographic characteristics of the sample

As a consequence of the high levels of protection and confidentiality surrounding those resettled by the SVPRS, it is difficult to find detailed, public, demographic information regarding geographic origins, ethnicity, religious affiliation, levels of education or socio-economic status of the refugees prior to resettlement. However, according to The Association of Religion Data Archives (The ARDA) and the Word Religion Database, it is estimated that 94% of the population of Syria are Muslim, 97% of those being Sunni, which equates to 74% of the total national population.[222] Given that

---

[222] "Syria Regional Profile," The Association of Religion Data Archives (The ARDA), https://www.thearda.com/world-religion/national-profiles?u=217c#S_2 (Accessed 20.10.22).

the majority of the population in Syria is Sunni Muslim, it is therefore not surprising that the religious demographics of those who have sought refuge through such schemes such as the SVPRS appear to be reflective of these statistics.

Although there was some initial consternation regarding these Muslim majority demographics in the UK, it is worth briefly noting why this is the case.[223] It is estimated that although approximately ten per cent of the pre-war Syrian population was Christian, only 1.2% of those who were forced to become refugees registered with the United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees (UNHCR).[224] This is due to a variety of factors that are not significant for this study but include: Christian views of the Assad regime; taking the political position of strategic neutrality; internal displacement, for example to *Wādi Al-Nasāra* ("valley of the Christians"); a sense of responsibility for the well-being of country and the future of Christianity in the region; as well as the Christian population being *generally* more urbanised and educated, and therefore having stronger opportunities for independent emigration, as well as connections to others of their denomination in neighbouring countries or around the world.[225]

Additionally, the war in Syria developed in such a way that the insurgency had a significant stronghold in the Sunni majority rural areas and so it was the Sunnis who bore the disproportionate share of violence and loss, and, as a result, a large part of the

---

[223] Perreault and Paul, "Narrative Framing," 276-297.
[224] Marwan Kreidie, "Why Do So Few Christian Syrian Refugees Register With The United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees?" in *Rozenberg Quarterly Magazine*, https://rozenbergquarterly.com/why-do-so-few-christian-syrian-refugees-register-with-the-united-nations-high-commissioner-for-refugees/ (Accessed 20.10.22).
[225] For example many found refuge in neighbouring Lebanon. See: Kreidie "Christian Syrian Refugees"; see also: Marjorie Gourlay, Muthuraj Swamy and Madaleina Daenhardt *How the church contributes on well-being in conflict-affected fragile states – voices from the local church.* (Cambridge/ Teddington: Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide and Tearfund, 2019), 40-52.

refugees were therefore rural people.[226] This was particularly evident among the early

arrivals in Dundee and Angus, and provided yet another obstacle to resettlement as rural

refugee skillsets were now redundant in urban centres.[227] This is explored further in

Chapters Three and Four.

A final key characteristic of many of the refugees arriving in the UK was their

limited levels of formal education. The Home Office guidance for local authorities and

partners states that the focus of the SVPRS on the most vulnerable included "women and

children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and

violence amongst others."[228] The consequence of such a focus was such that many of

those identified as vulnerable by these criteria had high levels of trauma and physical

illness, as well as very little education, and that a number of them were illiterate in

Arabic.[229] Apart from the difficulty of starting language learning, it was evident that

limited education could affect all areas of the resettlement process. Although education is

not the focus of this study, this idea of how limited education affects resettlement is

onsidered further in Chapter Three.

---

[226]It is important to note that the notion of "rural" in that context is very much in contrast to that of contemporary Britain. (See "Rural Idyll "in Rapport *Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 370-377. Here in Britian, a rural life is usually the privilege of the moneyed, in Syria the rural population is largely considered "poor." See Aron Lund, "Exile has no religion: the resettlement of Syrian refugees is a task best carried out on the basis of need and ability, not by sectarian or ethnic preference." Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Centre, (2014), https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/57512?lang=en (accessed 20.10.22); Meryem Aboushala, "Rural Areas in Post War Syria: Challenges and possibilities for resilience and sustainability" Conference paper International Conference on Contemporary Affairs in Architecture and Urbanism (ICCAUA-2019), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337403533_Rural_Areas_in_Post_War_Syria_Challenges_and_possibilities_for_Resilience_and_sustainability (accessed 20.10.22).

[227] [FN 06.03.21 41:1].

[228] Home Office "Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) Guidance for local authorities and partners" (July 2017), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/syrian-vulnerable-person-resettlement-programme-fact-sheet (accessed 20.10.22)

[229] For example, I had to teach a lady how to write her own name in Arabic so that she could sign the tenancy agreement on arrival in the UK. [FN 20.12.15 18:5].

While these demographic characteristics feature in the people comprising the sample in this study, it must be reinforced that these are general demographic characteristics that do not illustrate the full diversity among the sample. This is particularly evident when including Kurdish Syrians who in this case were also Sunni Muslim, but generally of higher levels of education, and more ready to develop independence.[230] As The Oxford Department of International Development states, borrowing from an article by Kat Egdamian:

> There is a tendency to view all Syrian refugees as a homogeneous entity. They are not. Many stories are being told, but many more remain untold – and that's particularly true when it comes to refugees' religious identity.[231]

Selection of participants for interview

As illustrated and detailed below, participants were selected for interview by invitation to inform an academic study that would consider their lived experiences as refugees resettled to Scotland (see Appendix). The delivery of this invitation evolved over time, as did my relationship with the sample, as well as the methods of investigation, due to changes in employment and the transition from support worker to researcher (explored below). The final sample therefore represent nothing but themselves, and although shared themes can be extracted from the conversations, and are explored in Part II of this thesis, generalisations from the particular are neither possible, nor are they the intention of this work.[232]

---

[230] [FN 21.04.21 26:1], For example, one who is qualified as an engineer in the oil industry but finds herself unemployable in the new context.

[231] Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford "Refugee crisis: Syria's religious minorities must not be overlooked" (30 September 2015), https://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/content/refugee-crisis-syrias-religious-minorities-must-not-be-overlooked (accessed 20.10.22).

[232] Pickard, *Research Methods* ,60; and Adrijana Biba Starman, "The case study as a type of qualitative research" in *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* 1, (2013): 28-43, 39-40.

The sampling used in this study does not fit neatly into any recognised category except that the project began with what is sometimes termed "convenience sampling" as it was based on ease of access to informants as a result of pre-established professional relationships.[233] To some degree it fits within purposive, non-probability sampling, to the extent that the sample selected for interview were sought as "information-rich cases for study in-depth," in order to prioritise depth of exploration over breadth. Those from the wider initial sample (refugees known to me in North East Scotland) and in the case study interviews represent nothing other than themselves and their individual attributes.[234] Consequently, the final sampling was neither "a priori" nor "snowballing," in fact rather the opposite, as the study gradually narrowed its focus until it settled finally and fully on the contribution of one solo voice, the key informant (described below).[235]

Ethical Considerations

Risk Assessment

The Ethical licence application procedure through the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) for a project such as this required careful planning for the welfare and protection of the research participants. The sample identified above was considered to be "vulnerable" on multiple counts: they were recognised as protected adults due to the support they were entitled to through the departments of Social Work and Welfare Rights (as all refugees in the SVPRS were entitled on arrival to full recourse to public funds and were accordingly in receipt of State benefits);[236] they were

---

[233] With reference to the categories identified by Pickard, *Research Methods,* 59-70.

[234] Russell, *Research Methods* 147, 186-209; Michael Quinn, *Patton Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (London: Sage, 2002), 169.

[235] Russell, *Research Methods*, 196; Pickard, *Research Methods,* 64-66.

[236] These descriptors are taken directly from the UTREC guidelines. See also Nadia von Benzon and Lorraine van Blerk, "Research relationships and responsibilities:

individuals who had been impacted by a traumatic event;[237] furthermore, the research

would involve sensitive research topics such as those resulting from displacement as a

result of war, or would relate to self-identity relating to nationality or ethnicity. The final

area identified as a risk factor in this particular study was the fact that the research would

seek data revealing information revealing religious or philosophical beliefs.[238] The list of

sensitive matters posing a risk to the research participants also includes gender and

mental health conditions as markers that identify the participants as vulnerable, and are

held in consideration for this study.[239] The reality is that no conversation with a refugee

can fully avoid these topics and, in fact, talking about them with an empathetic listener

can be healing experiences that facilitate recovery from trauma, and adaptation to life in

such an alien context.[240] However, as von Benzon and van Blerk observe, "perceived

participant vulnerability impacts on research projects from the earliest stages of

---

'Doing' research with 'vulnerable' participants: introduction to the special edition" in *Social & Cultural Geography* 18, no.7 (2017): 898.

[237] The UTREC risk assessment form (in Appendix) lists these as "such as war, displacement, acts of terrorism, abuse, discrimination, crime, disasters, life-changing illness or injury, bereavement," all of which the majority of those resettled through the VPRS had recently experienced or were still experiencing as bad news reached them from home.

[238] UTREC Risk Assessment form DI14015, (Ibid.)

[239] Although not one of the criteria listed in the UTREC documents, I would include the migrant's lack of kinship as a critical marker of vulnerability. Although notions of kinship have been considered out-dated in the world of anthropology today (Rapport, *The Key Concepts*, 252.), a person separated from their family and local community is defenceless and susceptible to exploitation. The notion of vulnerability in relation to this study is explored further below.

[240] Procedures such as those implemented by UTREC and the resettlement projects are fundamental to ensuring an understanding of vulnerability and ensuring protection however they can also create obstructions to natural relationships, good forms of neighbourly support and community cohesion. I mention this to illustrate that, rather than "humanising" the other, as is usually the intention, there can be an adverse consequence of further "othering," leading to a greater chasm between social groups, and the frustration of natural efforts at hospitality. This is relevant because the ethical procedure itself presented a layer of separation that had not existed prior, and an effective severing of a formerly natural relationship. [FN 06.05.21 22:1], This participant withdrew from the study at the sight of paperwork, having initially offered significant material to the foundation of the thesis.

conception and planning, through to the dissemination of research ideas."[241] The research

process was thus conscious of hidden power dynamics and careful to protect the

participants from harm at every possible juncture.[242] Furthermore, the Murad Code, a

newly released global code of conduct for dealing with survivors of conflict-related

sexual violence, also serves as a guide for interviewing broader groups of vulnerable

people.[243] It is based on the foundational principles of respect and integrity which include

the readiness to adapt to the indvidual, and the willingness to counter one's own

assumptions, as well as giving priority to the informant's control and autonomy in the

process. Further principles of preparation and implementation include strong groundwork

and knowledge of the context, as well as taking time and creating space that is conducive

to repsectful and secure conversations.[244]

Recruitment for Interview

Ethical licence was granted for participants to be recruited for interview by an

advertisement that would be posted at the locations of English language classes, in order

for participation to be voluntary, and undertaken at the location of their choice. This was

the procedure that was agreed in order to gain willing co-operation from the research

participants. However, this method of recruitment was ultimately never applied, because

---

[241] Von Benzon and Van Blerk, "Research relationships," 902.

[242] A Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) clearance was already secured through my employer Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre (MWRC), in partnership with Dundee City Council Health and Social Care Partnership, and was amended to name the University of St Andrews as co-sponsor. See Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 54. See also: Semhar Haile, Francesca Meloni and Habib Rezaie, "Negotiating research and life spaces: Participatory research approaches with young migrants in the UK" in *Refuge in a Moving World: Tracing refugee and migrant journeys across disciplines* Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyaeh, (ed.) (London: UCL Press,2020): 23-31.

[243] See "Global Code of Conduct for Gathering and Using Information about Systematic and Conflict-related Sexual Violence," 13th April 2022," https://www.muradcode.com/murad-code (Accessed 20.10.22).

[244] The Murad Code, 3-11.

recruitment instead occurred naturally, and slowly over time, by word of mouth, which better enabled me to clarify any misunderstandings the participants might have had about the research aims and purpose, and ensured that they were participating freely, and not from any sense of obligation.[245] As mentioned below, written Arabic was not necessarily helpful for this particular group, and, for the majority, their level of English was so elementary that they would neither understand a written poster, nor notice it in the first place. It was found that direct and personal communication in spoken, vernacular Arabic was the best way to communicate with the refugees in the primary years of the SVPRS.[246]

Informed Consent

When a person expressed a willingness to participate, they were given full information about the nature of the study accompanied by: an idea of the wider project; what they would be required to do; any risks associated with participation; information relating to University ethical licence procedures; data collection and storage; and assurance of the protection of their confidentiality. This ensured that there was informed consent, and helped to build trust in the research process. Participants were also to be provided with debriefing information.[247] All of the above forms and documents were translated orally into Arabic, and left with the participant in the original English printed format. This was the procedure with all other formal documents and formalities in the refugee resettlement programme. Although (in the course of resettlement) some information was provided for the refugees in written Arabic, many of them could not

---

[245] In my observations during work prior to data collection I noticed that many refugees felt obliged to participate in any research, perhaps in their efforts to be good citizens and exemplify agreeableness. (FN.01.08.18 13:6].

[246] See below. Also Amina MWRC Board Report 13.02.18 (no longer available online).

[247] See Appendix.

read, or found the business of British documentation in general overwhelming, and so anything of importance had to be explained orally in any case.[248]

Data Collection

Observation

As mentioned above, a large part of this study began as observations and conversations, during my time as an employee in the field of refugee resettlement. Unfortunately, direct observation has never been possible on account of my knowing the research participants and having developed relationships with them.[249] The model of observation thus followed a model similar to that employed by Nigel Rapport in *Diverse world-views in an English Village* in that I was in employment in the field and although my identity as a researcher was not hidden, it was mostly not understood, and was seen as a further marker of my eccentricity.[250] I kept field notes during most that period, intensified from 2017-2018, (until my resignation from the post) keeping records of any significant moments, sentences, stories or insights from the refugees themselves, as well as my own reflections, and those of others, that contributed to an understanding of the overall question of the role of religion in the resettlement process, or towards a development of the shape of this thesis. These were handwritten on numbered and dated pages with numbered paragraphs and significant identifiers were removed. Although these cannot be considered full field notes as would be expected for ethnographic examination in the field of anthropology, those inscriptions, transcriptions and

---

[248] Spoken translation of all documentation was the accepted and expected practice. (E.g. Amina MWRC Board Report 13.02.18).

[249] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 253. See also: Howard Becker, in Taylor and Bodgan, *Qualitative Research Methods,* 240-1.

[250] Being an unmarried, Arabic speaking British person. In fact it can be argued that this "strangeness" was an advantage when it came to conversations with the primary informant. See Rapport, Nigel *Diverse World-Views in an English Village* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (1993).

descriptive notes served to record many things that would otherwise have been forgotten, and provided other examples to support much of what was revealed in the interviews, and in conversation with the primary informant.[251] Mostly it was written up, to the best of my ability, at the end of each day due to the all-consuming nature of the job that gave me access to the field.[252]

Interviews

For the interviews, permission was granted for me to ask two questions in Arabic and invite the participants to speak freely without interruption, except where necessary for purposes of clarification (see "primary informant" below). The questions were to be: "Is God with you in Scotland?" and "How do you find Islam in Scotland?"[253] These conversations were to take place in the location of the participant's choice: at home, or in a public location such as that of English classes. Interviews would be unrecorded, and any notes taken during the discussion were to be written up within a week, with all original notes, as well as any identifying markers, destroyed. The semi-structured format of these interviews provided some formal evidence of themes, which had been collected during earlier observations and conversations in the field. With the participant who became the primary informant, this formal opening gave way to a series of unstructured

---

[251] A personal diary was kept separately. See Rapport, *Transcendent Individual*, 94; and Rapport, *Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 182; see also "participant observation" as described by Russell, *Research Methods,* 342 – 386.

[252] The challenges of note taking are considered in Rapport, Nigel "Discourse and Individuality: Bedouin Talk in the Western Desert and the South Sinai" in *Anthropology Today* 8, no.1 (Feb., 1992): 18-21.

[253] See Appendix. These questions are explored further in Chapter Five: on God. The questions were couched within a more natural conversation, which usually started with a reminder of when the person arrived, and a general discussion on how things had been for them since I had last seen them. Those casual moments often bore profound comments that I noted and absorbed into the overall thesis as it was being formed. In these cases I asked permission to use their contributions even though they were outwith the formal data collection.

interviews in which the dynamics changed from one in which the researcher enters the exchange seeking information from the informant, to being one in which the informant was freely sharing knowledge, experience and ideas to a listener willing to learn. This dynamic shift was a pivotal moment in the research project (mentioned below) and allowed for a series of conversations in place of a singlular interview and, consequently, produced a much richer yield of data.[254]

Data Management

All data gathered in the interviews was noted down in a combination of English or Arabic, depending on which came more readily in the moment. Any key phrases or sentences were written in Arabic, to preserve their authenticity and originality, and to allow for more careful translation. In some cases, notes were taken in English lettering representing the Arabic (as below). This is because the spoken Arabic can differ from Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and the dialects have no standardised spelling.[255] Otherwise, general themes, ideas and contributions were mostly noted in English, for later exploration and consideration. The data is presented in Part II in a way that reflects this process.

A final factor complicating ethical licence was the University's stipulation not to include any information that could potentially identify the participants, such as which city to which they were resettled. Thus, it was essential that the scope of the study had to be widened to include the other local authorities listed above, and the location of the primary informant is never intimated and could not be deduced. The refugees in this

---

[254] This is discussed below under "limitations and delimitations."

[255] Many native speakers will write in a combination of English letters and numbers to represent the vernacular to compensate for this. See Jacob Høigilt, and Gunvor Mejdell. *The Politics of Written Language in the Arab World: Writing Change.* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

study were guaranteed confidentiality by their being resettled by multiple local authorities, having no identity markers included in the records of data or their representation in this thesis, and being represented throughout by pseudonyms for the protection of their privacy.[256]

Challenges and barriers to research

Pre-existing relationship with the sample

As mentioned previously, the sample identified above, Syrian refugees resettled to local authorities with which I had professional contact, were people with whom I already had a professional relationship, either as their support worker, as a translator, or as a representative of the local authority, depending on the situation.[257] Although the intensive involvement in, and observation of, the lives of the refugees immediately following resettlement provided a unique opportunity for research (as I identified in the previous chapter), the transition from support worker to researcher was one that required sensitivity and wisdom, as well as time. A distancing of the relationship to the sample was gained naturally, however it was not until I left the project in June 2018 that I was fully able to introduce the idea of participation in research to the refugees, approaching them in a new way, as an individual researcher attached to the University.[258]

The interest of other parties/ Access to the field

---

[256] Pickard, *Research Methods,* 92. The UTREC process expected anonymity, however, given the small number of participants, the researcher is still aware of the true identity of each person that has been represented by a different name. See Appendix.

[257] For example, my contact with refugees in Aberdeenshire was mainly through a hospitality event in which my role was to facilitate communication between parties and I carried no further responsibility for the refugees present. [FN.15.09.18 15].

[258] By my promotion to the position of project manager (in Nov 2017) as well as the gradual transformation of the project itself to offer more distanced forms of support, such as a drop-in clinic which encouraged service user proactivity and allowed healthier boundaries to be drawn and sustainable models of support to be achieved.

An additional obstacle relating to my prior employment was my professional connection to the local authority, and the local authority's sense of protection (leaning, perhaps at times, towards over-protection).[259] Council procedure required that I declare my intention of research to the Head of Health and Social Care Partnership and, having been granted approval, it was later suggested that because I was to conduct the interviews in Arabic, I could organise interviews for the same visits as an internal Council researcher, who would conduct a resettlement project evaluation with my support as translator. I rejected this proposition for several reasons: first, because this would have required me to return to a previous relationship as support worker that I had been working hard to leave behind. Secondly, because I did not believe the research approaches to be compatible, for I felt the empirical methods required for project review would have a negative impact on the free flow and natural conversation I was hoping to achieve for my approach to a model of inter-religious dialogue, and that they would generate an environment where the participants would anticipate a different kind of conversation. Moreover, the presence of a second person, and in this case a stranger of a different gender, as well as being representative of the local authority, would have automatically added another layer of obstruction to creating conditions conducive to nurturing relationships that had, by this point, taken years to achieve.[260]

Participant expectations

Permission also had to be sought from the agencies delivering direct support to the refugees, as they were, and often continue to be, the gatekeepers for this

---

[259] I have discussed this elsewhere in an unpublished paper prepared for the European Academy of Religion, 2019, in terms of surveillance.

[260] Field notes also mention "sweat and tears", as many misunderstandings, frustrations and difficulties had to be overcome, and these relationships with deeper levels of trust were hard won. [FN.12.05.21 (16Y)].

community.[261] Due to the significant amount of interest in the Syrian refugees, especially in the initial years of the SVPRS, the support workers, as intermediaries, were often asked to find refugees willing to inform academic studies, most of which related to practical provision or initial experiences of resettlement.[262] Given that many of the refugees had little formal education, while some were willing, others were suspicious and uncertain of what was expected of them.[263] Furthermore, the fact that I was interested in exploring deeper levels of human experience and, in particular, the spiritual or theological, this carefully established trust could not be risked by rushing ahead of where we currently were.

Some of these details above relating to the various stages of difficulty in obtaining access to the field for this project, as well as the willing, informed participation of research informants, may not seem particularly relevant at this stage (having been earlier stages of project evolution) but, I believe, are worth mentioning as they illustrate some of the challenges that had to be overcome in matters associated with building trust (among all parties), encouraging independence following resettlement, and discouraging the automatic expectation of assistance (again for all parties), as well as transforming relationships from one particular kind of role (humanitarian support) to a very different one (that of researcher). Furthermore, these are challenges that continue to exist for host communities and wider society, as all parties adapt to the presence of refugees and participate in encouraging and developing their long-term independence and integration.[264]

---

[261] Although outwith the parameters of this study, this raises the important question of "power" which is a key concept in any consideration or analysis of the refugee resettlement scheme. See: Rapport *Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 349-357.

[262] [FN.02.08.18 14:5].

[263] [FN 01.08.18 13:6].

[264] This is not directly addressed in this thesis but illustrates the tensions present in the field.

The challenges of real life

Because I have known this community over a number of years I have observed trends that affect the kind of data that is produced. This is particularly evident during the holy month of Ramadan, when many are sleeping, fasting, or feasting with family and friends, or visiting the mosque. Conversations in these periods were sometimes harder to conduct, due to fatigue or prior commitments, but were also at times richer in theological content, as the mind of a fasting Muslim often appears to be occupied with more spiritual thoughts at such times, or perhaps a greater freedom to express them.[265] Another example of this is the noticeable impact of bad news on the refugee's ability to function. Many of the refugees were receiving devastating news from Syria about the destruction of homes or the deaths of loved ones during the period of data collection, and such news understandably had a considerable effect on patterns of thought, and on the direction of a conversation. As a result, many opportunities for interviews were abandoned in such circumstances, when the well-being of the refugee was not assured, and conditions were not favourable for research. At times such as these, I took on the role of friend or neighbour, and consoled them to the best of my ability as a fellow human being, sharing in their sorrow, and offering my company however it might best serve them in the moment. In those cases I left the possibility of future research participation entirely in their hands.[266] The problem with this approach was that there was nearly always an obstacle to data collection, and the conversations that had once been so natural at the time when the research question was conceived, were becoming impossible.

---

[265] [FN. 21.04.21 26.4], (One example of many) "We got used to everything now. God is with us… Thank God our faith is strong and helped us through everything." Several of the formal interviews were in fact conducted during Ramadan.

[266] For example during the Afrin massacre January to March 2018 (particularly memorable because several of the Kurds in the sample had family in the city) as well as the chemical attack on Douma (07.04.18).

COVID-19 restrictions

Finally, the arrival of COVID-19, and the resulting measures imposed in March 2020, once more necessitated changes to the model of data collection.[267] As a result of the complications and restrictions surrounding human contact, ethical licence had to be revised to allow for the data collection conversations to be conducted by phone, but not via social platforms or video calls. These restrictions further hindered the progress of the project for several reasons including the refugees' dependency on such tools for communication due to factors relating to signal, ease of access and understanding. For example, video calls can significantly increase comprehension when one party is not using their mother tongue (or both parties, as may be the case with Kurdish refugees whose first language is not Arabic). Cold calls or phone calls without the reassurance of facial responses were difficult to conduct and I suspect that because the format was perceived as more formal, there was a tension in the exchange.[268] It is also important to mention that the isolation resulting from coronavirus restrictions had a serious impact on the mental and also physical well-being of the research participants and in particular it was shocking to witness the effects on the primary informant (described below).[269]

Language barrier

---

[267] All researchers had to evacuate University offices in March 2020 and in some cases, such as mine, never returned.

[268] [FN 20.04.21 20].

[269] Other impediments to the progress of this study included difficulties in financing such a project and the need to advance my knowledge of Arabic. I therefore accepted the opportunity to conduct paid research as a Research Associate for Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide (CCCW) for a project that involved interviews in Lebanon, Syrian and South Sudan, and was granted the Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Bursary to complete an Advanced Diploma in Arabic Language alongside my own research for this study.

As mentioned above, all contact and communications with the refugees was in vernacular Levantine Arabic, the spoken language widely understood throughout the region, and referred to as *al ʿāmīyya* (meaning the colloquial).[270] Some of the refugees had strong accents that took some time to attune to (for example mountain, rural, or Bedouin dialects, as well as the pronunciations of those whose origins were Palestinian.)[271] However, the Arabic I had learned in Lebanon was sufficient to cultivate understanding, and I was able to repeat the idea that was being offered to me back to the speaker in a standardised form of spoken language (Lebanese *ʿāmīyya* or MSA) to confirm meaning. Gradually, my Lebanese Arabic gave way to Syrian expressions and phonation, and, with a great deal of patience on their part, the refugees were largely responsible for developing the greatly improved language skills I have today. I mention this because when it came to the in-depth interview with the primary informant, she had known me over a long enough period of time to discern the limitations of my language skills, and to adapt her speech accordingly. She never slowed down, but rather found other creative ways to deliver the same message in a way I would understand, expounding an idea by illustrating it with examples, or engaging me as one might a child, asking questions, and leading me, as listener, towards a certain conclusion.[272]

For those who had a better grasp of English, the conversations were mixed, with some degree of language switching between Arabic and English. That interchange between languages would be reflected by myself, leading to a back-and-forth pattern that allowed for a natural means of comprehension check, as I could repeat an idea in the

---

[270] Levantine Arabic is the broad term covering dialects spoken in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan.

[271] Hauran, between Syria and Jordan – Shawi and Najdi dialects are spoken in Syria.

[272] E.g. [FN 06.02.21 1-9B].

other language to allow for the opportunity to ensure mutual understanding.[273] However, even in cases where English language skills were strong, it was evident that, as the subject of the conversation turned to matters of the mind and heart, memories, struggles and hopes, the language always returned to the mother tongue.[274]

For Kurdish Syrians for whom, as noted above, Arabic was already a second language (*Kurmanji* Kurdish being their first) the primary language of conversation was English, with a type of language switching that was used to emphasise an idea, or to compensate for limited vocabulary.[275] In the Kurdish cases represented in this study, they usually had higher levels of education and, as a result, increased confidence in communication in English.[276] Further observations on language are considered in the following chapter, in addition to a brief consideration of the unique position of the Kurds.

A final point on language is that one consequence of not being able to record the conversations is that there is no further opportunity for checking meanings of specific words, as I only have what is recorded in my notes. Where I have translated directly to English, for example, there is no possibility of return to the original language used, and, therefore, no alternative translation available.[277] To compensate for this (to some degree)

---

[273] This method of language switching and repetition of ideas was a tactic I used in my role as support officer when in the position of translator between the refugees and a supporting agency. Often I would find myself saying the same thing three times, in English, then Arabic for translation, then English again, as a natural opportunity for learning. This was one advantage of being a support worker for whom Arabic was the second language whereas all the others were native speakers.

[274] [FN 27.04.21 34-35; and [FN 21.04.21 26-27].

[275] Bogusia Temple and Rhetta Moran, *Learning to live together* (Salford: Joseph Rowntree Foundation/ University of Salford press, 2005); cited in Sabouni, *Psychosocial Needs of Syrian Refugees*, 52.

[276] [FN. 21.04.21 26:2].

[277] One example from field notes is the word "chivalry," used by a Kurdish refugee. I have no record of whether the informant gave this word in English or whether I translated directly as I took notes. Either way, I suspect that from the context, "courtesy" would be a better translation. [FN.21.04.21 31:6].

I have included some key Arabic terms that were noted in my field notes next to my translation in the presentation of data.

Note on vulnerability – why is this research sensitive?

Returning to the idea of vulnerability, mentioned briefly above, it must be asked why, in ethical consideration of such a project, talking about philosophical or religious belief is considered to be a point of vulnerability. In Moyaert's discussion on the value of openness in interreligious dialogue she states:

> An encounter with the religious other can be distressing, for it is especially in the encounter with the other that the human person becomes aware of his/her own strangeness and vulnerability.[278]

Moreover, an exposure of philosophical or religious worldview is an exposure of the very depths of being, identity, meaning, and purpose. The willingness to enter into dialogue with the other must come with a readiness to be exposed, examined, and critiqued, and can therefore be fraught with tensions. Moyaert continues:

> Behind the openness pluralism argues for, there is an inability to deal with real strangeness – not only the strangeness of the other, but first and foremost one's own strangeness.[279]

I would suggest that it is this same exposure of each party's strangeness that makes engagement between refugees and host communities so challenging at times, and yet such an opportunity for joy because, when one chooses to overcome the discomfort of being faced with one's own strangeness and vulnerability, and is met with the same tentative willingness coming from the other side, a shared humanity is revealed, in which those very "strangenesses" are found to be what paradoxically unite. Moyaert expands:

---

[278] Marianne Moyaert, "Interreligious dialogue and the value of openness; taking the vulnerability of religious attachments into account" in *The Heythrop Journal* LI (2010): 737.

[279] Moyaert, "Interreligious Dialogue," 738.

There are in principle no limits to openness. The way forward for interreligious dialogue is to look beyond the particular to what unifies and transcends all religious perspectives. There are no strangers![280]

Other hesitations

Von Benzon and van Blerk also raise the subject of researcher vulnerability, in particular when dealing with people who have had traumatic experiences or are emotionally charged cases.[281] My own hesitation in embarking on this project are due, in part, perhaps, to a fear of misrepresenting Muslims and Islam, or being misunderstood either during the dialogue, or in its written representation, or being seen to have "overstepped the mark," in dealing with vulnerable informants, in addition to the challenge of balancing simultaneous "divergent responsibilities" towards the refugees and the university.[282] These hesitations and fears reflect the hesitation, I believe, of wider society that has inhibited the possibility of natural engagement with minority communities as well as free and fair public discourse on Islam in our country today, particularly in the current age of migration crisis and Islamophobia.[283] Perhaps these anxieties are also, in part, the causes that lead to the authorities delegating power to parties who reinforce social divisions, and intensify ghettoisation through the control of the narrow views held by some conservative groups and, consequently, hinder integration into wider society.

Recognising that I found myself at a unique intersection between different communities (Council, Church and Mosque) at a very interesting moment in time (the arrival of the first Syrian refugees to North East Scotland) I decided to overcome these hesitations in order to seek a better understanding of that which was being presented to

---

[280] Moyaert, "Interreligious dialogue," 737.
[281] Von Benzon and Van Blerk, *Research Relationships*, 901.
[282] Von Benzon and Van Blerk, *Research Relationships*, 901.
[283] Von Benzon and Van Blerk, *Research Relationships*, 901.

me. The solution to all these apprehensions and challenges above was to enter more fully into the encounter with the refugees, willing to expose my own strangeness and vulnerability. Over time, it became clear that to focus on one solo voice of a person with whom time could be spent, thus, securing a strong foundation to open and real dialogue, would be the most valuable way forward. I hoped that through that encounter I could seek a better appreciation of the real life experiences, perspectives and narratives of the Syrian refugees, and to articulate them in such a way that this knowledge could be used to inform future resettlement strategies and public policy appropriate to such a context as North East Scotland.

The final project design

Research Methods – (Ethnography and Case Study)

The impossibility of attempting to capture a full picture of refugee resettlement within a project such as this, which would have to include diverse experiences, personalities, histories, skills, ambitions, health and abilities, means that any effort to homogenise the refugee community is both unreasonable and futile.[284] Generalisation is therefore not the aim, and this project has consequently been designed to include information gathered by means of ethnographic representation of encounters with the resettled community over a prolonged period, supported by case study interviews that allowed for repeated return as researcher to the research site. Ethnographic is used in this study to mean the approach to writing, as opposed to the apprach to data collection.[285] This dual approach allowed for a more in-depth investigation of the particular context

---

[284] Starman, "The case study," 39.
[285] See: Paloma Gay y Blasco, and Huon Wardle *How to Read Ethnography* (2nd ed.) (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021).

that would be heuristic and illustrative.[286] As mentioned above, the observation of the

sample for this research spanned a period of five years (Spring 2017 to Summer 2022),

thus maximising the exploratory aspect of the study, enabling a more considered

illumination of complex phenomena.[287] As Rapport, notes, field work of this kind is

rarely linear but rather (and even, perhaps, preferably) "chaotic" or "intrinsically non-

systematic" in order to produce "authentic new data on the human condition."[288] He

continues: "the researcher opens himself or herself up to otherness, hoping for new

relationships, and ones that have never happened before."[289]

The combination of mixed methods, ethnographic written examination, together

with intrinsic case study in the form of interviews, allowed for the three phases of

research identified by Lincoln and Guba as: "Orientation and overview," "focused

exploration," and "member checking," a final stage ensuring that informants have the

opportunity to verify the written representation of their contributions. In this case, that

was continued throughout data collection by means of verbal summary of what I had

previously understood, and the opportunity for the informant to correct or expand as

necessary.[290] Moreover, the dual approach supported a more narrative representation of

---

[286] Sharan B. Merriam*, Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (2nd ed.). (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bas, 2009); Helena Harrison, Melanie Birks, Richard Franklin, and Jane Mills, *Case Study Research: Foundations and Methodological Orientations* Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung /Forum: Qualitative Social Research 18, no.1, (2017): Art. 19, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1701195; Also ,M. Agar *The Professional Stranger: an informal introduction to ethnography* (London, Academic Press, 1996); Pickard, *Research Methods,* 135.

[287] Harrison, *Foundations and Methodological Orientations*, (no page numbers in the text).

[288] Rapport, *The Key Concepts,* 186.

[289] Rapport, *The Key Concepts,* 186.

[290] See below " primary informant" Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Enquiry*, 235–6; Pickard, *Research Methods,* 102.

the data that articulates what Charmaz describes as "a whole human being who lived the story, rather than an anonymous report of it."[291]

The exit strategy employed in this study was dictated by time restraints, as the wealth of information available through such a method could be unending. It was also influenced by the awareness that I did not want to become "stuck" in a certain position, or to be viewed by anyone solely as researcher, mining a vulnerable field for information useful to myself. A natural close to the organic conversations with the primary informant was facilitated by her admission to hospital, an unfortunate moment that provided a reinforcing reason to draw a clear line under the research, and a return of the relationship to something more natural. In fact, the nature of the whole research process drew us closer together, her ultimately calling me "friend," a touching end to an enquiry that I believe demonstrates the importance of conversations such as these.[292]

Data collection – Fieldwork

Observation

As mentioned above, observation of the sample, as well as that of supporting agencies and members of the pre-existing communities (Muslim, Christian and other), over the period spanning those first five years of resettlement for the earliest arrivals was the basis of this study. Due to the evolving nature of the resettlement programme delivery, a process that required continual reflection, assessment and adaptation, observation could be undertaken in a very natural way through my professional

---

[291] Charmaz, "Grounded Theory," 236; Pickard, *Research Methods,* 143.
[292] This was not recorded in field notes at the time but she said something along the lines of: "I hope that when I come out of hospital you will visit me and we will drink tea together in my home. You will be my friend and I will be yours." (16.08.22).

participation in the project.[293] However, as mentioned in Chapter One, the emic/etic

tension of being at once, to some degree, both "insider "and "outsider" is captured by

Glesne and Peshkin who recognise that:

> The more you function as a member of the everyday world of the researched, the more
> you risk losing the eye of the uninvolved outsider: yet, the more you participate, the
> greater your opportunity to learn.[294]

Those observations were what informed the framework of this research, as well

as providing the research methods and approaches to further data collection. On-going

involvement in the field, however, meant that observations continued to inform the

content of the thesis as I interwove conversations parallel to wider engagement in the

community, thus testing and verifying the themes that emerged in the interview

conversations. Observation thus became a tool that remained throughout the study and, I

hope, will continue beyond to future studies, as the same sample expands beyond the

categorisation of "refugee" to gradually include second and third generation Syrian

Muslims living in, and contributing to, our society. These connections to the Syrian

Muslim refugee community that were forged by shared experience (the strong memories

of arrival and initial adjustment) as well as shared language, participation in significant

events such as engagements, weddings and the births of babies, allowed me, having

entered the lives of the refugees, to (as Maykut and Morehouse write):

"indwell…suspending as much as possible (my) own ways of viewing the world," a

---

[293] In the initial stages of the study, when the method was not yet finalized, this
data collection included natural access to and observation of Facebook group postings
(e.g. a page called "Syrians in the UK" or other community support networks), as well as
WhatsApp statuses (a rich opportunity for in-depth study of the emotional phases of
resettlement as well as religious views and their application to real life – for example in
dealing with bereavement of a parent who had died since their own resettlement.

[294] Corinne Glesne and Alan Peshkin. *Becoming qualitative researchers: An
introduction.* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1992), 40.

privilege that allowed for great personal learning and the possibility of a rich and long-term field of study.[295]

Interviews

The data collection in the form of interviews evolved over time, as outlined above, and settled on seven voices (comprising three men, four women, and two Kurds), with the ultimate focus on a solo voice, the single-subject case study, which will be described below. The method that developed was one of informal but purposeful conversation that allowed the exchange to "flow from the immediate context," as Pickard describes, and demanded what she recognises as "a very high level of concentration and the ability to be very reflective and reflexive."[296] This challenge that was made significantly harder by the language of conversation being Arabic. This method worked best with the participant who became the primary informant, as she had both a better understanding than the others of what I was seeking, and a greater willingness to offer her time for the purpose.[297]

During data collection, conversations were largely undirected.[298] Having offered the clearest description I could manage in Arabic of what this research was about (the human experience of resettlement, and experience of life in Scotland by means of the two research questions detailed above), I simply invited the participant to speak without interruption (except at times for understanding of a particular Arabic term, or to ask for

---

[295] Maykut and Morehouse, *Beginning Qualitative Research*, 69; Pickard, *Research* Methods, 227.

[296] Pickard, *Research* Methods, 200.

[297] I consider the reasons for this below.

[298] I might say something like "last time you told me about your childhood, until you arrived in Damascus"… and she, herself, would find a new place to begin. Usually conversations were heavily influenced by whatever was going on in her present life, for example, the physical struggles of being unwell and living alone. Then, because Arabic is so theocentric as a language, subject matter would soon turn, naturally, to the Divine.

more clarification on a given idea) and, naturally, further questions flowed from the matter in discussion.[299] Conversation has been described as "a basic mode of human interaction" in which, as Kvale notes, "Human beings talk to each other. . . .Through conversations we get to know other people, get to learn about their experiences, feelings, and hopes and the world they live in."[300] This essential human exchange for the purpose of deeper learning was that which was sought in the interviews.

Theological positioning

The previous chapter (in the review of literature framing the research) situated this study within the broad field of inter-religious dialogue, and established the premise of this study, which is that any attempt to understand the lived experience of the refugees that does not take into account a religious worldview, is distinctly lacking. This thesis seeks to illustrate the value of engaging in a form of conversation that invites the other to share from their full self, including their religious worldview, and so the interview aspect of the data collection, especially with the primary informant, is essentially and inescapably an inter-religious exchange. As Mitias notes, such an approach "can remove the veil of mystery which envelopes the others and paves the way for exploring constructive ways of reacting to and dealing with them. The path that leads to this understanding is dialogue."[301]

The positioning of the researcher in relation to the field of study has been identified and described above, as well as the epistemological and ontological positions assumed for this research being provided at the start of this chapter. However, a brief comment must be added to the theological approach of the researcher to the encounter.

---

[299] See "probing" in Russell *Research Methods*, 217-223.
[300] S. Kvale, *InterViews: an introduction to qualitative interviewing* (London: Sage, 1996), 5; cited in Pickard, *Research* Methods, 195.
[301] Mitias "Mysticism," 106.

