Intersections of Displacement

Intersections of Displacement:

Refugees' Experiences of Home and Homelessness

By

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This book is dedicated to my first *Home*, my Mother,
and my Nanny who gave me *Belonging*.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In many ways this book is a collective construction and I am just its means. I began this research because of an academic interest and by the time it was completed I found myself deeply transformed by participants whose voices I can still hear and whose faces I can still picture. The refugees and the advocates who shared their perspectives on homelessness for this project believe that systems can improve and that knowledge and awareness can influence political will. It is difficult to ignore what is in plain sight, and this book is an attempt to bring what was hidden into view. This book belongs in its entirety to the people in Toronto and London who patiently shared with me their meanings of home in the context of displacement, and their supporters who saw potential in this project. Everything of merit in the text I owe to others; all errors are mine only.

I am grateful for assistance from the organizations listed, and amongst these I would like to give particular thanks to Loly and Francisco at the FCJ Refugee Centre in Toronto for allowing me to walk with them while they "walk with uprooted people".

In Canada:
- Canadian Council for Refugees
- Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture
- Canadian Red Cross First Contact Programme
- Centre for Francophone Speaking People
- Centre for Spanish Speaking People
- Culturelink
- Eritrean Canadian Community Centre of Metropolitan Toronto
- FCJ Refugee Centre (FCJ Hamilton House)
- Flemingdon Neighbourhood Services
- Homes First Society
- Midaynta, Association of Somali Service Agencies, Toronto
- Northwood Neighbourhood Services
- Romero House
- Salvation Army

- Scott Mission
- Woodgreen Red Door Family Shelter, Toronto
- YMCA Youth Shelter

In the UK:
- Arab Women's Group, London (W6)
- Bayswater Families Centre, drop-in services for families who are homeless, London (W2)
- British Centre for Victims of Torture, formally known as The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture
- British Refugee Council
- Camden Local Authority
- EC-UK, Eritrean Community in the UK, Holloway Road, London (N7)
- Field Lane Homeless Families Centre, King's Cross, London (WC1)
- Hackney Training and Employment Network, UK
- Housing Association Charitable Trust
- Holy Cross Charitable Trust: bed and breakfast project for asylum seekers (WC1).
- Iranian Community Centre: Holloway Road, London (N7)
- Praxis, Newcomer advice and orientation in London (E2)
- Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit: London Metropolitan University

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION:
INTERSECTIONS AND DEFINITIONS
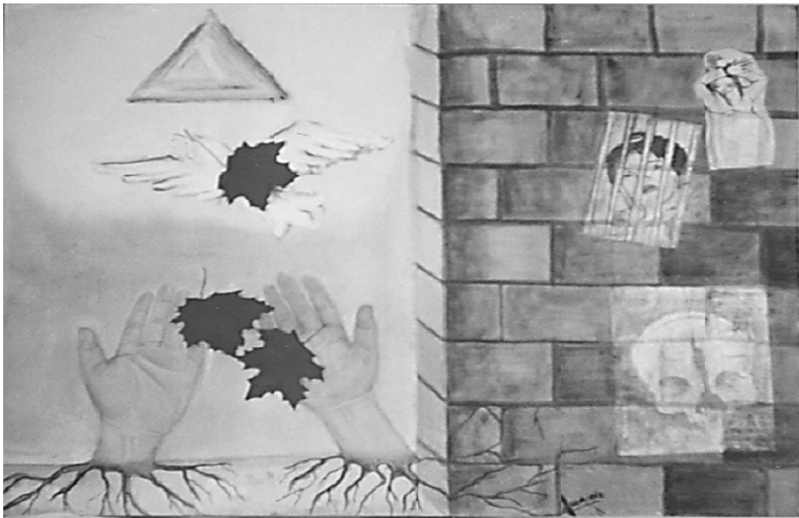
The refugee will never feel wholly at home in a foreign country. [...] The only roof he can call his own is the blue sky that smiles upon him as it did at home; no one can take that away from him. (Cirtautas, 1957, p. 59)

