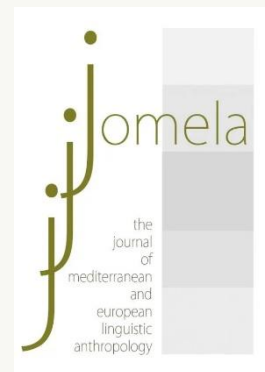


# Memory Shaping in the Migration Age: Amal's Walking

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## Abstract

Giant puppets have been appropriated worldwide for street entertainment, celebrations, and other purposes, and continue to be used at the present time. The Handspring Puppet Company's giant stilt puppet 'Little Amal' toured Europe and the United Kingdom in 2021, as the centerpiece of the project *The Walk*, demonstrating a positive view of the lone child refugee. The puppet focused on the plight of Syrian children as they migrated to Turkey, following the Syrian war and the mass exodus at the time. The puppet, and its walk, thus become tools for the exposition of micronarratives of these children. Such micronarratives assist in the landscaping of the movements of these refugees.

In this paper, I document the micronarratives of twenty children who joined the war and mass exodus from Syria to Turkey, following their interaction with Amal for several days. The children all exhibited an alteration in memory following their interaction with the puppet, and as such, the puppet also presented a patently positive influence on the children. To arrive at this understanding of collective memory and its intersections with the micronarrative, I draw on several pertinent frameworks. As such this study seeks to contribute to a larger narrative on refugee trauma and the memory of trauma by children, as well as scholarship in the field.

**Keywords:** *Migration, micronarrative, art performance, Amal, linguistic anthropology*

## Introduction

Memory tends to develop and form through visual and auditory perception and experience. Yet, memory studies frequently describe past traumas as influencing and shaping of memory over short and long term durations. Here, studies on past suffering have had a significant influence on the field of memory studies. For example, Huyssen (1999) notes that the narratives concerning a past trauma do not only transfer (conceptions of) past pain to the present time, but also contribute to the building of memory which then emerges later (see also Rigney 2018). In the current era, the creation of narratives has gradually and increasingly shifted away from large institutions and their agencies, and has increasingly gravitated towards smaller groups and individuals, particularly those smaller bodies and individuals dealing with past trauma and cultural adversity. Here, short story pieces are gaining a place in society, not least of which is general media, in forms such as micronarratives, thus significantly contributing to the structure of contemporary communication.

Such is the case with performances such as puppet theatre and its diverse set of narratives. For example, in Turkey and its surrounding regions, one popular puppet theatre narrative that is currently increasing in popularity and symbolic depth is the journey of the puppet 'Amal.' The puppet Amal as a protagonist in the puppet performance 'Amal's walk' was created and developed by the United Kingdom based Good Chance Theater. The project was then further developed by Walk Productions and the South African Handspring Puppet Company, with the aim of encouraging the development and dissemination of micronarratives by individuals and small communities. The name 'Amal' suggests 'hope' in the Arabic language. Within the 'Amal's Walk' narrative, Amal is a Syrian girl refugee who begins her journey in Gaziantep, a city in southern Turkey near the Turkish-Syrian border, and reaches one of the large urban centres in Turkey, the city of Izmir, as her next destination. In ways, Izmir also represents a doorway to neighboring Greece, and hence, symbolizes a facile journey to other cosmopolitan localities. As such, the journey to Izmir suggests that Amal engages in a walk from one border city to another border city in Turkey. Following her arrival and performance in Izmir, Amal, as a puppet, crossed Greece, Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, and the UK, on foot, thus traveling 8.000 km through eight countries ([walkwithamal.org](http://walkwithamal.org)).

Work on such a micronarrative as a factor through which to increase the legitimacy of self, particularly in contexts such as refugee communities, is limited. Until the present time, a significantly large body of work has focused on the macronarrative, and as such, has somewhat ignored the genesis of the micronarrative. This insufficient focus on the micronarrative, and more so in communities such as that of the Syrian refugees to Turkey, has created a void in scholarship, thus requiring work.