The method of dialogue, which took the form of conversations about God, that were

undertaken as a means to consider the Divine in the eyes of the "other" in fact also

revealed a shared humanity. This approach to dialogue was made with genuine curiosity

about the "other" in their "otherness," and a desire to learn about God. This method of

engagement with the informants was done in a style that reflects the monastic principle

of *dilatato corde* (an expanded heard), as a means of stepping outside the usual

frameworks of engagement with refugees as "us" and "them." As mentioned above, I

was seeking an approach that could escape the duality of "Musim refugee" or "migrant

Muslim" to see a fellow human being as much separated from their true home as myself

or anyone else, and as much a sojourner in this life as any other person of monotheistic

religious faith. This approach is similar to the loving curiosity demonstrated by Thomas

Merton, the American Trappist monk, writer, poet, theologian, social activist, mystic and

scholar of contemporary religion.[302] His inter-religious engagements also began on a

personal level and developed into a means of achieving, simultaneously a deeper

appreciation for the other, and a deeper faith of his own.[303] He writes of "a common

ground of spiritual Truth, where we share a real and deep experience of God," and

progression towards a ''conversion of us both, … upwards" towards the Divine source,

and ''a real growth, an interior development.''[304] I suggest that that a contemplative

spirituality, such as that of Merton, can be a strong foundation to inter-religious dialogue

and co-operation, and can assist in overcoming perceived barriers between guest and host

---

[302] "Thomas Merton's Life and Work" The Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University, http://www.merton.org/chrono.aspx (accessed 20.10.22).

[303] Sidney H. Griffith, "[From the conclusion of] ''Sharing the Experience of the Divine Light',' Thomas Merton's Path to Inter-religious Understanding; Encounters and Dialogues with Muslims" in *CrossCurrents* 58, no.4 The University of North Carolina Press (December 2008): 610-11.

[304] Thomas Merton, *A Search for Solitude* (Harper: San Francisco, 1996), 273-74. Also referenced in Griffith, "Divine Light," 611; See also: Skudlarek *Dilatato Corde*, 7-9.

to allow a mutual hospitality to emerge, in which all parties are, at once, both host and guest.[305] In this way, the "horizontal" encounter between people opens up the possibility of a "vertical" encounter with God.[306] By engaging with such an approach as that of Merton in parallel to the data collection, this research demonstrates that, by listening to the narratives of refugees in exile with what might be termed "holy curiosity" that seeks the Divine in the face of the other, can contribute to a broader understanding of our shared human belonging to what Merton calls a "supernatural organism," in which "every other man is a piece of myself, for I am a part and a member of mankind."[307] This theological positioning is the basis for the dual meaning of the title, "God in the Eyes of a Refugee," an approach which seeks both a better understanding of God, as known by the other, as well as to look for the Divine reflected in her face.

The solo marginal voice

A final characteristic of this research was the eventual settling on a solo voice for in-depth single subject study that would ultimately act as a "warp," through which the narratives of others from the sample, and the supporting literature, could be interwoven as the "weft." Rather than supplanting other voices to become the only voice to be examined, hers instead informed and sharpened focus on the themes that were gradually becoming clear through interactions with other informants. Her explanations offered

---

[305] This notion of hospitality to refugees was explored in Marjorie G. Gourlay, *Hope Unexpected: An Account of the Encounter Between Lebanese Christians and Syrian Refugees,* (Inpublished MPhil dissertation, University of St Andrews, 2015).

[306] See Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (Glasgow: Collins, 1976).

[307] I explored the idea of "holy curiosity" in an unpublished paper presented at ITMS 17th General Meeting, St Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana (June 24-27, 2021) entitled "Merton and the Refugee: exploring a contemplative approach towards hospitality to the perceived "other"- Syrians in Scotland." The notion is similar to the principle of "Holy Envy" explored by Barbara Brown Taylor in her book *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*. (New York, NY: Harper One 2019); See also Thomas Merton, *No Man is an Island* (London: Burns and Oates, 1955), xxi.

deeper meaning to the contributions of those others, and it was her unwavering faith that allowed the opportunity for this to become a theological study, and an experiment in inter-religious dialogue. This articulation of a marginalised voice is one aspect of this research that makes it a unique contribution to knowledge, for as Rapport concludes:

> It is individuals who are the corporeal constituents of the social world, the moving agents in history, the origins of culture…. Finally, it is individuals who potentially suffer. Thus it is that individuals must be the measure of moral action, the benchmark of justice in society, the foundation of cultural value, and their bodiliness unite the world in a common liberal morality.[308]

It was intentional that the principal informant for this study was originally selected for interview due to certain characteristics that both make her a person who has been marginalised and, as I am arguing in this thesis, also a voice that should be heard. The interviewee is unusual in that she is an unmarried woman in her mid-fifties, who arrived in the UK without being accompanied by a man (no husband, father, brother – or *maḥram* in Arabic, meaning, in this context, guardian, which is significant in Islam and Middle Eastern thinking).[309] She did come with a younger sister who has since married and started a family of her own.[310] The absence of a male figure in the household made it

---

[308] Rapport, *Transcendent Individual*, 201.

[309] From the Arabic root *ḥ-r-m,* meaning prohibited or sacred, in this case, being a man with whom sexual relations would be forbidden or considered *ḥarām* due to kinship through bloodlines or by marriage. A *maḥram* can act as a legal escort and perform the function of guardian on a journey such as the *ḥajj*. Although that is not legally required in the instance of migration, the lack of such a figure can make a woman both appear and feel more vulnerable, and forces her to take on authority that she has perhaps previously not been required to assume, all the more challenging in an alien environment. See: Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic:* 201; See also: Abū 'l-Ikhlāṣ al-Shurunbulālī, *Marāqī 'l-Saʿādat: Ascent to Felicity: A Manual on Islamic Creed and Ḥanafī Jurisprudence* (trans. Faraz A. Khan) (London: White Thread Press, 2010), 148.

[310] The sister was another significant voice in the early days of the resettlement project and features heavily in my field notes but, having moved on in her life, was not approached formally for interview.

very difficult for them in the initial stages of resettlement and ultimately cut them off from the wider Syrian and Muslim community.[311]

The informant has been further isolated by a series of physical health problems that, despite having surgery, have forced her to remain mostly housebound. Over time, these have become increasingly worse, resulting in serious pain, a heart condition, and other symptoms that are all, as yet, medically unexplained.[312] In one phone conversation she said:

> Being stuck at home between four walls and not mixing with people or contributing anything to society I feel I am nothing…. nobody needs me… I am without value, worthless… I don't exist. Not being in relation to others I have no meaning.[313]

During the same conversation, she added:

> If I could speak English, I could go out, do something… I have a lot of ambitions… open a shop, write stories… and other things… but without the language I feel stuck, trapped, tied, like I am tied to a chair. It is very saddening.[314]

The interviewee has had very little formal education, having left school at an early age in order to work, and was illiterate when arriving in the UK and starting English language lessons.[315] Language learning was made harder by what she understood to be the effects of accumulated emotional trauma on her concentration and memory.[316]

---

[311] Referred to in [FN.12.10.21 81.5] This unfortunate condition caused a separation from the others who also arrived as refugees and although the concept of *maḥram* is redundant in British society, the nature of the scheme was such that the refugees were ushered into the Muslim community where the concept was fundamental in establishing relationships, community, and networks of support.

[312] In the first home visit since COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, we had a general conversation unrelated to this study but she was visibly very weak, walking with a frame and unable to perform simple household tasks. [FN.22.03.22 94.2]

[313] [FN.12.10.21 82.1]; *"bḥs ḥāli mly shī…bdūn qīma…mannī mawjūd"* notes were taken during the conversation in English (immediate translation) except for these in Arabic letters which I have translated in the text above.

[314] [FN.12.10.21 82.2].

[315] In cases such as these, support workers had to first teach the refugees how to write their own names in Arabic and English in order to sign documents. [Referenced in FN 12.10.21 81.]

[316] [FN12.20.21. 82.5]; She said there was "no space" in her head, and that new vocabulary would "go in and exit directly out the other side." This frustration was

Additional factors contributing to the challenge of language learning include the fact that formal classroom education, for her, was associated with physical violence and an environment of intense fear, the memory of which was difficult to overcome, even in this new relaxed setting of adult learning.[317] Interestingly, the informant's frustrations with language learning were partially explained by what she reported to be a visitation of a man in a dream that she had had soon after arrival in the UK, in which he told her she would not be able to communicate in English for a period of ten years.[318]

A final challenge to resettlement and integration for this person in particular has been the role of (and expected proficiency in using) technology in the context of resettlement, a difficulty that added to her sense of alienation on arrival and has continued to impede personal development since then. For example, automated answering services with numbered options are not designed with non-native speakers in mind.[319] Additionally, remote access to medical care can be challenging, and usually

---

compounded by the evident progress of others but my own observation was that those refugee women with children with whom she compared herself (no matter their previous experience of education or trauma) had more opportunity to engage with the wider community and also learned English from their children.

[317] Both her and her sister reported regular beatings in school as punishment for mistakes. The education system in Syria is very well reputed in the region but is established on a method of rote learning [FN12.20.21. 82.4]. A full analysis of the language learning provision on resettlement is outwith the bounds of this particular study but featured heavily in conversations with refugees.

[318] [FN 12.10.21. 82.3] She said she found this very disheartening, and to think that she would be cut off from society for, perhaps, a fifth of her life made her very sad but she would accept it if it was what God willed, or was *maktūb* (written). Dreams are significant in Middle Eastern thought and within Islam are categorized into three kinds in Islam : *Rahmani* (from God), *Nafsani* (from the self) and *Shaytani* (from Satan). See: "What Islam says about Dreams and Dreaming," www.Islam religion.com: https://www.islamreligion.com/articles/5326/viewall/dreams/#_ftn23276 (Accessed 20.10.22).

[319] Language learning continues to be seen as the central to integration and independence and was identified, for example, at a COSLA {FN.23.05.17 8.2.i] [FN.10.05.17 6.4].

requires Language Line interpretation (where available).[320] Furthermore, the abundance of written correspondence (for appointments, bills, contracts, taxes and benefits) proved overwhelming for the new arrivals.[321] The refugee support programmes were already evolving to a format of email, and remote assistance, prior to Covid-19, and is now fully remote in most places.[322] There are, however, ways in which technology has assisted this refugee. For example, the availability of satellite access to Arabic television channels keep her informed, and offer familiar companionship in her solitude. Mobile phone applications such as Google Translate have been of use, and such social media apps as WhatsApp that have photograph and audio recording functions, as well as those which can assist her in her religious practice, by identifying the *qibla* (direction of prayer), playing the *ādhān* (call to prayer) in the voice of the *mu'azzin* of one's choice (the one who issues the call to prayer, usually from the minaret of a mosque) at the relevant *Salāt* (prayer) times, depending on the precise location of the user.*[323]*

I detail all these descriptors above in order to draw a picture of a person who is at the margin of the margins, as it were. As mentioned briefly above, she is largely

---

[320] Language Line interpretation is not always available in Arabic familiar to the refugees (e.g. Moroccan or Libyan dialects which are significantly distanced from Levantine colloquial Arabic. [FN. 10.05.17 6.4] Some General Practices are reluctant to use this service because it is expensive and sometimes patients do not attend appointments that this has been set up for. The problem of language access is further complicated for those Syrian refugees who are Kurdish and do not necessarily understand much Arabic. Although observations suggest that not having such language support actually encouraged their progress in English language learning at a faster rate than their Arab counterparts. [FN.04.04.17 18.4].

[321] This is a recurring topic throughout field notes.

[322] One example of temporarily overcoming these language challenges in was the establishment of a drop-in clinic in Dundee that was made available at the same building as English Language classes and mostly offered translation and support with written correspondence. (Twice a week in field notes, pp. 1-14).

[323] This is most often written in English as *muezzin* due to the *shadde* (stress) on the "ذ" which is more accurately transcribed as "*dh*", and with the stress "*dhdh*" is unclear to the reader. There are distinct styles of voice not only in different parts of the Muslim world but also at different mosques. (One example of many is and app called "Muslim Pro: Quran Prayer Times").

overlooked and side-lined, even by the other Syrian refugees. This is perhaps compounded by her own distancing from the group, and strong sense of independence, first grown out of necessity and then sustained, as will be illustrated in later chapters, by faith. These are the reasons she was chosen as the main voice for this study. She was among the very first arrivals to Scotland and we have carefully built up a relationship of respect and trust over the years, so now I am able to honour her by giving her voice, where others perhaps have not had such an opportunity. Her limited education brings an honest simplicity to her words, but she is by no means unintelligent, and early conversations with her guided and directed much of the resettlement programme in the place where she has been resettled, because, as a marginal observer, she often saw things before others did.[324] Our established mutual trust meant that I could be open with her about the purpose of the research, and (I hoped) she could speak freely in return.

She appeared not to have any ulterior motive with her answers although I know she would be delighted if I became a Muslim, especially because, in later conversations, she became bolder about questioning my own religious beliefs and offering guidance for living a life that would be pleasing to God.[325] This may seem insignificant, but although I had not had any contact with her for almost a year before I approached her about this research, she said that a couple of weeks prior to my contacting her she had had a dream in which I was wearing *ḥijāb* (the Muslim head covering). I think it is worth noting this, because although she did not tell me how she interpreted the dream, I suspect it

---

[324] For example, details relating to housing, access to services and support as well as broader perspectives on the overall scheme of integration. I refer to this idea in the final chapter.

[325] For example asking me why Mary, the mother of Jesus, wore a veil and explaining that I should also be covered as a person of faith. [FN.5.5.21.]; I return to this idea, of entering inter-religious dialogue with one who has a different approach, in the final chapter.

influenced both her readiness to speak to me, and her style of approach, in particular when raising and addressing subject matters related to religious faith.[326]

The pivotal shift in the design of this research came when she told me she wished she could speak English and could write (referenced above), and that she had a lot to say, providing someone would listen.[327] I tried to encourage her by saying that perhaps after this study, we could work together, because I could write her stories for her. However, what started to happen naturally (in the fashion of Scheherazade of *The Thousand and One Nights*, repeatedly leaving the listener with an unfinished tale) was a series of conversations which never quite came to a close, with her always giving me something to return to: a verse of the Qur'an, a story from her life, or an idea she had not quite told me.[328] Over time, what became revealed were the themes and ideas that provide the basis of Part II of the study, her voice interwoven with and supported by my observations of and conversations with others, as well as the existing literature. Sadly, as mentioned above, the discussions were brought to an abrupt halt by the participant's hospitalisation.[329]

---

[326] I explore this further in Chapter Five, on God.

[327] [FN 12.10.21 82:3].

[328] Narrative analysis is not part of this study however it is worth mentioning that there is a long history of women storytellers in the Arab world, primarily in private, with the male counterpart, the *ḥakawātī*, being a public role of poet, actor, comedian, historian, and storyteller of "cliff-hangers" and moral tales. Karam Nayebpour, "Narrativity in *The Thousand and One Nights*" in *Advances in Language and Literary Studies (ALLS)* 8, no.4 (2017): 85-90. http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.8n.4p.85 (accessed 20.10.22); Barbara Romaine, "Evolution of a storyteller: the "*ḥakawātī*" against the threat of cultural annihilation," Georgetown University Press *Al-'Arabiyya*, 40/41, (2007-2008): 257-263. The idea of storyteller as figure with a particular social role is also considered by Rapport in Rapport, Nigel "Discourse and Individuality: Bedouin Talk in the Western Desert and the South Sinai" in *Anthropology Today* 8, no.1 (Feb., 1992): 19.

[329] She apologized profusely that we could not continue the conversations while she was in the hospital, that she was in great pain and not able to move and didn't know when she would be able to return home. I reassured her that we could continue the conversations as friends but that she was released from formal participation in the study,

Thematic analysis

The data analysis employed for this ethnographic study was an iterative and cyclical process of observing, listening, identifying themes, and connecting ideas from a wide variety of sources.[330] The interviews and single-person study enabled a deeper understanding of the personal meaning of main themes that arose, and contributed to the synthesis of an inclusive picture, illustrating how these themes fit together within the context of resettlement. These themes were coded organically in journals and tested by further data collection, as well as peer review and analysis of existing literature. No coding software was used for this study, but rather a continual process of defining and naming themes and subthemes through hand-written lists, charts, and mind maps, which were tested in the field and refined over time.[331] Finally, some preliminary theorisation could be attempted to consider how and why these themes occur, and to what extent they can influence the process of refugee resettlement. This thematic analysis was the basis for the identification of the three key themes that are considered separately in the chapters in Part II: estrangement, homeland and God. These three are not exhaustive, and the same data could have been categorised and examined differently. However the focus throughout the study was to seek information that offered some response to the central research question: the extent to which religious belief impacts the process of resettlement; and these themes provide a framework for exploring that question. There is an overwhelming amount of data that has not made its way into the final thesis, due to the fact that both resettlement and religious belief are human experiences that affect

---

thanking her for the wealth of information she had taught me and provided me with. [FN 02.08.22 94:3-4].

[330] Pickard, *Research Methods,* 106, 268.

[331] V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," in *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, (2006): 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa (accessed 20.10.22).

every detail of real life. It is hoped that the selected themes are appropriate thematic divisions to illustrate this, in that they relate to diverse aspects of the human experience of resettlement – physical, emotional and spiritual – and are suitable categories for the sub-themes discussed in each chapter. The final chapters of the thesis provide an overall analysis and evaluation of the data, and draw all these diverse elements back together in order to summarise and review the contributions of the ethnography and interviews towards answering the primary research question. and Some suggestions are providedin Chapter Six from the findings of this study and some avenues for further research are identified in Chapter Seven.

Issues of academic trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba established criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research, namely: credibility (which is an internal factor), transferability (external), data dependability (or reliability) and confirmability (which seeks objectivity).[332] The above paragraphs have sought to demonstrate to what extent each of these was considered in the research process. Credibility has been earned by the prolonged engagement in the field, with a cyclical process of continued observation, and recurring dialogue with informants, to ensure participant-led data collection, member checking, and the refining of key themes over a sustained period of time.[333] Where possible, direct quotations are included, translated or transcribed into anglicised representations of spoken Arabic. As mentioned above, the unique contribution of this study is the narrowing towards an in-depth exploration of a particular case. The transferability of this study is therefore dependent on the unique characteristics of any

---

[332] Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic inquiry*, 384-392.

[333] Norelli S Lowell, Jill M. Norris, Deborah E. White, and Nancy J. Moules, "Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria" in *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, (2017): 1–13.

future research site. Certain aspects of this approach and model may be replicated in other studies, but the thesis does not seek to make generalisations that can be applied indiscriminately elsewhere.[334] The inter-disciplinary, mixed methods approach opened up entry points for other researchers to follow up from this study, due to the fact that the data collected addresses a variety different domains in fields relating to migration and refugee studies, ethnic and religious studies, psychology, even environmental studies, urban planning, and within the field of computer science which could develop software solution to facilitate communication, access to services and other means of support towards independence.[335] The dependability of this study has to be judged by the written thesis alone, as ethical issues relating to protection of the informants (mentioned above) prevented audio recording of the conversations, or publication of reflexive journals or field notes. The confirmability of the study is established by the interplay of the data with existing literature that corroborates the themes raised in data collection, and explored in Part II.[336]

Limitations

This study has been limited in its scope by the external conditions and factors outlined above: access to the sample; ethical considerations; COVID-19 changes to the method of data collection and access to literature, the resulting smaller sample, and the abrupt ending of unfinished conversations with the principal informant. The period of study was limited to the first five years of resettlement of those who arrived in the initial

---

[334] Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic inquiry*; Lowell, et. al. "Thematic Analysis," 3.
[335] See for example the work of Global Share, an initiative that has a vision for migrants and refugees, https://global-share.org (accessed 20.10.22).
[336] See "Fieldwork" in Rapport, *The Key Concepts*, 178. Furthermore, other studies that were undertaken with the same sample discovered similar themes such as those relating to perceived ghettoization of the refugees and frictions within the Muslim community.

cohorts through the SVPRS. Additional restrictions affecting the scope of data produced include the method of case study as an approach, and the process of participant self-selection.[337]

It must be noted that this research has taken place over a period of intense and rapid change, for the refugees, of the resettlement programme itself, and of the wider network of support structures that are continually evolving. As mentioned in Chapter One, the SVPRS was the first refugee resettlement project of this kind in the area in which the study was conducted, but has since been added to with (and overtaken by) the VCRS (Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme), and more recently, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) Scheme, Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), and Ukrainian resettlement schemes (Homes for Ukraine, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme and Ukraine Family Scheme).[338]

Delimitations

The intentional parameters of this study that were imposed by the researcher include the situating of the study within the framework of inter-religious dialogue as a means of side-stepping contentious matters relating to Islam, or the politics of resettlement, and thus contributing something less time-bound to knowledge. The narrowing of the focus from a wider sample to an individual voice at the margins was a secondary aspect of this, as a means to focus on the particular, and illustrate diversity, rather than attempt to convey a fair picture of the whole.

---

[337] A.B. Starman, "The case study as a type of qualitative research" in *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* 1, (2013): 28-43.

[338] See the Government website information for Afghan and Ukrainian refugee schemes, https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme and https://www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine .

The focus of this research is potential transferability rather than generalizability. It is hoped that the method and findings may be applied in similar contexts or settings to inform deeper understandings of the lived experiences of migrants, and of other communities at the margins of society. The observations and conversations produced so much of interest that could have been explored within the framework of other projects, but throughout the formulation of this thesis, only data that relates to the research question has been included. As established in the previous chapter, the interviews and conversations with the key informant are essentially inter-religious dialogue in nature, in that they seek to meet the "other" in the fullness of their "otherness," which includes a discovery of God, in the eyes of a refugee. However the research does not focus on the model of dialogue but rather on the material the dialogue produced and, in particular, those themes which contribute to a deeper understanding of the extent of the influence of religious worldview on the process of resettlement.

Summary of chapter

This chapter has outlined the research method employed in this study, beginning with the philosophical research paradigm, and offering a justification for a qualitative approach with the human being as the key research tool. The sample for the study was then defined, and some key characteristics of the sample described, followed by a full exploration of the ethical considerations of such an approach to research. Obstacles and barriers to the study were recognised, and some points for reflection were offered relating to the vulnerability of the informants, the researcher, and the topic of religious belief, as well as an acknowledgement of researcher hesitation being offered as a reflection of both the difficulty and value of such a study. The final design of the research project was then outlined, with reference to the ethnographic examination and case study, followed by a

description of the primary informant, a summary of data analysis, the establishment of academic rigour and trustworthiness, and finally the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Due to the model of research employed that allowed the participants to lead the conversations, the content of the following chapters is not in any way exhaustive, but rather representative of themes arising from a long-term series of conversations. The chapter on God, for example, does not in any way fully explain the God of Islam, but rather is an endeavour to maintain as true a representation of that which was presented to me as possible, in order to illustrate the core aspects of her Muslim religious belief, and maintain the centrality of the refugee's voice.

PART II

3. On Estrangement:

Considering *al-ghurba* as a Feature of Resettlement

"We have lost everything...
The places are no longer our places; the faces are no longer our faces.
Even our belongings and our memories are distorted.
We have become strangers in our land and strangers everywhere."[339] Carole Farah

Part II of the thesis comprises three research data chapters. The first begins with a simple portrait of a human being, displaced by war, and becoming a refugee. Other refugee voices are then interwoven, as the impact of migration is explored in its diversity. This chapter works through the experience of resettlement, then Chapter Four considers the particular of estrangement from homeland, before the thesis returns to the refugee's relationship with God in the final chapter. This trajectory has been chosen to reflect the meta-narrative that resonated throughout data collection, and was confirmed by the way the principal informant, Youmna, a person of great faith, presented her understanding of her own life and existence. Her contribution is at the heart of this study.[340]

This chapter presents a variety of voices that demonstrate the diversity of backgrounds, experiences, challenges, and approaches that refugees have in, and towards, resettlement, and to what extent the sense of estrangement *(fitnat al-ghurba)* from home, from the host society, and from other immigrants, becomes apparent as a

---

[339] Excerpt from a poem by Carole Farah, "'I wish it had been a dream': Voice from Syria" The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), https://unocha.exposure.co/voicesfromsyria?gclid=CjwKCAjw6fyXBhBgEiwAhhiZsgNi 39dwyvjeNLweMXMYaCATmKTsxYV8N3OR99AttWNXwVw5MrRadxoCeMcQAv D_BwE (accessed 20.10.22).

[340] The research participant's names have all been changed to protect their identity.

result. The chapter begins with a retelling of the primary informant's life story, as she told it to me, in order to illustrate the origin and roots of this particular displaced person, reveal her essential humanity, and lay the foundation for later discussion of themes that arise, relating to resettlement, estrangement, up-rootedness, and loss. Her story is followed by a discussion of the Arabic term *al-ghurba*, which emerged as a central theme during data collection. Extracts from the narratives of other refugees who were observed and interviewed for this study are then provided; in order to further exemplify the varied ways *al-ghurba* is experienced. Finally, the themes arising in this chapter are considered in the light of religion, in preparation for the following chapters.

Portrait of a refugee: Youmna's story

When I invited the principal informant to begin sharing the stories she had said she wanted to tell, she first took a long pause, and then began to speak, slowly, in *al-fuṣḥa*, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), as if reciting a narrative she had memorised for the occasion, pausing after each sentence for me to write it down. I have chosen to retell the story here in the first person, as I recorded them in the moment. However, given the length of the conversation, as well as my limited ability to write verbatim in Arabic, I include only some main parts that serve to provide a portrait of her as a person prior to exile.[341] Certain ideas are included in Arabic to demonstrate my particular translation of terms that could be translated differently, or have no English equivalent. The initial sentences are provided here in transliterated Arabic firstly because they are very poetic in

---

[341] Sometimes she included thoughts on life in Scotland, or we got into side discussions, for example about agricultural methods and comparisons with farming in the UK as well as clarification of certain terms. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some of my notes were in English, or Arabic represented by English letters, because, as the story continued, her language returned slowly to the colloquial.

form, and, secondly, because they offer the closest possible representation of her own voice. The lines are then translated into English before the story continues.

"*Ana fatātun min Sūrīya,*
wa tufūlati kāna rā'y'ā jiddan
wa kuntu aḥibu-al ḥayata kathīran
wa kulla shay ladayhi kāna basīṭan …"[342]

I am a girl from Syria, My childhood was wonderful and I loved life so much. And everything I had was simple.[343] I had friends. And I had a friend her name was … I can't remember her name now… I haven't seen her in forty years. She left the country. We played together and loved each other very much. We loved drawing. I loved the nature very, very much. I really loved the nature. The mountains, the fields, the trees, the green meadow… I loved the flowers on the hills and I played among the stones, jumping from one rock to another, and built houses out of mud.

My childhood was innocent; I didn't know anything about life. I didn't know anything about the harshness of life *(qasūt al- ḥayāt)*. There were grown ups all around me but I didn't know what it meant to be a grown up. I wished to grow up quickly… and I pretended to be like my mother, my aunties, and the other women in the neighbourhood… [*giggling*] all the grown ups round about me, although I didn't know what it meant to be an adult. How it was for them, their dreams, challenges, hope... I didn't know. I just saw them and wanted to be like them, that's all.

Our family had sheep and goats, and I loved looking after them when I was small. I had to feed them and walk with them. They would follow me and I would play with them. I would speak to them and they would understand me. If I went up the hills, for example, they would follow me. When I told them to drink, they would understand and drink. I took bread with me to drop along the way so they would follow. I was probably about eight or nine years old at that time.

I played with my friends, the other children in the neighbourhood, the girls. I loved the winter most of all, sitting next to the fire, or the gas stove. In the evening for example, we spent the evening together, all the family, we ate simple food but we were happy and comfortable sitting together, enjoying the company and eating together. We

---

[342] [FN 21.11.21 21i-ii].

[343] It is grammatically acceptable to begin a sentence in Arabic with "and."

had simple things like bread heated on the stove with *(za'atar)*, olive oil, *(zayt, jibne, labne, shay)* cheese, yogurt, and tea…[344]

I grew up, slowly, slowly. The more I grew up, the happier I was, I was growing up, becoming a young woman and learning about life. I started to understand how life can be hard, how there can be pain and sadness. I started to lose people. My friend left and travelled, I didn't know where. I started to lose relatives. One after the other, they died and went to the next life, up to be with the Lord of the Worlds. *(al-diniya al ākher, fowq, ʿind rab al ʿalamīn)* When they went, I started to feel the harshness of life. Childhood gives you the sweetness and I thought life was all about playing, eating, and sleeping, but no, I started to grow up and realise it was different, The harshness of the days, the need to work in order to live, I started to feel the tiredness of my parents, and if they weren't well, I started to understand they were in pain. As I grew up, the difficulties also grew with me… [*said with a wry chuckle.*]

When I was sixteen or seventeen, still young, but not fully grown up, as a teenager (you know how it is, you've been through that phase yourself you think you know everything). … I didn't like problems. I liked a balanced life, not extremes. I liked justice. No one take from me, I won't take from them.

I didn't learn in school, like others, but I learned from going about from place to place and working. I used to pick olives and things like that. Once I was about twenty I worked in the fields cutting wheat… light work…we cut the wheat by hand, and other things like barley, cotton, lentils, but not the cumin. Also we got wood from the trees. We have different trees than you have here: oak, apricot, plum, pomegranate, grapes, fig, and cherries… We grow trees and we get wood from them. We have a lot of olives and grapes in our village. I used to love *saj* (a kind of flatbread) with *laban* (yogurt) and tea for breakfast. I would go from village to village for work. Sometimes I didn't go to work and I stayed at home.

Later, when I was a bit older, I left the village and went to Damascus to work there. I can't remember what year exactly. I can't tell you when things were exactly because I couldn't write them down and I forget. I went to my uncle's house in Damascus. Of course my father took me and introduced me to the place. Then when he left, I stayed at my uncle's house and started to work in a factory.[345]

---

[344] I have only translated those that have direct translations to English. *Za'atar* is a mix of herbs including thyme, sumac, and sesame, and has various uses but is often used as a dip for bread and oil.

[345] [FN 21.11.21 21-25] She didn't mention this at the time but I know from earlier conversations that were notes in field notes as a reflection that she had fallen in love with a man who wanted to marry her but her father had disapproved because he was

At this point in the conversation the story broke down as she said she thought all stories had to have something nice *(ḥilwa)* in them or some meaning, and felt she would prefer to return to the story when she had thought of something to add to it. Unfortunately, she became unwell soon after, and so it was never possible for her to finish what she had hoped to achieve. The two-hour conversation then moved to memories of the seasonal migration of birds that follow the Eastern Mediterranean Highway: an important route for birds passing over land rather than sea; and a symbol of *hijra,* (migration, as explored in Chapter Four; and (sometimes) a symbol of expected return for all the refugees.[346] Further topics of discussion that arose in the course of this and other conversations are considered in the following two chapters, but first, an exploration of the concept, *al-ghurba*.[347]

Defining *al-ghurba*

al-ghurba is defined in the Hans Wehr dictionary as: "absence from the homeland; separation from one's native country, banishment, exile; life, or place, away

---

from another village. I commented in my notes that this was a significant loss, and resignation to the will of others, and, in particular, to the will of God, or fate.]FN.12.12.18 5:3] There is evidence to suggest the relationship with one's father does influence our understanding of the divine; although most literature that explores this is Christian (and sees God as "father") I do believe there will also be an influence in Islam. See, for example: Jane R. Dickie, Lindsey V. Ajega, Joy R. Kobylak, and Kathryn M. Nixon, "Mother, Father, and Self: Sources of Young Adults' God Concepts" in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45, (2006): 57–71.

[346] Tom Rollins, "Idlib, a refuge no more: stories of Syria's displaced" (March 1 2020), Mada Masr, https://www.madamasr.com/en/2020/03/01/feature/politics/idlib-a-refuge-no-more-stories-of-syrias-displaced/ (accessed 20.10.22); Syria is also a wintering ground for some, and breeding ground for others. See for example: Mahdi Saleh Mohammad Al Kerwi, Omar Mardenli, Tariq Salah Fathi Almrsomi and Mohammed Rasoul Mahdi Jasim "A Review of The Current Status of Migratory Wild Birds in Iraq and Syria" *Al-Qadisiyah Journal For Agriculture Sciences* (QJAS) ISSN: 2618-1479 12, no.1 (2022): 131-142.

[347] These related to comparisons between Scotland and Syria, the practice of faith in a new context, access to religious teaching and other matters. [FN 21.11.21 25].

from home."[348] The most literal translation of *al-ghurba* into English is "estrangement," but some have translated the term as: "exile", or even, "diaspora."[349] However, the root of the word, being *gh-r-b*, signifies: "to go away, depart, absent oneself, withdraw… leave," and carries rich meaning that consequently makes the term difficult to translate directly into a single English word.[350] Related in origin is the term, *al-ightirāb*, (from the same root) which also suggests separation from the native country, but carries additional connotations of "emigration; Europeanism, Occidentalism, Westernism."[351] As Hammer expounds (using different transliteration):

> The root of *ghurba*, the verb *gharaba*, is in a lexical/ philosophical sense, linked to it opposite *sharaqa*. *Al-sharq* is related to the rising sun; it is the East or Orient. Even in European languages, to be oriented literally means to face the sun. The sun as the source of light is, in Islamic philosophy, a symbol for God, who is the One from whom all light originates. The West, as the opposite, implies being away from the sun, in the darkness. Thus, the term *ghurba* means religiously and philosophically barred from the light.[352]
>
> The same root is the origin of the Arabic words *gharīb* (strange) and *al-gharb*

(the West), further exemplifying the sense of estrangement and literal "disorientation" that can accompany the experience of being a Syrian resettled in the West.

---

[348] Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic,* 783.

[349] For example: Rafik M. Salem, "Exile and Nostalgia in Arabic and Hebrew Poetry in al-Andalus (Muslim Spain)" SOAS: Unpublished Doctoral thesis (1987); Julie Peteet "Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora" in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no.4 (2007): 627.

[350] Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 783.

[351] Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 784. See also: See also Fawaz Turki, "The Palestinian Estranged" *Journal of Palestine Studies* 5, no. 1/2 (Autumn, 1975 - Winter, 1976): 83.

[352] Juliane Hammer, *Palestinians born in exile; diaspora and the search for a homeland*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 60; This thinking is reflected even in the Eastern Churches, which face towards the East, even if Jerusalem is in another direction. See: Sidney Harrison Griffith *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 145; and Arthur Serratelli, "Praying Ad Orientem," Catholic News Agency (CNA), Feb 2017, https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/column/53712/praying-ad-orientem (Accessed 20.10.22); a final note of interest is that in a manual of Hanafi jurisprudence, one of the events which are said to unfold in at the end of days is "the rising of the sun from the West." Al-Shurunbulālī, *Ascent to Felicity*, 39.

Edward Said, in his *Reflections on Exile*, captures this sense of disorientation that is shared by all who, like him, an Arab resettled in the West, have become estranged from their homeland.

> Exile is strangely compelling to think about, but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement.[353]

For the refugee, whose emigration was the ill-fated consequence of war, and not originally intended when they first took flight, this sense of being estranged from home is all the more painful. In the following section, the stories of how those interviewed for this study became refugees are provided, before turning to an exploration of the difference between expectations and reality for those resettled, and the ways in which *al-ghurba* is experienced.

Stories of migration (*hijra*) and becoming refugees

Youmna

When the Syrian war reached Youmna's village, area near Idlib in Western Syria, and armed factions were taking over homes and fields, and threatening people and their livelihoods, she decided she could no longer live with it and travelled to Lebanon to find somewhere to stay until her younger sister could join her.[354] Someone helped her register with the UNHCR for support and offered her a place to stay on a farm near Saida.[355] She spent five years there, but it was very hard (as it is for many Syrians in Lebanon) and

---

[353] Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile: and Other Literary and Cultural essays* (London: Granta, 2000),173
[354] [FN. 06.02.21 2.ii].
[355] [FN. 06.02.21 2.iii].

when she came to the United Kingdom she says she "really enjoyed the plane ride but arrival was very hard."[356] She and her sister were among the earliest arrivals to Scotland through the SVPRS scheme, and came to their new home in the dark and cold of winter.[357]

Haytham

Another family spoke of fleeing their home in a village near Hamah to reach the border with Lebanon. Then, a young couple with two children and a new-born baby, they managed to escape by "running barefoot in the night" through woodland to keep hidden from view, seeing only by the "light of fire" from nearby fighting.[358] On arrival in the UK, the father of this family had to have thirteen teeth removed, an indication of the poor state of health many refugees were in when they first arrived, and an illustration of the physical effects of extended trauma.[359] A pattern I observed among those resettled was a total physical collapse, often about one month after resettlement, that I believe was the result of now, finally, feeling safe.[360]

Mahmoud

---

[356] [FN. 06.02.21 2.iv].

[357] [FN. 06.02.21 2.v]; Her sister asked me where she was, saying, "We flew over water, I was terrified, I never knew we'd be going so far or flying over the sea." [FN.10.12.15].

[358] [FN. 11.05.18 1.2i]; Translated from the Arabic *harabnā* from the root *h-r-b* "to flee; to escape; to desert; to run away, elope." Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 1202.

[359] [FN. 11.05.18 1.2ii]; There is evidence to suggest that trauma can cause tooth decay. Nesreen A. Salem, Sawair, F. A., Meyad, F. H., Satterthwaite, J. D., Abukaraky, A., & Sartawi, S. Pattern, frequency and causes of dental extraction among children/adolescents Syrian refugees: an observational study. *BMC paediatrics* 22, no.1 (2022): 100.. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-022-03162-z. (Accessed 20.10.22).

[360] See: J.E. Duchscher, "Transition shock: the initial stage of role adaptation for newly graduated registered nurses". *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 65, no.5 (May 2009): 1103-13. (This developed Kramer's theory on "reality shock" but equally reflects the phases of transition observed in refugees.

Mahmoud related how the Syrian war took hold of Aleppo.[361] He described snipers, shooting, bombing, shelling, the strategy of Assad's forces and how armed rebels (*mujāhidin)* would get into an area and take hold of a building.[362] He spoke of living in constant fear, and of running home with his two young sons when they heard shelling, diving into bushes to take cover in the nearest shelter. His fourteen-year-old niece was killed by a splinter of glass that became lodged in her brain or heart, while she was sheltering with fifteen family members inside a house. The family hid until the shelling was over but, when they got up, she didn't move, and she died in her mother's arms.[363]

Together with his young family and neighbours, Mahmoud lived in a cellar with what he described as "no food and no light" for eight months.[364] His house was damaged, mostly by sniper fire, and was ransacked when they escaped. He showed me a video of the interior of their flat with furniture stolen, and photographs (black and white portraits) strewn all over the floor.[365] He spoke of how his family and children had witnessed people dying in the street, and that severed heads had been displayed in public gardens near their home, adding that his young boys had also been aware of that.[366]

Mahmoud, himself, had worked as an accountant for the Syrian army and was captured on his way home from work one day. He said perhaps they thought that because

---

[361] [FN. 11.04.18 2.1i]; [FN. 11.04.18 2.1ii].
[362] The term *mujāhidin* comes from the Arabic root *j-h-d* and broadly refers to those Muslims who "wage holy war, against the infidels", those who perform *jihād*, from the same root. See **(**Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 168-169); Several armed factions became, in the course of the war, united under the umbrella name The Mujahideen Army, and came to dominate the Aleppo region and some of the main routes to the Turkish border. Aron Lund "The Mujahideen Army of Aleppo" Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, "Syria in Crisis," https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/55275 (Accessed 20.10.22).
[363] [FN. 11.04.18 2.1ii].
[364] [FN. 11.04.18 2.1iii].
[365] [FN. 11.04.18 2.1iii].
[366] [FN. 11.04.18 2.2].

he was carrying a briefcase, they assumed he had a position of power or authority.[367] He was held for twenty days, and tortured by waterboarding, while they sought information on the Syrian army and a ransom was demanded from his wife.[368] At this point she contributed to the conversation to say how terrible she had found the ordeal, which was made harder by her being Turkmen, and therefore having limited Arabic, as well as the need she felt to try to stay strong for her sons.[369] After he was released, he escaped to Lebanon, alone under the cover of darkness, and his wife and children joined him a month later.[370] They shared accommodation with other refugees in a mountain village outside Beirut, where he described banners hung above the streets imposing a curfew on Syrians after 8pm, and children taunting them in the streets saying: "Are you Syrian? What time do you make it?"[371]

---

[367] [FN. 11.04.18 2.3i].

[368] Another participant reported electrocution, and showed me marks on his body. [FN. 24.04.17 39iv] See: The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), "The Tenth Annual Report on Torture in Syria on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture" June 2021, https://snhr.org/blog/2021/06/26/56447/ (Accessed 20.10.22). The report claims that at least 14,537 Syrians were killed as a result of torture since March 2011, 14,338 of these cases being perpetrated by the Syrian regime (p. 5). Another member of the sample known to me (but not interviewed for this study) was a single mother. Her husband had been captured and forcibly disappeared. She never saw him again except in a photograph of his beaten body, sent to her by the authorities. [FN. 16.04.18 17:4]; The same woman showed me wedding photos that were punctured by bullet holes. This is another example (of many) that demonstrates the levels of psychological torture that those resettled were escaping, and the reasons they had to rebuild their lives.

[369] [FN. 11.04.18 2.2]; The Turkmen are a large, minority, South Azeri Turkish speaking population descending from Central Asian Turkic migrants, the majority of whom are Sunni Muslim. See: "Turkmen in Syria" Harvard Divinity School, Religion and Public Life https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/turkmen-syria (Accessed 20.10.22); See also: PCGN (Permanent Committee on Geographical Names) *Syria: Toponymic Fact File* Compiled by Becky Maddock, (2011), 1. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/931617/Syria_toponymic_factfile-May11.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22).