As a human condition, homelessness has preoccupied people from diverse and ancient cultures, manifest in stories of exile and banishment from religious texts around the world. In the contemporary era, the euphemism "no fixed abode" points to mobility, or "unrootedness", as the underpinning characteristic of homelessness, although the meanings and experiences of homelessness and home in people's lives are almost as diverse as the people themselves. Despite the multiplicity of meanings and experiences, a few of which are explored in this text, the concept of homelessness is concomitant with cities and urbanization as well as the

archetypal homeless figures of the middle-aged single alcoholic male, resident in alleyways or city shelters, and "squeegee-kids" who have run away to the streets and survive on small transactional acts. Pavement or street dwellers, socially displaced persons, and families living in dwellings that are unfit for human habitation are characteristic of the working poor and most marginal classes in countries of the global south, which represent another type of homelessness, dominant in numbers, but often excluded from research and conceptualizations of homelessness. This book brings together different geographies of homelessness to share the perspectives of people living "exilic homelessness" at an international scale, as asylum seekers and refugees in the global north while also facing life on the streets or in shelters.

 I began my early research on homelessness in 1997 in Toronto as a graduate student examining the housing histories of people living in shelters and on the streets. Associated with my praxis was a heightened sense of social injustice related to formal Citizenship that failed to protect people from protracted street lives. Homelessness was a critical assessment of the welfare state, government, human rights and entitlements, especially for Canada's First Nations people who are over-represented amongst the homeless as well as other Canadians who claim never to have known a stable place to call home. For me, these Canadians were not only "chronically homeless" as people who had spent over a year on the streets and in shelters and hostels without housing; they were chronically homeless because of a pattern of housing instability that emerged before they were born, again in their youth, and finally in adulthood. The transition out of homelessness was only ever partial, and homelessness defined their housing conditions as well as their state of mind. At this time I had no interest in migrant homelessness. It simply was not on my radar until I began attending the meetings of the Homelessness Action Task Force (HATF) and heard refugees referred to as "doubly homeless". While on the one hand they found themselves with nowhere to turn and facing the streets, on the other hand they were in a foreign state with no place, not even a country, to call home. "Doubly homeless" and in some instances "triply homeless", were labels advocates ascribed to refugees, but I wondered if refugees would use these to describe their own experiences, and how long refugees experienced the conditions that created multiple homelessness.

The HATF was formed to examine and ameliorate the conditions for homeless people in Toronto at a time when the demand for beds had

reached a critical point, shelter staff were unable to manage increasing numbers of people at their doors, and winter had contributed to the street-deaths of several homeless people. In addition to the pressures to help people in from the cold and provide emergency shelter to the newly unhoused, shelter staff identified a concerning trend: growing numbers of immigrants and refugees amongst the homeless. This was a population that, until the 1990s, had been under-represented amongst the city's homeless services. However, with increasing numbers of asylum seekers arriving in Toronto in the late 1990s, unable to compete in the city's tight rental market (vacancy rate of 0.6 percent in 2000), and without the social capital to remain off the streets, this vulnerable population was defined by the City as being at high risk of homelessness.

At one HATF meeting of a newly formed sub-group called the Refugee Housing Task Group (RHTG), created to address the issue of refugee-claimant homelessness, refugee participants argued that Canada was failing to support newcomers' basic needs. Specifically, a few people with relatives abroad suggested that the Canadian government needed to examine the UK's provision for asylum seekers because family members and community members who had arrived in the UK were housed from "day one". This meant that they did not face the various hurdles of newcomers to Toronto of finding suitable accommodation at the lower end of the affordable housing market. The conviction with which participants compared the "raw deal" in housing for claimants in Toronto with asylum seekers in London provided anecdotal evidence for the importance of a comparative study of refugees' housing experiences. However, it was also clear that these vocal refugee newcomers felt their lived realities of homelessness in Canada were a betrayal of their expectations, which were their perceptions of Canadian multiculturalism, equality, and Canada's reputation as a country of immigrants welcoming immigrants.

Therefore, the research trajectory for this book flowed from two inter-related hypotheses: that national immigration and housing structures matter materially to the lives and welfare of newcomers; and newcomers' sense of home and belonging are further affected by their ability to meet their basic needs for safety, security, and shelter at the international and residential scales.