To respond to this need for scholarship, I have sought to document and to analyze the *pragmacting* of Amal, and her interaction with communities who consequently seek to develop

micronarratives of their own plight and lifeworlds during their involvement with the puppet Amal. For this, I attend to the notion that these puppets form a relationship with their audiences by co-constructing narratives both which are contextual, and which draw on their cultural and personal heritages to inform their narratives. Yet I argue that such a heritage can be continuously reconstructed during performance and interaction with Amal, and through the memory of the interaction with the puppet Amal. To this, I ask the question, 'can micronarratives also create other memories from stories that fall outside of the general or mainstream narratives?' In this context, the question, 'do created micronarratives correlate with narratives of the real actors to which they refer?' also constitutes a focus during the study.

I conducted this work on the puppet Amal and her targeted communities in Izmir, in Turkey, as one of her significant stations of work and interaction. In my study, I documented the involvement and interactions of these communities, and organized focus groups and in-depth interviews with the children who participated in these events. I specifically attended to the effect of Amal's walking performance on Syrian children, a set of narratives at the centre of which was the notion of 'forming a memory' through, or together with, the development of their micronarratives as Syrian children refugees now residing in Izmir.

As such, I structure the paper as follows: In the second section, I observe ways in which Amal has been constructed, her travels, and the reactions to her pragmacting. I precede this with a brief description of the Syrian war and the effect of this war on the refugees to Turkey. In the third section, I discuss the methodical framework of the paper, and discuss its optimum relevance to the context. In the fourth section, I discuss, be it briefly, the analysis of the effect of Amal's walking on these children's micronarratives, and the emergence of the micronarratives from these children in their communities. Through their expressions, a contribution was made to collective memory. In the final section, I conclude the paper, and discuss both its application to larger society and ways in which to progress in subsequent scholarly work.

## Content Review

### *Describing Amal's Walk and Little Amal*

Little Amal is a 3.5-metre (11 foot) partly-animatronic giant puppet which was first included as the centerpiece protagonist and prop of 'the Walk,' a performance art project developed in 2021. The project was created by the British production companies The Walk Productions and Good Chance theatre, in collaboration with the South African Handspring Puppet Company. The puppet's Little Amal persona originated as a character in the 'Jungle,' a play created in the former Calais jungle encampment in 2015. The name Amal suggests 'hope' in the Arabic language, where Little Amal represents a nine-year-old Syrian refugee girl who, in the Walk project, travels alone across Europe to find her estranged mother. Dozens of designers and

craftspeople may have collaborated to create the puppet, which is controlled or 'manned' by at least three puppeteers, that is, two people to control and to move the hands, and one interior puppeteer who walks on heavily-weighted stilts, and who controls the head, the eyes, and the mouth by hand, via a mechanism called the harp.

The director of the performance, Amir Nizar Zuabi, has explained that the motives for organizing Amal's walk as an extended pragmatic activity, and in my words, pragmacting, include the building of memory for these refugee children, and more so, the identifying of the existence of these refugee children. With the intention of celebrating human migration and cultural diversity, the puppet walked for five months, from the Syria-Turkey border, through European countries, and then to the United Kingdom, during which, Amal participated in locally arranged events in 65 towns and cities. Throughout, little Amal was greeted at venues by local dignitaries, such as Pope Francis, Vincent Nichols the Archbishop of Westminster, and Caroline Makinson, the Mayor of Barnsley. Amal also walked side by side with the Handspring company's 'Joey the War Horse' on the South Bank in London.

In some areas, Little Amal received a mix reception by crowds, in their racist and even violent reactions on the puppet. However, in most locations, the interaction between the communities and the puppet performance was joyful. As such, the walk appears to have created a travelling art and cultural festival, as a celebration of migration and cultural diversity, and as the identification of child refugees who have sought to build new micronarratives as children with an evolving heritage, grounded in part in their oppression and a larger escapism.

The puppet represents the displacement of children, who have either seen war firsthand and have escaped with their families into conditions that position these children as subject to inhospitable environments, or that separate these children from their families, where the children must live a life of searching for parents, siblings, and other family members, that is, a life-long plight of reconnection with family. As such, the symbolism of Amal includes the voicing or rechanneling of the voice of these children, which is, 'do not forget about us, as child refugees.' The founders of the Handspring Puppet Company, Basil Jones and Adrian Kohler, have noted the following:

The story of refugees is so important for the whole world. Many countries are on the move because of conflict, climate change, farmers that can't work anymore through lack of rain. It's the big story of our time. Because it's an outdoor event, The Walk has the potential of bringing people together again. At a moment when theatres are struggling to re-open this is something everyone can be a part of.