[370] [FN. 11.04.18 2.3ii].

[371] [FN. 11.04.18 2.4].

His family then moved to an empty shop in Dekwaneh, an urban area nearer the centre of Beirut.[372] There, they added a sink and furniture, and made it into their home where they lived for two years, with the support of the UNHCR, before being offered resettlement to Scotland.[373] He said that International Organisation for Migration (IOM) had given them training on everything British, including taxes and the law, such as those laws relating to the discipline of children.[374] He and his wife both said they could not believe how fortunate they were to have been brought here, and that they kept waiting to wake up and discover it was a dream, adding; "How will we ever thank you?"[375] Sadly, like so many others resettled by the SVPRS, they were separated from family members whose applications for resettlement or family reunification were declined and, in his case, his wider family had fled to Turkey where his father later died.[376]

Abdullah

Abdullah is a father of four (young children under the age of eight) and when I called him for interview he made his children greet me first then sent them to pray.[377] He, too, said that there were many people who left their families in Syria, who "left their

---

[372] [FN. 11.04.18 2.5].
[373] [FN. 11.04.18 2.5].
[374] [FN. 11.04.18 2.5]. This was often a primary concern to new arrivals, who were used to physical forms of discipline or shouting, and were terrified the authorities would take away their children if they were overheard raising their voices. (Mentioned in a personal diary entry after receiving new families from Glasgow airport 10.12.15). IOM provide migrant training, which has been developed to temper high expectations of life in the UK, and provide practical preparation. See: IOM "UK Cultural Orientation and English Language Training (CO-ELT): Giving Refugees a Head Start on Life in the UK." https://www.iom.int/uk-cultural-orientation-and-english-language-training-co-elt-giving-refugees-head-start-life-uk (Accessed 20.10.22).
[375] [FN. 11.04.18 2.5ii].
[376] [FN. 27.04.21 34:2]; See: Home Office "Family reunion: for refugees and those with humanitarian protection" Version 7.0 (29th July 2022), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1094740/Family_Reunion_Guidance.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22).
[377] [FN.29.04.21 37:1].

father and mother and siblings and the friends they grew up with, as well as the dreams they were building there…they left them."[378] He continued: "we came to a place we didn't know about, … I didn't know what or where Britain was," adding that he had no knowledge of English, and did not think before migrating about what kind of people he would find here either.[379]

Speaking of the journey here he said that they did not request migration, as is usually the case, but that the UN called them and asked them if they would travel, so they said yes because, like Mahmoud, he found that "Lebanon is a difficult place."[380] He remembered that he came by plane, seeking safety and security *(al-amān)*, a place to settle and a future for his family, adding that the future of his children was the most important thing.[381] Continuing, he said "there are children in Syria without mother or father, some of them have broken legs or arms, some have an eye missing, some don't have anything to eat, so we were searching for a place for our children."[382] Now, although he has bought a plot of land in Syria to replace the house and chicken farm that was destroyed in a bomb attack, he is thinking only of the future of his children, and he hopes that they will be granted British nationality one day, in order to be able to go back only to visit family and return because, as he concluded: "we are starting to build lives here."[383]

Layal

---

[378] [FN.29.04.21 37:4i].
[379] [FN.29.04.21 37:4ii].
[380] [FN.29.04.21 37:4v]. See Faten Kikano, Gabriel Fauveaud, Gonzalo Lizarralde, "Policies of Exclusion: The Case of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," in *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no.1 (March 2021): 422–452, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaa058 (Accessed 20.10.22).
[381] [FN.29.04.21 37:4iii].
[382] [FN.29.04.21 37:4iv].
[383] [FN.16.03.18 15:3ii]; [FN.29.04.21 37:6].

Layal first fled from the city of Homs with her parents and sister to Damascus, and from there, to Jordan, where she lived for six years.[384] During that time she married another Syrian refugee and gave birth to a baby girl in a refugee camp.[385] One week after the baby was born, the UN called them offering the possibility of migration *(hijra)* to the USA.[386] Two months later it was changed to the UK.[387] Her sister has been resettled to the USA, and her parents were in the process of resettlement at the time of the interview, and were hoping to join the sister in the USA.[388]

She remembered that, when she first arrived in Scotland, she cried in the airport because she felt so far from family and home, and was fearful whether she would be all right.[389] She said that she was happy on arrival, that the house and support available was good but that her husband "became worse here and life with him became unbearable."[390] Continuing, she gave several examples of what would be recognised as domestic violence, and described the police coming to her home and taking her to a refuge in a neighbouring town for a month.[391] However, in that time, her husband discovered her whereabouts, and caused her new troubles. She recounted that, finally, they have divorced, and now neither she nor her daughter ever sees him.[392]

There were, understandably, many details I have omitted from this account, but I include the mention of domestic violence, because it was a pattern that was often observed in the early days of resettlement. Although there is some research in this field,

---

[384] [FN 20.04.21 20:6i].
[385] [FN 20.04.21 20:6i].
[386] [FN 20.04.21 20:6ii].
[387] [FN 20.04.21 20:6ii].
[388] [FN 20.04.21 20:8].
[389] [FN 20.04.21 20:9].
[390] [FN 20.04.21 20:10i].
[391] [FN 20.04.21 20:10ii]; See: Gail Mason and Mariastella Pulvirenti "Former Refugees and Community Resilience: 'Papering Over' Domestic Violence" *Brit J. Criminol* 53, (2013): 401–418.
[392] [FN 20.04.21 20:10ii].

and the reasons for such a phenomenon are complex, it was evident, from my

observations, that the whole process of resettlement was such an upheaval, and an

unbalancing of family dynamics, that situations such as this were not uncommon.[393]

Ajlan, in a study of domestic violence and marital breakdown among refugees in the

context of Germany, discusses divorce in terms of "gain," where the resettled woman has

more "gain" in divorce, but the man still has more "gain" in marriage, and highlights the

fact that not all violence and marital breakdown is the sole fault of the man.[394] I would

suggest that the focus in this country on protecting women, as well as the high number of

female professionals delivering the SVPRS project (which are both good things in their

own right), are among the aspects of life in resettlement that have contributed to a further

undermining of traditional, and previously held, male household authority, and the social

roles the men had grown up to expect. These well-intentioned and important systems of

unquestioningly supporting women can inadvertently have the unfortunate and

detrimental effect of further emasculating the men, diminishing their trust in the State,

and pushing them further into the margins where they may seek refuge in communities

that hold more conservative views.[395] My argument here is that moments such as this are

---

[393] Additionally, a large percentage of those resettled (over 50% in the first six months of the programme) were, themselves, survivors of torture or other violence (as mentioned above) and were not receiving the mental health and recovery support they required. See: House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, "The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme" Thirty-fourth Report of Session (2016–17), 13, 21, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmpubacc/768/768.pdf (Accessed 20.10.22).

[394] Many of the examples cited in this paper have also been observed in the context of Scotland. Ahmad AL Ajlan, "Divorce and Domestic Violence Among Syrian Refugees in Germany." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37, (2022): 11–12. NP9784–NP9810. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520985488 (Accessed 20.10.22)

[395] For example, bi-lingual support, social work, education, healthcare and police were all areas heavily dominated by women in the local authorities with which I was involved. One refugee commented that the only man she had met in three months since arrival was a cleaner. [FN. 17.03.16]. Generally, men seeking male company and advice tended to gravitate towards the Muslim community.

opportunities for countering extremism but can have the unintentional effect of promoting it instead. It is outwith the parameters of this thesis to explore the phenomenon in any depth, but I believe it to be an important area for study, in particular how to support men, as well as women, in ways that respect and understand cultural and religious backgrounds and expectations.[396]

Thinking about life here, Layal said she only had "a couple of friends" here, because she lives in a very quiet town, adding: "you have to be careful. Choose friends that are like you and stay with them all the time."[397] Continuing, she said of the other refugees that "they crush you" *(yshazik)* and "they use you" *(ystghlik)*. Going further, she reflected: "I don't know what happened to people when they became migrants and left for a foreign country… They haven't opened their minds to that extent… When they saw the openness they closed in on themselves."[398] Following this, she spoke of the separation from her husband so there was no possibility of clarification, but her description reflects observations from my own work with the SVPRS during which time I witnessed internal clashes among the refugees. Perhaps this could be explained as a result of natural frustration about life, being expressed towards the closest people; perhaps to some degree it was caused by the difficulties of feeling pushed into a particular minority community, which was composed of people with very diverse backgrounds, experiences, and attitudes. It could also be argued that the fight for survival, which had brought the refugees to this point (of resettlement), was still ongoing, in the form of a fight for access to resources, including the resource of "allies," who

---

[396] In another local authority, one woman was taken to a refuge in a neighbouring area, but the translator liaising between her and the support agencies was also an Muslim Arab immigrant well connected to the Syrian community, and persuaded the woman to come home and give her husband children instead of bringing him shame. [FN.12.03.18 19:4].

[397] [FN 20.04.21 20:4].

[398] [FN 20.04.21 20:5i-iii].

could advocate for their cause, in the same way that the intermediary *(wasṭa)* system

operates in the Middle East.[399]

Interestingly, Layal is an urban woman resettled to a rural context, whereas

Youmna, as defined above, is an example of a rural person resettled to an urban centre.

This may not seem particularly relevant in the process of resettlement, if safety is the

primary objective but, in both cases, they found, to their dismay, that their previous work

experience and skills were now irrelevant, the solutions being either re-training (which

would be dependent first on learning English), or moving, yet again to another place,

where more suitable opportunities were not guaranteed.[400] The following chapter

considers this idea further in the context of connection to land.

The promise, and hopes of resettlement

Perhaps a natural aspect of seeking refuge in the West is the belief, for example,

that just reaching the United Kingdom will be enough to solve all one's problems. For

example, one research participant thanked us for bringing her to Paradise, saying she

knew everything would be all right for her daughters now that we were looking after

them.[401] On the bus from the airport, on arrival, she said: "Thank you for choosing us and

for bringing us to Paradise!"[402] Such was the level of her gratitude and sense of relief at

now being safe. However such sentiments carry unrealistic expectations of how their new

---

[399] See: Sa'ad Ali and David Weir. "Wasta: Advancing a Holistic Model to Bridge the Micro-Macro Divide" in *Management and Organization Review* 16, no. 3 (2020): 657–85. This was another role the support workers often found themselves expected to perform.

[400] In moving to another local authority, the rights for support that are integral to the SVPR scheme are terminated, with refugees having to seek housing and apply for financial support, register with schools and GPs, for example, on their own. One family tried this, having been told by other refugees that London would be better but they were miserable and returned to Scotland after six months. [FN. 09.08.18 18:7].

[401] [FN.05.10.17 36ii].

[402] [FN.05.10.17 36iii].

lives will really be, and of how long it will take to become self-sufficient in a new country, where everything is different, or strange *(gharīb)*.

After the initial thrill and relief at escaping hardship, there is inevitable disappointment as the harsh reality dawns of being a traumatised person in a completely alien environment, without the knowledge of how to function in this new system, and having become, perforce, totally dependent on the help of others, who are paid employees with strict boundaries and professional limitations of engagement.[403] Disillusion, humiliation, and a threatened sense of self, can all contribute to a sense of worthlessness and the feeling that there is nothing more that can be lost.[404] Consequently, there are certain stages of the integration process that echo Duchscher's trajectories of transition, which suggest that there will be expected peaks and troughs as the person, especially one who has experienced trauma, adjusts to life in a new setting.[405] Another such example of unrealistic expectation was a message from a Syrian, with whom I had contact through the SVPRS, who sent me a text message from Lebanon saying:

> I'll tell you how they find your country…Even though I've never been there, I'd like to visit. They find you people very human. You are very, very human people. The people fear God, your hearts are very sweet. The country will of course be nice because of the people in it, that's for sure.[406]

This exemplifies the pattern, also observed in other immigrant communities, that those exiled will exaggerate the benefits of migration in order to persuade others to join them,

---

[403] "Are you paid to help us?" asked angrily in February 2016 [FN.25.02.16 21i]

[404] Amin Maalouf *On Identity* Harvill: London, (2000), 62

[405] See: Duchscher, *Transition shock*, 1103-1113.; See also Carola Suárez-Orozco, Francisco X. Gaytán, Hee Jin Bang, Juliana Pakes, Erin O'connor, and Jean Rhodes. "Academic trajectories of newcomer immigrant youth." *Developmental psychology* 46, no.3 (2010): 602-618.

[406] [FN 11.04.17 1.2] This was a text message from a man, engaged to a refugee resettled in Scotland, who was seeking to be reunited with her. I have reason to believe that much of this message is written in the hopes that I had personal power (as *waṣta*) to advocate for his resettlement.

or justify the personal cost that migration has been to them.[407] As Haddad notes: "The promise and allure of European civilization is an illusion that glitters with the promise of happiness, only to disappoint once reality sets in. It is experienced as despair and disappointment since its benefits are insignificant, a product of the imagination."[408] She continues:

> The Muslim immigrant experience in the West can be difficult, despite the material well being that the immigrant may attain. Life on the periphery of a dominant society in many cases can lead to a profound sense of estrangement and alienation. Separation from friends and family and human contact that provides warmth, love and affirmation of one's worth can be devastating. Muslims living in the West vary in their interaction with Western culture. While most have maintained the faith despite incidents of overt discrimination, vilification and harassment, some have opted to give up their Muslim identity and immerse themselves in their new environment. Still others denounce that environment as ungodly and seek to Islamize it.[409]

Within the small sample interviewed for this research, there are examples of two of these approaches: those who have clung to faith as the only remaining familiar continuation in their lives, a source of patience and strength against adversity; and those who reject the society they find themselves in as ungodly and either seeking, if not to Islamise it, at least to ensure their children are raised in a Muslim environment, or to teach those they meet about Muslim thought and practice, for example, by praying during

---

[407] [FN. 26.07.21 36iii]; See also: Francesco Castelli, Drivers of migration: why do people move? *Journal of Travel Medicine* 25, no.1 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/tay040 (Accessed 20.10.22).

[408] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "*Ghurba* as paradigm for Muslim Life: A *Risale-i Nur* View" *The Muslim World* LXXXIX, no. 3-4 July-October, (1999): 304. This is written in reference to Said Nursi, who exemplifies a horror at Western secularism, but reflects the sentiments shared by many of those resettled through the SVPRS.

[409] Haddad, "*Ghurba* as paradigm," 309.

social work visits.[410] Within the sample, there are none who exemplify total rejection of Islam, although they may reject the possibility of participation in the existing Muslim community. Perhaps this is demonstrative of the demographic changes that allow diversity to be more acceptable today, but I would also argue that religious faith is so deeply ingrained in the Middle Eastern culture and language that abandoning it completely would be an abandonment of a central aspect of the self, and the only remaining connection to their roots.[411] A full exploration of the willingness or unwillingness of the refugees to engage with the existing Muslim community is beyond the scope of this research, and perhaps better suited to an insider. However, the narratives below offer an indication of the relevance of this question, and the varied views of those resettled.

The reality, and challenges of resettlement

Adjusting to a new country/ system

For some, the process of relocation to a new country is a very unexpected shock, and they find it very hard to create new habits and new relationships in the context of resettlement. For example, the primary informant, Youmna, for whom other Arab countries were the most foreign places she had previously imagined said once, in desperation: "If they'd sent me to Egypt, I could have learned Egyptian; if they'd sent me to Jordan, I could have learned Jordanian; if they'd sent me to Iraq, I could have learned

---

[410] I am not suggesting the praying during social work visits always has that intention, but I observed one family imply to me that was their reasoning. [FN. 20.01.28 36:1].

[411] As will be discussed in Chapter Five, the "theocentricity" of the language is another reason for this phenomenon. See: John A. Morrow (ed.) *Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon: How Language Shapes our Conception of God* (USA: Edwin Melton Press, 2006).

Iraqi but they sent me here and I have to learn 'foreign'."[412] It is equally shocking, however, for those who have prior knowledge of English, university degrees, and careers. For example the Kurdish participant, with extensive experience in the oil industry, was disheartened to discover she was not only unemployed, but also now unemployable in that particular field.[413]

Youmna summarised the experience of life in resettlement: "Everything is strange, the language, the people, the weather, even the food. And so even I feel strange."[414] On another occasion, she said that the Scottish way of keeping to oneself, leaving your neighbour some privacy, and not checking in on them was a surprise and disappointment to her, adding: *"al-gharīb yḥis fī al-ghurba zīyada."* which could be translated as: "the stranger feels even stranger."[415] She said, as an example, that if she died, no one would notice.[416] She continued: "We got used to it now, but in Syria we check on our neighbours, even if we have nothing in common, a neighbour is a neighbour."[417] She also talked about her sense of separation from her "sister, brother, land, house and language." She added she was not at all used to phones and other technology, like YouTube, saying she previously "only used the phone to say 'hello.'"[418] I observed that, for her in particular, the transition brought about by resettlement had also been a rapid process of modernisation. Having come from a rural way of life, where she

---

[412] [FN.YH.23.01.16]; Translated from the word: *"ajnabī"* which means" foreign" or "alien" from the root *j-n-b*. See Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 165. This word is often used to refer to the English language. The Egyptian, Jordanian and Iraqi she refers to here are all regional dialects of Arabic.

[413] [FN.MM.12.05.17]. She has now returned to university and is in the process of re-training.

[414] [FN. 05.10.17 19:5ii). This research participant is illiterate in Arabic and consequently finds formal language study very taxing. She resorts to creative means such as taking images and sound recordings with her phone to memorize aurally.

[415] [FN. 06.02.21 1:1]; online translations also suggest: "more alienated."

[416] [FN 06.02.21 1:2].

[417][FN 06.02.21 1:2].

[418] [FN 06.02.21 1:3-4].

lived among extended family and worked the land by hand, she was now in an urban

setting, alone, estranged from the society around her, and dependent on unfamiliar and,

in her case, alienating, forms of technology. Although she was only in her fifties, the

process of resettlement was very hard on her. Observations of the sample suggested that

the process was generally much easier for the young, especially those who had babies

and small children, and therefore had an automatic introduction to, and connection with,

the wider community and British ways of life through routine medical appointments,

such as immunisations, and through nurseries and schools.

Encountering the existing Muslim community

Another surprising difficulty for new arrivals is that of integrating into not only

the cities to which they are resettled, but also into the Muslim community, as mentioned

previously. Like Youmna, Abdullah's family also arrived in winter, when "everything

was closed for Christmas" and there was no one nearby who spoke Arabic.[419] He

remembers that there was only a bath, no shower, and the toilet was not yet adapted for

ablutions.[420] The language was different, the buses were different and they "didn't know

how to do anything," adding that: "the first year was very difficult. It was really hard, not

a little."[421] He said it was hard to meet people here because "people need time," but that

now he has "about fifty friends: Pakistanis and Scottish Muslims." It is notable there is

no mention of fellow Arabs, Syrians, or refugees.[422] I am fairly certain he is still involved

to some degree with other resettled Syrians, but many of those resettled refugees

endeavoured to forge networks beyond the small group who arrived through the SVPRS,

in order to find an identity beyond that of "refugee." Abdullah is very protective of his

---

[419] [FN.29.04.21 37:5i].
[420] [FN.29.04.21 37:5ii].
[421] [FN.29.04.21 37:5ii].
[422] [FN.29.04.21 37:5ii].

wife and fearful of her becoming influenced by Western notions that may undermine his household.[423] Another observation pre-dating interviews, was his insistence on removing the sofas that were provided by the council and replacing them with his own traditional floor seating. Furthermore, he collected large glass-fronted wooden cabinets, and made a dining room with a mahogany table and chairs, for what he described as "impressing the Sheikh."[424] His emphasis in the interview on the Muslim community, as well as a distinct shift of language (from Levantine colloquial *al ʿāmīyya* to a standardized formal version (MSA) understood by the wider Muslim community) indicates that this has been his chosen primary belonging.[425]

Mahmoud also recognised this tension of finding a place in society, saying that, when he first arrived, the only problem he had found here was pressure from local religious groups who "pushed their ideas on others."[426] He named one Muslim third sector organisation that was pressuring him to volunteer with them, or sending taxis to take him to the mosque, even when he did not want to go, and he spoke of the difficulty of being "moderate," standing between religious extremism on the one hand, and atheism on the other.[427]

Interviewing him three years later for this study, Mahmoud still said that "compared to Lebanon, everything is great."[428] The difficulties he now identified were the differences in language, and how to deal with people because "our culture is

---

[423] [FN.29.04.21 22iv].
[424] [FN. 19.06.18 22iii].
[425] [FN.29.04.21 37:5iii].
[426] [FN. 11.04.18 2:6].
[427] [FN. 11.04.18 2:6ii].
[428] [FN. 27.04.17 34:2]. He has found a job here and says that he is treated exactly as all the others whereas in Lebanon that was not the case. He says: "I didn't find any racism here, maybe because I stick to the rules". However, he also has the advantage of a willingness to adapt to the new context, and to learn English. In fact much of his interview was in English.

completely different."[429] He said that the young and the old have different mind-sets, which makes him hesitant to speak to people.[430] He continued, saying that it made him very reticent, in case someone would speak to him in a bad way. It had not happened to him yet but he had seen it happen to others, and so he "put himself back" to avoid drawing attention.[431] He gave an example of seeing a neighbour struggling to shovel snow to get her car out. He wanted to offer help but didn't know how she would respond, asking himself: "Should I? Will she want that?" He added that in his culture he would not be hesitant, but that the law is different here and "I am not sure of my rights," in particular with troublesome teenagers in the neighbourhood, not knowing whether he should confront them, or whether that would cause further trouble, and he would be better to ignore them.[432]

Besides this hesitation in knowing how to deal with people, he noted the further challenge of raising his own children (who are also now teenagers) as another difficulty in such an unfamiliar context.[433] He spoke of his eldest son as "very good, better than us," being very respectful and responsible, but having "no friends."[434] In contrast, the younger brother has made a lot of friends, but is frequently getting into trouble because he "wanted to show that he was strong"*(qabaḍāy)* in order to be accepted.[435] Mahmoud did not mention with whom his son was friends, but said: "We are open-minded

---

[429] [FN. 27.04.21 34:4i].

[430] [FN. 27.04.21 34: 4ii]. It was unclear exactly what he meant here but I understood he was more fearful of the old, imagining them to be less open, and more set in their traditions.

[431] [FN. 27.04.21 34: 4ii].

[432] [FN. 27.04.21 34: 4ii].

[433] [FN. 27.04.21 34:5].

[434] [FN. 27.04.21 34:5ii].

[435] [FN. 27.04.21 34:7ii]. This is a word of Syrian/Lebanese origin meaning strong or courageous, or "strong-arm (esp. one serving as bodyguard for politicians and prominent personalities); tough, bully" (Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 866) and is usually pronounced without the *"q."* It comes from the root *q-b-ḍ* meaning: "to seize, take, grab, grasp, grip, clasp, clutch…"(Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 865) and carries with it a certain implication of causing respect or fear.

religiously, but culturally we are far away from the Pakistani community…the young one

is closer to them… bad behaviour, making mistakes, annoying people."[436] He continued,

saying that migration was very difficult for older children, especially teenagers like his

sons.[437] In closing, he said (his voice filled with nostalgia) that he was missing Syria very

much, perhaps because it was Ramadan, and it reminded him of the atmosphere in the

streets, with people offering sweets or water, and breaking the fast together *(iftār)*.[438] He

added that when he left the country, he thought it would just be for a couple of months,

and never imagined that he would leave and migrate forever, but that he "left without

looking back", because he was responsible for his family.[439] Finally, he said: "I look to

my baby girl born here and sometimes I think, "bad luck, she never saw Syria.

Sometimes I think she is very lucky because she hasn't been in Syria at all.""[440]

A voice representing the Kurds

Mira is a Kurdish Syrian from Afrin, near the Turkish border, a town located

within the Aleppo Governorate. Afrin has lost over half its Kurdish population as a result

of the war.[441] I also interviewed her during the holy month of Ramadan, and she started

by telling me that she "says she's fasting to the Arabs, but goes home and drinks and

smokes" because: "fasting *(ṣīyām)* is about the heart"…"you can't fast from food and yet

---

[436] [FN. 27.04.21 34:6].
[437] [FN. 27.04.21 34:7ii].
[438] [FN. 27.04.21 35:13].
[439] [FN. 27.04.21 35:11ii].
[440] [FN. 27.04.21 35:12].
[441] Martin Chulov, "'Nothing is ours anymore': Kurds forced out of Afrin after Turkish assault". *The Guardian*, (7 June 2018). https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/07/too-many-strange-faces-kurds-fear-forced-demographic-shift-in-afrin (Accessed 20.10.22); and Seth Frantzman, "From Afrin to Kirkuk, Kurds suffered grievously under Trump – analysis." *Jerusalem Post*. https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/from-afrin-to-kirkuk-kurds-suffered-grievously-under-trump-analysis-656090 (Accessed 20.10.22).

lie or steal, like some do."[442] This comparison and sense of separation between herself, as a Kurd, and the Arab Syrians became a recurring theme throughout, and will be addressed briefly below, in order to illustrate another form of estrangement that can arise in the context of resettlement.

As a general comment on her experience of resettlement, she commented that many Syrian refugees will hope to obtain nationality *(jinsīya)* because "there are a lot of laws," but also "respect and value for the person *(qīmat al-insān)* here."[443] Continuing, she said: "Even the animals" (are protected by laws) whereas, in Syria, "the human being *(insān)* doesn't have law."[444] Furthermore, she added that, as a Kurdish person: "I don't have rights *(ḥqūq)* in my country Syria," describing herself, a Kurd, as a persecuted person *(insān muḍṭahda)* as "stateless," with no nation *(dawla)*.[445]

It was evident that this tension between the Kurds and the Arab Syrians was of central concern to her, as she returned to it repeatedly, using the term *ʿunṣurīya* in Arabic, and its translation, "racism," in English, in a back-and-forth between the two, as if to emphasise the extent of what she had been feeling.[446] In the context of resettlement, she said: "the Kurds keep together, the Arabs keep together."[447] At the wedding of a young Arab Syrian girl, I observed this apparent anti-Kurdish sentiment myself.[448] The women's part of the reception was taking place in a church (as many such events, interestingly, have so done) and as the ladies gathered, and formed groups at circular tables with six chairs around each one, it was noticeable that some tables had eight or ten

---

[442] [FN. 21.04.21 31:1].
[443] [FN. 21.04.21 31:2i].
[444] [FN. 21.04.21 31:1ii].
[445] [FN. 21.04.21 31:1iii].
[446] [FN. 21.04.21 31:3i]; *ʿunṣurīya* is defined in the Hans Wehr dictionary as: "race, nationality; racial theory; racism" from the root *ʿunṣur* meaning "origin; race, stock, breed; ethnic element; element (*chem., pol.*); component, constituent, ingredient; pl. also: nationalities." Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 760**.**
[447] [FN. 21.04.21 32:12].
[448] [FN 10.01.21i].

chairs now around them, while three Kurdish women sat at a table, alone. I joined them because their isolation was distinct, and I, too, felt a little lost in such a racket of greetings and the din of celebratory music. I did not mention my observation, but, as I sat with them, they immediately expressed their frustration and upset at the sense of being cut off, once again citing "racism" as the cause.[449] There are many ways to interpret this scene, and there could be a number of reasons for the behaviour and actions that were interpreted by the Kurds as "racist." However, it is apparent that this sense of alienation from the wider group of Syrians, which had its origins in their experience of life in Syria, has perhaps become intensified in the context of exile, where a sense of estrangement, still more acutely, pervades their lives.

On the other hand, this same Kurdish woman, Mira, said in our formal interview, that other (Arab) refugees had experienced racism from the resident Scottish population, more so than the Kurds, suggesting that it was because their appearance was so different.[450] It is perhaps worth noting that all the Kurdish refugees who were part of this research were young Muslim women who did not wear the veil *(ḥijāb)* although some of their mothers did. Mira, herself, did start to wear the hijab for a short while but quickly removed it.[451] When I asked her how she found Islam here, she told a story of a new refugee family to her city whom she described as being "from the strict Arabs" *(min al-ʿarab al-mutashaddidīn)*.[452] As an aside, she added that: "a lot of Arabs that have come here are strict" *(mutashaddidīn)*, with their wives "wearing the hijab on the chin, not under it," but that those were the ones who encountered racism *(al-ʿunṣurīya)* or "saw" it

---

[449] [FN 10.01.21ii].

[450] [FN. 21.04.21 31:3i].

[451] [FN. 04.03.17 18:6]. She gave more than one reason as to why she did so, first saying she was try to evade constant questioning and judgement form others, then saying it was only because of the cold.

[452] [FN. 21.04.21 31:3i]; This can also mean "zealous," see: Leonard T. Librande, "The Need To Know: Al-Ājurri's Kitāb Farḍ Ṭalab al-ʿilm" in *Bulletin d'études orientales* 45, (1993), 1.

on the faces (literally, "in the looks," meaning the gaze) of the people *(naẓarāt al-ʿālam)* and, as a result, some started wearing the hijab differently.[453] Returning to the story of the family, she said that there was a bridge near their house that they had to pass through in order to get to the shops and that local youths had thrown glass bottles at them as they passed.[454] When the father had taken the baby to get its vaccinations, by the same route, these youths "threw a piece of metal at them" that "just missed the baby and hit his shoulder" instead.[455] When he went to the police, they had allegedly told him: "just ignore it… when we were young we did the same."[456]

Mira said that she, too, had experienced racism from the wider community, to some degree, but that she had a different approach to dealing with it, recognising that those who wear the hijab are more vulnerable.[457] She said that people in the street shout: "Why do you live here?" and "Go back to your own country!" but that she just shouts back in English: "Fuck you! This is my country!"[458]

When they first arrived, she remembered that someone in their neighbourhood was "growing cannabis," and that she had seen "three police cars and a helicopter"

---

[453] [FN. 21.04.21 31:3i]; She previously told me "They laugh at me for not covering my head. Why would I do that? God gave us life and freedom to enjoy …They think that I'm not a good Muslim because I don't, but they all make fun of us and lie to each other, that's not Islam." [FN. 12.11.17 80:1] Another woman from the wider sample immediately removed her hijab on arrival but eventually began wearing it again. It is unclear whether this was relief at finding outward expressions of Islam acceptable in the UK or a result of pressure from the Muslim community but rumours at the time alluded to the latter. [FN. 23.10.17 81:3]; A deeper discussion of hijab and visibility is given by Nick Hopkins and Ronni Michelle Greenwood "Hijab, visibility and the performance of identity*" Journal of Social Psychology*, Eur. J. Soc. Psychol. 43, (2013)" 438–447.

[454] [FN. 21.04.21 31:3ii].

[455] [FN. 21.04.21 31:3ii].

[456] [FN. 21.04.21 31:3iii].

[457] [FN. 21.04.21 31:3iii]; Her family, in fact, experienced a lot of different attacks when they first arrived, including rocks thrown at their windows and someone urinating through the letterbox, leading to the police having cameras installed in their windows. [FN. 12.11.17 80:2].

[458] [FN. 21.04.21 31:3iii].

making her think: "I'm glad I'm in Scotland," because there was "order and safety."[459]

Continuing, she said that her husband "always says 'A thousand thanks, oh Lord, for bringing us to this country.'"[460] She sighed: "*al-ḥamdulilah* (praise be to God) we live like the people of the country, and our children are growing up and living clean and well."[461] She remembered that in Lebanon they had lived in one room with a toilet in it, whereas here they were given a flat with two rooms and she said *"ya Alllāh!"* (Oh God!), in disbelief and gratitude, and yet, when they had a third baby, they were even given a different house.[462]

On the subject of raising children she said she sent them to a Catholic School because it is a "better school," and that she teaches her children to pray at the same time as the others pray, showing them how to hold their hands in the Muslim way and to respect others, adding that: "respect is more important than food."[463] She explained the word *"ḥarām,"* describing it as "fear of God" *(khawf Allāh)* being "the most important thing in life."[464] Continuing, she said that the school teaches them what is *"ḥarām,"* for example how to respect the Earth, lift rubbish, and so on, another example of Britain being "one of the best countries… with lower levels of crime."[465]

She did, however, mention her younger brother (aged 19) who came here with the rest of her family, by way of the Home Office Family Reunion scheme.[466] She said that he was miserable here, having been here for a year, most of which was spent in lockdown

---

[459] [FN. 21.04.21 32:11].
[460] [FN. 21.04.21 33:23i]. *"alf shukr ya rab li'an jibtīna ila hal balad"* (this is grammatically incorrect for Modern Standard Arabic but transcribed as she spoke it.)
[461] [FN. 21.04.21 33:23ii].
[462] [FN. 21.04.21 33:23ii].
[463] [FN. 21.04.21 31:7i-iii].
[464] [FN. 21.04.21 31:8]; *ḥarām* is defined in the Hans Wehr dictionary as "forbidden, interdicted, prohibited, unlawful; s.th. forbidden, offense, sin; inviolable, taboo; sacred, sacrosanct,; cursed, accursed." Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 201.
[465] [FN. 21.04.21 31:9]; [FN. 21.04.21 31:10].
[466] [FN. 21.04.21 33:25], mentioned above.

as a result of the pandemic, that he was "depressed, and walking the streets all hours of the night, siting in graveyards," another illustration of how hard resettlement can be on young men who feel they now have no purpose.[467]

Mira is an example of how many of the Kurds may be more readily able to adapt to Scottish life than their Arab counterparts (in the sample for this study), and may blend into the wider community more easily due to dress, customs, cultural outlook, and a shared sense of humour.[468] I have suggested previously that, perhaps, as a result of their always having been separated from the mainstream in Syria, and again here, a minority among minorities, they may be key to bridging various cultural, religious and ethnic groups in the places in which they are resettled, and may have the potential to contribute towards a more integrated society.[469] Certainly, their wide knowledge and experience gave them an important role in the early days of the SVPRS. However, it was apparent, by the time of our conversation, that there has been a distancing from the Arab and Muslim communities, and that the priority is peaceful lives, obtaining citizenship, and securing the futures for their children.[470]

Religion and *al-ghurba*

Listening to the experiences of this small sample of refugees, and writing their varied accounts of migration and resettlement, clearly evidenced to me that it is neither possible, nor advisable, to homogenise the refugees into one unified group. The approach

---

[467] [FN. 21.04.21 33:25]; This was intensified for him by recent arrival and online classes but is often the case for those who do not fit automatically into the existing Muslim or Arab communities.

[468] [FN. 20.10.17 20:3]; Mira, in particular, exemplifies this, perhaps another result of openness and freedom that comes with being a complete outsider.

[469] In a paper "A Question of Belonging: Syrian Refugee Narratives of Relocation," presented at a panel of the Centre for the Study of Religion and Politics (CSRP) at the European Academy of Religion, Bologna in 2018.

[470] [FN. 21.04.21 31:5].

of some local authorities to usher those resettled into the existing Muslim community has been shown to be naïve, in that it illustrated a lack of understanding about the diversity of people within the Muslim *umma* (collective global Muslim community).[471]

These narratives have raised a number of issues that are reflected in the literature (including education, raising children, employability, domestic violence, and racism, as illustrated in Chapter One) demonstrating to what extent religion is connected to all other areas of life. The very simple two-question interview method opened up a surprisingly wide range of other possible avenues for research, and offered a rich opportunity for conversation with the refugees that could go far beyond the practicalities of resettlement.

Furthermore, the data collected in these narratives demonstrates the variety of ways in which the experience of forced migration and resettlement is primarily one of estrangement. As I observed in my field notes, under the interview with Mahmoud, there was a "pervading sense of 'otherness'" that overshadowed the entire experience of starting life in a context of resettlement.[472] Despite the positivity, gratitude, and relief, demonstrated by all those informing this study, there have been real challenges for the refugees and their families in adjusting to a new culture, recovering from trauma, and finding friendship, belonging, and purpose in the new context. Mahmoud identified the difficulty of being a Muslim who did not think in the same way as the established Muslim community, and the strange position of being a moderate Muslim, standing in the middle between the extremes of Islamism and Atheism.[473] Where some families, such as his, sought to blend into the wider community, others, such as the example of Abdullah, turned more determinedly towards the existing Muslim community, adapting himself in order to belong. Abdullah's experience highlighted the challenges of adjusting

---

[471] "nation, people, community," Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 32.
[472] [FN. 27.04.21 34:3].
[473] [FN. 11.04.18 2:6ii].

to life in a non-Muslim majority country, with his mentioning small details that had held vast significance for him in the early days, such as the lack of provision in the accommodation for ablutions, and his emphasis on protecting his family from the ways of non-Muslim society, as well as raising his children in the knowledge and practice of Islam.[474]

The Kurds, on the other hand, are an interesting example of the surprising freedom that comes with not belonging anywhere. Their marginalisation by the other Syrian refugee community conversely enables them to engage more directly with the existing wider society, as exemplified by Mira's appearance, habits, use of English language, and freedom to continue her religion as she sees fit, albeit in a very unfamiliar context.[475]

In conclusion, this chapter began with a solo, marginalised voice, illustrating an ordinary human being, displaced by war, and resettled far from home. The narrative re-telling of the stories in this chapter has attempted to bring the refugees as much as possible to life, revealing the shared humanity of those resettled through the SVPRS scheme. The different voices have all illustrated something of the central condition of becoming a refugee that is a pervading sense of estrangement *(fitnat al-ghurba)* from home, family, language, community, history, tradition, as well as the loss of abilities and independence, and an effective estrangement from the former self. They also show, to some extent, the role of religion in resettlement, which is the primary aim of this study. In the cases above, religion is the only remaining continuation and thing of familiarity: a source of courage, strength, and hope, which can either be a potential unifier with the communities in which they are resettled, or a further cause of a sense of *al-ghurba,* or estrangement.

---

[474] [FN.29.04.21 37:5ii].
[475] [FN..09.15.17]; [FN. 15.10.17]; [FN. 20.06.17]; See Chapter Four.

The following chapter further explores this sense of estrangement by focusing on diverse understandings of the notion of "homeland" *(al-waṭan)* from a position of exile, in preparation for the final chapter on God *(Allah)*. This reflects the arc of human experience that has been revealed by the refugees in this study, that being a refugee is essentially an intensified experience of what it is to be human: a separation, and a hope for return. For the Muslim refugee, such as Youmna, she endures estrangement and waits patiently for her return to God.

4. On Homeland:

Contemplating *al-waṭan* from a Position of Exile[+]

"The world is a bridge and a bridge should not be taken as a home."[476]

Ibn al-Jawzi

This study began as an exploration of the place of religion in the refugee experience of resettlement. Despite not being the primary focus of the study, the meaning, and interpretation, of the term *al-waṭan* ("homeland") merits examination at this point, for it emerged very clearly in conversations with refugees and members of the wider Muslim community. Furthermore, the theme illustrates the connection between the estrangement revealed in Chapter Three, and religious belief, providing a bridge between the human experience of refugee resettlement and the promise and hope of return to the Divine source. An enquiry into the concept of *al-waṭan* thus constitutes another key element of this study into religion and resettlement, as a means to explore varied religious interpretations within Islam. Furthermore, the prism of the concept of *al-waṭan* was chosen because of its pertinence to the discussion of understanding frictions observed between the Syrian Muslim refugees and the established Muslim community they encountered, as mentioned in some of the interviews quoted in Chapter Three, where the concept of estrangement itself took centre stage.

[+] An adapted version of this Chapter was published as: Marjorie G. Gourlay "The Homesick Camel and Other Stories: Contemplating "Homeland" *(al-waṭan)* from a Position of Exile Through the Narratives of Syrian Refugees Resettled in Scotland" in *Theological Review of The Near East School of Theology* George F. Sabra and F. Peter Ford, Jr. (eds.) 41, no.2 (2020): 110 -126.

[476] al- Ḥāfiẓ Abū'lFaraj Ibn al-Jawzī, *Disciplining the Soul* (translated from the Arabic, *Ṭibb al-Rūḥānī*, by Aymān Ibn Khālid (Birmingham: Dār As-Sunnah Publishers, no date), 34. https://darpdfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Disciplining-the-Soul-Ibn-al-Jawzi.pdf

This chapter therefore explores diverse theories and approaches to understanding Muslim notions of homeland, in particular considering the homeland from a position of exile. By briefly tracing the concept of *al-waṭan* from pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, through the Qurʾān, and Ḥadīth literature, and finally to modern day Islamic jurisprudence, the chapter illustrates the diversity of perspectives within Islam itself. Some personal narrative examples are included, in order to represent the differing perspectives observed in the sample of refugees for this study, as well as responses from the wider, established Muslim community. The chapter closes by demonstrating the implications of these varied narratives for resettlement. The voices of Muslims themselves are largely absent in public discourse about Muslim resettlement and integration in Western nations, which (as mentioned in Chapter One) is one of the reasons for pursuing this research. Furthermore, it has been noted that: "the integration process will be lacking if it does not fully recognise the place of religious faith [Islam] in this [the Syrian refugee] community."[477]

The background to *al-waṭan* as an emerging theme

The theme of *al-waṭan* began to emerge as this study sought to investigate and understand the frictions and hostility observed between some of the Syrian refugees and the existing Muslim community. The refugees who made it as far as Scotland, were driven by a vital instinct for survival (and particularly so for those families with young children) that was, in essence, a drive manifesting itself in adaptability, creativity, and fierce determination. Such characteristics should be understood based on the circumstances from which they arise, rather than on how they are displayed, a feature which society often uses to further disregard the immigrant. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the refugees who have reached the point of resettlement have not simply fled, but

---

[477] Discussion with a colleague belonging to the Muslim Community in Dundee, [FN. 14.07.17 12:3].

have continually fought for survival, and access to basic needs, at every stage along the way. These habits, however, can become obstacles, not only to fitting into Scottish society, but also to fitting in with the existing Muslim community. In particular, this is most evident when they are seen to have what many in the existing immigrant population regard as privilege, with access to support and resources, which were not available to earlier migrant communities.

