Having set forth from that place, it was only natural I should return to it, given the accuracy of my navigation. And my family could have moved to other quarters during my absence and settled down a hundred leagues away without my deviating by as much as a hair's-breadth from my course.

Samuel Beckett

Somayyeh Shahhoseiny

Forgetting
An approach to encountering the complexity of otherness

In connection with the fear of unknowns, Nietzsche's philosophy suggests that the will to power serves as a response to the inherent uncertainty and unpredictability of existence. Humans tend to fear the unknown and seek stability and security. The will to power arises as an attempt to overcome this fear and establish a sense of control and order in the face of the unknowns. The fear of encountering unknowns in the context of displacement is closely related to the disruption of living spaces. It encompasses the fear of being unable to establish a new sense of home, losing connections to one's community, and being isolated or marginalized in an unfamiliar environment or what Nietzsche calls *an adversity*.[1] The loss of familiar living spaces amplifies the sense of the unknown and can contribute to feelings of anxiety, vulnerability, and a heightened fear of the unpredictable circumstances that displacement entails. Additionally, it underscores the role of politics in displacement, as policies and actions can directly influence the loss of familiar living spaces and the subsequent emotional and psychological effects on displaced populations. I distinguish between the politics of displacement and the poetics of movement. Dance, wandering, and journey falls under the category of poetic movements and any form of forced displacement, like forced migration or cultural displacement, under the politics of displacement. The reason can be immediately grasped from

1 Fredrika Spindler, *Nietzsche: Kropp, Konst, Kunskap* (GläNta Produktion, 2010), ch. 2.

the definitions of the terms movement and displacement. Because while movement refers to the change in the position with respect to surroundings, displacement is the change in the position (from an initial position to a final position), regardless of the path taken. Therefore, fear is mainly the result of facing unknowns in forced displacement, which are the lack of choices as well as the limitation in controlling the living situation and uncertainty about returning home. Numerous factors underlie the displacement of populations and individuals in the world. In an era heavily reliant on technological tools, the occurrence and intensity of specific natural disasters, such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts, have been amplified and form new kinds of disruptions. There are also new forms of disasters, such as nuclear bombs, that can give vastly different shapes to new wars. These disasters (whether natural, technological, political, or economic) are the outcomes of opposing yet interconnected elements that shape our overall relationship with the world. In his book *After Fukushima, the Equivalence of Catastrophes*, Jean-Luc Nancy writes: "An earthquake and the tsunami it caused become a technological catastrophe, which itself becomes a social, economic, political, and finally philosophical earthquake, at the same time."[2] The psychological and emotional ramifications often constitute critical determinants in formulating many political strategies for displaced populations. One of these strategies is deliberate forgetting. A closer look at historical instances reveals that the deliberate act of forgetting or suppressing collective memory has been used as a policy to facilitate the displacement of populations. In particular, examples of such displacement are forced migration, colonialism, or ethnic cleansing, where erasing or distorting historical narratives played a role in justifying or perpetuating displacement. Put differently, by erasing or distorting historical narratives, authorities aimed to weaken the identity, resistance, and cohesion of targeted communities and create conditions conducive to displacement and subjugation. Therefore, forgetting is often perceived as a hindrance to our daily lives and a sign of memory failure that happens due to the passage of time and causes the interference of old and new information, or as a retrieval or encoding failure, or repression or as a result of a deliberate political act. However, my aim here is to

2 Jean-Luc Nancy, *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes* (Fordham University Press, 2014), 34.

elaborate on a different perspective of forgetting, suggesting that it can serve as a powerful tool for self-knowledge. By conceptualizing forgetting as a bracketing or a pause or breakdown from daily activities, individuals can create space for introspection, reflection, and self-awareness. The act of forgetting is related to the poetics of movement that leads an individual to a deeper understanding of one's thoughts, emotions, and values.