Amal's trauma and memories are grounded in the refugee crisis of the Syrian fleeing, that is, the war refugees fleeing from Syria to Turkey. Her narrative is one of representation and of thus

growing up in Gaziantep, and then wondering from place to place, such as Calais camp (Greece), Greece, Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. Amal's walk, to speak to Syrian migrant children confined to less than adequate conditions, and to attend to the aesthetic betterment of their lives, mediated the development of their symbolisms, in that she sought to draw the world's attention to the fact that Syrian children are forced to walk away from war, transnationally, and in the process to renounce home, land, family, and all material and aesthetic possessions. Amal's physical walk from city to city, and across countries, is a physical portrayal of the intention of these refugee children to cross borders in order to escape war.

Prior to departing from Turkey, Amal and her team organized several activities, during which, refugee children together with local Turkish children came together to interact with Amal to complement her pragmatizing. The communities organized, and involved themselves in, games to facilitate Amal's Izmir diary, visible in Izmir Art ([izmir.increased](http://izmir.increased)). The Amal puppet play is not predetermined, but rather a performance. In every visit, and hence, with every interaction with children in each community, the two-hour mime performance, as pragmatizing, is improvised and interactive, and not narrated in any way. During the two-hour interaction, Amal becomes symbolic of the ability to walk with a grandiose world stature, narrating to children that they can overcome the adversity of war and refugeeism through their identifying with the Amal persona and her actions. Amal acts and interacts with a complete silence that is symbolic of the fact that she refuses to allow war and refugeeism to interrupt her efforts to move, settle, socialize, and to appreciate the vastness of the world which she owns to the extent that any other individual does. Amal does not at any time express sorrow, nor despair, and nor does she express regret for travelling, thus offering the children a patent solidarity for their solitudinal exile. Her clothing and stature are always clean and refined, suggesting that any amount of travel through walking will not negate her joy, while she interacts with all participants in the community, that is, children, adults, administrators, performers, and so forth, to alter the aesthetics and ideology of the community.

In the process, Amal has attempted to succeed in the envisioned geographical pursuits of these refugee home-lost children, and hence, her travels symbolize the plight of these children, or rather, she informs the children that they can view their juxtaposition of home as a positive and beneficial lie movement. Such a walk becomes an acting that has socio-pragmatic intentions in that it symbolizes growth for its audiences. I label this contextually legitimate acting as 'pragmatizing,' which I define as follows: Pragmatizing is the pragmatic and hence purposeful enacting of a specific social role in a context where it holds specific social and societal value, while at the same time, drawing on the symbolic resources of that social context in order to facilitate the pragmatic intentions of the role of itself and the social groups that it addresses. While traveling, Amal engages in this pragmatizing, in order to impress upon children and their communities a range of ideologies, and to thus exhibit a highly positive influence on these

children's perceptions of society, self, and legitimacy. Amal accomplishes this as she walks together with the children, traveling from location to location, to evidence her stance on the plight of these communities, to instill in the ideologies of these children the positive values of inevitably leaving their homeland. Interacting with Amal, the children reinvent their lifeworlds and to reappropriate their symbolic resources, through a development of their micronarratives, and in turn, find facility to propagate these micronarratives and histories to others through stories that frequently center or at the very least draw on Amal.

### *Metanarrative and Micronarrative*

Amal may be construed as much more than a performance. Amal also intends to be seen by audiences as an interaction and a building of a 'community of subversive practice, culminating in the pragmacting I refer to above. Amal both literally and metaphorically instills in the children and their communities, conceptions of her ability to contest, or at the very least, subvert, oppression. In the process, Amal indirectly and non-confrontationally seeks to destabilize the tyranny of war, through acts such as inspiring communities to engage with her in her transnational walk. Here, her enacted community encourages an ideological freedom as a subversion of oppressive apparatuses, such as restriction to and isolation in refugee camps, evacuation from homeland, and erasure of national and ethnic identity and memory, as well as the attempted separation from ethnic community and religion.