Refugee homelessness should be an important case study for anyone interested in homelessness and housing as a basic human right, because it provides a litmus test for local and conventional frameworks to ameliorate

the lives of society's most vulnerable persons, regardless of origin. Refugee homelessness elongates the concept of pathways to homelessness, by describing journeys over hundreds and thousands of miles. Discussions to prevent homelessness and improve housing opportunities for the homeless have traditionally considered individual vulnerabilities and structural factors that combine to cause homelessness or compound to create barriers to stable housing. From examining the lives of refugees on the streets and in shelters, it is clear that the causes of homelessness and their solutions require both a national and international lens. This lens will also allow us to see the interlocking effects of homelessness with migration, citizenship, and belonging to improve social cohesion and "community" at the neighbourhood, national, and international scales.

Forced migration and homelessness are journeys or trajectories characterised by relative misfortune, constraint, and loss. Travellers at the cross-roads risk their most valued possessions as well as their intimate social relations, and physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. On the other hand, asylum seeking and residential mobility are intense acts of agency and points of departure on a quest for "home". Stopping at any time and in any space before arriving to the ultimate destination means one is still "on the way" home, and while some are closer to the emotional and material nexus that produces this sense of place, the litmus test is ultimately a combination of duration and personal satisfaction in a space i.e. does one remain in a country or in a house out of choice or by constraint. Chronic exile or permanent homelessness may result where neither the emotional or material conditions of home are satisfied. In the context of international migration, the journey toward home continues with integration even after overcoming the initial hurdles of settlement.

Exilic and homeless people's mobility has been described to be as passive as pinballs, political footballs, or players in a game of chance, such as snakes and ladders. If life is a game of risk, what is the prize on which the refugee sets her eyes? Some form of "home" certainly – a safe place to rest one's head, a place of respite, freedom, and relative security from environmental, political, and economic stress or harm. For some, the embodiment of this is democratic citizenship, for others it is about the opportunity to pursue one's personal goals or way of life without interference and threat, others still may privilege a domicile or dwelling-place that provides for their basic needs and that of their family; for most, however, it is a combination of all three, reflecting the evolving priorities and needs of the individual.

Migrant flows are subject to the socio-legal categories that afford various rights and privileges to the characteristics of emigration. While many people may be facing "refugee like" situations in their countries of origin, it is only those who apply for refugee status who are warranted the internationally recognized label and accompanying rights by receiving states. Once attained, the refugee label acts with homogenizing potency to meld the diversity of national origins, backgrounds, upbringings, and socio-economic statuses that migrants carry with them as well as their motivations, ambitions, attitudes, and fundamental human agency. The same can be said of homelessness, where individual differences in migration status, personal history, prospects for exit, as well as the desire for housing, are obscured by one normalizing label. Behind both labels, the embodiment of risk and vulnerability, perceptions of loss and gain, skills and capacity to survive and thrive vary tremendously across individuals. Some refugees quickly adapt and recover from their dislocation while others face daily challenges with settlement. Similarly, some homelessness people require consistent support and intervention to pry them from the streets, while others are able to house themselves after a few "hots and a cot", meaning a night or two in a shelter only. How do homeless refugees recover from, and cope with, displacement in their countries of asylum?

The refugee and the homeless person have always had something in common – no place to call home or, rather, no place an outsider would deem suitable to be called "home." Would the forced migrant consider herself homeless or almost home? In this book, we explore the refugee's sense of place by examining the subjective and objective, affective and material meanings of home and homelessness in the country of asylum. The refugees who shared their stories were doing so in order to influence their worlds for the better in the most transnational or translocal of ways. Investigating the intersection of "refugeeness" and homelessness, two processes which archetypically operate at different scales, reveals opportunities to mend cracks in migration, settlement, and housing policies in refugee-receiving countries in the global north.