If we look at the phenomenon of forced migration from the perspective of disruption in our daily lives, this disruption shatters our overall engagement with the world, and we need to establish a connection with a world that we are somehow new to. The existence of this disruption leads back to the nature of human connection to the world. Nietzsche refers to his own illness as a disruption that led to self-awareness and absolute freedom in him. He considers those who benefit from this disruption as those who can establish their own values, which are vastly different from traditional and imposed norms that – in his view – have not led humanity towards true success but have been the cause of human despair throughout history.[3] Subsequently, in the context of forced displacement, this phenomenon can be seen as a disruption for individuals. In his series of lectures on Kierkegaard's *Fear* and *Trembling*, Hubert Dreyfus explains the difference between the terms particular and individual and argues how you cannot distinguish this difference when you read the book in Danish if you do not understand the context, as there is only one word in this language meaning both individual and particular. He articulates that to have a real individual identity is different from being particular, as particularity is not in opposition to universality. Each one of us is a unique human being with associated particular properties and characteristics. However, simply by being an individual, one has a real individual identity related to its individual existence. In other words, being an individual is also called being an exception. Kierkegaard sees the way to be an individual in following the calling, which is also distinct for every individual. He considers this calling as infinite passion, and Dreyfus named it unconditional commitment. This calling puts a person in a situation in which they have to choose between the values of daily life and in accordance with society or their own values.[4]

3 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: Warum Ich so Klug Bin* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1976).
4 "Hubert Dreyfus - Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling." Intellectual Deep Web. August 22, 2018. Video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjfzyqCewdo.

For the connection between individuality and identity, he argues different degrees of awareness. Those who do not forget their identity have higher immediacy and are in contrast to those who have lower immediacy and quickly forget who they are. In this sense, forgetting is self-forgetfulness and becoming someone else. Anything that causes a person to turn into everybody and distance the self, according to Heidegger, is the result of fallenness. As human beings, we fall into certain tasks by default due to social expectations and following social patterns that place us in the safe zone of social life. From Heidegger's perspective, being in the world is being in the world with others (to be in Mitwelt or mitsein). However, the cost of becoming everybody (das Man) is falling into the abyss of daily life and the fall that takes Dasein away from becoming aware of its existence.[5] The example of others with whom man lives in the world is everyone who is considered a model or a hero in social life. This example of others (everyone) determines my Dasein. No one in their daily life is unique and cannot be. Dasein is the subject of others, and its understanding of self is a result and a function of understanding how it differs from others. Therefore, being with others has a two-way meaning of simultaneous integration and conflict with others. Becoming everyone makes Dasein lack individuality, and being too far away from others contradicts the concept of being with others (mitsein). Therefore, the complexity is that even disobeying to become everyone is a kind of companionship. Because Dasein can never be separated from mitsein, it can only try to decide and act independently, at least in some cases and in some moments. Heidegger calls these moments the moments of insight (Augenblick).[6]

The political process aims to resolve disputes in society. It tries to reconcile conflicting interests or create harmony in a situation where alienation has caused instability in the complex individual and social system. One political approach to creating this harmony is linking individual identity to the place of residence, which depends on various factors. One of these factors is the continuity of residence. If the intended place of residence is temporary, people's fear of losing that place turns it into an unstable location where they cannot envision a future for themselves. Consequently, they lack the motivation to improve this place and transform it into a place of

5 Babak Ahmadi, *Heidegger and the Fundamental Question,* trans. by author (Tehran, Nashre Markaz, 2002), 318.
6 Ibid. 320-333.

living. Another factor is conformity with social patterns. For some, achieving the defined social and economic patterns (often the products of power systems' propaganda) is never fully attainable. This achievement of this conformation is facilitated by reducing the diversity of values into a single, measurable financial value. However, if individuality weakens, its manifestations in the public sphere also are weakened. Here, individuality – which stems from the uniqueness of humans – can create a global being while remaining unique/particular by following social patterns. In his book *Individualism, Old and New*, John Dewey criticizes the capitalist system in which individuality has become a victim of financial interests, emphasizing collectivism and conformity.[7] Therefore, in such societies, everyday existence – namely everyday thinking about being – becomes impersonal. No one is their *self*, but their ordinariness leaves little opportunity for reflection on *self*.