With regards as to how the existing Muslim community is viewed from a refugee perspective, there are several interesting examples. One story, which I witnessed directly, arose when I was taking a lady to someone who sold *abayas* (long, sleeved dresses). Having knocked on a door, it was opened by a man of Pakistani dress and appearance, and a long beard. The woman with me shot backwards at such a speed that I had to make some kind of apology, as we left and immediately got back in the car. The lady was, by then, completely white-faced and shaking, and could hardly speak. When we drove off, and she had eventually settled down, she said: "I thought he was *Daʿesh*."[478] His appearance had reminded her of the ISIS fighters who had invaded her hometown, and who were the reason she had fled with her children.[479]

Observations over the first two years of the project in Dundee and Angus suggested that some of the refugee families were uncomfortable with the assumption of their automatic association with, and co-option into, the established Muslim community, as well as the formal channels of refugee support coming from faith-based, Muslim organisations.[480] As referenced in the interviews in Chapter Three, some said they felt

---

[478] [FN. 12.06.2016 19:1]. Noted in a personal journal prior to data collection. *Daʿesh* is the popular name for The Islamic State, the Arabic acronym for the same name *al-Dawla al-Islamīya.*

[479] [FN. 12.06.2016 19:1].

[480] Details of these organisations have been removed for ethical licence purposes but were included in full, in an earlier version of this, a paper presented at the European Academy of Religion (EuARe) in Bologna, 2018.

pressured to attend mosques, or dress in a particular way, including wearing the hijab, for instance, when they would rather not.[481] It is unfortunate that those who have come here seeking freedom of religious expression often find they are meeting with the very judgment and ostracism from which they were fleeing, and this is particularly the case for Kurdish Syrians, as will be discussed below.[482]

The Muslim community in Dundee, as mentioned previously, is predominantly south Asian in ethnicity and religious practice, a feature that has caused some reaction from the Syrians.[483] There was, in the early days of the SVPRS, significant suspicion between the two communities. On the one hand, the Syrians were, at that time, still highly sensitive, and insecure in their newness to Scotland, while re-negotiating identity in a new context.[484] In contrast, the resident Muslims in this community felt settled, and had forged a place for Islam in Scotland. Notably, many older Pakistani women still do not speak English. However, when they were first resettling in the country, they never had the option of English language lessons, nor were they offered direct support. Nevertheless, they are able to observe that these benefits are available to the new Syrian arrivals.

---

[481] Original meaning of this term means a dress code of modesty, veiling a woman from the view of unrelated males but has now come to mean the headscarf. [FN.23.10.17 23i] One lady who arrived in May and immediately removed her hijab is now wearing it again. It is unclear yet if this relief at finding outward expressions of Islam acceptable in the UK or pressure from the existing Muslim community?; [FN.12.11.17 23ii]; "They laugh at me for not covering my head. Why would I do that? God gave us life to live and freedom to enjoy... They think I'm not a good Muslim because I don't, but they all make fun of us and lie to each other, that's not Islam." [FN.12.11.17 23iv].

[482] [FN..09.15.17]; [FN. 15.10.17]; [FN. 20.06.17]; (Anti-Kurdish violent incident outside the mosque perpetrated by another Syrian refugee family.) Main examples of this sentiment are from Kurdish informants who repeatedly say they feel ostracised and mocked by the Arab refugees. This appears to depend on the strength of their connection to the pre-existing Dundee Muslim community. Those families who have become grafted into it appear to be less affected by intra-communal abuse).

[483] See BBC Radio 4 programme: "From Syria to Yorkshire," 29.11.15, URL: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06ptym0 (Accessed 20.10.22).

[484] Vertovec, "Diaspora," 316.

These tensions are perhaps to be expected but, I would propose, they are both cultural and theological. Some in the established Muslim community, for example, are of the opinion that the Syrians have betrayed the true Muslim homeland, and have acted against their faith by leaving *dār al-islām* (lit. the house, or abode, of Islam) to live in a non-Muslim country in *dār al- ḥarb,* (lit. the abode of war), arguing that the only *hijra* (migration) advocated in the Qur'an, is that which leaves the land of persecution to join the land of Islam.[485] Several *fatwas* (Islamic rulings) have been issued in recent years, which strongly advise return to *dār al-islām* as preferable to abiding in *dār al- ḥarb,* or *dār al-kufr* (the land of unbelievers).[486] These themes of physical and theological attachment to the land will be explored further below, but this clash of interpretations reiterates one of the primary purposes of this research, to explore theological understandings and interpretations of the refugee experience, and to theologise resettlement from a Muslim homeland to a non-Muslim country. However, it can also be seen that the more liberal Muslim views held by some of the Syrians (perhaps, in particular the Kurds), their adaptability and willingness to translate their faith into a new context, as well as their readiness to respond positively to the society that has absorbed them, may all be potential factors which might not only encourage public opinion to become more accepting of diversity, but also act as a bridge between the Muslim community and wider society.

Divergent understandings of homeland were thus noted in early observations and

---

[485] See: "Lessons from the Qur'an: the Truth about Migration in Islam (E21)" The Foreword, 9 May 2017 URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kdr7BCdRHIk (Accessed 20.10.22).

[486] For example *Naseem al-Sham*, a website publishing Friday sermons and *fatawa* e.g. "Emigration is not permissible URL: http://www.naseemalsham.com/en/Pages.php?page=readFatwa&pg_id=48961&back=93 83 (Accessed 20.10.22); and "Abodes of the Earth: The Middle Way" A discussion on *dar al-islam, jijra and dar al-harb* by Mehdi Lock, January 2016, URL: http://naseemalsham.com/en/Pages.php?page=readActivites&pg_id=54322&com=85 (taken from Mehdi Lock, March 2011, (Accessed 20.10.22).

conversations as one aspect of friction between Syrian refugees and the existing Muslim

community, which, in the major urban centres of North East Scotland, is predominantly

south Asian, and also influenced by Saudi missions, which are influenced by the Hanbali

school of Islamic thought.[487] Simply stated, Muslims from the established community

who are perhaps second generation Pakistani (for example) and dream of returning to

dār al-Islām—the homeland of Islam—may regard the (mostly) Arab refugees as

unfaithful, having betrayed their spiritual homeland, and prioritised the material over the

spiritual.[488] This chapter seeks to understand, however, whether this is truly reflective of

geographical variations in theology, or is, rather, indicative of generational diversity,

resulting from a desire for second or third generations to return to a land that was never

known directly as their own, a sentiment represented as a spiritualised longing for a

homeland that has been lost. Perhaps the sense of estrangement *(fitnat al-ghurba)* felt by

the Syrians recently resettled via the SVPRS is, to some degree, also felt by those other

---

[487] Different Islamic Schools of Thought usually dominate different states (as mentioned in Chapter One) Hanafi law is followed in Syria. See: London School of Economics Religion and the Public Sphere, "Muslims in Scotland Demographic, Social and Cultural Characteristics," (November 16, 2016), http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionpublicsphere/2016/11/muslims-in-scotland-demographic-social-and-cultural-characteristics/ (Accessed 20.10.22); The phases of Saudi influence in the UK are discussed in Hira Amin, 'The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain', in Peter Mandaville (ed.), *Wahhabism and the World: Understanding Saudi Arabia's Global Influence on Islam* (New York, 2022; online edn, Oxford Academic, 21 Apr. 2022), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197532560.003.0015, Accessed 20.10.22).

[488] This perspective was first made apparent to me in discussion with a British Muslim colleague of Pakistani decent [FN. 14.07.2017 12:1]. This is a very sensitive line of enquiry that I abandoned and sought to understand from a different vantage point. An in-depth study of this question may be better suited to a researcher with stronger connections to the Muslim community than myself. Others who have touched on this include: Sundas Ali "Identities and Sense of Belonging of Muslims in Britain: Using Survey Data, Cognitive Survey Methodology, and In-Depth Interviews." Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford, 2013; and Zeeshan Rafiq "An exploration of religious and ethnic identification in the consumption and consumer acculturation of different generations of British Pakistani Muslims." Doctoral Thesis, University of Edinburgh 2020. "https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/37893/ZeeshanR_2021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (Accessed 20.10.22).

minority ethnic populations who have been born here. It may be that second and third generation Muslims are still conscious of their separation from the majority, and are seeking an ultimate belonging somewhere else, and this is reflected in their theology. These are the questions this chapter makes some preliminary attempts to answer.

The depth of meaning in the term *al-waṭan*

First there must be an attempt to define *al-waṭan*. It should be made clear at this point that this is a conceptual study, which seeks the essential human meaning that lies at the heart the term *al-waṭan*. Although this theme is at the root of ideas such as Arab Nationalism, and even, to some extent, the modern Islamic State (ISIS), these highly contentious topics will be set to one side, in order to explore what the concept of *al-waṭan* means, personally, to the refugees resettled in Scotland, and how these notions impact resettlement.[489]

As mentioned above, a direct translation of *al-waṭan* would be "homeland, home country, home" or, more specifically, *al- waṭan al ʿaraby,* which refers to "the countries of the Arab nation, the Arab world."[490] However, it is a very rich term that is related to the word *mawṭin* (from the same root) and has also been used to imply: "nation,"

---

[489] Pintak, in a discussion of the influence of Arab journalists in formation of national identity, in reference to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, distinguishes the two perspectives thus: "Arab nationalists seek to erase the lines drawn in the sand by European colonialists and reunite the Arab nation; supporters of political Islam ultimately want to restore the glory of the Muslim Caliphate, an empire that encompassed Europeans, Africans, Asians, and Arabs alike." Lawrence Pintak, "Border Guards of the "Imagined" Watan: Arab Journalists and the New Arab Consciousness" in *The Middle East Journal* 63, no.2, (Spring 2009: 202; see also: Sylvia G. Haim "Islam and the Theory of Arab Nationalism." *Die Welt Des Islams* 4, no. 2/3 (1955): 124–49. https://doi.org/10.2307/1569540 (Accessed 20.10.22); The Islamic State is connected to this in that it seeks to re-establish the Muslim Caliphate. This will be discussed further below in relation to *dār al-islām.*

[490] Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic,* 1265; from the root *w-ṭ-n* meaning "to dwell, live, reside, stay. Also to choose for residence, to settle down…to live permanently (in a place), to take root, become naturalized, acclimated." Note: *al-waṭan al ʿaraby* is not strictly a plural but is identified in the dictionary as such.

"country," "home," and even "soil," and which often carries deep emotional and spiritual significance.[491] Exemplifying this diversity, and depth of meaning, is a Twitter thread from April 2020 that revealed the nuances of the term. Iraqi journalist Emad al-Kasid posted a question: "What does *waṭan* mean to you? Answer in one word."[492] The answers were not all given as one word only, but a translation and categorisation of the 144 original and different answers serves to illustrate the many connotations of the term that make it tricky to define, even in Arabic, let alone in English.[493] Some examples of the answers ranged from "soul" or "life" to terms indicating both heritage and nurture such as: "mother," "my mother," "my second mother," "dearer than my mother," and so on, with others referring to the homeland in terms of personal security, such as: "haven," "refuge," "abode," and other language attributing the homeland with being the source of abstract virtues, with the words "identity," "honour," and "dignity" recurring frequently. Other categories focussed on positive emotional feelings such as "freedom," "loyalty," "love," and the word *ikhlāṣ* that itself has a number of interpretations, suggesting "sincere devotion, loyal attachment, sincere affection; sincerity, frankness, candour; loyalty, faithfulness, fidelity, allegiance (to); purity and innocence (of a love, of a kiss)."[494]

Further categories for *al-waṭan* were rather darker in tone, speaking of a "love lost," "dream shattered," "safety missed," a "trick," a "lie," "humiliation," "devastation," "the greatest wound," "blood," "grave," "the grave of my grandfathers," and so on. The final category I identified focussed on the spiritual significance of *al-waṭan*, with

---

[491] *mawṭin* is defined as: "residence, domicile; habitat; native place, home town, home; native country, home country, fatherland; place, locality, area, region, section, district, zone; point, spot; right place, right time." Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic,* 1265.

[492] Emad al-Kasid, Twitter, April 19, 2020, (accessed July 16, 2020) (link no longer available).

[493] I pursued this line of enquiry when access to the refugees was limited by Covid-19 restrictions and I had not yet received ethical licence for adapted interviews.

[494] Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic,* 295.

examples such as "my religion after God," "my idol," "dogma," "holiness," and "heaven." Although identifying the nationality of the respondents was not part of the research, given some of the longer responses in particular, it can be assumed the majority were Iraqi. However, these descriptors echo those interpretations of the term by Syrians in exile, as explored below.

Maher Jarrar of the American University of Beirut (AUB) encapsulates this complexity of definition, saying:

> The term homeland (*waṭan)* in Arabic has many nuances, making it especially difficult to fully understand. It has had a wealth of multifaceted denotations throughout its long literary and historical usage, giving rise to variegated attempts at conceptualization of the term, and has furthermore been fraught with heavy politicization since the advent of colonialism, nationalism, and the rise of the purported 'nation-state' in the lands which formed part of the Ottoman Empire. The emerging conceptions of (*waṭan)* came to occupy an interstitial position between various disciplines and terrains, geographic, geo-strategic, 'patriotic', social, public, private, idyllic, emotional and nostalgic.[495]

A song called *mawṭinī* "my homeland"(from the same root verb as *al-waṭan,* described above) which was written by Palestinian Ibrāhīm Tūqān in 1934 has since become the national anthem of Iraq, and the unofficial anthem of Syria in recent years, being rearranged and produced by various popular artists. It was also featured in a television series by the same name, which told the tragic real life stories of some families on their perilous journey, crossing the sea to Europe.[496] The lyrics reflect the feelings conveyed in the above twitter thread; following is a sample:

> *My homeland, my homeland,*

---

[495] Maher Jarrar, "Homeland in Modern Arabic Literature: A Preliminary Outline," foreword to *Representations and Visions of Homeland in Modern Arabic Literature* Sebastian Günther and Stephan Milich, eds., (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms Verlag, 2016), xvii.

[496] *Al- ḥalaqa al-uwla min thalathīya mawṭinī, min musalsal madraset al-ḥubb* (TV series), Eagle Films, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7zDVSHWPHI (Accessed 20.10.22)

Glory and beauty, sublimity and splendour are in your hills…

Will I see you? Safely comforted and gloriously honoured,

Will I see you in your eminence?

Reaching to the stars, my homeland, my homeland.[497]

These popular definitions of *waṭan* are included here in an effort to convey the depth and breadth of this term, and to show how the relationship of the refugee with the homeland is never fully lost, and remains a strong multi-generational influence in a new life in a foreign context, as well as impacting on the relationship with the host country. In this case, that significance is compounded by the sense of abandonment by the wider world, and resentment at the West's involvement in the collapse of the Syrian homeland.

Syrian refugee perspectives on *al-waṭan:* nostalgia, and disenchantment

As already noted, although questions regarding homeland were not directly part of the research model for this study, the theme did continue to emerge at some point in most of the conversations. During interview, Abdullah mentioned that: "Syria will always remain the mother" *(al-umm)*, adding, "our parents, our mother, fathers, brothers, sisters and friends are all there."[498] He remembered his childhood as "difficult" but "sweet," although now the situation was "dead" *(al-waḍʿa mayit).*[499] He described there being no gas or electricity, that children did not have access to food, and that people were resorting to "eating from bins," summarising it, he said: "He who works and makes money worries about expenses. He who doesn't have money doesn't eat."[500] Nevertheless, his feeling of Syria as "mother" remained, as he sighed, "*aḷḷāh uifrij*

---

[497] The original Arabic poetry is available on the Ibrāhīm Tūqān website: https://sites.google.com/site/wwwibrahem2com/15962nono-2 (Accessed 20.10.22); See also: *al-nashīd al- waṭani al-ʿaraby* (The Iraqi national anthem) YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyLrl5vsJ1Q (Accessed 27.09.22).

[498] [FN. 29.04.21 37:2]; *al-umm* can also mean "source, origin; basis, foundation; original…" Wehr *Dictionary of Arabic*, 31.

[499] [FN. 29.04.21 37:3i].

[500] [FN. 29.04.21 37:3ii].

ʿalaynā," (May God release us), his use of the plural first-person pronoun suggesting a continued sense of belonging.

Mahmoud, on the other hand, referred to the idea of homeland as: "Syria first, Scotland second," using the term *"waṭan"* for both.[501] Syria maintained first place for him because he felt he had to "give it everything," and that "because it gave to me, I have to give back to it," adding that perhaps he felt this way because he was currently missing Syria and that after a visit, he might feel differently.[502]

Mira echoed this, despite her conflicted views on Syria as a homeland, saying that if she went back to Syria, it would be because she spent her childhood there, and she wanted to see where she grew up, continuing that: "even if there is a war and conflict, a person misses his country."[503] Perhaps quoting another source, she then recited in formal (MSA) Arabic: "He who forgets, has no origin," adding that even if she obtained British citizenship, she would continue to be a Kurdish Syrian.[504]

As with the others in this study, mention of Syria as homeland was demonstrated by nostalgia *(ḥanīn)* for a happy childhood. In this case, Mira remembered her mother sending her to get bread to a particular song, which she sang to me: "go and bring me bread so we can make food before your father comes home."[505] At this memory, Mira said: "I would ruuuuuun! Run!" so that they would be ready for her father and could sit and eat together.[506] She continued, saying that she would love to return to Syria one day, but that there was "no way" (said in English, for emphasis) she would stay, because in

---

[501] [FN. 27.04.21 35:11i].
[502] [FN. 27.04.21 35:11i].
[503] [FN. 21.04.21 32:14i].
[504] [FN. 21.04.21 32:14ii]; Syria is her *jansiya* (nationality) and *hawiya* (identification)*;* [FN. 21.04.21 32:17].
[505] FN. 21.04.21 32:14ii].
[506] [FN. 21.04.21 32:15].

Syria she had no rights, adding: "I don't feel like a human being" there.[507] Finally, she

said that for an Arab Syrian, Syria is "the mother and the father" but for her, as a Kurd,

Syria taught her, fed her, and raised her, but did not protect her, concluding that, as a

Kurd, "the mother is real, the father is fake."[508]

The Kurds are said to be the "largest nation in the world without their own

independent state."[509] However, their numbers in Syria are not exactly known, as they are

(said to be) exaggerated by the Kurds themselves, and under-counted by the Syrian

government.[510] Many of the Kurds in Syria have historically been refused citizenship,

classed as *ajānib* (foreigners), and denied the right to "vote, own property, or work in

government jobs."[511] Gunther, in a very interesting book about the sudden emergence of

the Kurds in the Syrian civil war, describes a further categorisation of some Kurds

known as *maktūmīn* (concealed), and having "virtually no civil rights" at all.[512] These

categorisations have often been given arbitrarily and, at times, both existing within the

same family.[513] As a popular Kurdish adage states: "Our only friends are the

mountains."[514]

In a shorter interview with another Kurdish Syrian woman, Rezan, from Qamishli

(on the North Eastern Syrian border with Türkiye), she told me that in Syria she had

experienced discrimination, and that no matter how hard she worked, the Arabs in her

---

[507] [FN. 21.04.21 32:16]; returning to colloquial Arabic.

[508] The word "fake" said in English, again for emphasis. [FN 21.04.21 32:17].

[509] Michael M. Gunter, *Out of Nowhere: The Kurds of Syria in Peace and War* (London: Hurst and Co., 2014), 1.

[510] See: Gunter, *Out of Nowhere*, 1,2.

[511] Gunter, *Out of Nowhere*, 19-20.

[512] Gunter, *Out of Nowhere*, 2, 19-20.

[513] Gunter, *Out of Nowhere*, 20. Gunther details multiple ways in which these categorisations forbid the registration of children with Kurdish names, and limit possibilities of education, employment, and practicalities such as obtaining a driver's licence or sharing a hotel room with one's spouse (as married Kurds "are considered single." Gunter, *Out of Nowhere* (2014), 2, 19-21.

[514] Spyros Katsoulas, "Kurds on the Move" in *Middle East Bulletin: A Greek Review of Middle Eastern Affairs* University of Peloponnese, (2015), 31.

class would always get better marks.[515] When the war broke out, she went to Iraq, and was there for five years before being resettled in Scotland, adding that each one of her family is now in another country.[516] She stated that they could never go back because it was "too dangerous", and that they now "have a new life".[517] Finally, she reflected that they previously were "not free", adding, with regret: "We feel broken when we think about it. The land is Kurdish, even if the government try to control or change it."[518]

Rezan extended the research discussion to include the others who were sitting with her, and told me over the phone that, at the mention of the word *al-waṭan*, her mother had simply smiled, and placed her hand on her heart, indicating that she had "no words."[519] It transpired that the reference to the idea of homeland had prompted such heated discussion following our phone call that, later, Rezan sent me the written words of the others, two of which were in English, represented as following.

> Homeland for me doesn't mean that much, as I wasn't happy and never felt safe there. I haven't got any support from my country, not cultural and not in law. Nobody has given me the rights to live as I wished to live, or the rights to make decisions, which related to my life, and it's the place where I spent the hardest years in my life. However it's still the place where I was born and raised with all my other siblings, where my family and friends live and where I started my fight and struggle with everyone to change my life. That's all what Homeland means to me. I feel more comfortable and safe being away from my Homeland as I get all I wish here and I wish one day my country will be safe and suitable for living like Scotland, to go back and visit my family.[520]

---

[515] [FN. 06.05.21 47v]; The theme of homeland became the major product of this interview, with very little discussion about God and Islam. This is partly because although these particular Kurds are Muslim, their Kurdish identity was the foremost factor in their thoughts at the time of interview, their religious identity, less so. The conversation was also affected and influenced by the presence of multiple people in the room. The only theological contribution was the sentence "After I die, I don't know what will happen." [FN. 06.05.21 47:2vi].

[516] [FN. 06.05.21 47v]; I believe she meant extended family – aunts and uncles, as she was resettled via the SVPRS with her mother and siblings.

[517] [FN. 06.05.21 47vi].

[518] [FN. 06.05.21 47vii].

[519] [FN. 06.05.21 47iii]; Rezan's description.

[520] [FN. FN 6.5.21 46:2iii].

I am a wandering bird and my Homeland is my nest. No matter where I roam, I will eventually perch on its green meadows. It is the everlasting yearning…the ultimate destination…it is the realm of my agonising heart.[521]

The third was written in colloquial Arabic, which I have translated as: "Fuck the homeland. If it had been a lap [or bosom—*ḥaḍan*] we wouldn't have run away from it."[522]

These three, very different, responses to the idea of homeland reflect the depth of meaning for those resettled and living in exile, and demonstrate an additional sense of injury and disappointment for the Kurds in particular.[523] The second of these quotations illustrates a very poetic nostalgia for a lost homeland that is, perhaps encompasses a memory, an imagined idealistic concept, and even, possibly, a spiritual yearning for an ultimate home in the afterlife.

Loss of connection to the land and soil: a recurring motif throughout Arabic literature and voiced by Syrian refugees today

As mentioned previously, and exemplified by the self-portrait of Youmna in Chapter Three, another aspect of nostalgia *(ḥanīn)* for the homeland, besides happy memories of childhood, was also a recollection of the seasons, and attachment to very

---

[521] [FN. 6.5.21 47:2i] (in English).

[522] [FN. 6.5.21 47:2ii]; (*kis imm al-waṭan, law al-waṭan ḥaḍan mā harabnā minno*) "*kis imm alwaṭan*," is perhaps the most shocking Arabic insult, translated very loosely here.) *ḥaḍan* can be used to mean bosom, lap, or embrace, and implies a mother hugging her children. It is a term commonly used to refer to the homeland but, since the civil war, has become a bitter joke.

[523] The access to and freedom of female Kurdish voices in this study in comparison to the one Arab female voice (Youmna), is also, arguably, reflective of the greater independence Kurdish women have tended to have, compared with their Arab neighbours. This is considered in Gunther's chapter "Women" in Gunther, *Out of Nowhere*, 29-33.

particular places: to trees, and rocks, and soil. Youmna, it may be remembered, loved nature, and spoke of it lyrically. These ideas are reflected in the poetry of a Syrian teenager Ftoun Abou Kerech, who was resettled in the UK via the SVPRS and, despite failing GCSE English, became the winner of the 2019 Betjeman Poetry Prize with her "Lament for Syria."

> *I left your land and merciful soil*
> *And your fragrance of jasmine*
> *My wing is broken like your wing.*[524]

This extract echoes the voices interviewed for this study, with its heart-felt longing for very particular sights and smells that have been lost, not only by resettlement but, in many instances, lost from the homeland itself, the Syria they left being no longer recognisable. As Chambers notes: "It is impossible to "go home" again, for neither home nor migrant stayed the same."[525]

In Arabic poetry (particularly the classical tradition called *"nasīb,"* explored by Stetkevych in his book, *The Zephyrs of Najd*) this sense of nostalgia is a recurring theme, with reference to the names of particular places becoming key elements of the poetic form.[526]

> These words are names: names of mountains, dunes, rivers, wells, stretches of desert, tribal grounds, regions. There are equally unending insistences on motifs of arrivals at abandoned campsites, of departures from the tribal grounds, of sorrow over such arrivals and departures, and over the emptiness that always lies before them and after them, and

---

[524] Extract from: "Lament for Syria" by Ftoun Abou Kerech (2018), Global Literature in Libraries Initiative https://glli-us.org/2018/02/07/lament-for-syria/ (Accessed 20.10.22); and Arab News "Syrian student who failed GCSE English exam praised for poem about homeland," 24th August 2019, https://www.arabnews.com/node/1544696/art-culture (Accessed 20.10.22).

[525] Ian Chambers *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994), 74.

[526] Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic* (Nasīb Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 103.

of the glimpse of happiness in between—just enough happiness to reduce everything else to unceasing yearning.[527]

The loss and yearning of the refugee, in this light, becomes understood as just the latest example of estrangement and nostalgia, in a long history of human migration, uprootedness, and longing for return. Stetkevych continues that these motifs become symbols of the promise of the afterlife, the ultimate homeland.

> For instance, …certain river names… such as the Euphrates, experience various degrees of metaphorization. Their abundance of water becomes an expression of generosity, their strong currents an attribute of power, the goodness of their water an echo, both qur'anic and pre-qur'anic, of al-Kawthar, the stream of Paradise.[528]

Interestingly, on the theme of soil, the Qur'an says that God brought us out of the soil, or earth, and will return us there before he raises us out of it again, suggesting resurrection. (Q. 71:17-18.) There is a belief within Islam, based on a Hadith of the Prophet and held, in particular, by those in exile, that the dead are returned to the very soil from which they were created.[529]

Classical and Modern Narratives and Theories of *al-waṭan*

In a lecture on "Expressions of Alienation in Early Arabic Literature," which was delivered at a symposium at the Orient Institute in Beirut, Wadad al-Qadi, argued that the theme of alienation is so deeply embedded in the human psyche, that a whole genre of Arab writing emerged in the ninth century called *al-ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān* (nostalgia for the homelands) which drew on, and developed from, the strong bonds tying a person to the

---

[527] Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd*, 103.

[528] Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd*, 111.

[529] The Hadith says "he was driven away from his land and sky [i.e. from his hometown] to the soil from which he was created" Hadith: 9425 https://hadithanswers.com/a-person-will-be-buried-in-the-soil-he-was-created-from/ (Accessed 20.10.22); This is sometimes taken literally so that, in the example revealed to me, a Pakistani who dies in the UK is returned to Pakistani soil, despite burial in the UK. [FN. 14.07.17 12:4].

familiar place.[530] The classical Arabic tradition of *qasīdah* (poetry) developed the idea of *al-waṭan* as referring, "not to a fixed abode but rather to the deserted former encampment of the beloved."[531] This theme of nostalgia is often likened to a camel pining for its resting place—a repeated motif of longing that occurs frequently in pre-Islamic poetry. This notion is supported by the BBC story of the Mongolian camel, which travelled over 100 kilometres across the Gobi desert to return to her previous owners, in July 2020.[532] Al-Qadi states that these bonds of attachment to the place tie a person to the land in which they spent their youth: "having sucked [*sic*] the homeland's milk, eaten its food, drunken [*sic*] its water, touched its soil, and witnessed its rain, dew and trees," there is an unbreakable connection to the particular place that is demonstrated, not only in an emotional tie, but also by one's being bonded to the place, to the extent that the land itself has composed the person's very being.[533]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, some of the rural Syrians who have been resettled in urban centres through the SVPR scheme have expressed this yearning, this estrangement, and loss of connection to the soil itself. Having been farmers who cultivated and lived off the land, they now find themselves in apartments in urban housing estates, with little to nothing in the way of a garden. One particular man, Haytham, has frequently expressed his desire for a job on a farm, but that is

---

[530] Wadad al-Qadi, "Expressions of Alienation in Early Arabic Literature," in *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature: Towards a New Hermeneutic Approach*, Proceedings of the International Symposium held in Beirut, June 25th–June 30th, 1996, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Birgit Embaló, Sebastian Günther, and Maher Jarrar, (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999), 6.

[531] Boutheina Khaldi, "The Ambivalent Émigrée: Mayy Ziyādah's Rhetoric of Nationhood*" Journal of Arabic Literature* (2016) 47: 3 260–277. This is an interesting article which considers these themes in relation to the female Palestinian writer, Mayy Ziyādah, describing her as an intellectual *émigrée*, belonging, at once, both everywhere and nowhere.

[532] BBC World News, "Homesick camel returns to owners," July 26 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ta2RX95kqFg (Accessed 20.10.22).

[533] Al-Qadi, "Expressions of Alienation," 8.

unfortunately not possible in the British context, without evidence of a certain level of English proficiency, skill certification, connections, access to transport, and so on. Even then, employment may only be seasonal, and therefore insufficient to support his family, and it could negatively impact his access to welfare rights. His wife has often reminisced about sitting outside in nature, and said: "We grew up under trees. We ate, slept, we played and we cooked, all under the trees—pomegranate and fig."[534] These examples clearly demonstrate that the loss of the *waṭan* for a refugee is not only the leaving of a country behind, but is often a separation from, and loss of, any significant physical connection to the earth.

Another association of *al-waṭan* is its identification with people (or kin) as well as place, often occurring in the phrase *al-ahl wa-l-waṭan* (kinsfolk and homeland) and with reference to close companions and neighbours, as exemplified by the refugee voices above. Reflecting the conclusions drawn in the previous chapter regarding *al-ghurba*, Noorani's work on estrangement and selfhood in the classical concept of *waṭan*, again emphasises nostalgia, explaining that this state of estrangement from the homeland is essentially a condition of misery, whether estranged from the geographical homeland, the place of one's youth and its pleasures, or more broadly the sense of estrangement from being at home with oneself.[535] In mystical poetry and treatises, yearning for the homeland is frequently identified with the love of God. Ibn al-ʿArabī suggests that this longing for the homeland is in fact a desire shared by all created things, in order to reach their higher purpose.[536] He argues that this innate desire should therefore not be

---

[534] [FN 30.08.20 18.1].

[535] Yaseen Noorani, "Estrangement and Selfhood in the Classical Concept of Waṭan" in *Journal of Arabic Literature* 47, (2016): 24.

[536] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah*, Ed. ʿUthmān Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr (Cairo: Al-Hayʾah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Kitāb, 1975), 4:129, cited in Noorani, "Estrangement and Selfhood," 28.

abandoned, but rather embraced, and transformed into the perfect condition for which we truly long.[537]

Although perhaps not particularly relevant to a study on refugees who have been resettled outside their homelands, and are unlikely ever to permanently return, it is worth briefly mentioning the difference between classical and modern concepts of *waṭan,* as indicative of the trends that continue to transform the Arab world, even in the absence of the refugee. Noorani determines that, unlike the lost innocence implied in the classical sense of *waṭan,* the modern understanding focuses on the idea that the former glory of the modern homeland must be restored. He argues that the modern individual's attachment to homeland is imagined, not as infatuation with the past, but as the force behind the nation's integration and advancement in the present and future.[538]

Contemporary Islamic Scholarship of *al-waṭan*

The next stage of analysis of *al-waṭan* is to consider recent studies that categorise Muslims living in a state of exile. Works of particular interest to this study are those which are intrinsically linked to the traditional Islamic view that the world is divided into a territory of "Islam" (*dār al-islām*) and a territory of "war" (*dār al-ḥarb*), and which offer attempts to resolve the dilemma this generates for a diaspora situation, and, thus, for the refugee in the context of resettlement.[539]

Recent scholarship on this topic, such as Sarah Albrecht's article "Searching for the Homeland of Islam," has explored the notions of belonging to, and alienation from, an "Islamic homeland," and the attempts proposed for preserving a "'Muslim identity' in

---

[537] Noorani, "Estrangement and Selfhood," 28.
[538] Noorani, "Estrangement and Selfhood," 28.
[539] Sarah Albrecht, "Searching for the 'Homeland' of Islam: Concepts of Diaspora in Contemporary Islamic Discourse on Muslims in the West," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 5, (2016): 106–131.

the West."[540] For example, Lebanese Sunni scholar Faysal Mawlawi promoted the

additional term "*dār al-hijra*," "the territory of migration," to include mainly Western

countries which have provided asylum and protection for those in need, and this has been

echoed by other scholars who have applied similar phrasing.[541] For example, Mauritanian

scholar Abdallah Bin Bayyah, who is influential in Muslim thought in Europe, suggested

the term the "diaspora countries" (*bilād al-mahjar*) reflecting the early twenty-first

century idea of "*fiqh al-mahjar*" (the jurisprudence of the diaspora), which was

significant at a time when large numbers of people were leaving areas of conflict and

unrest in the region of Greater Syria to establish new lives in South America and Africa

(*fiqh* being the theory or philosophy of Islamic law, based on the teachings on the Qur'ān

and the Ḥadīth literature). The term *mahjar* comes from the same root as the word *hijra*,

(migration) or pilgrimage, which is considered below. Albrecht notes that:

> While thus construing a spatial distinction of inside and outside, the notion of
> *mahjar* comes to embody the other, the non-Muslim world, implying that
> Muslims are alienated from their original geographic or spiritual homeland.
> Thereby, it contributes, on a rhetorical level, to the drawing of boundaries
> between the self and the other, and to construing a notion of belonging and
> identification along religious lines.[542]

However, other prominent contemporary European scholars have re-envisioned

homeland and belonging in a context of second or third generation Muslims living in

predominantly non-Muslim countries. The Swiss Muslim Tariq Ramadan, who is often

considered a controversial voice in this discourse, but has sought to speak for European

Muslims, is quoted in Albrecht as saying: "I'm not a diaspora, I'm at home."[543] This

could suggest that the Syrian refugees resettled by the SVPRS, particularly the young,

---

[540] Albrecht, "Searching for the 'Homeland,' 110.
[541] Albrecht, "Searching for the 'Homeland' 113.
[542] Albrecht, "Searching for the 'Homeland' 115.
[543] Tariq Ramadan, "Islam, Democracy, and the Pursuit of Civil Society" (lecture presented at the University of Michigan, September 10, 2012), as quoted in Albrecht, "Searching for the 'Homeland,'" 123.

who are growing up in Western education systems, are therefore to be considered as exiled Syrians, but not exiled Muslims.

Additional approaches to resolving the problems posed by the binary *dār al-islām—dār al-ḥarb* model is the so-called *dār–* continuum, outlined in detail by Turkish scholar Mucahit Bilici, an American Muslim sociologist and author of *Finding Mecca in America: How Islam is Becoming an American Religion*.[544] In an article which states its intention as seeking "the way in which immigrant Muslims eliminate their sense of homeland insecurity, and gradually come to see the United States of America as a new homeland," Bilici explores how immigrant Muslims are making the transition from being "in" America to being "of" America, and he suggests how the sense of being "at home" (in the private and subjective sense) precedes that of feeling "at home" in a society (a belonging which is rather more public and inter-subjective).[545] He illustrates how Muslims in minority settings have revitalised several pre-existing notions, in addition to *dār al-ḥarb* and *dār al-islām*, in order to understand their status in exile. The most important of these are *dār al-daʿwa* (the abode of call or propagation) and *dār al-ʿahd* (the abode of treaty or contract). In place of the *dār al-harb—dār al-islām* dichotomy, there has emerged a continuum of approaches that offer flexibility and inclusion for various stages of relationship to the country of residence.

On the one extreme is *dār al-ḥarb*, conjuring ideas of war and chaos, and perceiving the country of residence as something external, and the self as visitor. Between this and the other end of the spectrum, *dār al-islām,* the insertion of *dār al-daʿwa* provides justification of a sense of mission, as visitor to a new frontier, and applies to the newcomer or recent immigrant. Further, *dār al-ʿahd* induces a sense of peace and

---

[544] Mucahit Bilici, *Finding Mecca in America: How Islam is Becoming an American Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
[545] Bilici, "Homeland Insecurity, 618.

accord with fellow neighbours, and regards the self as fully resident. Finally, at the other

end of the continuum, *dār al-islām* considers the country of residence to be fully

Islamic—securing a person's basic needs and rights, and offering them religious

freedom, as well as evoking a sense of home, in which the Muslim is a full citizen.[546]

Exemplifying this, is a refugee who has been on the move from one temporary residence

to another for a number of years, and was preparing to sit a citizenship test, when she

said to me: "For the first time in my life, I feel I belong somewhere."[547] Despite being

permanently separated from family, the sense of safety and peace has distinguished her

adopted homeland from all other places where she has previously lived or sought refuge.

This was again reflected in a recent conversation about migration and homeland with

members of a Muslim immigrant community, who overwhelmingly agreed that safety

and security were the primary factors in identifying one's "homeland."[548]

Interestingly, Bilici suggests that these four perspectives also correspond to the

stages of relationship to the country of residence over time since the first significant

waves of Muslim immigration in the 1970s. What began in that period in the US as a

feeling at the *dār al-ḥarb* end of the continuum, evolved as *dār al-daʿwa* became the

predominant feeling of immigrant communities in the 1980s, then *dār al-ʿahd* in the

1990s, leading towards *dār al-islām* in the 2000s, thus moving, over time, from a sense

of diaspora and estrangement, to that of being fully settled and belonging. This is a useful

model that simplifies and reflects the stages also observed in Europe, to varying degrees,

and particularly in urban centres. This is due, in part, to the prior existence and support of

---

[546] Bilici, "Homeland Insecurity, 607; See also Salih Yucel "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland? The Notion of *watan al-asli* and *watan al-sukna* in Islam," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 35, (2015): 196.

[547] Conversation with a refugee who is now in the process of receiving citizenship in the third country in which she has sought refuge since fleeing her original homeland. [FN.11.10.20 20.2.].

[548] Conversation with students at Al-Maktoum College, Dundee, [FN 10.11.20 36.iv].

urban Muslim communities, who have paved the way in society, and have been significant actors in the resettlement process. These stages are also observed among those Syrian refugees who have migrated to the more isolated rural areas of Scotland. However, the stages are noticeably accelerated over a much shorter period. For, in rural areas, the Syrians are sometime the first Muslims, and are required to establish a place for Islam themselves.

Returning, then, to the idea of *al-waṭan,* there are, similarly, multiple categories of *waṭan* identified by Muslim jurists: *al-waṭan al-aṣlī*, the original homeland, *al-waṭan al-safarī,* the country that is travelled to or visited, *waṭan al-suknā*, the country in which one resides*,* and, Sufis would add a fourth category which is *waṭan al-khidma,* the country of service.[549] Interestingly, Sayyid Quṭb also provides a clear way out of this dilemma, stating that "the idea of homeland (*waṭan*) [is] an idea in the consciousness (*fikrah fī al-shuʿur*) (lit. an idea in feeling), not a piece of land."[550] This leads us back to the idea of *al-ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān* and the concept of *hijra*.

Migration, *al-waṭan*, and the Implications for Resettlement

Very briefly, the concept of *hijra* (migration) has been applied to two significant episodes in early Islamic history, when Muslims migrated to seek refuge and escape religious persecution.[551] Primarily, this refers to the exodus (*hijra)* of many of the early Muslim community, the so-called *muhājirūn,* who were converts to Islam, and fled religious persecution by *hijra* from Mecca to Medina.[552] However, the same term was

---

[549] Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia," 196.

[550] Sayyid Quṭb, as quoted in Sayed Khatab, "Arabism and Islamism in Sayyid Quṭb's Thought on Nationalism," *The Muslim World* 94, (2004): 220.