Refugees, asylum seekers, and irregular migrants broadly defined

In a world of 7 billion people, about 232 million people are migrants (3.25%) (UNPD, 2013) making international migration one of the foremost economic, social and political challenges facing states in the

contemporary world. However, not all migration is equal. In a period of extraordinary human mobility fifty-one million people around the world are forced migrants and nearly 7 percent of the international migrant stock are refugees (UNPD, 2013), substantiating the "age of migration" (Castles and Miller, 2009) as "the age of the refugee" (Said, 2001, p173; Wyschogrod, 1996). Worldwide, there are 1.2 million asylum seekers with half of these making applications in 44 industrialized countries (UNHCR, 2014), and despite their small numbers, asylum flows to the "global north" are a matter of intense political debate and begrudging obligation (Carens, 1992; Gibney and Hansen, 2003; Gibney, 2005). There is ample evidence of asylum seekers and refugee claimants depicted as undesirable unwanted migrants, where the tragedy of exile is replaced by rhetoric and policy framing these irregular migrants as something akin to human missiles, penetrating national defences (borders) and attacking state sovereignty and security, the domestic economy and social cohesion (Dowty and Loescher, 1996). For instance, in Canada, Chan (2013) lists the media's most common descriptions of immigrants and refugees as criminal, illegal, and bogus (p19). The UK's Joint Committee on Human rights (2006-2007) points to the possibility of a link between hostile media reporting and physical attacks on asylum seekers (p.6). Moreover, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR, 2006) elaborates on the human irony and heartbreak of managing to flee from persecution and arriving to abuse or death instead of safety in the prospective country of asylum:

> In recent years, a number of asylum seekers and refugees have been targeted and killed despite having escaped persecution for the safety of industrialized democracies like the UK. And for each one who is murdered, hundreds are assaulted and thousands are verbally abused.

The vitriolic rhetoric against asylum seekers obscures the life-or-death pursuits by individuals who have fled their countries of nationality. Research tells us, however, that where refugees end up matters to their safety as well as their settlement (Van der Veer, 1992; Renaud and Gingras, 1998; Bloch, 2002; Black, 1994, 2002; Korac, 2003). In turn, settlement supports, or a lack thereof, can exacerbate the grief associated with loss of place or accentuate the positive aspects of a new place and its outlook. The state has a positive duty to take steps to safeguard the lives of those within the jurisdiction (L.D.B. v United Kingdom [1999] 27 EHRR 212, para. 36.); however, it also has a basic duty to control access to its territories and resources, including the entitlements of citizenship. Therefore, immigration and asylum legislation as well as social welfare policies are fundamental to a state's response to newcomers.

Contemporary state responses to asylum are an expression of histories and traditions of incorporating and excluding others and building boundaries that reflect and protect national identity and associated territory. Despite international law and conventions, countries vary in their treatment of asylum seekers because they can; and this variation can drive, and be driven by, public perception or prejudice toward refugees.

A refugee is defined by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as someone who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." In view of this, there are three conjoined characteristics of a refugee:

1. Being outside a person's country of nationality (Geography);

2. Being a member of a particular race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion (Identity); and

3. Being persecuted based on identity, which is the driving factor behind emigration (Fear).

Geography defines the refugee as a migrant foremost while their position and voice in society ascribe them a marginal or stigmatized identity in her country of nationality. This marginality combined with the 'othering' that occurs in the country of asylum create a double alienation for the refugee to overcome. Fear uproots, defines the push factors in the migration experience, and constrains available choices, making asylum seeking and refugee integration an emotional geography, while borders and identity make it political.

Applying for refugee status is a transformative process: people become "cases", persecution and torture become "evidence", and nationality and other forms of identity are subsumed by the labels, "asylum seeker" or "refugee claimant". Each case is determined on its own merits, and the burden of proof is on claimants or asylum seekers to show they are targeted and unprotected against persecution for reasons of their identity in their countries of origin. Once the claim is validated by the receiving state, the state may confer the right to asylum on the individual who is then legitimated as a "refugee".

Refugees are distinguished from asylum seekers through the act of conferment of a positive decision on a person's asylum claim by the receiving state, or designate (e.g. UNHCR), which gives them leave to apply for permanent, indefinite, or temporary residence, while asylum seekers are awaiting a decision on their refugee application. The term asylum seeker is often used interchangeably with refugee claimant; however the former is more common in the UK while the latter is frequently used in Canada.