We understand that the individual's identity strongly depends on the place of living, where a delicate balance exists between taking action and being subjected to action. Establishing this equilibrium results from perceiving the rhythmic pulse arising from being in the world. It intertwines and merges the inner and outer worlds. Gaston Bachelard describes the home as it comprises inner and outer spaces, private and public.[8] I interpret the inner and private as *self* and the outer and public as *others*. Now, if under certain conditions, like in the case of forced displacement, the inner essence is somehow taken away from the individual, it creates an incomplete identity due to permanent failure or being constantly exposed to failure in establishing the balance between self and others. Preserving historical identity for the displaced population while simultaneously embracing a new identity means interiorizing and incorporating a part of your identity that was once rooted in a land you lost, and acknowledging the possibility of forming a new one. Forgetting allows you to define yourself uniquely with a distinct identity. The middle ground, or the state of being neither this nor that, emerges from the balance between the inner individual aspects and the outer social aspects. If we can call it a task, it is a task of becoming universal from individual or individual from universal. It is nothing but a matter of balancing between interiority and exteriority.

7 Cf. John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New* (Prometheus Books, 2009), ch. 4.
8 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. (Penguin, 2014), 139.

In this way, the challenge that forced migrants face is a way of being in which they are simultaneously engaged in a new beginning and remaining loyal to the past. Or, in other words, they are engaged in blending old and new identities. The individual's task is then to construct an everyday life that aligns with the new situation while still being entangled with a past. It is a state in which an internal yearning for a spiritual homeland and the past always accompanies integration with the new community. From this perspective, the situation of Ukrainian migrants in Europe and migrants from Afghanistan in Iran differs from other migrants. For some of them, the condition entails a cyclic pattern of returning to their countries of origin, where they revisit their native towns, cities, and homes. This iterative process endures for an extended duration subsequent to their initial compelled displacement. Franck Düvell, a researcher at the University of Osnabrück, has coined the term "Pendel-Migration" for this new phenomenon. He attributes the reason for this phenomenon among Ukrainian forced migrants to the integration of their country into Europe, which allows them to travel without visas and be close to their destination countries. Additionally, some of them partially kept their jobs in their homeland, and for some other, a fragmentation of families is still there.[9] Most of these cases are also the same and relevant to describe the situation of people who forcibly left Afghanistan and migrated to Iran during the past years. However, the point here is that even after returning to their homes, these migrants never regain their pre-migration identity. Even if they return to a place from the past, that place may have become unfamiliar to them. The German adjective *unheimlich* aptly links the concepts of home and place of residence to this sense. It describes a closeness/proximity that has become strange and unfamiliar – a home that is no longer a home. This word carries the weight of the impossibility of returning to the past. For forced migrants, there is a sense of andomness of life, events, and places, which makes having a home something uncertain. It creates an unstable sense of belonging to the place, which is intertwined with their identity. Perhaps the term *rootlessness* can better depict this situation. In de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, the character of the rose asserts

9 Franck Düvell, *Europäische und internationale Migration: Einführung in historische, soziologische und politische Analysen* (Verlag Münster, 2006), 131.

that men have no roots, which makes their lives very difficult. The rose expresses this difficulty by stating that rootlessness makes the wind easily blow them away. With this simple sentence, it rejects any interpretation that entails a journey around the world, which adds to human experiences. For a journey, or even wandering, there is an assurance of returning to the origin. In a journey, it is the traveler who changes, while the place of belonging remains in its own unchanged position, waiting for the return of its dweller. However, in rootlessness, the place is lost, and the identity related to it is also transformed. Consequently, the problem of a rootless man is tied to the lack of identity.