[551] See Saritoprak, Zeki "An Islamic Approach to Migration and Refugees" *Crosscurrents* 67, no.3 (2017): 526.

[552] See Tahir Zaman, "The Noble Sanctuary: Islamic Traditions of Refuge and Sanctuary" in *Islamic Traditions of Refuge in the Crises of Iraq and Syria* (London:

also applied to the earlier migration of a group of Muslims, who also fled from persecution in Mecca, and sought refuge in the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia (*al-Ḥabasha*), in modern day Ethiopia.[553] The Christian ruler invited them to live under his protection, and practise their religion in freedom. As Albrecht notes, these examples are the basis for contemporary Islamic legal discourse for Muslims living in the predominantly non-Muslim countries in the West.[554] Furthermore, the Qur'an praises migration in verses such as Qur'an 2: 218 which says, "Those who believed and migrated and struggled in the way of God are those who are hopeful of the mercy of God. God is Forgiving and Merciful." Additionally, the Qu'ran promises success for such migrants: "Those who are migrating in the way of God will find refuge and prosperity" (Qur'an, 4:100).[555] However, this is another point of contention within the Muslim community, since both those cases of early Muslim *hijra* were for the sake of the freedom of religious faith, and it is arguable whether religious freedom is the primary reason for those displaced by the Syrian war to seek refuge and resettlement in a non-Muslim country, although for some it may be a significant factor.[556]

Aref Ali Nayed, discussing his notion of the "Interior Abode of Peace," states that: "today many liberal environments are actually more conducive to Muslim living and

---

Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 19-42.; See also Saritoprak,"Migration, Feelings of Belonging to a Land, and the Universality of Islam" in Ednan Aslan and Marcia Hermansen (Eds*.) Islam and Citizenship Education In Cooperation* with Minela Salkic Joldo (Wiener Beiträge zur Islamforschung: Springer VS, 2015), 47-48.

[553] See Sharifah Nazneen Agha, "The Ethics of Asylum in Early Muslim Society" *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 27, no.2 (2008): 30–40.

[554] Albrecht, "Searching for the 'Homeland,'" 111.

[555] Saritoprak also outlines some particular examples from Hadith literature that are used to support the idea of migration as a fundamental part of human existence, and the temporality of human life on earth. See: Saritoprak, Zeki "Migration"), 45-56.

[556] [FN. 10.01.20 17:2].

worshipping than many so-called 'Muslim countries.'"[557] This was reflected in the words of one refugee in Dundee who said, "We came from a country with many Muslims but little Islam. Now we are in a country with few Muslims but we have found Islam."[558] He went on to explain that he had been surprised to find freedom for him and his family to practise Islam without fear, and that the legal system and support available to the refugees was in line with his religious beliefs.[559] Nayed takes this idea further, arguing that: "The 'Muslim World' is, in fact, the entire cosmos."[560] He goes on to say:

> The astonishing phenomenon of cultural and religious diaspora that we clearly witness today must not be viewed negatively.… Being alienated, estranged, unsettled, and always on-the-way is not a pathological state to be in. Rather, it is the very state of healthy Islamic living! We must stop lamenting alienation, and begin to realize that such alienation is a sign of healthy and righteous living. If we ever feel at-home and settled in any worldly abode, even if it happens to be an abode-of-peace, we are very likely to be in a state of temptation that distracts us from striving towards our true and eternal peace. This is why living in diaspora is often more conducive to healthy and sincere Muslim living! Empires and carved-out "Islamic states" often make us complacent, and can actually become a hindrance rather than a help to sincere Muslim living.[561]

It can be argued, therefore, as Albrecht does, that the experience of displacement and resettlement "does not pose a threat to Muslims' religious identity, but rather allows them to develop an even deeper understanding of their spiritual sense of belonging."[562]

In conclusion, the notion of *al-waṭan*, as understood by the majority of Syrian refugees, who were resettled to Scotland, and sampled for this study, is one which

---

[557] Aref Ali Nayed, "Duties of Proximity: Towards a Theology of Neighbourliness," (London: Global Centre for Renewal and Guidance, 2010), 4, https://kalamresearch.com/pdf/dutiesofproximity_web.pdf. (Accessed 20.10.22).
[558] Noted from a home visit with newly resettled refugee family [FN. 12.04.17 3].
[559] One example he gave was the council's provision of a separate room for his only daughter in a family of sons. [FN. 12.04.17 3]
[560] Nayed, "Duties of Proximity," 4.
[561] Nayed, "Duties of Proximity," 4.
[562] Albrecht,"Searching for the 'Homeland,'" 126.

understands homeland as a place of safety, protection, and hope for the future, especially for their children. If this is not offered by the original homeland, Syria, the *al-waṭan al-aṣlī*, it will be sought elsewhere—and doing so is not outside the bounds of Islam. However, perhaps it is also evident that feelings of estrangement and nostalgia *(al-ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān)* are intrinsic human instincts, and a natural part of being a human being on Earth, aching for an ultimate belonging in a spiritual and eternal Homeland. Furthermore, these sentiments are sometimes described as a yearning to return to the Creator—origin, source and destination. This is a human desire that is reflected in Muslim descriptions of Paradise as a second Eden, and also in the poetry explored above, that details even the particular names of heavenly rivers and trees. Such images offer the uprooted and displaced Muslim refugee the promise of restoration of a homeland, and a connection to the elements of nature that have been lost, and therefore of particular comfort to those who feel they have truly lived through hell.[563]

The concept of *al-waṭan* can seem almost kaleidoscopic in its rich and moving complexity. This chapter has illustrated that, despite being a potential cause for friction among the increasingly diverse Muslim community in Scotland, Muslim theological interpretations of homeland can in fact offer a bridge for refugees who find themselves standing between a place of exile and estrangement and a true and longed-for place of refuge in God. The next focus of this study turns towards the heart of the Muslim faith, and a search for understanding the Divine.

---

[563] See, for example, the description of Paradise in the Qur'ān, Sūrat Muḥammad 47:15; and the mention of the tree named Ṭūbā in the Ḥadīth literature, (Accessed 20.10.22), https://abuaminaelias.com/dailyhadithonline/2019/09/12/blessed-tree-in-jannah/.

5. On God:

Allah in the Eyes of a Refugee

"Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."
Al Baqarah Q2: 156

The previous two chapters explored firstly the concept of estrangement *(al-ghurba)* as experienced by refugees resettled through the SVPRS to Scotland, and thereafter that of homeland *(al-waṭan)*, as considered from a position of exile. Two key motifs could be heard throughout: continued expressions of steadfast Muslim faith in the context of resettlement, and an often-reprised longing for resolution of the tensions in the life of a migrant. These two ideas are brought together in this final data chapter, in a quest for the foundations of an ultimate sense of belonging and homeland that are found in God. The study therefore now turns its focus towards the Divine, to the heart of the Muslim faith, and seeks to know God *(aḷḷāh)*, as understood by the refugee. I am using the terms Allah and God interchangeably, in translation to English, but predominantly "God" for the reason that I believe it closes the gap between the English reader's mind and that of the refugee. Using "Allah" consistently in English, I believe, would give the impression that the discussion is about a different god than that of Christianity, and not the one true God of the monotheistic faiths.[564]

---

[564] See: Asma Afsaruddin, "Monotheism in Islam" in *Monotheism and Its Complexities: Christian and Muslim Perspectives (A record of the fifteenth Building Bridges Seminar)* Lucinda Mosher and David Marshall (eds.) Hosted by Georgetown

To attempt to understand and describe the God of Islam is not only daunting, but such a search requires entry into the world of Islamic Theology which is complex, at times contentious, and overwhelming in its scope. It is with trepidation that one ventures into this subject at all. In approaching this task, therefore, I began by first setting the literature to one side, in order to prioritise the voices of the refugees themselves. Consequently, this chapter presents the findings of the interviews, which seek, in particular, to understand God, as known and understood by those Syrians resettled to Scotland, and focuses especially on those aspects of *aḷḷāh* of particular significance in the context of exile. Chapter Three introduced Youmna to the reader, but her voice was largely absent from Chapter Four. In this chapter she returns, once again, as the leading vocalist, and speaks as a theologian in her own right. Chapter Five begins then with a brief overview of the conversations about God that comprise this study. It then adopts a descriptive approach that, firstly, outlines Youmna's views, as she presented them in our conversations about God and, secondly, offers some points for further consideration. Two concepts are chosen for brief exploration, with reference to the implications of such data on refugee resettlement, and these are: the ethical concept of *jiwār* (neighbourliness) and a brief consideration of the Muslim life as one of sojourn, a passing through the world, *(al-dunya)* on a greater journey to reunion with the Divine.[565] Finally, the chapter closes with a reminder of the meta-narrative that has emerged through these chapters,

---

University Washington DC, and Warrenton, VA May 6-10 (2016), 39; This subject is an on-going debate, particularly in American public discourse, whether Muslims and Christians worship the same deity, but the word for God in Arabic is Allah (*Allah*) and thus Allah is the God of the Middle Eastern Christians too. The best source on this question is Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: HarperOne, 1989).

[565] *Al-dunya* is the Qur'anic term for the world, and is defined as: "this world (as opposed to *al-Ākhira* [the Afterlife, see below]); life in this world, worldly existence; worldly, temporal things or possessions; earthly things or concerns." Wehr *Dictionary of Arabic*, 340.

which is that being a refugee is to be separated from homeland, but that to be a true Muslim is to live in a state that is not at home in the world.

Conversations about God

As outlined in the methodology chapter (Chapter Two), ethical licence was granted from the university to ask two questions in the series of interviews for this study. These questions were to be asked by phone, without recording, and the refugee was to be invited to speak freely without interruption. The research questions were: "Is God with you in Scotland?" and "How do you find Islam in Scotland?"[566] Despite my hesitations, and the ethical licence procedure in this case being doubly complicated by the informants being classified as vulnerable people; and the subject matter being contentious, in that we were discussing matters of religious faith, in fact, talking about God with Syrian refugees proved very natural and easy to do.[567] Whether the Syrian be religiously practising or not, the Muslim faith and God Himself, are deeply embedded in the Arabic language, and are central to all regular interactions in a way that has been largely lost in Western language and thought.[568] For example, the standard response to "How are you?" is "*alḥamdu l-illāh*" meaning literally "Praise be to God." This conveys gratitude, as in "thank God," and demonstrates the pervading belief that every life experience is ordained by God, and therefore that one must be patient in all circumstances.[569] Likewise, the response to any invitation is usually *"insha' Allah,"* literally, "if God wills it," and, apart from being a pleasant, non-committal phrase that means neither yes nor no, and yet honours the host, it reveals a worldview in which one is only ever at the mercy of the will of God. Some

---

[566] See Appendix.

[567] (as mentioned in Chapter Two).

[568] John A Morrow *Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon: How Language Shapes our Conception of God* (USA: Edwin Melton Press 2006).

[569] This is discussed further below, under Patience *ṣabr.*

contributions from the interviews are presented briefly here, before turning to 'hear' the principal solo voice.

In conversation with Layal, she clearly said that: "Wherever we go, God is present," adding that: "God gave us life *(al-hayāa)* and gave us spirit *(rūḥ,* or soul)."[570] Being resettled in a rural location, she commented that the men in her area go to the mosque in the city, but the women stay at home.[571] However, she stated that she was comfortable being a Muslim in Scotland and that people were friendly when they saw her wearing hijab, and even greeted her and her daughter in Arabic saying *"as-salāmu 'alaykum"* (peace be upon you), a common greeting among Muslims, which she understood to be a recognition and acceptance of their Islam.[572]

In contrast, as, a man, and resettled in a city, Abdullah had a different experience of Islam in Scotland but, likewise, noted: "there are no problems, thankfully," that "the mosque is opposite the church" and "no-one bothers anyone else."[573] He continued, saying: "if there is discrimination, I don't know," because, until that point, he had not witnessed anything he understood to be discriminatory, since "everyone talks to everyone."[574] He commented that "In Islam, we speak to everyone, we invite them to our homes."[575] At this point he explained that we are all children (or sons) of Adam *(awlād Ādam)*, and that Muslim and Christian alike are People of the Book *(ahl al-kitāb)*, using an Islamic phrase to describe the believers of the monotheistic religions, who received divine revelation prior to Islam.[576] He continued: "*Ṣubḥān aḷḷāh* [Glory to God] we were

---

570 [FN. 20.04.21 21:14i].
571 [FN. 20.04.21 21:14ii].
572 [FN. 20.04.21 21:15].
573 [FN. 29.04.21 38:7].
574 [FN. 29.04.21 38:8i].
575 [FN. 29.04.21 38:8ii].
576 These include the Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians See Richard Kimball, "The People of the Book, ahl al-kitāb", *International Journal of Asian Christianity* 2, 2 (2019): 189-210, doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/25424246-00202004 (Accessed 20.10.22).

created from the earth (or soil) *(al-trāb)* and to the earth we will return," adding that when a person dies "he doesn't take anything with him, only his faith," and that "whatever you have done in this life, is all you take with you."[577] He went on to say that, "God does not close his eyes. If he closed his eyes, everything would end"(or be ruined, destroyed, *mkhrūban*)…"Glory be to the Almighty, He is present everywhere."[578] Finally, Abdullah observed, that: "You need education in your schools about faith, good deeds, and Islam," a further hint of a belief that he was now in an ungodly society, or at least one which was ignorant to the ways of Islam.[579]

In a similar answer to whether God was with her in Scotland, Mira said "*(Ṭabʿan!)* Of course God is with me, If God wasn't with me, I wouldn't have come to this country—He wouldn't have brought me here," adding that "millions" of Syrians are requesting migration but not all of them are successful.[580] When asked how she finds Islam in Scotland, she replied that: "It's good, but Islam mustn't show too much," because "you're not in your country and your country is full of Christians." Continuing, she commented that: "it mustn't show too much to go to the mosque every day or dress conservatively."[581] Her discussion moved to whether religion changes in exile, about which she said: "it becomes subdued."[582] She remarked that many Syrian Muslim refugees had started going to churches and changing their religion, adding, "in Lebanon it happens a lot."[583] She went on to say that such a trend was not heard of in Scotland because the community in which she is living is "small," and if that were to happen it

---

[577] [FN. 29.04.21 38:9i-ii *Ṣubḥān aḷḷāh* can be translated a number of ways as there is no ecact translation but it is used as an exclamation at the wonders of creation, a recognition of God's splendour, and a form of *dhikr* prayer of remembrance. See below.

[578] [FN. 29.04.21 38:10ii]; *"Ṣubḥān watʿāla, mawjūd bikul makān"*

[579] [FN. 29.04.21 38:11].

[580] [FN. 21.04.21 32:18] *Ṭabʿan*, meaning "Naturally! Of course! Certainly! To be sure!" Wehr *Dictionary of Arabic*, 644-645.

[581] [FN. 21.04.21 32:19].

[582] [FN. 21.04.21 32:20i].

[583] [FN. 21.04.21 32:20i].

would be "hidden," stating: "if it showed, others would wound them with their words, even kill them."[584] I was surprised by this turn in the conversation, but she continued, saying that if you go to a Muslim country "that is all Muslims with prayer and mosques, OK," however, if a Muslim refugee is resettled in another country with "no mosques, all churches," and "all the people around you are Christians, it affects you."[585] It was apparent that Mira is one of those resettled refugees who see Scotland as a Christian country, as opposed to "ungodly" (See Chapter Three, On Estrangement). Perhaps this belief underlies her decision to send her children to a Catholic school, and further explains her attitude to the society in which she finds herself, and her efforts to fit in. She added that her thinking was not shared by everyone and that some people, when they leave their country, "cling to their faith more."[586] Continuing, she described herself, as a person of true faith and a good heart, saying "I am a Muslim Muslim [*repeated for emphasis*]—as God created me, in my heart," adding, "it doesn't show all over me," that it does when she is at home with her family, but that she does not consider it necessary that it "shows on me when I am out and about."[587] Expanding this idea of religion being private, between the heart and God, she gave the example of reward, saying: "When you do something good, and you receive something good, you say 'Oh God, thank you that you gave me this thing!"[588] Finally, she said: "When I do good *(khayr)*, I know God will give me something," adding an example of a time she did a good deed for another member of the refugee community, as an illustration that if she helps someone, she knows God will bless her. "God brings the right person at the right time to help you," she

---

[584] [FN. 21.04.21 32:20ii].
[585] [FN. 21.04.21 32:21i].
[586] [FN. 21.04.21 32:21ii].
[587] [FN. 21.04.21 32:21iii].
[588] [FN. 21.04.21 32:22].

said, closing with the words: *"rabbul- ʿalamīn mā yansā shay,'"* meaning "God, (the Lord of the Worlds), does not forget anything."[589]

Interestingly, Mira's comments on her experience of Islam in Scotland suggest that the stance she took (and did so in the previous two chapters too) as bearing witness to the freedom of being Kurdish, in conjunction with her dismissive attitude to outward expressions of Islam, may in fact be deliberate decisions demonstrating that her priorities are to fit in with a wider Scottish society, an example of "strategic invisibility," perhaps. It may be that, having always been at odds with the majority (as a Kurd in Syria), this is a habit formed through years of marginalisation and discrimination, which have built up in her a determination to avoid such experiences in her new life.[590] It is evident that her religious faith is central to her worldview, providing an ethical code for life, as well as the promise of divine protection and provision.

Youmna presents *aḷḷāh* and teaches Islam

What began as one interview with the principal informant, Youmna, soon extended to three sessions, and provided over five hours of data, because she wanted to find certain verses in the Qur'an, and to read them to me, taking me through each verse, one at a time.[591] In the many hours of solitude she has experienced since being resettled, she has found solace in the words of the Qur'an and, with the support of audio recordings, taught herself to read it.[592] The beauty of a simple question such as: "Is God with you in Scotland?" is that the automatic answer is usually "Yes, of course," to which

---

[589] [FN. 21.04.21 32:24i-ii]; *rabbul- ʿalamīn* is discussed below as the greatest descriptor of God in terms of Allah's dominion.

[590] Haile, "Voices to be heard," 374-36; This also, again, explains to some extent, her sensitivity to anything she senses as discriminatory or "racist" in the new setting, and her friction with the Arabs.

[591] [FN 07.02.21 40-41]; [FN 16.03.21 42-44]; and [FN 05.05.21 45-46].

[592] [FN 07.02.21 40:1i].

one can naturally reply: "Wonderful, tell me more!" and, in this particular case, what followed was: a description of God; an outline of the basic tenets of Islam; examples of some things that gain God's favour; an illustration of the horrors of Hell and the promise of Paradise; how faith enables the believer to endure hardship, and finally the sense of isolation and estrangement of a life in exile. I will now outline the key findings in the way she presented them to me.

Description of God

First and foremost, she stated clearly that God is with us wherever we are, "*Allah wayn ma kinit,*" and religion (*al-dīn*) doesn't change, wherever you go.[593] God is the creator of the Heavens and the Earth, and His is the dominion of all that is.[594] He alone gives life, and he causes death, and all of creation will one day be returned to Him, the one God.[595] He is kind, and merciful, and praiseworthy, and He sees all, and knows what is hidden in the heart… Everything is written *(maktūb)* and is the result of God's plan, and, thus, even no disaster can happen without Allah bringing it into being.[596] On the day of judgement, those believers who have done good deeds will be welcomed into the eternal gardens of Paradise, and the unbelievers and hypocrites will be shut out and thrown into the torment of the fire of Hell, from which there is no relief, or end.[597] The examples she gave for each of these points came from *Sūrat al Ḥadīd*, but these themes are also present in *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, the opening chapter of the Qur'an, which serves as the creed.

> *In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate*
> *Praise be to Allah, Lord of the entire Universe,*

---

[593] [FN 07.02.21 40:2i].
[594] [FN 07.02.21 40:2i-3].
[595] [FN 07.02.21 40] *Sūrat al Hadīd,* verse 9.
[596] [FN 07.02.21 40] *Sūrat al Hadīd,* verses 9, 2, 28, 4, 22.
[597] [FN 07.02.21 40].

The Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate;

The Master of the Day of Recompense.

You alone do we worship and You alone do we turn to for help.

Direct us on to the Straight Way, the way of those whom You have favoured,

Who did not incur your wrath, who are not astray.[598]

Sūrat al-Fātiḥa (Q.1: 1-7)

The opening sentence, in Arabic, *Bismiḷḷāh al-raḥmān al-rahīm*, is said frequently, and used before doing anything at all (eating a meal, starting a car, drinking coffee, and so on). In explaining this to me she said *bisthii min rabbul- ʿalamīn,* meaning something that could be interpreted as "I am shy, or ashamed, in front of the Lord of the Worlds" and, continuing, she added: "How can I drink even a glass of water without recognising it as a gift of God's mercy?"[599] She explained that the word "Allah" is the proper name belonging only to the One Almighty God, Creator and Sustainer of the Heavens and the Earth, the Eternal and Absolute to whom all worship is due.[600] The term "Lord of the Worlds" *(rabbul- ʿalamīn)* describes Allah's lordship over all creation and is a descriptor referring to just one aspect of God's nature, but is more commonly used in reference to the divine.[601] For example, in the phrase, *"Al-ḥamdu l-illāhi rabbi l-ʿalamīn,"* which can be translated as: "So all praise be to Allah, the Lord of the heavens,

---

[598] Sayyid Abul aʿlā Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding The Qurʾān: Abridged version of Tafhīm al-Qurʾān* (Translated and edited by Zafar Ishaq Ansari), (Great Britain: The Islamic Foundation, 2014), 1. This is one of two different copies of the Qurʾan, which were given to me on separate visits to the mosque. I referred to both of them during our conversations and for crosschecking references in the writing up of the research findings.

[599] [FN. 07.02.2021 40:8].

[600] [FN. 07.02.2021 40:9i]. Al Ghazali described it thus: "*Allah,* …is a name for the true existent, the one who unites the attributes of divinity,… subject of the attributes of lordship, and unique in true existence." For no existent thing other than He may claim to exist of itself, but rather it gains existence from Him: it is perishing insofar as it exists of itself, and exists insofar as it face Him. For every existing thing is perishing except His face*."* Al-Ghazali, *The Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God: al-Maqṣad al aAsnā fi sharḥ asmāʾ Allah al-ḥusnā* (translated with notes by David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher) First Edition, (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1992), 51.

[601] [FN. 07.02.21 40:9ii].

the Lord of the earth, the Lord of the whole Universe," as exemplified by the verse which continues: "His is the glory in the heavens and the earth. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise "(*Sūrat Al-Jāthiyah* Q.45: 36-37) The chapter of the Qur'an which best encapsulates *Aḷḷāh* is *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* (which is translated as Sincerity, or Purification, and has been said to equal one third of the Qur'an).[602] In its entirety it reads:

> *Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,*
> *Allah, the Eternal Refuge.*
> *He neither begets nor is born,*
> *Nor is there to Him any equivalent*. (Q.112: 1-4)[603]

The ninety-nine names of Allah

Continuing, Youmna then introduced the Islamic concept of Allah having ninety-nine names, which are all descriptors and characteristics (*ṣifāt*) of his ultimate nature.[604] Examples already given in the verses referred to above, in *Sūrat al- Ḥadīd*, are: the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate, the Most Mighty, Most Wise, the First, the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, (or the Ascendant, the Intimate), the all-Knowing, Self-Sufficient, the Immensely Praiseworthy, Most Forgiving, all of which are mentioned in

---

[602] Saheeh International *The Qur'an: English Meanings and Notes* (Jeddah: Al-Muntada al-Islami, 2012), 658; *Ikhlāṣ* is defined in relation to the "Homeland" in Chapter Four; Wehr *Dictionary of Arabic*, 295.

[603] This is explored in much greater depth in an article which makes the case for God as Love in Islam by Zain Ali, "Concepts of God in Islam" *Philosophy Compass* (2016); 11: 892–904. This chapter, naturally, led Youmna into a critique of Christianity and what she understood as the polytheism of the Trinity, and the objectionable notion of Jesus as God's son. Her understanding of Christianity is solely based on Islamic teaching and therefore is as unacceptable to me as to her. It can be hard to have one's faith condemned, especially when there is no room for a rational defence. However, I respected her honest views and appreciated her authentic manner. The purpose of this research was to understand God in her eyes, not present her with the God of my own understanding.

[604] [FN. 07.02.21 41:16].

Surat al- Ḥadīd.[605] Indeed, it is said: "And if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to count them."[606] Any The ninety-nine names of God are all explored by Al-Ghazali (an influential Eleventh Century Persian Sunni Philosopher and Muslim Scholar) in his book *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*, which is based on the Prophet's teaching that `Ninety-nine Beautiful Names' are truly predicated of God.[607] Any serious investigation into who God is in Islam would include his writings, which strengthened the position of Sunni Islam, and played a large part in the spread of Sufism and Sharia (law), as well as influencing Christianity and Western Philosophy. However, Youmna herself has neither access to, nor knowledge of such sources, given that her knowledge and understanding of God came to her from her family, passed down through the generations.[608]

Five pillars of Islam

Returning to the idea of religion being unchanged in a context of exile, Youmna outlined the five pillars of Islam and how they are practised in a context of resettlement. These are: the *Shehāda*, testimony or creed, which is present in the *Sūrat al-fātiḥa*; *Ṣalāt* (ritual prayer)*; Zakāt* (charity); *Ṣawm* (fasting) and *Hajj* (pilgrimage), for those for whom

---

[605] *Sūrat al- Ḥadīd* (verses 1, 3, 24) Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding The Qur'ān*, 815-823; Also referencing Saheeh International *The Qur'an,* 550-554; Other translations use: Almighty, All Wise, Most High and Most Near, Ever Gracious and Merciful, All-Aware, Most Capable of everything, the Free of Need, All-forgiving) See Qur'an online. https://quran.com/al-hadid (Accessed 20.10.22). I am using multiple translations, and varying their application in the text, for increased ease of reading.

[606] *Sūrat Ibrahim*, 34. Furthermore, it is said that the Prophet, likewise, being favoured by Allah, possessed innumerable attributes, 201 of which are described by Ibn 'Arabi in his *Tree of Being: Shajarat al-kawn: An Ode to the Perfect Man* (Interpreted by Shaykh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti) (Cambridge: Archetype, 2019), 206-232.

[607]Al-Ghazali, *The Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God*, the full list of names is provided on pages 49-50).

[608] Youmna made reference to her father, who lived to the age of 100, and "never needed to wear glasses because he read the Qur'an every day." [FN. 07.02.2021 41: 1ii].

it is possible.[609] The *hajj* is a source of sadness for her, personally, because she has no

maḥram (obligatory male companion, defined in Chapter Two) to accompany her to

Mecca.[610] Additionally, her finances and health do not allow travel. For example,

regarding prayer, she said: "If we don't pray five times a day, we end up in Hell because

God has told us to pray."[611] She used the word *sujūd* to describe the prayer performed

during *Ṣalāt*, which describes a position of prostration or kneeling in prayer.[612]

Continuing on the pillar of prayer, she said that: "When the birds are singing, they are

praying. The ants even pray."[613] Further adding that, "We feel God in us. God is present

in everything," and therefore even "the rocks pray."[614] In both of these examples she

used the word *tasbīḥ*, meaning glorification of God, or praise.[615] I have translated the

term here, generally, as "prayer" because these illustrations were her way of leading up

to providing the reasons for the Muslim ritual prayer, *Ṣalāt*, being five times a day. She

said, that: "Only us (human beings) don't know how to pray," adding that the only ones

who did were the prophets.[616] This is why, she explained, Muslims are required to stop

whatever they are doing, and kneel in prayer, at several points throughout the day, to be

reminded to glorify God, and not think about anything but God as they do so.[617]

---

[609] There are transliterated here as they are most commonly written in English. Eligible recipients of *zakat* include wayfarers who "despite possessing wealth in his homeland, has nothing with him on his journey", therefore including refugees. al-Shurunbulālī *Ascent to Felicity,* 142.

[610] [FN. 07.02.2021 41:17]. I am not aware of any of the refugees having performed the *hajj* although this may happen as their residence status becomes more secure.

[611] [FN. 07.02.2021 41:15iii].

[612] "To bow down, bow in worship, to throw oneself down, prostrate oneself; to worship." (Wehr *Dictionary of Arabic*, 462-3).

[613] [FN 16.03.21 43: 7-8].

[614] [FN 16.03.21 43: 6].

[615] The word *tasbīḥ* comes rom the root verb *s-b-ḥ* defined as meaning: "to swim (in); to float (fig.); to spread; to praise, glorify; to praise, extol; to sing s.o's praise, glorify s.o." Wehr *Dictionary of Arabic*, 457.

[616] [FN 16.03.21 43: 8-9].

[617] [FN 16.03.21 43: 10, 3]

However, one other form of prayer Youmna raised briefly in conversation was the practice of *dhikr*, remembrance, which is a more distinct form of *tasbīḥ*. For she drew my attention to the verse in the Qur'an which says: "So remember me and I will remember you" Qur'an 2:152.[618] This form of prayer is a practice of praise, recitation of certain phrases, (sometimes repeated thirty-three times each, perhaps with the aid of prayer beads) or simply remembering God in the heart, and centred on the ninety-nine names.[619] It can be done at any time. Some of these phrases are commonly used in Arabic speech, as mentioned above, for example "*Ṣubḥān aḷḷāh*" and ""*alḥamdu l-illāh,*"(Glory be to God, and Praise be to God, mentioned above). The practice of *dhikr* is considered one of the best means of glorifying God and also for assisting entry into higher levels of Heaven. Furthermore, it is said that the practice is a "supreme form of sacrifice" or self-annihilation, in that the believer realises that they have not been separated from God.[620] Illustrating the practice, she said that especially when she is alone and lonely, living as a stranger in solitude: "Remembering God is the only thing for my heart to do."[621]

She turned the focus of discussion towards fasting, in particular the fasting undertaken during the holy month of Ramadan. This form of self-discipline and spiritual purification is also practised at other times throughout the year. Youmna described it

---

[618] [FN 05.05.21 46: 11ii] See also "Remembrance of Allah: Dhikr" Islam Online https://islamonline.net/en/remembrance-of-allah-dhikr/ (Accessed 20.10.22).

[619] This concept is also discussed in Thurston, "Thomas Merton's Interest in Islam," 42-49.

[620] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi* Essays (Albany: State University of Noew York Press, 1972), 49-50. Also cited in Thurston, 45. She notes the similarities between the Christian trandition of "prayer of the heart" and Muslim *dhikr*, quoting Merton's description as "the sharing of the divine light." 47. (from Thomas Merton *Hidden Ground of Love,* William H. Shannon (ed.), (New York: Farrar, 1985), 53.

[621] [FN 05.05.21 46: 11iii]. An interesting recent publication explores the link between the practice of *dhikr* and mental well-being through the reduction of stress. See: Pauzi, A.P., Afi Parnawi, Fithri Addieningrum, Neri Aslina, Klemi Subiyantoro, Ina Sagir, Aldrin Herwany, and Rie Febrian. "Relationship Between Remembering God (Dhikr) and Stress Prevention of Life Problem" in Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 17, no.7 (2020): 4926 – 4932.

thus: "It purifies the person from the head to the toes, it lightens the whole body, you feel you are flying, as light as a feather. It is beautiful."[622] Lastly, in demonstration of the pillar of charity *(Zakāt)*, she said that Muslims are obliged to share anything they have, even if all they have in the world is one date, they are encouraged to break it in half, and give the other half away.[623] Illustrating this principle she quoted *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd* again: "Indeed, the men who practise charity and the women who practise charity, and they who have loaned Allah with a goodly loan – it will be multiplied for them, and they will have a noble reward."[624] (Q.57: 18) Finally, she drew attention to verse 24, which warns that: "God turns away the stingy."[625] For those who have believed in Allah and his messengers, they will have their reward and the Light, whereas those who have disbelieved and denied are warned in the following verse: "Your refuge is the fire. It is most worthy of you, and wretched is the destination."[626] (Q.57: 15) The rest of this chapter, *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd*, weaves back and forth between the threat of eternal damnation of Hellfire and the promise of Paradise, in a form of "promise and threat" (*al-waʿd wa-l-waʿīd*).[627]

Heaven and Hell

In continuing to unpack the concepts of Heaven (*al-janna*) and Hell (*jahannam*, meaning fire), Youmna read from *Sūrat al-Aʾlā* (meaning the Most High), *Sūrat al-Mulk* (meaning Dominion), *Sūrat al-Raḥman*, (The Most Merciful) and *Sūrat al-Ghāshiyah*

---

[622] [FN. 07.02.21 41:12ii].
[623] [FN. 07.02.21 41:12iv].
[624] This translation taken from: Saheeh International *The Qurʾan*, 552.
[625] Youmna's summary.
[626] Also translated as: "You are destined for the fire. That will be your guardian. And that indeed is a grievous destination." Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding The Qurʾān,* 819.
[627] Christian Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 186.

(which means the Overwhelming, and is one of the names for the Resurrection).[628] These are among the shorter chapters of the Qur'an, but I will not expand on them fully at this point, but rather summarise the argument she was illustrating through such extensive reading. The central theme of her argument was that all four chapters (and therefore, multiple verses continuing throughout the Qur'an) provide further descriptions of the terrors and anguish of hellfire on the one hand, and, on the other, the bountiful blessings and peaceful rewards that await the faithful believer in the Hereafter (*al-Ākhira*).[629] *Sūrat al-A'lā* again illustrates this choice between the two, concluding that although one may prefer this life, "the Hereafter is better and more enduring," (Q.87: 17) suggesting that the afterlife is far superior to the world, and that the world is transient, whereas that which is after this life is everlasting.[630] *Sūrat al Ghāshiyah* is summarised in a footnote to one edition of the Qur'an used for this study, which says:

> Those who deny the Hereafter on the grounds that it is beyond the range of possibility should look around and consider some well-known facts pertaining to God's creation of the camels, to the establishment of the mountains, to His raising the heavens to very lofty heights, and to the spreading out of the earth, They should also ponder on how this was brought about. If it was possible to bring all these things into existence – and their existence is a tangible reality – what, then, are the grounds for believing that Resurrection cannot take place? Why can a new world not come about, and what is the basis for thinking that Hell and Heaven are beyond the range of what is possible?[631]
> *Sūrat al-Mulk* reminds the reader that they have been offered knowledge and

granted the ability to understand the truth, and are therefore to be warned of the consequences of not living in the "Straight Path." (Q. 67: 22) Furthermore, in one translation, the unbeliever is warned of the "alienation" for those whose destination is the

---

[628] [FN 16.03.21 42-44]; Saheeh International *The Qur'an* 2012, 631.

[629] [FN 16.03.21 42-44] I use Hereafter and Afterlife interchangeably but predominantly "Hereafter" as this is how it appears most often regarding Islam in English.

[630] See also Islamic Studies, "Towards Understanding the Qur'an" https://www.islamicstudies.info/tafheem.php?sura=87 (Accessed 20.10.22).

[631] Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding The Qur'ān*, 948, (echoing verses 17-20).

"Blaze." (Q. 67:11) It is said that reading this Surah before bed can protect the Muslim from the torment of the grave, and aids in the forgiveness of sins on the Day of Judgement.[632] *Sūrat al Rahman* is written in a repetitive pattern that includes twenty-eight pairs of verses, in which the first is a descriptive example of one of the bounties of paradise, and the second, a recurring question: "So which of the favours of the Lord would you deny?" (Q.55: 1-78) The repeated motif perhaps reflects the constant offer of God's mercy shown throughout one's life, and the continued opportunity to repent and turn to God before it is too late.[633]

Life as a test

Life, according to Youmna, is therefore an opportunity to learn what is right, and practise what is good; in order to gain these promised favours as reward. Or, as she put it, *al-dār imtiḥān,* put literally, "this abode is an exam."[634] *Sūrat al-Mulk* states that God "created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed," (Q.67: 2) which demonstrates the temporary nature of this life, and reminds the believer that all of this world is passing, and only serves as a practice trial and preparation for eternity.[635] With these examples of repeated emphasis on what one has to do in order to gain God's favour, it is evident that no chapter on the idea of God in Islam would be complete without a section on ethics. I will return to this idea below with a brief consideration of one ethical principle drawn from these conversations.

---

[632] [FN 16.03.21 42:14].

[633] I asked her if this knowledge of Heaven and Hell made her fear for those who did not know Islam, to which she replied: "Fear for, or fear from?" and continued to say, hesitatingly, that she was afraid of the unbelievers around her because she did not know how they might behave, not having the same moral code as her. [FN 16.03.21 42:18].

[634] [FN 16.03.21 43:6].

[635] [FN 16.03.21 43:6]; [FN. 12.03.21 53:2], notes from a lecture in Islam at Al Maktoum College, Dundee.

Patience in adversity

Another theme that emerged in our conversations was how religious faith enables the Muslim to endure hardship and the sense of estrangement *fitnat al-ghurba* (discussed in Chapter Three) of a life in exile. Because the human life is full of trials and tribulations, the believer is encouraged to be patient and persevering in adversity, and to hold on to the hope of heaven.[636] As it says in *Sūrat al-baqarah* about the believers: "Who, when disaster strikes them, say, 'indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return," (Q.2: 156) and in *Sūrat al-Anʿam,* it is written: "For them will be the Home of Peace [i.e. Paradise] with the Lord. And He will be their protecting friend because of what they used to do." (Q.6: 127) On these themes, Youmna explained that God gives us these experiences, and that suffering has a purpose in life, even such difficult things such as illness, so that we can use them and benefit from them, learning from such experiences and hardships in the path of faith.[637] The experience of estrangement and loss resulting from migration and resettlement is one such opportunity in her eyes. She even went as far as to say: "I love illnesses, why? Because they are a kind of grace of God," that deepen our faith and bring us closer to God, and fasting can bring us healing.[638] The Muslim response to such hardship and adversity is therefore patience, or *ṣabr*, defined more fully as "fettering, shackling; patience, forbearance; composure, equanimity, steadfastness, firmness; self-control, self-command, self-possession; perseverance, endurance, hardiness."[639]This patience is therefore more than simple tolerance of hardship, but rather the faithful continuation in the hope and promise

---

[636] [FN 12.03.21 53: 3]. *Sūrat al-ʿaṣr* states: "By time, indeed mankind is in loss, Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience" (Four of the pillars are mentioned in this one Surah, effectively summarizing the entirety of Islam in one sentence.)

[637] [FN 12.03.21 53: 17].

[638] [FN 12.03.21 53: 19].