Even the terms asylum seeker or refugee claimant do not apply until a migrant has filed her application for protection. If she never files an asylum application, despite her country conditions and individual experiences of persecution, she is categorized by her visa category e.g. student, visitor, temporary foreign worker. In cases where the visa was non-existent, fraudulent, or expired, she may be referred to as an irregular migrant. The irregular migrant category is popularly synonymised with "illegal migrant", often by the migrants themselves.

To seek asylum is a challenge to international borders while at the same time it is also an international human right; however, to confer asylum is ultimately the right of states. Some irregular, undocumented, or "illegal migrants" may bypass state authorities to occupy a space of asylum without government screening. This personal act of survival via subterfuge transforms a person into an invisible resident, which in the short-term may be a relief for some migrants who are fearful of not being able to convince a foreign country of the deservedness of their claim. In the longer-term, however, invisibility is corrosive to social and economic integration, health, and well-being, and protracted periods can ultimately lead decision-makers to question the legitimacy of any eventual application.

The organization of rights and entitlements, especially pertaining to welfare and social benefits, is confounded by mixed migration and shifting status, and so the state and its policies demand the rationalisation of migration categories (Zetter, 1991; Black, 2001). Behind the labels, there is "a world of socio-economic statuses, personal histories, and psychological or spiritual situations" (Malkki, 1995, p 496). This is important to recognize because an asylum seeker may have access to supports and resources (e.g. access to waitlists for social housing, welfare, and counselling) unavailable to the same person if she is living in another migrant category.

Refugee homelessness: A matter of scale and place

The essence of the refugee problem is very, very simple. It is: to find 'ein Plätzchen', to find a 'Mio Nido' for people who for reasons of persecution have been obliged to leave their native country and who have therefore become 'uprooted' and homeless. (Dr. Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart, 1955)

Refugees embody the theoretical contribution of scale to the literature on home and homelessness, where persons pursuing the former may find themselves struggling against the latter. This book explores the intersections of migration, housing, and the meaning of home at interlocking scales of support and oppression from the perspective of sixty refugees from different backgrounds living in Toronto, Canada and London, England, all of whom made asylum applications between 1996 and 2001 and were subsequently granted residence. To respect the cultural diversity and experiences of participants, the research method created a space for participants to express and examine their own multiple meanings of home and homelessness.

There are socially constructed and accepted norms for the ways in which "home" and "homeless" are used in the vernacular and conceived in the West, and at times participants have tried to conform or distance themselves according to the interview question. Anticipating this issue, the research process began by re-locating home and homelessness in the context of each person's own culture of origin, as well as their flight and settlement experiences, perceptions of loss, the process of reconstruction, and their relationship to various state structures that regulate housing and migration, including support for asylum seekers and the homeless. The research design framework included semi-structured interviews, key-informant interviews, and photo-voice.

Canada and the UK are both Western liberal democracies with advanced welfare systems, English is the dominant language, and they have a shared colonial legacy. However, Canada has developed a reputation as a country of immigrants with official bilingualism and multiculturalism and respect for human rights within the international community. Canada's spirit of welcome is epitomized by its citizens receiving the 1986 Nansen Refugee Award for its role in refugee resettlement. In addition, the Charter of Rights, Canada's constitution, establishes a baseline level of equality amongst all persons on Canadian territory, regardless of nationality.

The UK, by contrast, has appeared to struggle with reconciling Britishness with its multiracial/multiethnic population and immigrant diversity, and has taken an exclusionary approach to asylum seekers for which it has been criticised by the UN amongst others.

At another level, while housing vulnerable and destitute homeless people is a statutory duty for local authorities in the UK, social housing in Canada has devolved from national government to municipalities and homelessness is a municipal responsibility without legislative underpinnings. Therefore, the implications for asylum seeking households with no place of abode is different in the two countries: housing and welfare in the UK are tied to immigration status, and consequently asylum seekers are not treated as equal to nationals, and the opposite is true in Canada, where asylum seekers have access to mainstream benefits, social housing, and homelessness services equal to citizens throughout their claim. However, in both countries asylum seekers are considered a temporary population, and ineligible for integration services until refugee status or equivalent has been awarded. How refugees interpret and live within these regulatory contexts must be empirically examined, and this research provides a lens for us to assess receiving countries through refugees' eyes and citizens' contributions to newcomers' futures, both of which are inextricably linked by nation-building.