I must emphasize that revisiting the past and being entangled in memories should not and cannot hinder an individual from moving towards the future. Self-understanding is not limited to historical knowledge but encompasses an awareness and cognition of new possibilities. As previously mentioned, it is a balance between exteriority and interiority, between the universal and individual. I introduced forgetting as a disturbance in daily life, which opens up the possibility for self-awareness. I should emphasize that forgetting also ties in with remembering. Not in the sense of being in opposition to it but to accompany it in the process of revisiting memories. In conscious moments of revisiting the past, one must have an abstract involvement in ordinary and everyday engagement with the world. In his book *Art as Experience*, Dewey explains the difference between an experience and experience: according to him, the experience is continuous and permanent, whereas an experience only occurs when a task or work is successfully and satisfactorily completed.[10] As long as there is no interruption in activities of daily life, an experience does not occur. The value of an experience lies in its ability to save a person from falling into the repetition of daily life, and it marks moments of self-awareness and insight into one's own existence. Nonetheles, how does revisiting the past or memories become an experience in the moment of insight? In the novel *In Search of Lost Time*, Marcel Proust expresses the connection between self-knowledge and memory. In his work, he strives to place events and images in their rightful place in time. The entire novel is a search into the past that is only possible through the work of

10 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1934), 54.

memory. Proust aims to show us that direct and unmediated experience does not lead us to the truth of life and ourselves. Instead, it is the instrument of the mind (or memory) that, through disruptions in emotional rhythms, allows us to touch moments of unfamiliar perception. In this way, memories have the capacity to shed any incompatibilities and – as Proust himself says – only keep inside us what they have experienced. Proust elevates the position of memory to a point where it brings humans to the experience of timeless or eternal time. Memory, in its backward movement, turns the individual towards their own self and into the depths of their existence. Thus, in the presence of forgetfulness (forgetting the *self*) resulting from the daily routine disrupted by an emotional disturbance, it is the memory that brings one closer to self-understanding.

In this context, it might be appropriate to offer a spontaneous response to Gabriel Motzkin's 2012 lecture at Stanford University.[11] In this speech, Motzkin examines the distinctions between history and memory, events and narratives, as well as collective and individual memory. He poses the question of why Heidegger, who extensively explored the concept of forgetting in *Being and Time*, remained conspicuously silent on the topic of remembering. My view is that Motzkin's analysis places excessive emphasis on the various forms of memory, both individual and collective, while overlooking the fact that forgetting also exhibits individual and collective manifestations. Heidegger's focus, as expounded in *Being and Time*, primarily pertains to self-forgetfulness, which, at its fundamental level, is directed towards the individual human being. Contrasting forgetting is the act of remembering, the sole prerequisite for which is liberation from forgetfulness, particularly self-forgetfulness. Therefore, it is essential to underscore that forgetting, as sketched here, is intricately and immediately linked to the remembrance of human existence. The process of memory, exemplified in Marcel Proust's novel, is an inherently personal and individual phenomenon characterized by unexpected moments of insight. This sharply contrasts with the realm of collective memory, intertwined with the broader concept of history and juxtaposed with collective forgetting. Historical identity and collective memory are not opposed to ongoing changes in

11 Gabriel Motzkin, "Memory and the Philosophy of History," video, May 17, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSKeNfcqdeQ

individuals. Instead, the historical identity is contingent upon the inevitable passage of time, which undergoes alterations and changes with the conditions of the Zeitgeist. This is not in conflict with the routines of everyday life; rather, it is the perpetuation of everyday life across varying epochs that gives rise to such identity. My claim is that it is within moments of detachment from ordinary life and all its associated dependencies, including historical and social identity, that individuals return to a sense of self.

Home: A view from migrant children

By defining *self* in its physical and metaphysical representations and its appearance in the body, one can understand why a person can settle in different houses and get used to new places of living. In this definition, the house is an objective and tangible extension of the self (body). Every time one throws some characteristics of oneself on the design and physical elements of the place of living, the existence of this extension can emerge. Indeed, in this way the place of our life becomes a clear manifestation of ourselves.

As indicated by several research studies, when individuals from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds are asked to articulate their concept of an ideal house, the results are mainly the same, and people describe a single-family house characterized by a square architectural design. These findings underscore the pervasive preference for independent houses as the exemplary embodiment of a family residence. They also show that high-rise structures often fail to gain the acceptance of dwellers as suitable living spaces, as a home is typically envisioned as an independent, ground-level structure.[12]

These findings lead us to a commonality in the way children represent houses in their drawings. Children often draw houses in a similar, simplistic way. This phenomenon is a result of several factors, like peer influence and cognitive development, imagination, and cultural patterns. Various studies (Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, Howard Gardner) also discussed that children rely on simplified symbols to convey their ideas instead of drawing detailed and accurate representations of objects. In most of these studies, such representations are considered to be related to cognitive development.