[639] Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 585.

of God's final plan and the ultimate reward of Heaven.[640] As a Hadith of the Prophet

states: "Allah Almighty says: O son of Adam, if you are patient and restrained at the first

moment of calamity, I would not be pleased with any reward for you less than

Paradise."[641]

Comfort in exile

On the Qur'an itself Youmna described it as *bahr min al-ʿilm,* a vast sea of

knowledge, and that "Islam is so deep and wide and strong, it would take a long time to

explain it all.[642] It is this source that has provided a great strength and comfort to her in

the years since arriving in Scotland as a refugee. She said: "I came to love religion more

in exile."[643] Continuing, she provided a metaphor to illustrate how this came to be,

saying, "If you're out in the desert, you need strength; there is no room for weakness of

fear. You have to be strong to face life. Religion gives us that strength and courage to go

out and about and speak, even when I don't know the words."[644] Concluding that,

"Wherever I go, by bus or by foot, my faith gives me strength."[645] Further, she added: "I

---

[640] [FN 12.03.21 53: 18]. Some contemporary research has explored the relationship between Islamic *ṣabr* and resilience, for example during Covid-19 See Kamarudin Salleh, Ab Rahman, Z., Mohd Noor, A.Y., Kashim, M.I.A.M., Ahmad Sunawari Long, Ahmad Zaki Hasan, Abdul Rahim Ridzuan, Shafinar Ismail, Salasiah Hanin Hamjah, Muhd Najib Abdul Kadir, Che Zarrina Saari, Muhammad Farid (2020). "Resilience and patience (sabr) in Islamic view when observing the movement control (order MCO) during the covid 19 pandemic 1 I The Element of Resilience when Observing the Movement Control Order (MCO)" in *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*. 24. 2020. 10.37200/IJPR/V24I1/PR200654. (Accessed 20.10.22).
[641] Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, 1:509, #1597.
[642] [FN 05.05.21 45: 3].
[643] [FN 05.05.21 45: 4i].
[644] [FN 05.05.21 45: 4ii].
[645] [FN 05.05.21 45: 4iii]. This is especially meaningful in her case, when going by bus means entrusting herself to an unknown system, strange streets, not knowing the map and layout of the place where she lives nor knowing language to ask for help. Even by foot, for her in particular, is an enormous challenge, given her physical mobility that has rapidly declined since being resettled.

am not alone at home, God is with me."[646] Finally, she said that "remembering God is the

only thing for the heart to do – and doing so brings peace, and comfort to the mind and

heart … that is the greatest grace, that God is everywhere and never forgets us."[647]

In telling me what these things all meant for her life, as a refugee now resettled

and living in a state of exile, she repeated that "everything is written," and that "when it

is time to die, there is no postponing or changing the hour that God has written."[648]

Going further, she said: "God wrote for me to come here, maybe I will die here. God

brought us here."[649] She also noted that it was not likely that any of the refugees would

ever go back to Syria permanently, because it is no longer the same place, and it would

all be strange to her now.[650] Moreover, it is not safe, because of the extremist groups who

have taken up residence in their houses and fields.[651] In particular for the young who

have studied here, or families with young children who are building new lives and

memories in Scotland, she reflected that there would be no reason ever for going back.[652]

As a result of escaping the war and seeking refuge in the UK, she became

estranged from all that she had previously known, and said the first days of resettlement

were especially difficult.[653] As mentioned in Chapter Three, Youmna had left everything

behind when she left Syria: her brothers and sisters, her home, her land, even her own

language. She was now in a strange place where she herself felt "even stranger."[654] This

strangeness, she said, was compounded by the fact that here, in Scotland, people keep

themselves to themselves, and are not in the habit of dropping in on their neighbours as

---

[646] [FN 05.05.21 45: 5].
[647] [FN 05.05.21 45: 6].
[648] [FN 05.05.21 46: 1].
[649] [FN 05.05.21 46: 2].
[650] [FN 05.05.21 46: 3ii].
[651] [FN 05.05.21 46: 2i].
[652] [FN 05.05.21 46: 4].
[653] [FN. 06.02.21 1:1ii].
[654] [FN. 06.02.21 1:1]; [FN 05.05.21 46: 6].

they are in the Middle East.[655] She said that integral to Islam is the rule that each neighbour is responsible for seven others in the neighbourhood. She simply cited this as coming from *dīnnā*, (our religion), so I am not sure of the exact source, but an online search confirmed this, saying that a Muslim has a duty, not only their immediate neighbours, but also up to seven doors away, which effectively suggests the "whole neighbourhood."[656] The concept of neighbourliness, *jiwār*, is thus central in Islam, and there are several examples in the Qur'an and Hadith on the importance of maintaining good relations with ones neighbour, treating them with respect and offering assistance. The examples she gave to me to illustrate this responsibility were these: "If I am rich and eating in front of the poor, that is *ḥarām*, [shameful, forbidden] we shouldn't show off our wealth in front of the poor"… "If I am cooking and the neighbours smell the food, and they are poor and can't manage to get what they need to cook and provide for themselves, then I should take them a dish of food."[657] These practices of neighbourliness (*jiwār*) and hospitality (*ḍiyāfa*) are very deeply rooted, not only in Islam, but also in Christian, and other communities throughout the Middle East, to a similar extent. In fact, to arrive uninvited is to honour the host, and to leave too soon, insulting.[658] Mona Siddiqui illustrates this interconnectedness between hospitality and

---

[655] [FN 05.05.21 46: 7].

[656] See Islam Awareness "Neighbors: Up to Seven doors Away." https://www.islamawareness.net/Neighbours/7doors.html (Accessed 20.10.22); Likewise, eleven duties to one's neighbour are outlined in (Accessed 20.10.22). This list includes sharing food, sharing with the neighbour in celebration or in mourning, and "If he commits a sin, prevent it from being known," echoing a point that recurred in conversations but has not been outlined above – that a Muslim must not speak ill of anyone, even if they have done wrong. [FN. 05.05.21 1-3].

[657] [FN 05.05.21 46: 9].

[658] Andrew Shyrock, "Breaking hospitality apart: bad hosts, bad guests, and the problem of sovereignty" in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (2012): 23; See also Mona Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam: Welcoming in God's Name* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015). Her book offers a comparative social ethics of hospitality in Islam and other traditions, illustrating the spiritual roots of hospitality and explores a God-centred hospitality that has the power to transform our world.

neighbourliness, as being framed in the Qur'an and Hadith in "the act of giving."[659]

These ideas will be briefly explored below, with reference to the context of refugee resettlement.

The ethical concept of neighbourliness, *Jiwār*

At this point we will turn away from the interview data, and briefly focus upon, and explore, this ethical principle and notion of neighbourliness, or *jiwār*, in Islam and consider what this might mean in the context of refugee resettlement in a non-Muslim context, such as Scotland. The Hans-Wehr Arabic Dictionary defines *jiwār* as "hospitable reception, entertainment as guest, accommodation; hospitality," and relates to neighbourhood or proximity, but can be used with the meaning to request refuge or grant protection.[660] In fact, closely linked to each other, the traditions of *ḍiyāfa* and *jiwār* predate Islam, and originated in pre-Islamic Arabia. The term *ḍiyāfa* has at its root, the idea of inclusion, a metaphorical extending of the tent pegs to make room for the guest, and the sharing of food is a central part of this welcome.[661] Likewise, in the practice of *ṣulḥa,* making peace (or conflict resolution), the hospitality of sharing and drinking of coffee is a symbolic act at the point of reconciliation to show that trust has been re-established and peace restored.[662] The nomadic Bedouins of the desert have a tradition of hospitality that continues to this day, which is to offer food and shelter to anyone in need

---

[659] Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam*, 31.

[660] Wehr *Dictionary of Arabic*, 640; For a deeper investigation into the definition of neighbour, see Franz Rosenthal "The Stranger in Medieval Islam" *Arabica*, T. 44, Fasc. 1 (Jan., 1997), 35-75.

[661] The root verb is *ḍ-y-f* which implies "to stop or stay as a guest II to take in as a guest, receive hospitably, entertain; IV-II; to add, subjoin, annex, attach; to admix; to connect, bring in relation; to annex…" Wehr, *Dictionary of Arabic*, 640.

[662] See Wi'am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center, "Sulha" https://www.alaslah.org/sulha/ (Accessed 20.10.22).

for up to three days, without even asking their name.[663] Bedouin customs stipulate that after forty days, a guest is no longer a guest and instead becomes a member of the family.[664] These practices are closely related to those of *jiwār* and are echoed in the Hadith.

In contractual *jiwār,* there may be many accepted reasons for requesting refuge. Among those noted by Arafat Shoukri in his investigation into *Refugee Status in the Arab and Islamic Tradition* are: seasonal migration, refuge from political danger, wind, and even for the those evading the contempt of poets.[665] In the process of requesting and establishing *jiwār,* there is a clear request and a clear answer, perhaps quite unceremonial in practice. A request is made, for example, by holding the tent ropes or tying up one's camel to the tent, and the offer is granted when one is welcomed without question, offered food and water, and told *ahlan wa sahlan*, which literally means a people and a land, and implies that you have found people who are ready to be your family (*ahl*) and an easy and comfortable place (*sahl).*[666] Within this simple contract are understood the rights and duties of the host and guest*,* and for termination of *jiwār* when the guest either moves on, or stays and becomes a part of the family to be provided for and protected in the same way as any other. This was a comprehensive and recognised law widely practiced in the *jahilīyah* pre-Islamic era and continues in certain places to this day.

---

[663] Shyrock, "Breaking hospitality apart," 24

[664] Shyrock, "Breaking hospitality apart," 31; See also Gourlay, *Hope Unexpected,* 107, 109.

[665] In that era poets had the social power to exalt or condemn a person publicly so their approval was quite understandably sought. Even today, poets are revered in the Middle East in a way that they are not in Western Europe. Arafat Madi Shoukri, "Refugee Status in the Arab and Islamic Tradition: A comparative study of Jiwar, Aman and the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees." (Doctoral Thesis, SOAS, University of London, 2008).

[666] Dana Sajdi, "The Dead and the City: The Limits of Hospitality in the Early Modern Levant" in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions*, Richard Kearney and James Taylor (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011), 123.

This concept of *jiwār* became an integral part of Islam under the pillar of *zakāt* (charity), and the protection of life and of the innocent, which therefore includes refugees. There are, in fact, several examples of divine protection and provision in the life of the Prophet Mohammed as well as examples of his migration to flee danger of persecution in Mecca and seek refuge, once, under the Christian King of Abyssinia, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Migration to seek refuge is therefore seen as praiseworthy and part of the Prophetic path.[667] Equally, it is said that: "Those who are merciful, the Most merciful will show mercy to them. Be merciful to those on earth and the One in Heaven will be merciful to you."[668] It is interesting to note that Islamic notions of *jiwār* were in fact the forerunner to establishing the rights to Asylum in International Law.[669]

I have selected this theme of *jiwār* for exploration because, in the case of the principal refugee informing this study, the absence of hospitality, as recognised (or understood) by her as a Syrian Muslim, has had a significant impact on her in the context of exile and resettlement. She comes from a context where these ancient practices are still evident in daily life. On the one hand there is the religious teaching and impulsion to be neighbourly, in order to be an exemplary host and to secure heavenly reward, and, on the other hand, there is the disappointment in finding oneself to have requested *jiwār* and become a guest in a culture, which seems cold and unwelcoming, and is represented

---

[667] See: Arafat Madi Shoukri, "Jiwār in the Islamic Tradition in the Meccan Period." In *Refugee Status in Islam: Concepts of Protection in Islamic Tradition and International Law* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011): 17–43. http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9780755610938.ch-002. (Accessed 20.10.22); also: Saritoprak "An Islamic Approach," 522-531.

[668] Abu Dawud, hadith no: 4931, cited in: Saritoprak "An Islamic Approach," 531.

[669] See Ahmed Abou-El-Wafa, "The Right to Asylum between Islamic Shari'ah and International Refugee Law, A Comparative Study, Riyadh - 2009 (1430 H.)" Published by the UNHCR https://www.unhcr.org/uk/publications/legal/4a9645646/right-asylum-islamic-shariah-international-refugee-law-comparative-study.html (Accessed 20.10.22).

initially by social workers and other professionals who behave very differently. For they don't visit without an appointment, refuse the offer of food and drink, and then they leave quickly. In the communities around the refugees, their neighbours stay behind closed doors, perhaps in recognition of personal privacy. However the refugee feels, and perceives, this as neglect and further estrangement, even interpreting it as the stinginess that Allah rejects, and evidence of godless-ness.[670] This encounter is eloquently summarised by Ben Jalloun, in his case in reference to North African immigrants coming to France as refugees. However it is equally relevant when considering the context of Syrian refugees in Scotland.

> Some people are more hospitable than others: generally speaking, they are those who have remained close to the soil and live in wide open spaces, even if they are poor. The industrialized countries, obedient to a cold rationality, have had to unlearn hospitality. Time is precious and space limited. There's a shortage of accessibility, or in other words of generosity and freedom, because everything is calculated and measured. Doors are shut and so are hearts.[671]

In reflection for this study I have wondered if perhaps this tension can lead to various outcomes for the refugee along what could be considered something of a "spectrum of estrangement." At one end, the refugee experiences this "cold rationality" by misunderstandings, disappointment and, ultimately, isolation, as seen in the particular case of Youmna, the primary voice in this study. At the other end, unfulfilled expectation of provision from the host can manifest itself in behaviours that at times demonstrate what can be interpreted as a sense of "entitlement," or judgement and condemnation of the host as unwelcoming and godless.[672] Furthermore, I have considered whether hospitality and neighbourliness are, to some degree, the insurance of the poor, in

---

[670] Q.57:24; [FN. 29.04.21 38:13].

[671] Tahar Ben Jelloun, *French Hospitality: Racism and North* African Immigrants, trans. Barbara Bray, (New York: Colombia University Press, 1999), 5. The same quote is also found in Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam* (2015), 31.

[672] This will be considered in the following chapter.

particular those from rural backgrounds such as many of those resettled to Scotland. For those who have had little, and depended on the generosity and kindness of others throughout their lives, generosity and kindness to the other, even the stranger, is a natural instinct in recognition of the vulnerability and inter-dependency of humanity and the grace of God.

Strangers in the world

A second point for consideration, which has been raised in the previous chapters, is the broader idea of sojourn, the temporality of life on earth, and the theological significance of migration and exile. All the Abrahamic faiths emerged from, and developed out of, a context of exile and estrangement, and a dependence on strangers from the very beginning. Witness the accounts of the Israelites in exile in Egypt; the birth of the Christ child in a manger, with the subsequent flight of the Holy Family to Egypt. In Islam it is seen in the waves of *hijra*, or migration of the first Muslims in Mecca, as they fled form, and escaped, religious persecution. This idea of "being strangers" is at the heart of these faiths, and in fact influential in the historical cause of Islam.[673] As a Hadith of the Prophet says: "Be in this world as if you were a stranger, or an *'ābir al-sabīl* (a traverser of the road), or *ibn al-sabīl*, which effectively means "traveller," (see Q.9: 60).[674] The distinction between a stranger *gharīb* (as mentioned in Chapter Three) and *'ābir al-sabīl*, (apart from the fact that the term *gharīb* is not present in the Qur'an) is that the former was defined in Medieval Islam as "one who may take up residence in a foreign place," whereas the latter was defined as "one who intends to go to a faraway place (because he is in a difficult situation and cannot stay in one particular place)."[675]

---

[673] See Rosenthal, "The Stranger," 73.
[674] Saritoprak, Zeki "An Islamic Approach," 522.
[675] See Rosenthal, "The Stranger," 37; Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam*, 62.

Both of these apply to the Syrian refugees. At the first stage of flight, they are strangers

seeking residence away from the dangers of war and, in adjusting to life in the context of

resettlement, they find themselves in a position of having refugee status, a constant

reminder of residing temporarily in the world.[676] Indeed, the body that was created from

the earth will return to the earth, and the soul will continue on its journey to reunion with

God in Heaven. Thus, the believer is reminded that "Real life, that is eternal life" begins

only after physical death.[677] As Ibn Qayyim stated (again, reported using different

transliteration (*gurba* for *ghurba*)):

> Wherever a believer takes up residence in this (worldly) mansion (*dar*), he is a stranger
> there, and he is in foreign territory (or exile, *dar al-jurba*), as the Prophet has said: "Be in
> this world as if you were a stranger!" It is, however, a *gurba* that will come to an end,
> and he will get back to his native land and mansion. The *gurba* that offers no hope that it
> will ever end is the one in the vile mansion (that is this world, *dar al-hawdn*) involving
> separation from the native land that was arranged and prepared for him, and he was
> commanded to make provisions for the journey back to it-that is the *gurba* that offers no
> hope for a return.[678]

This Muslim account of life as transient, and the call for believers to be strangers in the

world, waiting patiently for return to God, is the religious resolution of the tension

described in Chapter Three. That sense of estrangement that pervades the life of the

refugee, is in fact intended to pervade the life of the believer, and direct their focus ever

towards God, with practices such as the five pillars, providing guidance and aid to that

end.

The final abode

Finally, this view of life as temporary, and the Muslim as a traverser of the road,

'ābir al-sabīl, on a journey to an ultimate abode in the Hereafter, is a promise of the

---

[676] As arued by Zaman, *Islamic Traditions of Refuge*, 28.
[677] Rozenthal, "The Stranger," 59.
[678] Ibn Qayyim *al-,jawzīya,* 151. Quoted in Rozenthal, "The Stranger," 59.

resolution of that tension and pain of separation from homeland. Where the refugees experience an up-rooting from and loss of a particular landscape, familiar soil, trees, fields, and rocks, the faithful are promised an ultimate homeland that is described as a garden, a second Eden (as mentioned in Chapter Four). The Arabic for Heaven is *Janna*, which is defined as "garden, paradise" with *Janna ʿdn*, meaning "The Garden of Eden," which is also considered to be the fourth layer of *Janna*.[679] It is well known that within Islam is the belief of Seven Heavens, layers and degrees of the Afterlife, depending on the reward that has been earned by the believer in this human life on earth.[680] As briefly referred to in Chapter Four, the topography of *Janna* is described in terms of particular rivers and trees, that emphasise the reality of existence in the life beyond this world. According to Smith and Haddad, the descriptions of Heaven and Hell are not metaphorical, but to be understood as "real and specific," and therefore to be anticipated with true, fear, and joy at the promise of a final belonging and security.[681]

To conclude, this chapter has presented a very brief overview of God in the eyes of a refugee. It began by portraying God, as understood by some of the refugees sampled and interviewed for this study, and revealed a shared core aspect of Muslim faith despite varied approaches to living out faith in the context of resettlement. The meta-narrative of temporality in the world and ultimate destination being reunion with the Divine was apparent in nearly all the interviews with the refugees. The main focus thereafter was on the conversations with the principal informant, Youmna about God. Her account provided a rich portrayal of Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and included reference to His

---

[679] Wehr *Dictionary of Arabic*, 164; Lange "Paradise and Hell," 131. This very detailed book gives an account of the ideas of Heaven and Hell in Sunni, Shia'a and Sufi traditions as well as contemporary conceptions of the Hereafter.

[680] Lange "Paradise and Hell;" and Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981) This very interesting book illustrates the diversity of interpretations and understandings of the Afterlife even in modern Islam.

[681] Smith and Yazbeck, *The Islamic Understanding* (1981), 82.

ninety-nine beautiful names, reminding the believer of the Divine source of all that is good, and God's superlative nature. She went on to describe the core of Islam, from the five pillars of the faith, to Qur'anic explanations of the Straight Path of faith, and descriptions of the Hereafter, both Heaven and Hell. The worldview offered by this refugee has illustrated that life, in her eyes, is a test, and she holds onto her faith through every adversity in the hope of the promise of ultimate return to God, her true home, and the restoration of all that has been lost in her lifetime. It is evident that from the descriptions of God, and the subsequently mandatory duties of a good Muslim, as outlined by the other interviewees for this research, that, just as this world is understood as temporary and passing, the Muslim believer is likewise only passing through this world on a greater journey to return to God, and longing, in the meantime, for that ultimate, metaphysical home in Heaven. Muslims are therefore called to live in a state of sojourn, as they pass through this difficult life, and therefore absolutely everything around them is also transient. Finally, as Youmna explained, every little detail of life is to be understood as a gift of Grace—water, a new morning, coffee, and dates—and therefore must be shared freely with one's neighbour, and the name of God remembered. For, as this particular refugee said: "Remembering God is the only thing for my heart to do."[682]

These three data chapters comprising Part II of the thesis have discussed three separate themes that emerged in conversations with the refugees, and also illustrated the meta-narrative that became apparent and has been outlined in detail above. In this chapter, some practical implications of religion on resettlement have also surfaced, including the Muslim ideas of *jiwār* and *ḍiyāfa*, (neighbourliness and hospitality). In Part III, chapter six provides an overview of the thesis, which is then followed by some

---

[682] [FN 05.05.21 46: 11iii].

discussion and reflections on the research process and findings. The contribution of this study to the field of inter-religious dialogue is then considered along with some avenues for future research are identified. Finally, some practical suggestions as outcomes from this study are offered before closing with a final reflective thought.

PART III

6. Considering Religion and Resettlement of Syrian Refugees

He dreams of tossing his eyes
into the well of the coming city,
dreams of dancing toward the abyss,
of forgetting his days that devour things,
days that create them,
dreams of rising, of collapsing
like the sea—forcing secrets to birth themselves,
starting a new sky at the end of the sky.
Adonis [683]

This thesis has sought to address a gap in the available literature that considers the role of religion in the resettlement of refugees, which was identified in Chapter One, and the particular absence of that which considers the relationship between religion and resettlement from the perspective of the refugees themselves. Furthermore, in an effort to interrupt the perpetuation of narratives of vulnerability, as mentioned by Smith and Waite in Chapter One, and contribute to what Vertovec termed as "narratives of cartography," in which the subjects present who they are as they understand themselves to be, this study has sought the theological narratives accompanying the refugee experience of displacement and resettlement.[684] Thus, the presentation of the research in the form of first person life narratives has ultimately revealed and illustrated a shared humanity, and provided a contribution towards countering the common understandings of Islam that are prevalent within the local authorities and the communities to which they are being resettled. This study has focussed on the voices of those at the margins of my own society, namely those Syrian Muslim refugees resettled to North East Scotland through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS). The central

---

[683] Adonis, "The End of the Sky" in *Adonis: Selected Poems,* Trans. Khaled Mattawa, New Haven: Yale University Press (2010), 29. Adonis is the pen name of much celebrated Syrian poet and essayist, Ali Ahmad Said Esber, a man familiar with exile.
[684] Smith and Waite, "Narratives of Vulnerability," 2289; and Vertovec, "Diaspora," 323.

original contribution of this study has therefore been the emic perspectives of the refugees themselves, and ethnographies of conversations that are, in essence, the practice and product of inter-religious dialogue, which is considered further below. Such an ethnographic approach required time for community observation and the slow work of building trust. Situating the research within the framework of inter-religious dialogue enabled the disruption of the usual power dynamics, and freed the conversation out of the confines accompanying vulnerability. In the placing of such marginalised voices into the Academy, I have endeavoured, at all times, to represent them as truly as possible, bearing in mind that this work is a time-bound glimpse into an ever-changing and dynamic reality, and that the same study today may produce different results.

Summary of Chapters—Estrangement, Homeland and God

As outlined in the chapters of Part I of the thesis, this research emerged from real life engagement with Syrian Muslim refugees resettled to North East Scotland, and the observations and conversations from my own unique positioning at the intersection between the refugees, the Muslim Community, Churches with an interest in hospitality to refugees, and the secular local authorities overseeing their resettlement. In the course of data collection with the refugees, three key themes emerged, as explored separately in the preceding chapters. Firstly, the experience of resettlement was considered through the lens of *al-ghurba*, estrangement. It became apparent during conversations with the informants that this sense of estrangement pervaded the lives of the refugees, particularly in the early days of resettlement, and included the estrangement from all that was left behind in Syria. It was also a sense of estrangement from the person they had once been: a separation from their language, their skills and abilities, as exemplified by the portrait of Youmna in Chapter Three. Moreover, in the context of resettlement, there is another

sense of estrangement from the society in which they now find themselves, the strangeness of their environment exaggerating their own sense of personal strangeness, which, in turn, impedes connection to those around them. Additionally, the prioritisation of the most vulnerable in the design of the SVPRS meant that a large percentage of those resettled were survivors of trauma, which can be another socially isolating factor during recovery.[685] A further sense of estrangement, identified during conversations, was that of being at odds with the existing Muslim community into which they were placed. This tension led to strained relationships between the new Arab Muslims and the established Muslim community, which in this area, is predominantly of South Asian ethnic origin. Finally, a sense of estrangement amongst those resettled through the SVPRS also emerged in particular for those who are Kurdish, a people who have experienced marginalisation and discrimination previously, and are therefore wary of the same happening to them again. The Kurds in particular exemplify the words of Bruggeman who said that: "Exile…. is not primarily geographical. It is a cultural, liturgical, spiritual condition; it is an awareness that one is in a hostile, alien environment where the predominant temptation is assimilation."[686] However, despite the relatively small sample of informants, the varied responses of the refugees interviewed for this study demonstrate the diverse approaches to establishing new lives in, and adapting to, a context of resettlement in a non-Muslim country, such as Scotland. If there is so much apparent

---

[685] See, for example, I.I. Vlachos, C Papageorgiou, and M. Margariti, "Neurobiological Trajectories Involving Social Isolation in PTSD: A Systematic Review" in *Brain sciences* 10, no.3 (2020): 173, https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci10030173 (Accessed 20.10.22). This paper suggests that addressing social isolation soon after the traumatic event can prevent the development of PTSD and, generally, the refugees do have high levels of resilience due to the strong family networks of support. This corroborates the work of Ian Barron, which compared resilience between young Palestinian and Scottish survivors of trauma and influenced the SVPRS project in Dundee.

[686] Bruggeman, (1999), cited in Jennifer B Saunders, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Susanna Snyder (Eds.) *Intersections of Religion and Migration: Issues at the Global Crossroads* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 300.

diversity of religious and other perspectives even in this sample, it is evident that

generalisation of the refugees is not to be advised, and that they cannot be treated as one

uniform or homogenous group but should rather be allowed individual freedom to form

connection to, or indeed separation from, the established Muslim and migrant

communities.

Chapter Four explored the notion of homeland (*al-waṭan*) from a position of

exile. This more theoretical chapter sought to assist a better understanding of the

particular significance of the concept of homeland to the refugees themselves, but also

served to make initial steps towards appreciating theological differences between the

Syrians resettled through the SVPRS, and the Muslims of the established community in

Scotland. The chapter explored loss of connection to land and soil in Arabic and Middle

Eastern literature, and suggested that such feelings of nostalgia are perhaps integral to the

experience of being human in the world. The separation of the refugees from homeland,

especially for rural people resettled to cities and unable to find employment, echoes the

"uprootedness" discussed by Simone Weil in *The Need for Roots*, which, interestingly,

also considers the loss of meta-narrative in modern education.[687] Further, the chapter

briefly considered classical, modern, and contemporary Muslim scholarship that is

relevant to those in exile from their native Muslim lands. It became apparent that there

are numerous interpretations for and approaches to living in exile and, as migration has

increased, the binary view of *dār al-islām* versus *dār al-ḥarb* is problematic, in particular

for those who are now second or third generation immigrants of Muslim-world origin,

but who consider themselves to fully be at home in their countries of adoption. Thus, the

---

[687] Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties towards Mankind,* Translated by Arthur Wills, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 45, 46. She also considers the contemporary trend in which family units are separated from the whole (wider family), another symptom of life today that is exaggerated in the life of the refugee by forced migration.

notion of a spectrum, or *dār*-continuum, as developed by American Turkish Muslim

scholar, Mucahit Bilici, has been offered to address this dichotomy. Likewise, Muslim

jurists have sought to define multiple kinds of *waṭan*, in recognition of the multiple

belongings that are increasingly common in a mobile world. Finally, the chapter returned

to the idea of religion in terms of nostalgia and longing, which is reflected in the

refugees' personal religious faith in an ultimate home in Heaven. This led, quite

naturally, to the Chapter on God.

Chapter Five turned its focus inward, to the heart of the refugee, in order to seek a

better understanding of God, as known by the refugees themselves. In a return to the

primary refugee voice of the study, it focussed chiefly on the theological contributions of

Youmna. From a perspective of the study of Islam, it could arguably be said that the

chapter produced nothing of notable surprise. However, her voice presents an

introduction to Islam as was passed to her through her family heritage. Furthermore, it

offers a stark illustration of the inner world of a poor and marginalised person, echoing in

many ways the accounts of others, for example, the unmarried Sicilian, "Aunt Antonia,"

as portrayed in Gavin Maxwell's *Ten Pains of Death.*[688] In the same way that Antonia

responds to her poverty and consequent marginalisation by leaning heavily into her

religious (albeit Catholic) tradition, both Mira and Youmna in this research demonstrate

a response that reflects Gozdziak's suggestion that: "when everything else has been

stripped away… faith becomes a cornerstone for renewing and rebuilding lives."[689]

Responses such as theirs indicate that the sense of estrangement identified in Chapter

---

[688] Gavin Maxwell, *Ten Pains of Death* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1986), 68-85. These similarities are especially unsurprising given Sicily's long association with, and influence by Islam including two hundred years of Muslim rule.

[689] Elizabeth M. Gozdziak, "Spiritual Emergency Room: The Role of Spirituality and Religion in the Resettlement of Kosovar Albanians," in *Journal of Refugee Studies* 15, no. 2 (2002): 145, also cited in Saunders and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, *Religion and Migration,* 299.

Three does not pervade their spiritual lives, as God becomes an anchor in the storm, and, indeed, the only remaining connection to their former lives. Youmna's presentation of Islam illustrates the core aspects of her faith, which have enabled renewal and re-building, even when her health keeps her house-bound. Her outline of the characteristics of Allah, the pillars of Islam, and the descriptions of Heaven and Hell, though not, in themselves, offering anything new to the study of Islam, all provide insight into the lived experience of her religious faith and offer a guide for understanding how a migrant Muslim might navigate and endure life in the World (*al-Dunya*) and ensure her eternal peace in the Afterlife (*al- Ākhira*). This theistic perspective is encapsulated in the Hadith (to which she herself made reference) which cries, "Oh Allah, set right my religion, which is the safeguard of my affairs; and set right my world, wherein is my living; and set right my next life, to which is my return, And make life for me an increase in all good and make death a relief for me from every evil."*690*

Finally, the chapter briefly considered the ethical concept of *jiwār*, neighbourliness, as a means to examine the practical implications of religion on resettlement. In this case, the concept of *jiwār* highlighted the obligation in Islam to provide unquestioning hospitality to the stranger in need. The idea that, in Middle Eastern culture, the guest honours the host by requesting hospitality, casts an alternative light on the process of refugee resettlement. Applying these principles to the SVPRS reveals a potential expectation of those resettled to find and receive similar, freely given, hospitality to the stranger, and perhaps even honouring the host nation having "requested *jiwār*" in the receiving country. Consequently, the "entitlement" that is often seen in the behaviour of refugees may in fact have its roots in a religious worldview that influences

---

690 [FN. 05.05. 21 46:12]; Found at: Sahih Muslim Book 17, Hadith 1472, Authentic Dua and dhikr: https://authentic-dua.com/category/dua-dhikr/aakhira-hereafter/ (Accessed 20.10.22).

an expectation based on what they themselves would freely perform (hospitality to the stranger, that will be rewarded in the Afterlife). Conversely, the perceived reticence to welcome them (as the Scottish value of personal privacy can be understood from outside) can sometimes be seen as another indicator of godless-ness, which further drives a wedge of misunderstanding and fear between themselves and the host communities.

Discussion of the Research Findings

The overall findings of this study are validated by a North American study into the role of faith in refugee resettlement of Syrian Muslim refugees in Texas, which concluded that religious faith was central to the lives of the refugees both before and after resettlement, and continued to provide a source of resilience, patience, and comfort, as well as being a tool for negotiating challenges during the process.[691] The implications of that research included the suggestion that Social Workers be trained in religious literacy, and that a spiritual assessment of those resettled could provide further insight into religion and resilience.[692] While that may improve understanding, my experience of religious literacy training in such contexts has usually been so simplistic, presenting homogenous or stereotypical representations of Islam, that it often reinforces the existing prejudice and "othering" it tries to counteract.[693]

Another recent study which identified and discussed this tendency to misunderstand Syrian Muslim refugees, in ways that tend to be homogenous, orientalist

---

[691] Hasan, et al." Faith in resettlement," 223–238.

[692] Hasan et, al, "Faith in Resettlement" 8, 9, 11.

[693] [FN. 16.03.17 48:5] Observation in field notes from a diversity training workshop delivered by Muslim women at the local authority for members of the Humanitarian Resettlement Team (SVPRS). These obervations were corroborated by a very interesting experience at such a training conducted by British sociologists of religion (who were oblivious to the much more sophisticated religious literacy already present in the room) at a conference in collaboration with Tearfund in Juba, South Sudan in 2019. [personal journal 13.05.19]

and political, is the work of Khatereh Eghdamian, in her examination of religious identity and integration in Germany.[694] Her research also recognised that "such (mis)assumptions about Syrian refugees are increasingly shaped by the secularised biases of some institutional actors. These directly influence the experiences of 'religious minority' refugees in refugee-host contexts," an idea which confirms my observations and interpretations of the decisions and procedures in North East Scotland that prompted this study. Moreover, her work also recognises intra-communal dynamics, and tensions between the refugees themselves, as has been noted in this study (between Arabs and Kurds, or Middle Eastern and South Asian Muslims) albeit with a smaller sample.[695]

This thesis has also demonstrated that, in general, refugees are acutely aware of their need for God, as a source of strength and hope, a need that has largely been forgotten, or perhaps not needed, in contemporary Scottish society. Nigel Rapport encapsulates this reason for religion in a way that echoes the one that has become apparent in this study.

> Historically, religion has been the most widespread and effective means of maintaining, legitimating and validating the worlds, which human beings have individually and collectively constructed... Human societies are enterprises in world-making, affording human beings a sense of meaning, order and routine which is not provided by their biological circumstances alone, and thus potentially keeping at bay the anomy of a random, entropic, absurd universe. And yet, there are occasions when the facticity of everyday routine, when the commonsensical expectation of mundane interaction, is not sufficient to deal with life's eventualities. Ignorance and forgetfulness, suffering and misfortune, dreams and daydreams, accidents, insults, fights, failures, above all, deaths, may all call into question the interactional routine and commonsensical knowledge by which life is usually lived, and threaten confusion. These uncalled-for occasions and occurrences bring into stark focus the dividing line between order and disorder and emphasise the precariousness to the former, its constant dependence on human activity and consciousness. To alleviate this dependence, to make the order of the world seem

---

[694] Eghdamian, "Rethinking 'Religious Identity,'" 167-196.
[695] Eghdamian, "Rethinking 'Religious Identity,'" 197-226.

more sure, more autonomous, more proper and permanent, 'religion' is called into play: something which substitutes human agency and responsibility by the superhuman and which bolsters a frail human order by subsuming it within an ultimate, universal, 'cosmic' meaning and order. The human order or 'nomos' becomes a microcosm or reflection or incarnation of an all-encompassing universal order.[696]

Finally, the ideas contained in this study of religion and resettlement of Syrians in Scotland are echoed in a poem written by Syrian women on the Isle of Bute, further confirming the themes addressed in the preceding three chapters of this thesis, regarding estrangement, homeland and God.

We believe that
everything that happens is our fate,
whether bitter or sweet.

All the shocks;
didn't expect
anything as powerful
as we received.

Life has to go on
because of the shocks we experienced.
We have to force ourselves to continue
Because life goes on for our children.

The human being
Was created as a human being
because it forgets.[697]

Although the research findings relating to the topics of estrangement, homeland and God in this study are interesting, and reveal the inner life of a practicing Muslim in the foreign context of resettlement, the main outcome of this study has been the evident

---

[696] Rapport, *Transcendent Individual*, 17-18.
[697] Mohabir, *Leaving our Homeland*, 45.

value of paying attention to a marginal voice in order to advance interpersonal understanding and openness to the other. Furthermore, the small number of voices directly represented in the written thesis was sufficient for the aims of the research, which were to demonstrate the variety of religious and social perspectives among those resettled, and offer an argument against the homogenisation of refugee communities in resettlement project design and delivery, as mentioned above. These few conversations were of course informed and guided by a much longer period of observation, engagement and conversation with over 150 individuals as part of the wider SVPRS in the region. As mentioned above, the framing of the data collection as inter-religious dialogue allowed a means to liberate the encounters from the usual paradigms and narratives that perpetuate powerlessness in the refugee. This is discussed further below. Finally, although the factor of Islam is central to the thesis and significant for understanding this particular migrant group, the research did not set out to add to discourse on Islam. Indeed, from a perspective of Islamic studies, this thesis has not presented anything of surprise and even the chapter on God could be described as elementary in terms of religious study. However, as mentioned in the early chapters, the focus in the thesis has been on Islam insofar as it is the religious identity of those at the centre of the study, and it was the observed ignorance about and fear of Islam that was the origin of this work.

Reflections on the research method and findings

Much discourse on refugees is polarised. On the one hand, the refugee is seen as a danger, with the Muslim refugee viewed as particularly threatening, due to common associations of Islam with terrorism and extremism. On the other hand there are those who advocate for indiscriminate hospitality towards the other, regardless of the cost. Both of these approaches, I would suggest, often continue to prioritise the other's

"otherness," either as a result of fear, or even pride, with talk of "humanising" the refugee, which suggests a presumed superiority towards the vulnerable other. This second approach, which illustrates a sustained power imbalance, can lead to disappointment when efforts to support refugees are not accepted with gratitude, and exemplifies what Holton calls "objectification of 'the needy' that we are seeking to repair."[698] I have sought to avoid these two extremes in the course of this study and find an alternative to that dichotomy. The thesis has therefore attempted to find an informed middle way, by means of a simple form of inter-religious dialogue, and theology *from* the margins (rather than *about* them). The study has ultimately demonstrated that focusing on Divinity reveals humanity. Thus, not only is the refugee "humanised," but also me. Our shared humanity becomes apparent: our equal vulnerability in the world, our equal need for and attachment to particular people, places, landscapes, memories and habits, as well as our equal hopes and fears. Both parties in this encounter are at the mercy of circumstance, living by grace, dependent on others, and sharing in our hope for meaning in the midst of suffering, and equal in our unknowing (in that neither of us truly knows any more than the other, the full picture of existence). It is evident from the conversations in this study, that religious faith, for the refugee, provides a source of strength, courage and patience in adversity, as well as the promise of a much greater narrative that gives meaning to this lived one, life.

In this light, the experience of the refugee can thus become understood, perhaps, as an intensified experience of what it is to be human: a separation and a return; a beginning in comfort and belonging, a struggle, and a hope for future peace. The voices of the refugees have illustrated that the greatest human pain is separation (in the form of displacement, exile, misunderstanding, disintegration, death) and the greatest joy is union

---

[698] M. Jan Holton, *Longing for Home: Forced Displacement and Postures of Hospitality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 185.

(as exemplified by belonging, family, home, mutual understanding, integration, God's mercy, and a final home in Heaven). Perhaps this is why the plight of the refugee induces such fear in hosting nations. The refugee reminds us of our own vulnerability, dependency on others, temporality, and ultimate death, and reveals our own precarious relationship to the material, and our attachment to possessions. The arrival of refugees in our towns can be a threat to all we know, and we, too, face the threat of change, and risk the loss of particular places, traditions, and habits, as we formerly knew them.[699] This, perhaps, provokes the greatest fear in those who have no meta-narrative of their own, and no religion to offer existential meaning, nor a source of *ṣabr,* patience, in adversity, nor eternal hope. However, if an approach of love can be taken in place of fear, one which meets the refugee as a "sister," and one that looks for something of the Divine reflected in her face, the refugee becomes a powerful teacher through her experience of loss, estrangement, and faith. The method of approach to these conversations that began with *dilatato corde,* an expanded heart, and sought God in the eyes of the refugee was twofold. Firstly, seeking to understand God, as known by the refugee, and secondly, seeing the divine reflected in face of the other, by entering into the conversation with the expectation and belief that God is present in both of us, and that I am communicating with another part of the whole, of which I am also only a part.

Emic perspectives from marginal voices

---

[699] This was explored further in a paper entitled: "Uprooted: An Exploration of Christian Theology of Place and its Implications for Refugee Resettlement in North East Scotland," prepared for Global Network for Public Theology Conference on "Place and Space: Theological perspectives on living in the world," Bamberg, 23-26 September 2019. An earlier version of this thesis had a heavier focus on the importance of connection to the land itself, and drew on a wider range of sources from European, Jewish, Palestinian and Jordanian contexts, as well as information gathered in interviews for Gourlay et al. *voices from the local church,* (2019).

Prioritising the refugees' own voices and emic perspectives in this research meant that the subject matter emerged over time, in a series of organically developing conversations and observations. In this way, the data presented in this thesis illustrates a process of discovery, an unwrapping of more and more layers, "complexifying" the experience of what it is to be a Muslim refugee, resettled to a non-Muslim country.[700] Therefore, both the research method and the data produced were unpredictable, but had to be so, if the process was to truly disrupt existing power structures and allow these voices to speak for themselves. As a result, the initial search for the connection between religion and resettlement gave way to a meta-narrative that was revealed in conversations with the refugees. The interviews evolved to become conversations about God, and the experience of resettlement became lifted into a much larger story that revealed the Muslim perspective of the temporality of life in the world as a person of religious faith, and the ultimate hope of Heaven.

The "emergent" nature of this qualitative research required a willingness to adapt and respond to a number of variables involved in such a study of the contemporary, lived experience of a migrant and vulnerable population.[701] While it would have been possible to proceed with earlier research designs, such an approach would have necessarily meant a researcher-dominated encounter, and not only would the product of such interviews have been more predictable, there would have been no space for the unexpected to occur, such as the rise of Youmna's solo voice, or the possibility of such rich conversations

---

[700] See: Peter Stewart, "Complexity Theories, Social Theory, and the Question of Social Complexity" in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 31, no. 3 (September 2001): 323-360. The theory of complexity as an analytical tool was not a primary objective in this study, however, considering Katz's definition, that "irreducible heterogeneity is tantamount to complexity,"(p. 325) that does apply to this research which has sought the variety of views within the Syrian refugee and wider Muslim community, rather than considering it as a homogenous whole.

[701] Pickard, *Research* Methods, 45. Variables included factors such as current home situation, mental and physical health, as well as external factors such as Ramadan and the coronavirus pandemic. (See Chapter Two).

about God, and the personal experience of Islam in Scotland. The long-term approach to, and conversational style of, data collection allowed for recurring "member checking" and "negotiated outcomes" between the researcher and the informants in order to ensure mutual understanding and fair representation of their contributions.[702]

Additionally, the principles outlined in the Murad Code recognise the importance of careful preparation and strong knowledge of the context prior to interview, as well as the need to ensure respectful and safe environments for research.[703] Preparation in this case included the development of relationships of trust, which was supported by my continued presence in the field (for example, visiting new babies and attending weddings), and also the requirement to improve my Arabic in order to maximise research potential (by my increased understanding, as well as the informant's increased freedom in speech).

Inter-religious dialogue

The framework of the research within inter-religious dialogue has been discussed at length in earlier chapters and referenced above. Primarily, the term has been used as an umbrella descriptor signifying the context of considering religion in the lived experience of the refugees. Secondarily, it refers to the nature of the practical engagement more broadly between peoples of the same community, in this case, mixed neighbourhoods, but also hospitality from Churches, as well as the refugees' relationship to the secular local authorities, which is yet another example of attempts to bridge a divide across contrasting worldviews. Thirdly, in the context of data collection, the term was applied to describe the dialogically interactive conversations with the research informants, in particular with the main subject whose voice became more significant in the chapter on

---

[702] Pickard *Research Methods*, 14, (See Chapter Two).
[703] *Murad Code*, (2022), 3.