In addition to these structural issues, Canada and the UK experienced a dramatic rise in a "new homeless population" in the mid-late 1990s, characterised by families, the working poor, and newcomers (Kennett and Marsh, 1999; City of Toronto, 1998). Compared with other migrants, asylum seekers are highly vulnerable to homelessness (City of Toronto, 1998) and increasing numbers of homeless asylum seekers reflect the number of asylum applications received since the early 1990s. The geographical comparison between Canada and the UK, focussing on Toronto and London, contributes to understanding how refugee homelessness is structured, managed, and experienced at different levels.

At its core, this research analyses refugees' responses to one main research question: "How is home conceived, located and reconstructed in the asylum and settlement process?" Secondarily, the research also examined the ways in which national and residential dynamics affected refugee participants' sense of home or homelessness. The remainder of this introduction further defines the issues at hand.

Shelter as the cornerstone of settlement

Research has documented the importance of housing as one of the cornerstones of reception and successful resettlement for refugees and asylum-seekers (Van der Veer, 1992; Zetter and Pearl, 1999; Carey-Wood *et al.,* 1995; Carey-Wood, 1997; Murdie and Teixeira, 2000; Garvie, 2001; Foley and Beer, 2003; Edgar *et al.,* 2004).

Housing is extremely important for refugees as a place of safety, autonomy, and respite from the asylum process, the struggle for recognition and status, and the effort of integration or adaptation (Renaud and Gingras 1998). More than filling a basic physical need for immigrant newcomers, it constitutes an important resource in re-establishing social structures such as the family and linkages to the wider community, and minimising dependency on welfare support (Zetter and Pearl, 2000). However, evidence of systemic underhousing, *i.e.* living in substandard, crowded, unaffordable, and unsafe housing, amongst asylum-seeker and refugee households in London and Toronto has also been well documented (Quilgars, 1993; Garvie, 2001; Palmer, 2001; Zetter and Pearl 1999, 2002; Lukes, 2002; Anderson, 2003; Murdie *et al.,* 1998; City of Toronto, 1998).

In attempts to differentiate the impact of social exclusion and homelessness on various groups, research exploring the extent and pathways into and out of homelessness has proliferated (Sullivan *et al.,* 2000; Murdie, 2005; Edgar and Doherty, 2001 as examples). The analysis presented here along with refugees' viewpoints is primarily about the meaning of home/lessness, but it also contributes to a growing body of work examining experiences of volatility, insecurity, and discrimination in housing for people dispossessed and disenfranchised by the refugee process (Quilgars, 1993; Pearl and Zetter, 2002; Phillips, 2006; Murdie, 2005; Klodawsky, 2006; Hiebert, *et al.*2006; Kilbride, 2006; Robinson and Reeve, 2006). The analysis of refugees' multi-scalar home/lessness, examined in the context of forced migration and settlement constraints, is concerned with a much wider notion of home than that which affords physical safety (e.g. the house from the elements. or the state from perpetrators of violence). While it does give attention to material safety, it also looks at emotional security. By unlinking home from the dwelling place, the term can be used to examine the process of self (re)construction at the interstices of a former and future home, irrespective of the time or space between them. In some manner, therefore, it may be more apt to

focus on safety and security as the cornerstones of settlement, with the understanding that shelter is the foundation of both.

Postcolonialism, immigration, and the undeserving poor

The deserving and undeserving poor have been a concerning dualism in welfare and charity from the Victorian era to present. The concern lies in the competition amongst the poor for finite resources. If one accepts the resource limitations, it may seem rational for those who are least deserving of relief to be restricted in their access. Who constitutes the least and the most deserving varies according to a number of factors, including politics, culture, and the economy.