Amal's narrative is thus a performance central to the sharing of knowledge and meaning creation across larger refugee society. The narrative is also shared, reinvented, and repropagated throughout the community. Concurrently, Amal's reinvigoration of the ethno-cultural setting, through her visual narrative and pragmacting, grounds the efforts by the community to reconceptualize the junctures between place of origin and place of arrival. Such an ideology aligns with Jerome Bruner, who notes that the narrative entangles people, their lifeworlds, their aspired worlds, and beyond, that is, the real world, through the patterns they create through such narratives. To this, I add that through the narratives, the refugee children, and the community as a whole, encode, organize, and present events of the world to people, while providing channels for the allocation and allowance of specific and selected memories of the past to be stored, erased, and modified, and to hence become an embodied structuring apparatus for ideologically sustaining their lifeworlds and significance.

Throughout the twentieth century and until now, in the era of intensified postmodern ideological change, the metanarrative has offered new spaces through which to accept that which was not or can not be accepted by modernity and its world, that is, that which emerges solely through narrative form. The postmodern world emphasizes the micronarrative as a narrative that opens up ideological and interactive spaces for the expression of and exemplification of difference. Lyotard, for example, makes evident his support for the

metanarrative, by noting that 'true knowledge' is representational, and is always created indirectly, through such systems as the metanarrative. Here, Lyotard notes, information created indirectly will also appear through a structure that prepares and confirms its legitimacy by its creators, that is, in a meta structure. Yet, to further and to legitimize the metanarrative, in the postmodern era, the micronarrative can embody the cultural and ideological parts of the narrative, and can produce stories not conveyable in metanarratives, as a stage necessary for legitimizing the parts not possible in the metanarrative. As such, Lyotard notes, metanarratives, in their efforts to stabilize their roles vis-à-vis narratives, should give way to the petit recits, and thus localized narratives. Yet, what Lyotard criticizes is the fact that, when a metanarrative is created, all narratives are superseded by such a meta perspective. While all things emerge from a single narrative that has been created, the creation of the metanarrative prevents other narratives, where, difference is not allowed, and a suppressive force which is otherwise countered through the exposition of the micronarrative. Therefore, the sequence for the emergence of voice becomes narrative, metanarrative, and finally micronarrative (Reading 2006). Through such a sequence, communities can work together to build a cluster of memories, to sustain their ideological selves and more so, their societal ontologies.

### *Building Collective Memory, Individual Memory, and Memoir*

Collective memory is significant to the study of anthropology, particularly in the context of migration and displacement. The Mediterranean and European regions have witnessed a surge in refugees and migrants over the past decade, resulting in complex processes of collective memory formation and transmission. Micronarrative theory offers an approach to storytelling that emphasizes the significance of personal and individual stories in the construction of collective memory. The theory presents that small, seemingly insignificant stories or micronarratives contribute to the formation of a larger narrative or collective memory. Micronarratives are often ignored in mainstream historiography that focuses on grand narratives and macro-level events. However, they are essential in capturing the experiences of marginalized and minority groups, such as refugees.

Refugees often experience trauma, displacement, and loss, which can have a significant impact on their identity and sense of belonging. However, these refugees also exhibit a rich and diverse cultural heritage, which is often overlooked in mainstream discourse. Micronarrative theory provides a valuable framework for capturing and preserving the cultural heritage of refugees. The Refugee Voices Archive is an example of the use of micronarrative theory in the context of refugees. The British Library initiated this project in 2015 to collect and preserve the personal stories of refugees from around the world. The archive consists of audio recordings, photographs, and written testimonies that all purport to provide a unique insight into the experiences of refugees. The stories available in the archive are not only valuable for the individuals themselves, but also contribute to the collective memory of the refugee community.

Another example of the use of micronarrative theory in the context of refugees is the Center for Digital Storytelling's work. The organization employs digital media to assist refugees and other marginalized groups to convey their stories. The Center for Digital Storytelling provides workshops and training programs that assist refugees to create their digital stories. These stories are often deeply personal and emotional, providing a powerful means of self-expression and healing. They also contribute to the collective memory of the refugee community by capturing and preserving the stories of individual refugees.