God, due to the natural development of an initial conversation into a series of sessions in which she presented me with the tenets of her faith. In this instance, representation of my own voice in the discussions was not important, as this was an opportunity to effectively shift power structures and exchange roles. Thus it was intentional that my own voice not be presented in the written record and the conversation essentially became an opportunity for the "absorption" of the other, allowing for new conversations that could raise the informant out of the normal framework of engagement she was familiar with in dealing with professionals through the SVPRS. The dynamic that had dominated the early days of the SVPRS was one which tended to view the refugee as victim, needy, or weak and, although that was natural in the circumstances, it was important to me that the power imbalance was shifted before embarking on data collection.[704]

The challenge, however, in such an approach was the difficulty of inter-religious dialogue with someone who is entering the conversation with a completely different manner. On the one hand the researcher has had access to formal education, holds an attitude to learning that is founded in argument and reason, and maintains an openness to other voices that has led to an interest in mysticism in general and Sufism in particular as a bridge with Islam. On the other hand, the primary informant, for example, has not had the same privileges and access to diverse theories and worldviews, and not only holds fast to the religion of her heritage, but is sceptical and afraid of other views and traditions even within Islam.[705]

These difficulties were circumnavigated by the focus being on my entering the conversations as a student, a learner, and the refugee as teacher, imitating the approach of

---

[704] Those refugees I had known through my work in the SVPRS continued to seek my support and saw me as a figure of authority, an expectation I had to slowly un-do, in order to be able to approach research conversations in a different capacity.

[705] For example rejecting Shi'ism as unorthodox but not able to say why. The mention of Sufism prompted an audible gasp of horror so the subject was not pursued. [FN. 05.05.21 46:19].

Louis Massignon as a student of Islam, mentioned in Chapter One. Whether this would be the right approach in other circumstances, it cannot be said here. Perhaps there would be those who view this approach as cowardly in that I did not (much) defend my own faith, except when asked a question directly, and even then the answer was brief. However, is not Heaven spacious enough for us both? Is God not great enough to recognise sincerity in whatever form it is practised? To challenge or un-do the faith of a person, such as Youmna, would be to destroy the last remaining aspect of her former life and self, and would also undermine her relationships with her family and friends, and even, for example, how she sees her late father.[706] Church projects, which are eager to support refugees, can sometimes be heavy on proselytism, even in hidden ways, and are unaware of how ruinous such an expectation of conversion is, and how duplicitous and artificial is their hospitality.

I have observed in my own life and experience with refugees that, even with no knowledge of the language, another person's intention is usually understood. Thus, the refugees are acutely aware of ulterior motives, as this is a key aspect of their survival in the world. Additionally, this is an important point to note, because I also observed hesitation in many of those Scots who wished to be involved with supporting refugees. Their willingness was dampened by fears of offending the refugee, and uncertainty, for example, about food being permissible (*ḥalal*) or forbidden (*ḥaram*). Thus, some knowledge of Islam was actually inhibitory, rather than helpful. When one is a guest in Middle Eastern culture, there is little or no regard for dietary requirements. One is simply treated as a part of the family, as well as an honoured guest, and so is served the same as everyone else, and more. I mention this because I have observed that education about

---

[706] As mentioned in Chapter Five, she saw her father as an example to her of a good Muslim, who taught her Islam, and read the Qur'an every day of his life. It will give her comfort that she will one day meet him again in Heaven.

Islam in the UK tends to have a dividing effect rather than a unifying one, as mentioned above. Furthermore, approaches to inter-religious dialogue also often tend towards one of two extremes: either identifying and focusing on differences, or denying them in a search for commonality. Finally, people with similar levels of education are the usual interlocutors in formal inter-religious dialogue and, as a result, intellectual engagement with Islam tends to exclude lay voices, such as those represented in this thesis. The clarity of Youmna's voice in this study reveals a level of religious education and knowledge among ordinary Syrians that is largely lost among Britons in the UK. This raises the question of religious continuity in the context of resettlement, in particular, access to knowledge for women and children.[707] It also reveals a need for better forms of religious and diversity education that are fully inclusive.

A final point for consideration arising from this study is the value of attending to the marginal voice. Although not a primary element of the written representation of the interviews, it was evident during conversations that the refugees, as newcomers, were observing, witnessing, and experiencing their communities and wider society with the eyes of outsiders and, therefore, sometimes saw things to which we, as a society, have become blinded.[708] For example, Youmna, as such a marginal observer, commented on what she viewed in terms of fragmentation of families, disconnection from land and soil, social isolation, and the risk of invisibility and neglect of the ill or elderly.

Research limitations

As outlined in Chapter One, this is study has been confined to the application of inter-religious dialogue to a very particular group of people in the years following their

---

[707] This was identified as an important potential field of study in conversation with a Muslim colleague [FN. 14.07.17 12:5].

[708] [FN. 09.10.17 14:8ii], one example of many.

resettlement from Syria to Scotland. The study has not sought to address the wider issue of immigration or integration, nor has it intended to critique the SVPRS or other humanitarian schemes. Although the work leans on inter-religious dialogue, the subject has not been inter-religious dialogue *per se*, although certainly it has made the contribution discussed above of the value of a marginal voice, the need for language learning and trust building, and the importance of recognising power dynamics in such an exchange. Neither has this research been an exercise in Islamic studies or Arabic language although both these fields have influenced and supported the process of entering into the life narratives and gaining a better understanding the lived experience of the refugees.

Implications for resettlement

Although this study has by no means resolved any of the challenges presented by the resettlement of vulnerable Muslim Syrian refugees, nor fully explored the influence of religion in refugee resettlement, some tentative suggestions can be offered, based on the data gathered, and the conclusions drawn from analysis. Perhaps it should be noted that not all those interviewed for this study were likeable characters, and some of them demonstrated the closed-minded fear and affiliation to fundamental doctrine that is a threat to integration and community cohesion, and a longer-term danger to our society. However, I would argue that there will never be a hope of mutual understanding or adaptation on the part of the immigrant if we as host societies never express any willingness to understand their worldview and experience, and consequently we will never be able to expect them to adapt to or adopt our languages, social expectations, values and so on, if we don't listen to them first. Conversations such as these are therefore vital for any future possibility of living alongside one another. We must not be

naïve but neither should we be afraid. I will briefly offer suggestions for three different

fields, as outcomes of this research: the Church, or Christian engagement with refugees;

the secular authorities, which oversee and deliver the resettlement programmes; and the

broad field of Education and Academia.

Church and Christian communities

As mentioned in Chapter One, the arrival of Syrian Muslim refugees to Scotland

presented an opportunity for the creation of inter-religious networks of support, co-

operation, and dialogue, as both the Muslim and Christian communities came together to

provide for the Syrian New Scots. In that sense, inter-religious dialogue found new

openings in the form of "the dialogue of life," as well as "the practical dialogue of

action."[709] This study has presented a possible method of engagement in a deeper form of

"theological dialogue" (or "the dialogue of discourse") and the "dialogue of experience"

through the sharing of spiritual life.[710] Such a method depends on conversations in the

informant's mother tongue, adopting the approach of a learner with a willingness to

"absorb" the religious views of the other, neither hiding one's own true identity nor

softening beliefs to make them more palatable, having an attitude of humility, and the

willingness to be misunderstood, and not jumping to defend Christianity (or, equally,

perceived Western-ness) even when false or unjust claims are made. This final point was

important to me in this study because, to the refugee, our (Western or Christian) voices

are always the ones that are being heard and expecting to be understood. I felt that in

---

[709] Types of dialogue identified alongside "practical dialogue of action, theological dialogue, spiritual dialogue, and diplomatic dialogue" by Marianne Moyaert, in "Interreligious Dialogue" in *Understanding Interreligious Relations,* David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt and David Thomas (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 201.

[710] Moyaert, "Interreligious Dialogue," 202.

order to really hear these marginal voices, this encounter and approach had to turn everything around the other way.

The meta-narrative that was revealed in this study is not at odds with Christianity, indeed, as Volf reminds us, "to be a child of Abraham … means to make an exodus, to start a voyage, become a stranger."[711] This should make us, too, strangers in the world, and enable us to recognise those other sojourners, including the Muslim *ʿābir al-sabīl,* a fellow traverser of the road. Moreover, such a divine and eternal narrative perhaps allows the refugee the freedom to live anywhere, geographically. Seen in that light, perhaps means that neither I, nor her, have any greater claim that Scotland is ours. Furthermore, the sense of estrangement, or uprootedness, and the disorienting nature of our present age, is familiar to the majority of people, and so a yearning for belonging, meaning, and peace can be easily shared and understood. As stated above, this study has illustrated that dialogue about divinity can reveal shared humanity that transcends the complicating factors of social diversity. Finally, as Holton notes, what is required is a "renewed sense of 'we'" that can welcome the wider community "to make a place of belonging and bridge the social exclusion uncovered in the concept of the foreigner."[712] This should be natural, for the Christian, as Volf declares, for whom "the Spirit of God breaks through the self-enclosed worlds we inhabit" and creates, what he calls, a "catholic personality" that is open towards others and "enriched by otherness."[713]

The secular authorities

An interesting observation in the early days of the SVPRS was that the arrival of Muslim refugees brought about a requirement for talking about religion and using

---

[711] Miroslav Volf *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 39.
[712] Holton, *Longing for Home*, 182.
[713] Volf *Exclusion and Embrace,* 51.

language that spoke of God, even in secular environments such as the local authority. I noted that the presence of Syrian Muslims in our communities had enabled a place for theism that had been becoming increasingly constricted. Relaying religious requirements, and the resulting resettlement challenges for the refugees, brought about an unexpected freedom to talk about other religious perspectives as well. It cannot be denied that religious communities in Scotland are alive and well, active, and engaged in their neighbourhoods, and are important resources for supporting the vulnerable in society who, with some guidance and support, can be key actors in future resettlement projects.

This study has illustrated that the decision of some local authorities to place the Syrian refugees directly into the Muslim communities may have been well intentioned but was also short sighted with regard to longer-term integration and independence. I have argued that an unfortunate result of that decision was the effective ghettoisation of the refugees (although that had been partially countered by the wide scattering of urban accommodation and the concurrent resettlement to rural areas). Furthermore, the encouragement of the families into the Muslim community had an increased isolating effect on many of the women, in particular for Youmna, who had no man in the household. A suggestion from this research would be to recognise the Islam of the refugees as probably significant, but allow room for it to be expressed, or suppressed, according to the wishes of the individuals themselves.[714] In summary, I would suggest that a "religion-centred" approach, such as that outlined above, rather than a "God-centred" approach to the religious "other," (as presented in this thesis) can lead to

---

[714] This was addressed in Dundee city for example by the removal of project delivery from the Muslim community after three years of the SVPRS to the Scottish Refugee Council. See Dundee Resettlement Support, SRC https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/direct-support/dundee-resettlement-support/ (Accessed 10.10.22).

decisions and practices that further isolate the refugee, when the intention was the opposite.

Additionally, the markers of "vulnerability" which rendered those interviewed for this study, and others, eligible for the SVPRS, are often markers which make the process of resettlement all the more difficult. It has to be asked whether those criteria are indeed useful in the selection of those for whom humanitarian protection will be offered, or whether, in fact, the long-term consequences of such decision-making were truly taken into account. Finally, there is also an urgent need for a better understanding of how to support Muslim men, as well as women, particularly in cases of domestic violence. There needs to be measures of support and guidance available to men that do not increase the danger for victims (especially when the Syrian and Muslim communities are so small in Scotland), and can offer guidance to those who are experiencing marital tensions in the context of (and often as a result of) the trauma of war, exile, and resettlement in an alien, and alienating, place which throws into question the traditions and values of their heritage.

Education and the Academy

The final field that can respond to the implications for resettlement identified in this study is that of Education and Academia. This study has raised the need for better forms of religious education, which do not reinforce divisions and perpetuate "othering," but rather listen to a wide range of voices on personal and public issues. Pratt argues that religious extremism is, to a large extent, a rejection of diversity.[715] Thus, religious education would better serve society by perhaps promoting commonalities, or focusing

---

[715] See Douglas Pratt, *Religion and Extremism: Rejecting Diversity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

on shared social issues of concern, on a path towards broader "dialogue of action."[716] A second outcome of this study, which can begin with Education, and then be applied in society, is the development of inter-religious integration programmes for these diverse communities, but such a process would need to be mediated with care.

Finally, this study has demonstrated the value of peripheral voices and the need, in particular, of more examples of theology *with* those at the margins rather than *about* them.[717] This study provides an opportunity for future research access to refugees, as a means to explore wider issues such as the contributions of Islam towards social concerns. For example, Islam has a strong contribution to make in the field of climate change, and in ethics relating to the environment, but their voices are largely absent from public discourse. It has to be asked why their voices are not heard. I suggest that, in part, it is because the public voices of our British Muslim communities are largely denied, and are forced to express themselves in extremes. Inviting the voices of Muslim scholarship to the centre of public debate may not be straightforward, but it will be enriching, by challenging assumptions and offering new solutions for our contemporary, diverse, and mobile world.

This thesis has demonstrated that the voices of refugees, and the tenets of Islam, bestow valuable contributions to multiple academic disciplines, including demography, communication, urban studies and urban planning, psychology, environmental studies, ethnic studies, linguistics, women's studies, government and law, and public administration. The major social issues identified today in Scotland include climate emergency, child poverty, violence against women and girls, mental health, social isolation, ageism, other forms of discrimination, and unemployment. The voices of the

---

[716] Moyaert, "Interreligious Dialogue, 201.

[717] I am a member of Scholars at the Peripheries Research Group, an initiative which seeks to promote the voices of the marginalised around the world. See https://csrp.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/scholars-at-the-peripheries/ (Accessed 20.10.22).

refugees represented in this thesis have shown they can speak to all of these areas through their lived experience, but also that they can contribute their knowledge and understanding of Islam to enrich public debate and inform policy.

Epilogue

The first time I saw Youmna in person following the pandemic I visited her at her home. She was unable to walk and was resting her legs along the sofa. In fact, she was so much in pain that I made myself at home, putting the flowers I had brought her from my garden into a glass I found by the sink. After the usual pleasantries, I asked her how she had been and she soon began sobbing inconsolably as she told me, repeatedly: "marry, just marry, whatever you do, don't stay alone," illustrating her acute sense of loneliness in the world.[718] Until this point, our relationship had always been professional. First, I was a support worker, mediating between her and the supporting agencies, then, as researcher, I was seeking her viewpoints for this study. Somehow, the method that had unfolded in the course of the research, which was, at its core, inter-religious dialogue, and a sharing of the fullness of her worldview, religious faith and lived experience, previous barriers between us had at some point (now?) dissolved. Suddenly, we were nothing other than two human beings sharing a raw moment of personal pain and sorrow, and shared humanity. I instinctively, although hesitatingly, responded by crossing over the room to where she was, and kneeling down by her side, I held her hand until the sobbing subsided. It wasn't until much later, in the writing up of this thesis, that I realised the significance of that poignant moment. The transformation of our relationship was a natural consequence of the kind of dialogue we had established. In entering into

---

[718] [FN.22.03.22 94.2]. My field notes observe: "solitude has had a negative effect on her and what she describes is akin to a broken heart – separation from land, family, friends, community, nature, her able self. Grief of multiple kinds have made her physically ill."

conversations about God, our shared humanity had become revealed, and the divides between us were now removed. Although we had entered into the conversations from opposing theological and ontological positions, we had found a commonality that transcended those markers that divide, illustrating the reciprocity, if not the symmetry, of the two parties.[719]

This thesis has not resolved the challenges posed by migration or resettlement, nor the strains of diversity on community cohesion, nor provided any solution to inter-communal misunderstanding or fear, nor the threat of extremism in all its forms. However, a model of inter-religious dialogue such as this, which listens intently to a marginalised voice, reveals the breadth of influence of a religious worldview, and the wealth of knowledge and experience of the individual can speak to current social issues, and offer enormous value in the wider field of refugee resettlement, and our shared participation in society. This study has demonstrated the power of inter-religious dialogue, even when it is only conducted between two individuals, and has illustrated the profound significance of the marginal voice.

---

[719] Rapport, *The key Concepts,* 185.

7. Conclusion

You will remain my friend
Of what was or what's left
In this rubble
Oh, light that wears the clouds, the Lord that never sleeps.
Adonis[720]

Reiteration and Summary

This thesis has provided a written account of a particular moment in time for Syrian Muslim refugees resettled to North East Scotland by means of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, and serves as a gauge by which to capture the lived experience of those people by means of life narratives in their own voices. Part One of the thesis established the context of and background to the study, including the history of refugee resettlement in the region and a brief outline of the resettlement scheme in question, early observations informing this research, and a description of the existing Muslim community into which these "New Scots" were being introduced. An examination and overview of the available literature pertaining to Syrian refugee resettlement revealed a wealth of publications but a lack of those which directly considered the emic perspectives of those religious refugees themselves. Finally, inter-religious dialogue was offered as a useful framework for opening the means to have deeper discussions with the subjects that would recalibrate existing power dynamics and address this gap in knowledge from a different angle.

Chapter Two provided a discussion of the research method employed in this study, including the foundations of the research paradigm, the reasons for choosing such

---

[720] Taken from a collection of poems by Syrian poet Adonis, *The Desert (The Diary of Beirut under Seige, 1982): 35*. Published in Abdullah Al-Udhari (translator), *Victims of a Map: A Bilingual Anthology of Arabic Poetry* Second Edition, (London: Saqi Books, 2005), 165.

a qualitative approach, and the challenges and obstacles in accessing the subjects as well as a description of the development of the research design over time, highlighting the difficulties relating to engagement with such a demographic. This chapter also included an argument for the importance of such an ethnographic method, as well as full details relating to ethical license procedures and the recruitment of informants. Finally an acknowledgement of the researcher's own theological positioning was given in order to establish the footing of one side of the dialogue in the Christian tradition, followed by an argument for the marginal voice, and some details relating to overall matters of academic trustworthiness as a foundation to the study.

Part Two of the thesis presented the thematic analysis of the data gathered from conversations with the subjects. These have already been summarised in Chapter Six, and were presented in such a fashion that echoed the meta-narrative which emerged during conversations with the refugees relating to: separation and the pervading sense of estrangement (*al-ghurba)* that comes from displacement and resettlement; poetic and theological ideas of homeland *(al-waṭan)* that are influencing factors in the mind of the Muslim migrant when considered from a position of exile; and, thirdly, a Muslim presentation of God *(Allah)* as seen through the eyes of one particular refugee. Each of these chapters presented elements of the life narratives that the refugees were expressing throughout the research conversations, and contribute towards painting a picture of the inner world of a Muslim refugee in a context such as this.

Chapter Six has offered an analysis of the research findings and method, and the consequent implications for resettlement by corroborating certain findings with other published research, and considering the value of such an ethnographic study to academia and resettlement policy. In particular, the chapter considered the value of such emic perspectives of the refugees themselves and the significance of their marginal voices.

Furthermore, the chapter considered the research as an exercise in inter-religious dialogue, emphasising the usefulness of such a method of dialectic interchange in order to achieve new conversations and be able to break free from, and get beyond, the usual frameworks for interaction and paradigms of power.

Returning briefly to Cornille's five requirements for inter-religious dialogue that were introduced in Chapter One (namely, humility, commitment, interconnection, empathy and hospitality) this study has verified that these foundations are indeed essential, and part of what can make the idea of such conversations threatening, as well as making them so challenging to realise. The conversations represented in this thesis are a small example of an effort to pursue these requirements in the context of an unbalanced power relationship. It is in these ways that this study has therefore contributed to the field of inter-religious dialogue. Although the field of mysticism in general (including the influence of thinkers such as Thomas Merton) and Sufism in particular has been a bridge for the researcher in approaching Islamic thought, it was found during dialogue with the refugees that this could not be a natural point of interconnection, most evidently with the main subject. Thus, the point of interconnection in this case became life narratives of human experience, the shared knowledge of leaving one's country and the sense of estrangement accompanying the new start of life in a different place.

Furthermore, this particular study has also highlighted the importance of three additional key factors when engaging with a marginalised minority group. Firstly, is the importance of time, and unhurried development of natural relationships of trust and respect as a basis for engagement in dialogue which has the additional benefit of allowing the long term observation of cycles and directions of change. The context of resettlement is one that is for the refugees a period of trauma and recovery, upheaval, grief, the seeking of new identity and purpose in what can be an alienating place and

culture, the multiple stages of progress and setback that are inevitable at such a time, and the debilitating impact of bad news from home and the death of loved ones. The advantage of time and long-term engagement with the wider community is that one can be an element of stability in otherwise unstable lives and, eventually, the relationships and conversations naturally go to deeper places than they would if they were forced to happen earlier. The second factor is the importance of language as essential in such a search for the voice of the other, and in particular when discussing matters of the inner life such as religious belief and practice for inter-religious dialogue that relates to human experience. Thirdly, this study has demonstrated the importance of recognising existing power dynamics when engaging with certain demographics such as the refugees who can have a degree of powerlessness and vulnerability. This may include the willingness to invert such a dynamic and, at the same time, to be willing to accept true humility that can cope with being misrepresented or misunderstood, as well as generous intellectual hospitality to be willing not only to hear, but also absorb something of the worldview of the other, in other words, to allow the "other" to add to one's own understanding of human life and of the Divine.

Avenues for future research

The prioritisation of vulnerability in the design of the Syrian resettlement scheme (discussed in Chapter One) meant that the majority of those interviewed were of rural backgrounds and had lower levels of formal education, factors often accompanied by more conservative religious belief and practice, a general suspicion of the West, and a reduced willingness to adapt to the new context. This study thus includes disproportionate representation of Kurds, and only one university educated person who is a person of faith but whose religion has not appeared to pose a barrier between her and

the society in which she finds herself. Although the sample was sufficient for the aims of this particular study, as discussed in the previous chapter, a truer picture of the extent of the role of religion on the process of resettlement for refugees could be better achieved by a larger sample: one that could include a greater diversity of voices. As more literature becomes available in this nascent field of research, a picture of this relationship between religion and resettlement will be enriched by studies in other contexts, such as those referenced in the previous chapter, in the USA and Germany. A future study involving inter-religious dialogue, such as this, might also benefit from focus group research methods although such an approach would have to be handled with discretion and care, in order to encourage fruitful discussion.

Relating to studies in the field of refugee resettlement, this study has fixed its attention on a particular moment in time: the early years of the SVPRS. Since then, and as mentioned in Chapter One, the Humanitarian Resettlement Scheme, as it has become known, has expanded to include vulnerable children from a wider region (including Iraq and Sudan), the programmes for refugees from Afghanistan followed, and, most recently, the schemes for accommodating Ukrainian refugees who are more commonly Christian. Each of these waves of migration, of course, raises new questions and themes for consideration and the research method that leaned into inter-religious dialogue that was applied in this study could be transferrable to each of these different contexts and communities in order to contribute to a better understanding of our increasingly diverse society, and to build bridges towards mutual understanding that will support the development of community cohesion. However, some degree of research interest, I would argue, should not turn away completely from the Syrians, as they provide a useful focus for studies on the integration of Muslims in particular.

In terms of the Islamic dimension of this research, it will be important for future studies to follow the lives of the Syrian children, both the first and second generations, as they grow up, to observe the relationships they have with each other, with the Muslim community, and with wider society. The relationships, such as my own professional and academic connections with the informants, which have so carefully and slowly been built up, over these initial years of the SVPRS, will be vital links in obtaining refugee voices further into the future for a longer arc of study. Additionally, it would be worthwhile pursuing research of perhaps one of the key elements from this study more deeply, and delving more into the Islamic sources and voices of the religious authority figures influencing the refugees. There is also a rich potential field of study inside the Muslim community to examine, for example, access to knowledge for women and children, as mentioned above, and also to better understand theological and cultural frictions that may occur within the Muslim community.

Finally, the ethnographic method of this work that focussed on life narratives illustrates that in-depth story telling has a valuable contribution to make to community cohesion in today's diverse societies. The transferability of such a method that focussed on inter-religious dialogue and depended on the requirements discussed above will be contingent on the unique characteristics of the future research site in question. However, if a strong foundation for such dialogue can be established through the time, language and awareness of power dynamics discussed above, the method itself is the main opening for future research that comes out of this study. In those instances where there may not be the time available for the development of such factors for the application of a new study, this thesis illustrates that within these communities the foundations probably do already exist in varying degrees in diverse areas of the refugee's lives. Thus, any research that has its focus on those who have arrived here as refugees must take into consideration

the fact that the subjects are not isolated individuals but interconnected dynamic elements in ever-evolving communities where surprising points of human connection and inter-religious dialogue of varying kinds already occur. These are the vibrant points that are the opening for future studies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbas, Madeline-Sophie. ”Conflating the Muslim refugee and the terror suspect: responses to the Syrian refugee "crisis" in Brexit Britain," in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42, no.14 (2019): 2450-2469.

Abbas, Tahir. *Islamic Radicalism and Multicultural Politics: The British Experience*. Routledge: London, 2011.

Abdulkader, T., I. Niehaus and W. Weisse. (eds.) *Muslim Schools and Education in Europe and South Africa.* Waxmann, Berlin, 2011.

Abou-El-Wafa, Ahmed. "The Right to Asylum between Islamic Shari'ah and International Refugee Law: A Comparative Study," Riyadh: UNHCR, 2009.

Aboushala, Meryem, "Rural Areas in Post War Syria: Challenges and possibilities for resilience and sustainability" Conference paper for *International Conference on Contemporary Affairs in Architecture and Urbanism* (ICCAUA-2019). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337403533_Rural_Areas_in_Post_War _Syria_Challenges_and_possibilities_for_Resilience_and_sustainability

Adonis. "The end of the Sky," in *Adonis: Selected Poems.* (Trans. Khaled Mattawa) New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Agar, M. *The Professional Stranger: an informal introduction to ethnography,* London, Academic Press, 1996.

Agha, Sharifah Nazneen. "The Ethics of Asylum in Early Muslim Society" in *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2008): 30–40.

Aguilar, Mario I. *Interreligious Dialogue and the Partition of India: Hindus and Muslims in Dialogue about Violence and Forced Migration.* London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018.

Ai, A. L., T. N.Tice, B. Huang, & A.Ishisaka, "Wartime faith-based reactions among traumatized Kosovar and Bosnian refugees in the United States" in *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 8, no.4 (2005): 291–308.

Ajlan, A. A. "Divorce and Domestic Violence Among Syrian Refugees in Germany" in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37, (2022): 11–12.

Alawfi, Nadyh. "A study of Adaptation to Life in the UK among Lebanese Immigrants in London and Manchester," Applied Linguistics Doctoral thesis, University of Central Lancashire, 2019.

Albrecht, Sarah. "Searching for the 'Homeland' of Islam: Concepts of Diaspora in Contemporary Islamic Discourse on Muslims in the West," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 5, (2016): 106–131.

Al-Dhaif, Amina. "Identiti(es) and investment in learning English: an ethnographic study of Syrian refugees in the UK," Doctoral thesis, Northumbria University, 2020.

Al-Ghazali. *The Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God: al-Maqṣad al aAsnā fi sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā* (translated with notes by David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher) First Edition, Cambridge, The Islamic Texts Society, 1992.

Ali, Sa'ad and David Weir. "Wasta: Advancing a Holistic Model to Bridge the Micro-Macro Divide" in *Management and Organization Review* 16, no 3 (2020): 657–85.

Ali, Sundas. "Identities and Sense of Belonging of Muslims in Britain: Using Survey Data, Cognitive Survey Methodology, and In-Depth Interviews," Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford, 2013.

Ali, Zain. "Concepts of God in Islam" in *Philosophy Compass* 11, (2016): 892–904.

Ali-Dib, Edith Szanto. "Inter-religious dialogue in Syria: Politics, Ethics and Miscommunication" in *Political Theology* 9, no.1 (2008): 93-113.

Al-Kerwi, Mahdi Saleh Mohammad, Omar Mardenli, Tariq Salah Fathi Almrsomi and Mohammed Rasoul Mahdi Jasim. "A Review of The Current Status of Migratory Wild Birds in Iraq and Syria" in *Al-Qadisiyah Journal For Agriculture Sciences* 12, no. 1 (2022): 131-142.

Almustafa, Maissaa. "Reframing refugee crisis: A "European crisis of migration" or a "crisis of protection"?" in *Politics and Space* 40, no.5 (2022): 1064–1082.

Al-Qadi, Wadad. "Expressions of Alienation in Early Arabic Literature," in *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature: Towards a New Hermeneutic Approach, Proceedings of the International Symposium held in Beirut*, June 25th–June 30th, 1996, (Angelika Neuwirth, Birgit Embaló, Sebastian Günther, and Maher Jarrar, eds.) Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999.

Al-Shurunbulālī, Abū 'l-Ikhlāṣ. *Marāqī 'l-Saʿādat: Ascent to Felicity: A Manual on Islamic Creed and Ḥanafī Jurisprudence* (trans. Faraz A. Khan) London: White Thread Press, 2010.

Al-Udhari, Abdullah (translator), *Victims of a Map: A Bilingual Anthology of Arabic Poetry* Second Edition, London: Saqi Books, 2005.

Amin, Hira. 'The Shifting Contours of Saudi Influence in Britain,' in *Wahhabism and the World: Understanding Saudi Arabia's Global Influence on Islam* Peter Mandaville (ed.), New York: 2022, online edn, Oxford Academic, 21 Apr. 2022), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197532560.003.0015.

Armbruster, Heidi. "It was the photograph of the little boy": reflections on the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme in the UK," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42, no.15 (2019): 2680-2699.

Afsaruddin, Asma. "Monotheism in Islam" *Monotheism and Its Complexities: Christian and Muslim Perspectives* Lucinda Mosher and David Marshall (eds.) (A record of the fifteenth Building Bridges Seminar) Hosted by Georgetown University Washington DC, and Warrenton, VA (May 6-10, 2016): 33-44.

Asmal-Lee, Mujahid. "Understanding Refugee Experiences : Mental Health and Acculturation," Doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 2020.

Badiou, Alain. *Migrants and Militants* (Trans. Joseph Litvak) Cambridge: Polity, 2020.

Baghieri, Reza. "Halal Scots; Muslims' Social Identity Negotiation and Integration in Scotland," Doctoral Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2015.

Baird, Sarah, Raphael Panlilio, Jennifer Seager, Stephanie Smith, and Bruce Wydick. "Identifying Psychological Trauma among Syrian Refugee Children for Early Intervention: Analyzing Digitized Drawings Using Machine Learning" in *Journal of Development Economics* 156, (May 2022). doi:10.1016/j.jdeveco.2022.102822

Bakker, Freek L. "Inter-Religious Dialogue and Migrants: The Case of the Netherlands" in *Mission Studies* 31, (2014): 227-254.

Ballentyne S, Drury J, Barrett E, Marsden S. "Lost in transition: What refugee post-migration experiences tell us about processes of social identity change." in *J Community Appl Soc Psychol*. (2021): 1–14.

Bashur, D. "What the West owes Syrians," *Syria Studies* 9, no.2 (2018): 31-59.

Becker, Howard in Taylor, S. J. and R. Bodgan. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: The Search for Meanings* (2nd Ed.) John Wiley & Sons: Toronto, 1984.

Ben Jelloun, Tahar. *French Hospitality: Racism and North African Immigrants*, (trans. Barbara Bray), New York: Colombia University Press, 1999.

Bernard, H. Russell. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* Lanham: Alta Mira Press, 2006.

Bilici, Mucahit. "Homeland Insecurity: How Immigrant Muslims Naturalize America in Islam" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no.3 (2011): 595-622.

Bilici, Mucahit. *Finding Mecca in America: How Islam is Becoming an American Religion* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Birt, J. "Locating the British *Imam*: The Deobandi 'ulama between Contested Authority and Public Policy Post-9/11" in *European Muslims and the Secular State* J. Cesari, and S. McLoughlin, (eds.) (Ashgate: Burlington, 2005), 183-196.

Boccagni, Paolo. *Migration and the Search for Home: Mapping Domestic Space in Migrants' Everyday Lives,* Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2017.

Bonino, Stefano. *Muslims in Scotland: The Making of a Community in a Post-9/11 World* Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2017.

Boswall, Karen and Ruba Akash. "Personal perspectives of protracted displacement: An ethnographic insight into the isolation and coping mechanisms of Syrian women and girls living as urban refugees in northern Jordan," in *Intervention*, 13, no.3 (2015): 203–215.

Braun, V., & V. Clarke. *Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, (2006): 77–101.

Burton, Naomi, Brother Patrick Hart, and James Laughlin, eds. *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* New York: New Directons, 1973.

Carter, Paul. *Living in a New Country* London: Faber, 1992.

Castelli, Francesco. "Drivers of migration: why do people move?" in *Journal of Travel Medicine* 25, no.1 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/tay040.

Ćatibušić, Bronagh, Fiona Gallagher and Shadi Karazi. "An investigation of ESOL provision for adult Syrian refugees in Ireland: Voices of support providers" in *ESOL provision in the UK and Ireland: challenges and opportunities* Freda Mishan (ed.) Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019.

Çetinkaya, Kenan, "Interreligious Dialogue" in Center for Cultural Dialogue *Key Concepts in Intercultural Dialogue* No. 96 (2020).

Chambers, Ian. *Migrancy, Culture, Identity.* London: Routledge, 1994.

Charmaz, K. "Grounded Theory," in *Rethinking Methods in Psychology,* J. A., Smith, R. Harre, and L. V. Langenhove, (eds.), London: Sage, (1995): 29–49.

Cheetham, David, Douglas Pratt and David Thomas. (eds.) U*nderstanding Interreligious Relations* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Çınar, Özgür Heval. "Brexit and its Implications on the Freedom of Religion and Belief in the UK" *in International Journal of Religion* 3, no.1 (2022): 37-48.

Cooke, Melanie, and Rob Peutrell. *Brokering Britain, Educating Citizens: Exploring ESOL and Citizenship*, Bristol: Blue Ridge Summit, Multilingual Matters, 2019. https://doi-org.ezproxy.st-andrews.ac.uk/10.21832/9781788924634

Cornille, Catherine *The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2008.

Cutcher, Alexandra J. *Displacement, Identity and Belonging: An Arts-Based, Auto/Biographical Portrayal of Ethnicity and Experience* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2015.

Darychuk, A., and S. Jackson. "Understanding community resilience through the accounts of women living in west bank refugee camps" in *Affilia* 30, no.4 (2015): 447–460.

Dey, I. *Qualitative Data Analysis: a user-friendly guide for social scientists,* London: Routledge 1993.

Dickie, Jane R., Lindsey V. Ajega, Joy R. Kobylak, and Kathryn M. Nixon. "Mother, Father, and Self: Sources of Young Adults' God Concepts" in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45, (2006): 57–71.

Dirven, Lucinda. *The Palmyrenes of Duro-Europos: A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* Brill: Leiden, 1999.

Duchscher, JE. "Transition shock: the initial stage of role adaptation for newly graduated registered nurses," in *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 65, no.5 (2009): 1103-13.

Duyvendak, Jan Willem. *The Politics of Home: Belonging and Nostalgia in Europe and the United States.* Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2011.

Eghdamian, Khatereh. "Rethinking 'Religious Identity' in Refugee 'Integration': An Examination into Representations and Experiences of Syrian 'Religious Minority' Refugees in Berlin, Germany" relationship between 'religious identity' and refugee 'integration.'" Doctoral Thesis, University College London, 2019.

El-Khani, Aala, Fiona Ulph, Sarah Peters, and Rachel Calam. "Syria: Coping Mechanisms Utilised by Displaced Refugee Parents Caring for Their Children in Pre-Resettlement Contexts," in *Intervention* 15, no.1 (2017): 34–50.

Esler, P.F. "The Context Group Project," in *Anthopology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach* L.J. Lawrence, and M.I. Aguilar, (eds.) Leiderdorp: Deo Publishing, 2004.

Farani, Muhammad Najam-ud-din, Iram Khalid, and Muhammad Rizwan Abbassi. "United Kingdom's Foreign Policy towards Syrian Refugees," in *Journal of Political Studies* 24, no.1 (2017): 97–112.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Elena (ed.) *Refuge in a Moving World: Tracing Refugee and Migrant Journeys Across Disciplines*. London, UCL Press, 2020.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Elena and Yousif M. Qasmiyeh. "Muslim Asylum-Seekers and Refugees: Negotiating Identity, Politics and Religion in the UK," in *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no.3 (September, 2010): 294–314.

Flick, U. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research,* 2nd ed., London: Sage, 2020.

Forward, Martin. *A Short Introduction to Inter-religious* Dialogue Oxford: One World, 2001.

Gay y Blasco, Paloma and Huon Wardle. *How to Read Ethnography* (Second edition) Abingdon: Routledge, 2021.

Gilgan, Chloë. M. "Exploring the Link between r2p and Refugee Protection: Arriving at Resettlement" in *Global Responsibility to Protect* 9, no.4 (2017): 366-394.

Gilgan, Chloë "Localising the 'Responsibility to Protect'? : The UK and Syrian Refugees," Doctoral Thesis, University of York, 2018.

Glesne, C., and A. Peshkin. *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction.* White Plains, NY: Longman, 1992.

Gozdziak, Elizabeth M. "Spiritual Emergency Room: The Role of Spirituality and Religion in the Resettlement of Kosovar Albanians," in *Journal of Refugee Studies* 15, no.2 (2002): 136- 152.

Gourlay, Marjorie G. "Hope Unexpected: An Account of the Encounter Between Lebanese Christians and Syrian Refugees," MPhil Dissertation, University of St Andrews, 2015.

Gourlay, M., M. Swamy and M. Daenhardt *How the church contributes o well-being in conflict-affected fragile states – voices from the local church.* Cambridge/ Teddington: Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide and Tearfund, 2019.

Gourlay, Marjorie G. "The Homesick Camel and Other Stories: Contemplating "Homeland" *(al-waṭan)* from a Position of Exile Through the Narratives of Syrian Refugees Resettled in Scotland" in George F. Sabra and F. Peter Ford, Jr. (eds.) *Theological Review of The Near East School of Theology* 41/2, (2020): 110 -126.

Griffith, Sidney H. "Merton, Massignon, and the Challenge of Islam," in *Merton and Sufism: The Untold Story: A Complete Compendium* (Rob Baker and Gray Henry (eds.) (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999), 40-50.

Griffith, Sidney H. "[From the conclusion of] ''Sharing the Experience of the Divine Light'': Thomas Merton's Path to Inter-religious Understanding; Encounters and Dialogues with Muslims" in *CrossCurrents* The University of North Carolina Press, 58, no.4 (2008): 610-612.

Griffiths, J. D. 'Fragmentation and Consolidation: the Contrasting Cases of Somali and Kurdish Refugees in London,' in *Journal of Refugee Studies* 13, no.3 (2000): 281–302.

Gunter, Michael M. *Out of Nowhere: The Kurds of Syria in Peace and War* London: Hurst and Co., 2014.

Habash, Dunya. "'Do Like You Did in Aleppo': Negotiating Space and Place Among Syrian Musicians in Istanbul," in *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no.2 (2021): 1370–1386.

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck. "*Ghurba* as paradigm for Muslim Life: A *Risale-i Nur* View," in *The Muslim World* LXXXIX, no.3-4 (July-October, 1999): 297 – 303.

Haile, Semhar. "Voices to be heard? Reflections on refugees, strategic invisibility and the politics of voice" in *Refuge in a Moving World: Tracing refugee and migrant journeys across disciplines* Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (ed.) (London: UCL Press, 2020), 32-40.

Haim, Sylvia G. "Islam and the Theory of Arab Nationalism." *Die Welt Des Islams* 4, no. 2/3 (1955): 124–49.

Hammer, Juliane. "Palestinians born in exile; diaspora and the search for a homeland." Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005.

Harrison, Helena, Melanie Birks, Richard Franklin, & Jane Mills. "Case Study Research: Foundations and Methodological Orientations," in *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung /Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 18, no.1 (2017): Art. 19.

Hasan, N., D. B., Mitschke, and K. E. Ravi, "Exploring the role of faith in resettlement among Muslim Syrian refugees," in *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 37, no.3 (2018): 223–238.

Hatton, Timothy J., Ralph De Haas, and Peter Egger. "Refugees and Asylum Seekers, the Crisis in Europe and the Future of Policy," in *Economic Policy* 32, no.91 (July 2017): 447–496.

Haycox, Hannah. "Policy Paradoxes and the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme: How Welfare Policies Impact Resettlement Support," in *Critical Social Policy* 0:0 (April 14, 2022). 1. DOI:10.1177/02610183221088532.

Heisenberg, W. *Physics and Philosophy,* New York, NY: Harper Row, 1858.