In an age of migration, the newcomer is often categorized as undeserving, and depending on the factors in play, asylum seekers may be constructed as the migrants least deserving of state support. This may seem paradoxical in countries whose wealth and power are founded on or by imperialism and colonialism, and who have significant immigrant or black and minority-ethnic populations.

In an age of colonialism, the term "telescopic philanthropy" was coined to guilt wealthy British subjects, who sought to address abject poverty reported from the distant reaches of Empire, to turn their lens on the poverty at their feet in their home country. The term telescopic philanthropy adds a geographical factor to the undeserved-deserved dichotomy – distance (Figure 1.1).

In essence, social commentary in late Victorian England questioned the responsibility of the state in caring for its colonies when there were so many people in dire need of welfare at home. This commentary has persisted over time, and has manifested as systemic and cultural racisms, sometimes masked by themes such as childhood delinquency, housing squalor, unemployment, crime and, most obviously, migration.
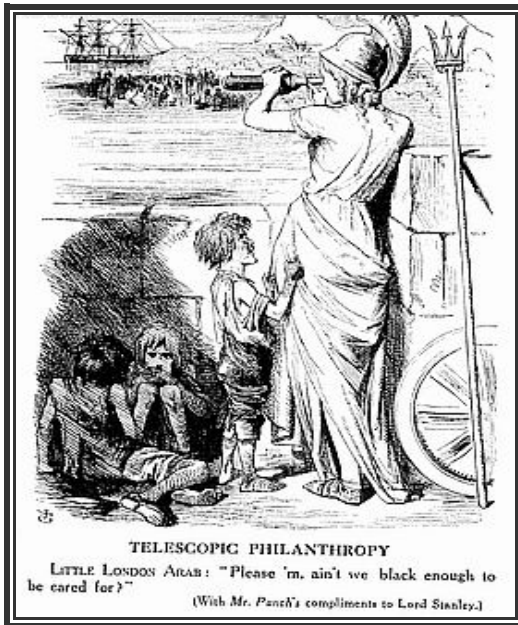
Fig 1.1

"**Telescopic Philanthropy**"

Little London Arab. "Please 'm, ain't we black enough to be cared for?"

Punch, Volume XLVIII, 4 March 1865, p. 89.

In an age of exile, the proliferation of national instability, state conflict, and persecutory regimes have forced worlds together. Consequently, Canada and the UK are attempting to manage their duties towards their domestic homeless population and their humanitarian duties to asylum seekers, the preference for which is now ironically distant aid or "telescopic philanthropy". Despite extra-territorial measures and development aid to refugee-producing regions, statistics reveal asylum seekers amongst the ranks of the homeless in both London and Toronto. Therefore, ameliorating the conditions for both groups is increasingly singular in scope because those who were "over there" are now here. However, the debates over deservedness continue, as do the interlocking oppressions of racism, poverty, and social exclusion.

At the surface, refugee homelessness may seem to be a lesser-deserving form of housing need than citizens' because non-nationals have not "paid into the system" and therefore should not expect to benefit from it. Furthermore, refugee homelessness may be a transitional phase of the settlement curve, caused by insecurity, fixed finances, a lack of knowledge of the housing culture and housing systems, no guarantors or guarantors with weak links, no social contacts or contacts that are strained

themselves. Each of these resource deficits improves with time, bringing greater degrees of confidence to the newcomer and familiarity with the nuances of a new society, and turning the settlement stage into a platform for integration. In theory, this may be true.

In theory, refugees should find themselves in better situations with time: they had survived, they were safe from persecution, and they had arrived in a new country in which they could re-define themselves, live freely and plan for their future; so why should this be framed as a form of homelessness or even loss? In reality, the situation is mixed, and some refugees never find their way out of insecurity and instability. The reality of deservedness is also mixed. While there are cases of newcomers taking advantage of the social benefit or welfare systems in receiving countries, assistance can be a positive investment in the early stabilization of future citizens. This study only looks at the perspectives of people who received a decision on their refugee applications that allowed them to remain in the country and the impact homelessness has had on their integration.