Collective memory, also labelled 'collective mind' or 'social memory,' suggests that every social event can affect the memory of both individual and society. According to Halbwachs, work on memory at any level reinforces (the notion of) social memory, as individual memory is shaped through societal ideology, structure, and action. Here, the individual acquires memory through and together with larger society, in a continuous process of negotiation between self and society. Noting the impossibility for individuals to sustain a consistent memory outside of the society in which they live and function, Halbwachs attributes the motives for the lack of certainty of childhood memories to the fact that, at the time of childhood, a collective memory had not yet formed. Halbwachs thus asks, "Whose memory is the memory that individuals remember actually? And is it the memory of the family or an individual memory?" As such, Halbwachs appears to indicate a desire to underline the fact that memories are continuously formed through larger societal structures, yet he maintains that the acquisition of memory occurs at the level of the individual (Olick 2014, pp. 178-179).

Schacter (2022) cites a memory experiment conducted by the French artist Sophie Calle in his work entitled 'Searching for Memory.' Here, notes Schacter, Calle requested that employees act to remove some of the artwork from a museum (or modern art). Following the removal of the artwork, Calle then questioned the employees as to what they recalled about these paintings. Each of the employees expressed that they recalled a uniquely different aspect of the art, and hence, recollections which other employees did not recall. From these recollections, Calle (re)created an exhibition on only those aspects recalled by each of the individual employees. Calle then presented a main conclusion, that people individually have their own specific and unique recollections, despite the fact that they have all been subjected to the same artefact. Schacter also points out that, as one factor that influences this selectivity, human perception erases or does not perceive selected goings on, unlike a photographic device. Here, each individual person semiotically and ideologically uniquely filters their own perceptions through such a semiotic and ideological window, and then configures these to sustain the memory through already attained and developed personal semiotic devices. More to this, as psychologist Ulric Neisser informs, some fragments of memory are retained in mind to then reappear at various times, through the already present structures, a process which he labels as the 're-emergence hypothesis' (Schacter 2022, p. 68).

I also now discuss work by Andreas Huyssen, whose work contributes to my argument for



the enactment of the micronarrative. Huyssen notes that the past does not exist in memory in a plain and orderly objective state. In order for the memory to become a memory, it must be expressed in some way. Just experiencing an event renders the process inadequate for the experience to become a memory. Huyssen states that there is a past in every memory recall, but the 'moment' that is constructed and recalled is in the 'now.' As such, when an event that occurred in the past is remembered in the present, the memory is (re)created and (re)constructed, and as such, memory is formed when the past is remembered in the present time, that is, in the 'now' (Huyssen 1999, p. 13).

## Methodical Framework

Amal's walk in Izmir in July 2022 spanned several days. During this time, Amal performed and interacted with a group of over one thousand people, as refugees. The director of the performance, Amir Nizar Zuabi, explains that the main motive for this walk was memory building, both individually and collectively. Amal sought to 'play interact' with the community as a whole, and to encourage members of the community, predominantly the children, to guide the play, while accommodating such play in ways that I best describe as 'pragmacting.' As above, I define Pragmacting as the pragmatic and purposeful enacting of a social role in a context where it holds social and societal value, while drawing on the symbolic resources of that social context in order to facilitate the pragmatic intentions of the role of itself and the social groups that it addresses.

As such, my roles as ethnographer and overall researcher included an attempt to understand and to document the ways in which characters such as Amal (and her team) act to encourage, to mediate the development of, and to effect the building of, such a collective memory, yet in parallel with the efforts of society, to draw on society's emerging micronarratives that form through the interaction of society with such a persona. In this study, which I conducted through my ethnography of those who experienced Amal's walk, through observing and interacting with Amal, I sought to locate the effect of an art performance on memory formation, both individual and collective. My analysis of the data obtained from my interaction on these Syrian refugee children, included a focus on development of the micronarrative, memory formation, as well as on the ideologies of migration of these children. I include in this framework scholarly work on memory formation as a micronarrative during interaction with performance.

The data collection largely comprised interviews, conducted at ASAM (the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants) in Izmir. To facilitate the welcoming of Amal, the children at this center attended a puppet-making workshop with their instructors prior to her arrival. I have taken all images for this study from ASAM. Prior to conducting the main in-depth interviews at ASAM, I conducted interviews with two focus groups, each of which comprised two people, in order to assist the newly introduced children to feel safe in their interactions with

me, that is, in a trusting environment. In such an environment of trust, I then conducted in-depth interviews with a group of six children, and then 14 children individually. In the data, I encrypted the interviewees' identities with the letter A, a number, and their age (in parentheses).