Holton, M. Jan. *Longing for Home: Forced Displacement and Postures of Hospitality* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

Hopkins, Nick and Ronni Michelle Greenwood. "Hijab, visibility and the performance of identity*"* in *Journal of Social Psychology*, Eur. J. Soc. Psychol. 43, (2013): 438–447.

Hovil, Lucy. *Refugee, Conflict and the Search for Belonging* Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Høigilt, Jacob and Gunvor Mejdell. *The Politics of Written Language in the Arab World: Writing Change*. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

Huntly, Fay. "The Refugee Parenting Experience: From Flight to Resettlement" Doctoral Thesis in Clinical Psychology, University of Manchester, 2017.

Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman. "International Politics after Secularism" in *Review of International Studies* 38, no.5 *The Postsecular in International Relations* (December 2012): 943-961.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah, Ed. ʿUthmān Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr* Cairo: Al-Hayʾah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Kitāb, 1975.

Ibn ʿArabi. *Tree of Being: Shajarat al-kawn: An Ode to the Perfect Man* (Interpreted by Shaykh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti) Cambridge: Archetype, 2019.

Ibn al-Jawzī, al- Ḥāfiẓ Abū'lFaraj *Disciplining the Soul* (translated from the Arabic, *Ṭibb al-Rūḥānī*, by Aymān Ibn Khālid Birmingham: Dār As-Sunnah Publishers, (no date). https://darpdfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Disciplining-the-Soul-Ibn-al-Jawzi.pdf

Ibn Taymiyyah, *Islamic Creed {Al-Agidah Al-Wasitiyah]*. (Translated by Al Reshah) Canada: Alreshah, 2017.

Iner, Derya and Salih Yucel. *Muslim Identity Formation in Religiously Diverse Societies* Cambridge Scholar Publishing: Cambridge, 2015.

Isherwood, L. and D. Harris. *Radical Otherness: Sociological and Theological Approaches* Acumen: Durham, 2013.

Jarrar, Maher. "Homeland in Modern Arabic Literature: A Preliminary Outline," Sebastian Günther and Stephan Milich, (eds.), *Representations and Visions of Homeland in Modern Arabic Literature* Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms Verlag, 2016.

Jones, Martin. "The rights of resettled refugees in the UK: lessons for 'new' resettlement states and rights based advocacy for refugees" in *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies* 3, no.1 (2017): 67-97.

Karyotis, Georgios, Gareth Mulvey, and Dimitris Skleparis. "Young Syrian Refugees in the UK: A Two-Tier System of International Protection?" in *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 47, no. 3 (February 15, 2021): 481–500.

Katsoulas, Spyros. "Kurds on the Move" in *Middle East Bulletin: A Greek Review of Middle Eastern Affairs* University of Peloponnese, (2015): 28-32.

Kelly, Samantha. "Who deserves compassion? A corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of the discursive construction of Syrian refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants in UK newspaper reports published between October 2014 and September 2016." Doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 2020.

Khaldi, Boutheina. "The Ambivalent Émigrée: Mayy Ziyādah's Rhetoric of Nationhood*" Journal of Arabic Literature* 47, no.3, (2016): 260–277.

Khatab, Sayed. "Arabism and Islamism in Sayyid Quṭb's Thought on Nationalism," in *The Muslim World* 94, (2004): 217-244.

Kimball, Richard. "The People of the Book, ahl al-kitāb," in *International Journal of Asian Christianity* 2, no.2 (2019): 189-210.

Kikano, Faten, Gabriel Fauveaud, Gonzalo Lizarralde. "Policies of Exclusion: The Case of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*,"* in *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34,no.1 (March 2021): 422–452.

Kisiara, O. "Marginalized at the Center: How Public Narratives of Suffering Perpetuate Perceptions of Refugees' Helplessness and Dependency," in *Migration Letters* 12, no.2 (2015): 162–171.

Kvale, S. *InterViews: an introduction to qualitative interviewing,* London: Sage, 1996.

Lange, Christian. "Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions." Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Lakitsch, Maximilian. "Islam in the Syrian War: Spotting the Various Dimensions of Religion in Conflict," in *Religions* 9, no.8: 236, (2018).

Legard, Robin, Jill Keegan, & Kit Ward. "In-depth interviews" in *Qualitative Research Practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (eds.) (Sage Publications Ltd.: London, 2003), 138-169.

Librande, Leonard T. "The Need To Know: Al-Ājurri's Kitāb Farḍ Ṭalab al-ʿilm" in *Bulletin d'études orientales* 45, (1993): 89-159.

Lincoln, Y. S. and E. G. Guba. *Naturalistic Inquiry.* London and Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1985.

Lippard, Cameron D., and Catherine B. McNamee. "Are Refugees Really Welcome? Understanding Northern Ireland Attitudes Towards Syrian Refugees," in *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no. 3 (September 2021): 3091–3112.

Lloyd, Annemarie. "Stranger in a strange land; enabling information resilience in resettlement landscapes," in *Journal of Documentation* 71, no.5 (2015): 1029-1042.

Lowell, Norelli S., Jill M. Norris, Deborah E. White, and Nancy J. Moules. "Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria" in *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, (2017): 1–13.

Maalouf, Amin. *On Identity* Harvill: London, 2000.

Madziva, R. and J. Thondhlana. "Provision of Quality Education in the Context of Syrian Refugee Children in the UK: Opportunities and Challenges." In *Compare* 47, no.6 (2022): 942–61.

Martzoukou, Konstantina, and Simon Burnett. "Exploring the everyday life information needs and the socio-cultural adaptation barriers of Syrian refugees in Scotland," in *Journal of Documentation* 74, no.5 Dan P. (2018): 1104-1132.

Mason, Gail, and Mariastella Pulvirenti. "Former Refugees and Community Resilience: 'Papering Over' Domestic Violence," in *Brit J. Criminol* 53, (2013): 401–418.

Mawdūdī, Sayyid Abul aʻlā. *Towards Understanding The Qurʼān: Abridged version of Tafhīm al-Qurʼān* (Translated and edited by Zafar Ishaq Ansari) Great Britain: The Islamic Foundation, 2014.

Mawson, S. and Kasem, L. "Exploring the entrepreneurial intentions of Syrian refugees in the UK," in *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research* 25, no.5 (2019): 1128-1146.

Maxwell, Gavin *Ten Pains of Death* Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1986.

Maykut, P. and R. Morehouse *Beginning Qualitative Research: a philosophic and practical guide* London: Farmer Press, 1994.

McAdams, Dan P. and Kate C. McLean "Narrative Identity" in *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 22:3 (2013), 233–38.

McLean, Kate C and Moin Syed. "Personal, Master, and Alternative Narratives: An Integrative Framework for Understanding Identity Development in Context." *Human Development* 58:6 (2015), 318–49.

Mellon, C. A. *Naturalistic Inquiry for Library Science: methods and applications for research, evaluation and teaching,* London: Greenwood, 1990.

Melnik, Sergey "Types of Interreligious Dialogue" *The Journal of Interreligious Studies* 31, Nov 2020.

Merriam, Sharan B., *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bas, 2009.

Merton, Thomas. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (2nd edition) London: Sheldon Press, 1977.

Merton, Thomas. *Hidden Ground of Love,* William H. Shannon (ed.), New York: Farrar, 1985.

Merton, Thomas. *No Man is an Island* London: Burns and Oates, 1995.

Merton, Thomas. *A Search for Solitude*, USA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.

Mitias, Michael H. "Possibility of Friendship Between Religions," in *Dialogue and Universalism* 31, Special Supplement, (2021): 9-38.

Mitias, Michael H. "Mysticism as a basis for inter-religious dialogue" in *Dialogue and Universalism* 2, (2019): 89-107.

Mohabir, Rissa. *Leaving our Homeland: Syria to the Isle of Bute* Bristol: Trauma Awareness, 2018.

Morris, M., K. Leung, D. Ames, and B. Lickel. "Views from Inside and Outside: Integrating Emic and Etic Insights About Culture and Justice Judgment" in *Academy of Management Review* 24, no.4 (1999): 781-796.

Morrow, John A. (ed.) *Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon: How Language Shapes our Conception of God* USA: Edwin Melton Press, 2006.

Moyaert, Marianne. "Interreligious dialogue and the value of openness; taking the vulnerability of religious attachments into account" in *The Heythrop Journal LI* (2010): 730–740.

Moyaert, Marianne. "Interreligious Dialogue," in *Understanding Interreligious Relations* David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt and David Thomas, (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 193-217.

Mulvey, G. "Refugee and Asylum Seeker Research in Scotland: A Literature Review" Scottish Refugee Council: Glasgow, 2009.

Najjar, Randa. *"Refugee Families, Schools and Cultures of Dialogue,"* Doctoral Thesis, University of Winchester, 2021.

Nayebpour, Karam. "Narrativity in *The Thousand and One Nights*" in Advances in Language and Literary Studies (ALLS) 8, no.4 (2017): 85-90.

Noorani, Yaseen. "Estrangement and Selfhood in the Classical Concept of Waṭan," in *Journal of Arabic Literature* 47, (2016): 16-42.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* Glasgow: Collins, 1976.

Nsonwu, Maura Busch. "God-Talk in the Survival Epistemology of Liberian Refugee Women," in *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, 34, (2015): 304–327.

Orton, Andrew. "Interfaith dialogue: seven key questions for theory, policy and practice," in *Religion, State & Society* 44, no.4 (2016): 349-365.

Oyer, Gordon. "Lous Massignon and the Seeds of Thomas Merton's 'Monastic Protest'" in *The Merton Annual: Studies in Culture, Spirituality, and Social Concerns* David Jospeh Belcastro and Joseph Quinn Raab (eds.) 26, (2013): 84-96.

Patton, M. Q. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods.* London: Sage, 2002.

Paudyal P, M. Tattan, and M.J.F. Cooper. "Qualitative study on mental health and well-being of Syrian refugees and their coping mechanisms towards integration in the UK," in *BMJ Open* (2021). doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2020-046065.

Pauzi, A.P., Afi Parnawi, Fithri Addieningrum, Neri Aslina, Klemi Subiyantoro, Ina Sagir, Aldrin Herwany, and Rie Febrian. "Relationship Between Remembering God (Dhikr) and Stress Prevention of Life Problem" in *Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology* 17, no.7 (2020): 4926 – 4932.

Perreault, G. and N. Paul. "Narrative Framing of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in British Religious News,"in *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 8, (2019): 276-297.

Peteet, Julie. "Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no.4 (2007): 627-646.

Petito, Fabio, and Luca Mavelli. "The postsecular in international relations: an overview," in *Review of International Studies* 28, no.5 (2012): 931-942.

Pickard, Alison Jane. *Research Methods in Information.* London: Facet, 2013.

Pintak, Lawrence. "Border Guards of the "Imagined" Watan: Arab Journalists and the New Arab Consciousness," in *The Middle East Journal* 63, no.2 (2009): 191-212.

Poks, Malgorzata. "Thomas Merton's Re-Visioning the New World," in *CrossCurrents* (2008): 570 – 591.

Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Christ" Joint Document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples, Rome, 19 May 1991; OR. 21 June, 1991.

Portice, Jennie. "Exploring the Relationship between Diversity and Social Cohesion." Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of St Andrews, 2021.

Pratt, Douglas. *The Challenge of Islam: Encounters in Interfaith Dialogue* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

Pratt, Douglas. "Christian Encounters with Islam: An Historical Precursor" in *Christian Engagement with Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2017): 9-28.

Press, Meherangiz. "The inaudible bereaved: a critical narrative analysis of the voices of bereaved Syrian refugees in the UK" Doctoral thesis, Regent's University, 2019.

Qureshi, Raoom. "An Exploration of Syrian Refugees' Coping Strategies during the Syrian Conflict : A UK-Based Study" Doctoral Thesis, University of Manchester, 2016.

Rafiq, Zeeshan. "An exploration of religious and ethnic identification in the consumption and consumer acculturation of different generations of British Pakistani Muslims," Doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2020.

Rapport, Nigel. "Discourse and Individuality: Bedouin Talk in the Western Desert and the South Sinai," in *Anthropology Today* 8, no.1 (1992): 18-21.

Rapport, Nigel. *Diverse World-Views in an English Villag.e* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).

Rapport, Nigel. *Transcendent Individual: Towards a Literary and Liberal Anthropology.* London: Routledge, 1997.

Rapport, Nigel. *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts* 3rd Ed. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Ricucci, Roberta. *Ethnicity, Identity and Faith in the Current Migratory Crisis: Continuity and Change in Migrants' Religiousness in Southern Europe.* Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

Romaine, Barbara. "Evolution of a storyteller: the "ḥakawātī" against the threat of cultural annihilation" in *Al-'Arabiyya*, Georgetown University Press, 2007-2008, 40/41, (2007-2008): 257-263.

Rosenthal, Franz. "The Stranger in Medieval Islam" in *Arabica*, T. 44, Fasc. 1 (Jan., 1997): 35-75.

Russell, Bernard H. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* Chicago: Alta Mira Press, 2006.

Sabouni, Faten. "Exploring the Psychosocial Needs of Syrian Refugees in the UK: Accounts of Community Service Providers," Doctoral Thesis, University of Manchester, 2018.

Salem, Nesreen A., F. A. Sawair, F. H. Meyad, J. D. Satterthwaite, A. Abukaraky, and S. Sartawi. "Pattern, frequency and causes of dental extraction among children/adolescents Syrian refugees: an observational study," in *BMC Pediatrics* 22, no.1 (2022): https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-022-03162-z.

Salem, Rafik M. "Exile and Nostalgia in Arabic and Hebrew Poetry in al-Andalus (Muslim Spain)" Doctoral Thesis, SOAS, 1987.

Saheeh International. *The Qur'an: English Meanings and Notes* Jeddah: Al-Muntada al-Islami, 2012.

Sahin, Abdullah. "A Theology of Belonging: The Case of European Muslims Reconsidered," a conference paper published by Akademieder Diozese Ase: Rottenburg-Stuttgart, Germany, 2014: https://www.academia.edu/34148736/A_Theology_of_Belonging_The_Case_of_European_Muslims_Reconsidered.

Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile: and Other Literary and Cultural essays* London: Granta, 2000.

Sajdi, Dana. "The Dead and the City: The Limits of Hospitality in the Early Modern Levant" in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* Richard Kearney and James Taylor (eds.) London: Continuum, 2011: 123-131.

Salleh, Kamarudin, Ab Rahman, Z., Mohd Noor, A.Y., Kashim, M.I.A.M., Ahmad Sunawari Long, Ahmad Zaki Hasan, Abdul Rahim Ridzuan, Shafinar Ismail, Salasiah Hanin Hamjah, Muhd Najib Abdul Kadir, Che Zarrina Saari, Muhammad Farid (2020). "Resilience and patience (sabr) in Islamic view when observing the movement control (order MCO) during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Element of Resilience when Observing the Movement Control Order (MCO)," in *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation* 24, (2020): 5485-5497.

Saritoprak, Zeki. "Migration, Feelings of Belonging to a Land, and the Universality of Islam" in *Islam and Citizenship Education* Ednan Aslan and Marcia Hermansen (Eds.) In Cooperation with Minela Salkic Joldo, (Wiener Beiträge zur Islamforschung: Springer VS, 2015), 45-56.

Saritoprak, Zeki. "An Islamic Approach to Migration and Refugees," in *CrossCurrents* 67, no.3 (2018): 522-531.

Saunders, Jennifer B., Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Susanna Snyder. (eds.) *Intersections of Religion and Migration: Issues at the Global Crossroads* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Schmiedel, Ulrich and Graeme Smith. (eds.) *Religion in the European Refugee Crisis* Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Schweitzer, Robert, Jaimi Greenslade, and Ashraf. Kagee. "Coping and resilience in refugees from the Sudan: A narrative account," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 41, no.3 (2007): 282–288.

Shaikh, Fazlur Rehman. *Chronology of Prophetic Events* Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd.: London, 2001.

Shoukri, Arafat Madi. "Refugee Status in the Arab and Islamic Tradition: A comparative study of Jiwar, Aman and the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees," Doctoral Thesis, SOAS, University of London, 2008.

Shoukri, Arafat Madi. "Jiwār in the Islamic Tradition in the Meccan Period" in *Refugee Status in Islam: Concepts of Protection in Islamic Tradition and International Law* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 17–43.

Shyrock, Andrew. "Breaking hospitality apart: bad hosts, bad guests, and the problem of sovereignty" in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* (2012): S20-S33.

Siddiqui, Mona. "Islam in Scotland after 1945" in *Scottish Life and Society*, C. MacLean, and K. Veitch. (eds.) 12, (John Donald: Edinburgh, 2006), 281-294.

Siddiqui, Mona. *Hospitality and Islam: Welcoming in God's Name* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015.

Sleijpen, M., H. R. Boeije, R. J. Kleber, and T. Mooren, "Between power and powerlessness: a meta-ethnography of sources of resilience in young refugees," in *Ethnicity & Health* 21, no.2 (2016): 158–180.

Temple, B. and R. Moran. *Learning to Live Together*. Salford: Joseph Rowntree Foundation/ University of Salford press, 2005.

Skudlarek, William OSB. (Ed.) DIMMID *Dilatato Corde* 1, nos.1-2 (Brooklyn: Lantern Books, 2012).

Smith, Jane Idleman and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad. *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981.

Smith, Kate, and Louise Waite. "New and enduring narratives of vulnerability: rethinking stories about the figure of the refugee," in *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 45, no.13 (2019): 2289–2307.

Springer, Simon. *The Discourse of Neoliberalism: An Anatomy of a Powerful Idea*, London: Rowman and Littlefield International Ltd, 2016.

Starman, A.B. "The case study as a type of qualitative research," in *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* 1, (2013): 28-43.

Stetkevych, Jaroslav. *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Stevens, Dallal. "Rights, needs or assistance? The role of the UNHCR in refugee protection in the Middle East," in *The International Journal of Human Rights* 20, no.2 (2016): 264-283.

Stewart, Peter. "Complexity Theories, Social Theory, and the Question of Social Complexity," in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 31, no. 3. (2001): 323-360.

Suárez-Orozco, Carola, Francisco X. Gaytán, Hee Jin Bang, Juliana Pakes, Erin O'connor, and Jean Rhodes. "Academic trajectories of newcomer immigrant youth," in *Developmental Psychology* 46, no.3 (2010): 602-618.

Swinton, John. and Harriet Mowat. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.) London: SCM Press, 2016.

Taylor, S. J., and R. Bodgan. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: The Search for Meanings* (2nd Ed.) John Wiley & Sons: Toronto, 1984.

Taylor, Barbara Brown. *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*. New York, NY: Harper One, 2019.

Thomas, David. "Islam and the Religious Other," in *Understanding Interreligious Relations* David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt and David Thomas (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 148-171.

Thurston, Bonnie. "Thomas Merton's Interest in Islam: The Example of *Dhikr"* in *Merton and Sufism: The Untold Story: A Complete Compendium* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999), 40-50.

Tomass, Mark. *The Religious Roots of the Syrian Conflict: The Remaking of the Fertile Crescent* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Trapnell, Judson *Bede Griffiths: A Life in Dialogue* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.

Turki, Fawaz. "The Palestinian Estranged" *Journal of Palestine Studies* 5, nos.1/2 (Autumn, 1975 - Winter, 1976): 82-96.

Vandevoordt, Robin, and Gert Verschraegen. "Demonstrating Deservingness and Dignity. Symbolic Boundary Work among Syrian Refugees," in *Poetics* 76, (October 1, 2019), 101343. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2018.12.004.

Vertovec, S. "Diaspora, Transnationalism and Islam: Sites of Change and Modes of Research" in *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and across Europe* S. Allievi, and J. Nielses (eds.) (Brill: Leiden, 2003). https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12184.

Viola, Frank. *From Eternity to Here: Rediscovering the Ageless Purpose of God* Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009.

Vlachos, I. I., C. Papageorgiou, and M. Margariti. "Neurobiological Trajectories Involving Social Isolation in PTSD: A Systematic Review," in *Brain sciences* 10, no. 3: 173 (2020). doi: 10.3390/brainsci10030173

Volf, Miroslav. *Allah: A Christian Response* New York: HarperOne, 1989.

Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* Nashville: Abingdon Press 1996.

Vollmer, Stefan. "The Digital literacy practices of newly arrived Syrian Refugees: a spatio-visual linguistic ethnography" Doctoral Thesis, University of Leeds, 2020.

von Benzon, Nadia, and Lorraine van Blerk. "Research relationships and responsibilities: 'Doing' research with 'vulnerable' participants: introduction to the special edition" in *Social & Cultural Geography* 18, no.7 (2017): 895–905.

Waardenburg, Jacques. "Louis Massignon (1883-1962) as a Student of Islam," in *Die Welt des Islams, New Series, Facets of Orientalism* 45, no.3 (2005): 312-342.

Wehr, Hans. *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*: (Arabic-English) J.M. Cowan (ed.) 4th Edition, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979.

Weil, Simone. *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties towards Mankind* (Translated by Arthur Wills) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952.

Weil, Simone *Waiting for God,* trans. Emma Craufurd, New York: HarperCollins Books, 2001; first published in 1951.

Weir, Katherine E A, Sheila J Wilson, Dermot R Gorman. "The Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme: evaluation of Edinburgh's reception arrangements," in *Journal of Public Health* 40, no.3 (2018): 451–460.

Williams, Ryan J. & Tinu Ruparell. "On Being in the Middle: Interreligious Dialogue and Network Centrality," in *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 29, no.3 (2014): 471-489.

Wood, Maximillian, et al. "Trauma and resettlement: lessons learned from a mental health screening and treatment programme for Syrian refugees in the UK." In *International Review of Psychiatry* (May 2022): 1-8.

Xu, Man. "Constructing the refugee: Comparison between newspaper coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis in Canada and the UK," in *Current Sociology* 69, no.5 (2021): 660-681.

Yucel, Salih. "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland? The Notion of *watan al-asli and watan al-sukna* in Islam," in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 35, (2015): 191-202.

Zaman, Tahir. *Islamic Traditions of Refuge in the Crises of Iraq and Syria* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Electronic Sources

Aberdeenshire Council. "New Scots' Refugee Integration Strategy" https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/communities-and-events/refugee-integration-strategy/

A Common Word, "A Common Word Between Us and You," https://www.acommonword.com/the-acw-document/

al-Kasid, Emad. Twitter, April 19, 2020, accessed July 16, 2020 "What does *waṭan* mean to you? Answer in one word." (Link no longer available).

Arab News. "Syrian student who failed GCSE English exam praised for poem about homeland," 24th August 2019. https://www.arabnews.com/node/1544696/art-culture

BBC Radio 4. "From Syria to Yorkshire," 29.11.15. URL:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06ptym0

BBC World News. "Homesick camel returns to owners," July 26 2020,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ta2RX95kqFg&feature=youtu.be.

Berkley Center for Religion. Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University,
"Religious and Secular Identity in Syria."
https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/religious-and-sectarian-identity-in-syria

Community Housing Cymru Group. "Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme In-Depth Briefing," October 2015, (https://chcymru.org.uk/cms-assets/legacy/general/Syrian_vulnerable_persons_relocation_(VPR)_scheme_-_in-depth_briefing.pdf

Chulov, Martin. "'Nothing is ours anymore': Kurds forced out of Afrin after Turkish assault" *The Guardian*, (7 June 2018).
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/07/too-many-strange-faces-kurds-fear-forced-demographic-shift-in-afrin

Darul Uloom School website. URL: http://www.darululoom-deoband.com/english/index.htm

Department for Communities, Northern Ireland. "Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme" (page updated 20.02.20) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/syrian-vulnerable-persons-relocation-scheme

European Council on Refugees and Exiles. "Scotland Leading the Way on UK Resettlement Scheme," 21st March 2019, https://ecre.org/scotland-leading-the-way-on-uk-resettlement-scheme/

Frantzman, Seth. "From Afrin to Kirkuk, Kurds suffered grievously under Trump – analysis." Jerusalem Post. January 20, 2021. https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/from-afrin-to-kirkuk-kurds-suffered-grievously-under-trump-analysis-656090

Global Literature in Libraries Initiative. "Lament for Syria" by Ftoun Abou Kerech (2018), https://glli-us.org/2018/02/07/lament-for-syria/

Global Share. https://global-share.org

Hadith: 9425. "he was driven away from his land and sky [i.e. from his hometown] to the soil from which he was created." https://hadithanswers.com/a-person-will-be-buried-in-the-soil-he-was-created-from/

Harvard Divinity School. Religion and Public Life, "Turkmen in Syria"
https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/turkmen-syria

Home Office. "Community Sponsorship: Guidance for Prospective Sponsors" URL:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/62
6810/Community_sponsorship_guidance_for_prospective_sponsors_July_2017.p
df

Home Office. "Fact Sheet: Government Support for Vulnerable Children 24.02.17."
URL: https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2017/02/24/fact-sheet-government-
support-for-vulnerable-children/

Home Office. "Family reunion: for refugees and those with humanitarian protection"
Version 7.0 (29th July 2022).
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attac
hment_data/file/1094740/Family_Reunion_Guidance.pdf

Home Office. "Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS): Guidance for
Local Authorities and Partners, July 2017. URL:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/63
1369/170711_Syrian Resettlement_Updated_Fact_Sheet_final.pdf

House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts. "The Syrian Vulnerable Persons
Resettlement programme," Thirty-fourth Report of Session (2016–17).
https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmpubacc/768/768.pdf

Ibrāhīm Tūqān website: https://sites.google.com/site/wwwibrahem2com/15962nono-2

International Organisation for Migration (IOM). "UK Cultural Orientation and English
Language Training (CO-ELT): Giving Refugees a Head Start on Life in the UK"
https://www.iom.int/uk-cultural-orientation-and-english-language-training-co-elt-
giving-refugees-head-start-life-uk

Islam Awareness. "Neighbors: Up to Seven doors Away."
https://www.islamawareness.net/Neighbours/7doors.html

Islamic Academy. "Tableeghi Jamaat Exposed,"
URL:http://www.islamicacademy.org/html/Articles/English/Tableeghee%20Jma
%27at.htm

Kreidie, Marwan. "Why Do So Few Christian Syrian Refugees Register With The United
Nations High Commissioner For Refugees?" in *Rozenberg Quarterly Magazine*,
(no date). https://rozenbergquarterly.com/why-do-so-few-christian-syrian-
refugees-register-with-the-united-nations-high-commissioner-for-refugees/

London School of Economics. Religion and the Public Sphere, "Muslims in Scotland
Demographic, Social and Cultural Characteristics," November 16, 2016,
http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionpublicsphere/2016/11/muslims-in-scotland-
demographic-social-and-cultural-characteristics/

Lund, Aron. "The Mujahideen Army of Aleppo" Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East
Center, *Syria in Crisis* (8th April, 2014). https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/55275

McGuinness, Terry. *"The UK Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis,"* (14 June 2017), House of Commons Library. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06805/

Mehdi Lock. "Abodes of the Earth: The Middle Way" A discussion on *dar al-islam, jijra and dar al-harb* by Mehdi Lock, January 2016. URL:http://naseemalsham.com/en/Pages.php?page=readActivites&pg_id=54322&com=85

Migration Scotland. "Refugee Resettlement: Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS)," https://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/our-priorities/current-work/syrian-refugee-resettlement

Miles, Tom. "Syrian refugee numbers reach 2 million in tragedy of century - U.N" Reuters, 3rd September 2013 https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-syria-crisis-refugees-idUKBRE98204I20130903

Minhaj-ul-Quran International. URL: http://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/1799/Minhaj-ul-Quran-International.html

Mosque directory, "Muslims in Britain," Al Maktoum, Dundee URL: http://mosques.muslimsinbritain.org/maps.php#/mosque/1083

National records of Scotland. "Scottish Council Areas 2001 to 2011 Census Profile Comparator Tool: Dundee City," 15th February 2017, URL:http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/council_area_profiles/Dundee_City.pdf

Naseem al-Sham. URL: http://www.naseemalsham.com/en/Pages.php?page=readFatwa&pg_id=48961&back=9383

Nayed, Aref Ali, "Duties of Proximity: Towards a Theology of Neighbourliness," London: *Global Centre for Renewal and Guidance,* 4, (2010). https://kalamresearch.com/pdf/dutiesofproximity_web.pdf.

Oxford Department of International Development. University of Oxford, "Refugee crisis: Syria's religious minorities must not be overlooked" (30 September 2015). https://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/content/refugee-crisis-syrias-religious-minorities-must-not-be-overlooked

Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN). "Syria: Toponymic Fact File," (Compiled by Becky Maddock, 2011). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/931617/Syria_toponymic_factfile-May11.pdf

Qur'an online. https://quran.com/al-hadid

Ramadan, Tariq. "Islam, Democracy, and the Pursuit of Civil Society" Lecture presented at the University of Michigan, September 10, (2012).

https://ii.umich.edu/wcee/news-events/events/archived-events/2012/09/lecture--_from-the-arab-spring--forward--islam--democracy-and-th.html

ReliefWeb "Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2022 -2023." https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-lcrp-2022-2023

Rollins, Tom. "Idlib, a refuge no more: stories of Syria's displaced," March 1 2020. Mada Masr https://www.madamasr.com/en/2020/03/01/feature/politics/idlib-a-refuge-no-more-stories-of-syrias-displaced/

Sahih Muslim. Book 17, Hadith 1472, Authentic Dua and dhikr: https://authentic-dua.com/category/dua-dhikr/aakhira-hereafter/

Serratelli, Arthur. "Praying Ad Orientem", Catholic News Agency (CNA), Feb 2017. https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/column/53712/praying-ad-orientem

Scholars at the Peripheries. University of St Andrews. https://csrp.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/scholars-at-the-peripheries/

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees. (http://www.sfar.org.uk)

Scottish Government. "Ethnic Group demographics" from the 2011 Census URL: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Ethnicity/EthPopMig

Scottish Government website. "New Scots", https://www.gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/new-scots/

Scottish Government website. "New Scots: refugee integration strategy, 2018-2022" January 2018. https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy-2018-2022/

Scottish Government website "New Scots Report: Integrating refugees in Scotland's communities, 2014-2017." URL: https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/3000/https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00439604.pdf

Scottish Islamic and Cultural Centre Dundee. Jam'i Mosque Bilal, URL: http://www.siccdundee.co.uk/introduction

Scottish Refugee Council. "Dundee Resettlement Support." https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/direct-support/dundee-resettlement-support/

Solesmes Abbey. "The Rule of Saint Benedict" (Translated into English. A Pax Book, preface by W.K. Lowther Clarke. (London: S.P.C.K., 1931). https://www.solesmes.com/sites/default/files/upload/pdf/rule_of_st_benedict.pdf

Strang, Alison, Helen Baillot and Elodie Mignard "Rights, Resilience and Refugee Integration in Scotland: New Scots and the Holistic Integration Service: A report

sharing insights from the Holistic Integration Service 2013-2016." Scottish Refugee Council, (June 2016). https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RRRIntegratScot_FINAL.pdf

The Amman Message 2017. URL: http://ammanmessage.com/the-amman-message-full/

The Association of Religion Data Archives (The ARDA). "Syria Regional Profile." https://www.thearda.com/world-religion/national-profiles?u=217c#S_2

The Courier and Advertiser. "With Open Arms: Warm Welcome to Refugees" (Dundee Edition, 11.12.15), https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-courier-advertiser-perth-and-perthshire-edition/20151211/281930246921762

The Ibrāhīm Tūqān website. https://sites.google.com/site/wwwibrahem2com/15962nono-2

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). "The Tenth Annual Report on Torture in Syria on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture" (June 2021). https://snhr.org/blog/2021/06/26/56447/

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).https://unocha.exposure.co/voicesfromsyria?gclid=CjwKCAjw6fyXBhBgEiwAhhiZsgNi39dwyvjeNLweMXMYaCATmKTsxYV8N3OR99AttWNXwVw5MrRadxoCeMcQAvD_BwE

The Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University. "Thomas Merton's Life and Work," www.merton.org: http://www.merton.org/chrono.aspx

UK Government website. "Concessions to the Immigration Rules for Syrian nationals" Government website (accessible version) updated 5 September 2022." https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-syrian-nationals-in-the-uk-on-how-to-extend-their-visa/concessions-to-the-immigration-rules-for-syrian-nationals-accessible-version

UK Government website. Afghan refugee schemes. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme

UK Government website. "Humanitarian protection in asylum claims lodged on or after 28 June 2022. Version 7.0" https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1085512/Humanitarian_Protection_-_claims_lodged_on_or_after_28_June_2022.pdf

UK Government website. "Immigration Rules" updated 22 August 2022. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-part-11-asylum

UK Government website. Ukrainian Refugee Scheme. https://www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine

UNHCR. "Master Glossary of Terms: 'resettlement.'" https://www.unhcr.org/glossary/#r

UNHCR. "Member States." https://www.un.org/en/about-us/member-states/turkiye.

UNHCR. "Persons of Concern." https://www.unhcr.org/ph/persons-concern-unhcr

UNHCR. "Refugee Data Finder." https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=7nC3JG

UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, "Heat Map" https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=3DSOb0

UNHCR Operational Data Portal. "Refugee Situations." https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/94587

UNHCR Operational Data Portal. "Refugee Situations (Syria)." https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria

UNHCR. "UK Syria Emergency." https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html

University of Dundee. "Refugees and Resiliency An Inter-professional Leaning and Planning Tool: A Trauma-informed Lens" 2016. URL: http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/portal/files/10954422/Refugees_and_resiliency.pdf

UN OCHA. Carole Farah, "'I wish it had been a dream': Voice from Syria" The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) https://unocha.exposure.co/voicesfromsyria?gclid=CjwKCAjw6fyXBhBgEiwAh hiZsgNi39dwyvjeNLweMXMYaCATmKTsxYV8N3OR99AttWNXwVw5MrRa dxoCeMcQAvD_BwE

Vatican Archives. "A Document of Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together," Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to the United Arab Emirates (3-5 February, 2019). https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/pap a-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html

Vatican Archive. "Declaration on the Relation of The Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate, Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28 1965." https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

Wi'am. The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center, "Sulha" https://www.alaslah.org/sulha/

World Council of Churches. "Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation." https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation#what-we-do

YouTube. *"al-nashīd al- waṭani al-ʿaraby"* (The Iraqi national anthem),
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyLrl5vsJ1Q

YouTube, Eagle Films (2016) "*Al- ḥalaqa al-uwla min thalathīya mawṭinī, min musalsal
madraset al-ḥubb"* (TV series).
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7zDVSHWPHI

Yusuf Youth Initiative. Scoping Exercise commissioned by the Dundee City Counci,
"Youth Work Support Needs for Black and Minority Ethnic Young People,"
(2011). Publication_2778.doc - Dundee City Council,

Zakat.org. "Duty to Our Neighbors – 11 Rights of Neighbors" https://www.zakat.org/top-
11-rights-neighbors-understanding-muslims-duty-neighbors

1893 Parliament of the World's Religions.
https://parliamentofreligions.org/parliament/1893-chicago/

School of Divinity Ethics Committee

26 May 2020

Dear Miss Gourlay

Thank you for submitting your amendment application which comprised the following documents:

1. Amendment Application
2. Consent Form
3. Supervisor Agreement

The School of Divinity Ethics Committee has approved this ethical amendment application and the particulars of this approval are as follows –

Original Approval Code:	DI14015	Approved on:	19 December 2018
Amendment Approval Date:	26 May 2020	Approval Expiry Date:	18 December 2023
Project Title:	Refugee Narratives of Belonging		
Researcher(s):	Miss Marjorie Gourlay	Supervisor:	Prof Mario Aguilar
School/Unit:	School of Divinity		

Ethical amendment approval does not extend the originally granted approval period of five years, rather it validates the changes you have made to the originally approved ethical application. If you are unable to complete your research within the original five-year validation period, you are required to write to the School Ethics Committee to request a discretionary extension of no greater than 6 months or to re-apply if directed to do so, and you should inform the School Ethics Committee when your project reaches completion.

Any serious adverse events or significant change which occurs in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration, must be reported immediately to the School Ethics Committee, and an Ethical Amendment Form submitted where appropriate.

Approval is given on the understanding that you adhere to the Guidelines for Ethical Research Practice (http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/utrec/guidelinespolicies/).

Yours sincerely,

Dr Eric Stoddart

Cc Prof Mario Aguilar

School of Divinity Ethics Committee
Convenor: Dr Eric Stoddart
T: 01334 462841] E: divinitypg@st-andrews.ac.uk
The University of St Andrews is a charity registered in Scotland: No SC013532

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1 – Is God with you in Scotland?

2 – How do you find Islam in Scotland?

What is the study about?

We invite you to participate in a research project about the experiences of refugees in North East Scotland. This project explores belonging within a faith perspective. This forms part of a wider thesis which includes a perspective on inter-faith dialogue.

Do I have to take part?

This information sheet has been written to help you decide if you would like to take part. It is up to you and you alone whether you wish to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be free to withdraw at any time without providing a reason.

What would I be required to do?

You will be asked two open questions which will take approximately half an hour. You can say whatever you feel comfortable saying.

Are there any risks associated with taking part?

There may be some risks in this study if you feel uncomfortable talking about your experiences, especially if you relate them to your experiences in Syria, but my primary concern is how you find belonging in Scotland. Should you happen to find yourself upset, I can give you sources to support you. This study is only for those over the age of 16. I have a current PVG certificate.

Informed consent

It is important that you are able to give your informed consent before taking part in my project and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions in relation to the research before you provide your consent (oral or written).

What information about me or recordings of me ('my data') will you be collecting?

If you agree, the interview will be recorded for the purposes of translation and the recording will be destroyed within 7 days. You will not be identifiable once the data is anonymised.

How will my data be stored, who will have access to it?

Your data will be stored in an **ANONYMISED** form, which means that parts of your data will be edited or deleted such that no-one, including the researchers, could use any reasonably available means to identify you from the data. Your un-anonymised data will then be permanently deleted. Your data will be stored securely in the university network and only I will be able to access it.
Audio recordings will be taken on an encrypted device (dictaphone) and transcribed at the earliest opportunity before being destroyed within 7 days

How will my data be used, and in what form will it be shared further?

Your research data will be analysed as part of the research study, and may be published.

Your data will be shared (published and/or placed in a database accessible by others) in an **ANONYMISED** form, which means that no-one could use any reasonably available means to identify you from the data.

It is expected that the project to which this research relates will be finalised by June 2020 and written up as part of my PhD thesis.

When will my data be destroyed?

Your data will be shared as described above, and then the data held by the researcher will be destroyed 3 YEARS following the interview

Will my participation be confidential?

Yes, your participation will only be known to my supervisor and me.

Lawful basis for making use of personal data and data protection rights

The lawful basis that the University will rely on to make use of your personal data during the research and for related research projects in the future, as described to you is public task; where special category personal data are used the lawful basis is archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes.

The University of St Andrews is a Data Controller for the information you provide about you. You have a range of rights under the data protection legislation, including the right of complaint. However, some of those rights may not be available where you provide personal data for research purposes. For questions, comments or requests, consult the University website at https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/terms/data-protection/rights/, or email dataprot@st-andrews.ac.uk.

You will be able to withdraw your data within 7 days following of the interview. Because data is anonymised, we will not be able to withdraw it after that point, because we will no longer know which data is yours.

Ethical Approvals

This research proposal has been scrutinised and subsequently granted ethical approval by the University of St Andrews Teaching and Research Ethics Committee.

What should I do if I have concerns about this study?

In the first instance you are encouraged to raise your concerns with the researcher and if you do not feel comfortable doing so, then you should contact my Supervisor. A full outline of the procedures governed by the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee is available at www.st-andrews.ac.uk/utrec/guidelinespolicies/complaints/

Contact details

Researcher(s)   Marjorie Gourlay   **Supervisor(s)**   Prof. M. Aguilar
                        mg214@st-andrews.ac.uk   mia2@st-andrews.ac.uk
                                                              01334462835

Debrief

Thank you for taking part in my research project; your contribution is valuable.

Nature of study

These interviews are part of a wider study that explores the concept of belonging for refugees resettled in Scotland. You were asked to take part because you know what this is like and we can learn from your experience.

Data

As outlined in the Participant Information Sheet (marked PIS_[10.04.19]_[1]_[REFUGEE NARRATIVES OF BELONGING):

o   The information (data) you have provided will be stored in an anonymised form.
o   Your information (data) will be stored securely on the university network and only my supervisor and I will be able to access it.
o   Your data will be shared published in an anonymised form.
o   Your information (data) will be shared as described above, and then the information (data) held by the researcher will be destroyed within three years following the interview.
o   If you no longer wish to participate in the research, you are free to withdraw at any time. You will be able to withdraw your data within 7 days. If your information (data) is anonymous at the point of collection or subsequently anonymised, we will not be able to withdraw it after that point because we will no longer know which information (data) is yours.
o   If you do feel upset after our interview you are invited to contact your Scottish Refugee Council Support Worker or GP for support.

Contact

If you have concerns or if you would like to view a summary of the results of my research, please email the researcher or the supervisor detailed below.

Researcher	Marjorie Gourlay	**Supervisor**	Prof. M. Aguilar
	mg214@st-andrews.ac.uk		mia2@st-andrews.ac.uk
			01334462835