Conceptualising refugeeness

The poet Robert Frost famously wrote, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." This could easily be applied to the international refugee regime and the promises that lay behind a state's humanitarian duties. The term refugee homelessness necessitates unpinning homelessness from the traditional association with housing and situating it alongside forced migration. Both concepts should be viewed first and foremost as disruptions: to careers; a sense of security; personal relationships; routine; and familiar geographies. "Refugeeness" encapsulates three key characteristics of the refugee situation:

1. **Vulnerability** - from the prospect of being returned to persecution;

2. **Mixed objectives** - that include seeing flight as an opportunity for work, study, or family reunification as well as safety and freedom of expression in the country of asylum; and

3. **Agency -** in the ability to make choices, escape, strategise, and find alternatives amidst seemingly immovable obstacles and structures, and to engage opportunities when they appear. Uprootedness is a consequence of survivorship.

Most 'South-to-North' migration requires a period of adjustment to overcome an initial set of obstacles that may include any number of the following:

- Unfamiliarity with the language;
- Arriving to a strange, unknown, or inhospitable (climatic or cultural) environment;
- Inversion of social status;
- Discounted skills, education, and work experience;
- Social isolation; and
- Adjustment to a culture that may be more individualistic than communal.

However, refugee claimants face additional obstacles inherent to their form of migration, mostly associated with a lack of choice, fear, and the imperative of departure:

- Not necessarily choosing or understanding their destination;
- Migration marked by trauma and persecution;
- Vulnerable mental and physical health;
- Separation from family members whose safety may be at risk;
- Arrival without identity documents or with false documents;
- Arrival without evidence of qualifications;
- Arrival under the stress of deportation or detention; and
- Temporary admittance under the fear of return.

The first set of barriers are intensified by the second set of barriers, which in turn are exacerbated or ameliorated by state responses to asylum that institute measures of exclusion or equality.

Earlier studies have highlighted systemic use of detention, reduced income support, dispersal, vouchers, unassured tenancies, restriction from work or conspicuous temporary national insurance numbers as examples of the exclusion, while examples of equality include welfare and social housing equality, permission to work, family reunification, reception on arrival, and universal healthcare (Ryan and Woodill, 2000; Zine, 2002; Junaid, 2002; Bloch and Schuster, 2002; Lukes, 2002).

Maria (not her real name) was once a refugee and is now a citizen of Canada. Her painting of refugeeness welcomes the reader to this book. It defines home as a feeling of confidence, acceptance, interaction and

understanding, marking it as a two-way process. She depicts refugeeness as a form of survival and hope, rather than the despair and despondency suggested by the painting's caption. Painted from the perspective of her country of origin, the viewer is partly barricaded by death and oppression, a reminder that the two percent of forced migrants who are able to seek asylum constitute a lucky minority. Maria depicts flight as an opportunity for peace, and Canada as a means of escape requiring a painful uprooting. She also suggests that the open hands symbolise both a relinquishing of the past and acceptance of change and the unknown. Like Maria, Edward Said's experience of exile also informs the basic tenets of home as a psychological position foremost. He argues that refugees must resist the popular perceptions of forced migrants as weak and vulnerable: "Provided that the exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound, there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity" (Said, 2001, p. 184).

Conceptualising home

Integration as an ongoing process of mutual enablement between individuals and various aspects or scales of society, which is also essential in understanding expansive notions of home and belonging. Society itself includes institutions, traditions, regulations, and environments that structure one's life-world. While the details of the lifeworld may differ amongst individuals, integration consists of instrumental and affective elements. The former represents an improved level of functionality within society's structures, and the latter the development of feelings of attachment, familiarity, and confidence with one's surroundings as a sense of well-being. Functional indicators of integration (employment, housing, education, language acquisition) and affective indicators (belonging, citizenship, nationalism) are sometimes referred to as hard and soft indicators, respectively. Hard indicators receive the most attention by states because they are measurable outcomes of settlement. Soft indicators of integration are harder to assess, but are just as meaningful to migrants' settlement. Home and homelessness can be used as metaphors to describe the extreme outcomes of poor functional integration or poor affective integration. As metaphors, home and homelessness are complex concepts, especially when considered materially, emotionally, and at different scales.

Settles (2000) argues that limits on the locality of home are limits to the expression of the individual and "[t]he modern political assumption that