To proceed with the analysis, I discuss Amal's performativity during her interaction with the community in terms of the extent to which Amal succeeds in her appearance in their subsequent micronarratives. I then observe keywords used during the interviews with the children to develop a cluster of indicators that thus suggest a collective memory formed among the children.

## Results and Findings

### *General*

Prior to proceeding to the analysis, I find it appropriate to provide brief information in order to clarify the form of the findings.

### *Describing the War*

The Syrian War, which largely began in 2011, has forced millions of Syrians nationals to flee their homes, and to thus seek refuge in other, mostly neighboring, countries. As a country adjacent to Syria, Turkey has become a facile target for Syrian refugees, a factor that has also been influenced by its historical ties with Syria and its open-door policy towards refugees. As such, Izmir has become a hub for these Syrian refugees. As such, Izmir is one of the several hubs for these Syrian refugees.

Language barriers constitute a challenge for Syrian refugees in Izmir, as many refugees struggle to develop their competence in Turkish and to hence communicate with a larger Turkish populace. Despite the fact that difficulties arise at times, difficulties such as receiving healthcare and education, these populations can overcome many problems with the assistance of associations such as ASAM and the state. The difficulties in obtaining work are also predicated on migration factors. Violence perpetrated by a large number of unregistered refugees can motivate the prejudices enacted against registered refugees, where the presence of unregistered refugees also impedes the ability by authorities to locate these people, more so at times when these unregistered people do not comply with the law. Yet, associations are also attempting to integrate and harmonize with these populations. One example is the presence of language courses, through which they attempt to adapt to the needs of locals, and to prevent the migrants from lacking in education. I observed that the interviewed children were very satisfied with their stay in Turkey, motivated by their interest in continuing with school.

Following the anti-regime protests that began in Syria on March 15, 2011, a civil war broke out, sparking a massive movement of human migration from the country to neighboring countries. The first mass migration to Turkey took place on April 29, 2011 (Erdogan, p. 5). Juristically, the Syrians are now under temporary protection in Turkey. This temporary protection may be provided for the people who have been forced to leave their country. Subsequently, between three and four million Syrians now reside in Turkey under its temporary protection ([goc.gov.tr](http://goc.gov.tr)).

## Analysis

The analysis begins with the identifying of key words from the interviews conducted. The stages throughout the interviews were as follows: I firstly discussed with the children their crossing of the Turkish Syrian border, that is, how they crossed, the duration of their crossing, the difficulties they overcame, their groups, and so forth. This discussion aided in the understanding of the extent to which the migration journey gained a place in the children's memories, and the extent to which, and the ways in which, these children were able to bond with the Amal walk narrative to then subsequently form their own meta and micronarratives. To this, I obtained three different categories of responses; those who crossed the border on foot (nine children), those who crossed the border in a vehicle (five children), and those who did not remember (six children).

With respect to those who do not recall how they crossed the border, I draw on Halbwach's thesis. Halbwach suggests that the limitation of childhood memory stems from trauma or from their limited participation or membership in their society. Despite the fact that some children who were too young to remember, others who were at an age capable of recalling the travel maintained the notion, "I don't remember." For this, there are several possibilities, such as the fact that, following border crossing, the family did not continue to discuss the crossing. Other possibilities would include mixed and confusing narratives, thus effecting a forgetting of sorts, or a forced forgetting, and hence an erasure of past memory. However, following on from Halbwach, I suggest that the lack of societal engagement on the matter may have played a central role, both during the migration, at which point, the children may have been silenced, and after the migration, where the children may have been confused and not able to engage in discourse as to the process, or the children may have become frightened and thus forgetting, and hence not engaging in discussion, or the children may have been suppressed from discussing this. At any rate, all factors would lead to limited collective discussion on the matter.

Interviewer A2 (12) explained that he himself crossed the border on foot at the age of four. However, during the conversation on Amal, A2 explained that Amal stopped many times, in the same way that the Syrians did. He suggests, because "Amal got very tired too." To this, he added that Syrians also cannot walk for a long time. Here, I note that the child appeared to be projecting

between Amal's walk and his own memories of himself at four years old. Consequently, it is significant that A2 informed me that he loves Amal very much, and draws a parallel between Amal and himself, indicating that Amal's project has achieved at least one of its goals.

In response to the question, "how did you feel when you saw Amal?" all of the children suggested that they like and more so love Amal very much. The children all expressed that they were patently excited at the time of Amal's walk through their campsite. For example, A14 (14) informed me of the fact that, "I felt strange, because the big Amal came and chose us. I was affected. The attention she paid to us was very nice, I didn't see that attention from anyone." When I asked why he was so affected, he responded with, "It was too big, the puppet was very beautiful." Some other children commented in the same way. Although all of the children commented that they were impressed by Amal's size, at times when I attempted to expand on the question and notion of her beauty, some children also expressed that they love Amal as she is a Syrian child. Others noted that they love Amal owing to her appearance and actions.

A5 (10) replied to this question by informing me of the following: "When I saw Amal, I thought that people would understand what we went through, how we suffered." Here, Amal appears to have drawn their attention to their sufferings, and this I see at the early stages and catalyst for the development of the children's micronarratives. While individual problems cannot constitute the subject of a metanarrative, these unseen stories can come to light through the micronarrative. The mechanics of the micronarrative appear in the ways in which the children discuss their memory of or their forgetting of the crossing of the border on foot through Amal.

A3 (12), one of the children who created a puppet to meet Amal, also informed me of the fact that, when he saw Amal, he came to realize that his efforts were not at all in vain, and that this effective contribution of his work gave him patent joy. When asked as to which efforts of his were not wasted, he discussed the puppet workshop he attended that prepared him to meet Amal. A3 (12) and the other children created a micronarrative with the puppet production workshop, following which they revealed their personal memories.

Many of the children began talking through the puppets they produced and hence remembering their crossing as a micro-memory creation, the starting point of which was Amal's walk. A4 (12) responded to the question of "Did Amal leave a pleasant memory for you?" by stating that, "Yes, she left a pleasant memory, Amal reflected us." Here, the respondent commented that the children see themselves in Amal, thus developing conceptions of themselves, their plight, and the reality of their existence, with the appearance of Amal. Amal inspired the formation of a second category of micronarratives, that is, Huyssen's notion that no memory is formed when a person simply experiences an event. For the formation of the memory, the experiences must be expressed in the 'now.'

The group suggested that they largely saw Amal's walk as an intense form of memory shaping. Amal became a signifier for liberation, and thus, the children pursued Amal, a walking puppet

who appeared to fashion their escape from the memory of trauma, and who effected an embodiment of safe heritage. Some children recall a joyous Syria prior to the war, where Amal represents a tunnel through which to escape or at least circumnavigate around that trauma of war.

## Conclusion

Forced emigration is always unpleasant, where forced migrations are traumatic. Yet, the necessity of such an act would compel researchers to take note, and hence to listen to the experiences of these forced migrants, following which, we can assist these populations to obtain some level of resolution.

Forced migration is a central problem in the current era. Renouncing homeland by force can traumatize children, and as such, the difficulties experienced by immigrants require extensive scholarly work. To aid this, the documenting of the micronarrative allows for a personal and hence highly relevant understanding of processes of forced migration. Such can be revealed by documenting and analyzing the junctures between trauma and art performance.

Amal's narrative is not a macro narrative, but rather a catalyst for a plurality of micro narratives. Through her visuals and performances, Amal presents that she is largely concerned with a discursive interaction with children, within which she informs them of her continuing availability for the children. Her size suggests that she is larger than the difficulties that the children must overcome, and as such, can freely walk without the confinements that are part and parcel of refugeeism. Her narrative thus becomes a symbolic conveyance of liberalism and the pervasion of boundaries, or rather, a superseding of oppression.

Through the micro narratives that accompany Amal, collective memory is created, one which aims at igniting a new positive beginning acknowledging and integrating that encounter. Amal's walk perfectly exemplifies this, as attention was drawn to children who are small in size but whose distress is not that of small children. It is large.

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## Endnotes

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