12 The result of one of the first research of this kind was published by W. Michelson in 1968. Michelson, William. "Most People Don't Want What Architects Want." Society, vol. 5, no. 8, Springer Science and Business Media LLC, July 1968, 37–43, accessed June 11, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02804721.

The children's drawings of homes can also be discussed in Jungian archetypes since they are universal (same geometry, form, and landscape) and recurring symbols and seem to be based on a collective unconscious shared by all humans. Jolan Jacobi explains the Jungian archetype as "a profound expression that transcends our intellectual understanding,"[13] and in her article *The House as Symbol of the Self*, Clare Cooper – a landscape and architecture professor at University of California – introduces the self as one of the most fundamental archetypes and adds that people resort to physical forms or symbols that are tangible, visible, and definable to achieve its true essence.[14] The first and most conscious form of self is the body because the body appears both as an external appearance (others or other things) and as an internal appearance (self).

Such an explanation expresses the complexity of individual and collective conscious and unconscious experiences. The manifestation and expression of these experiences can be seen in children's symbolic understanding of the world that exists in them in a completely natural way. Children's drawings of homes are a way of making something implicit (mental schemata) explicit through symbolic representation. In fact, they use symbols that are meaningful to them to communicate their thoughts, feelings, or experiences related to the concept of a home. Bachelard introduces the home as everyone's first world, asserting that the childhood home retains such significance that even if it physically disappears from our lives, it returns to us throughout life and manifests itself in our sleep and daydreams. "Over and above our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us."[15] The cognitive realm of young children, particularly up to the age of seven, is characterized by a preeminence of form over a connection to objective reality. This formative stage serves as the foundation for their expression in the context of drawings. In the realm of children's drawing, symbolic signs serve as the bridge within the visual language, and drawing serves as a mode of expression that may not always align with everyday conversational language. This alignment can vary, occurring either earlier or later in a child's development.

13 Jolande Jacobi, *Complex/Archetype/Symbol in the Psychology of C. G. Jung,* trans. R. Manheim (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1957), 76.

14 Clare Cooper, *The House as Symbol of the Self, in The People, Place, and Space Reader* (Routledge, 1974), 168-172.

15 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* 62.

In the practical part of my research, I tried to delve into the experiences of children from Afghanistan aged seven to thirteen, residing in the town of *Aab Sard* near Tehran. My initial purpose was to conduct this research in Germany, focusing on the children of Ukrainian families who had arrived in various German cities from the winter of 2022 following the war. However, despite my efforts over several weeks, I encountered substantial administrative hurdles, rendering this seemingly straightforward project intricate and time-consuming. Consequently, I switched to my second option and held the one-day workshop in Iran.

My motivation behind organizing the workshop was a desire to gain insight into the phenomenon of forgetting as experienced by forcibly displaced individuals. Clearly, direct interviews with them could not serve as an unmediated way to ascertain factual information. An alternative was to observe their behavior, but this option was ruled out in a short time due to its inherent complexities, which I could not deal with. However, analyzing the drawings of children who have encountered forced migration in their lives could present a viable means to advance this objective. Children usually lack self-censorship, often observed in adults, and as explained, drawing serves as a medium for them through which they can externalize and reflect upon their experiences. Drawing is in the same field of expression as playing and speech. Through drawings, children express their fears, joys, dreams, and pains, and you are given leads about their relationship to the world. Two crucial considerations informed the framework of this workshop: first, it was acknowledged that drawing could potentially trigger moments of forgetting in children, and second, by choosing *home* as the thematic subject, the result of the work would provide the possibility of examining the manner in which these children interact with their new living spaces.

To ensure that no external concerns and distractions affect the children's expression, I tried to eliminate all of the external and unnecessary disturbances and stimuli that might otherwise cause discomfort. Therefore, my interaction with the children was very direct, avoiding any excessive introduction. There was also no need for any mediator.[16] It all started so simply. Through a local contact, I already knew that

16 Farsi/Persian is the dominant common language of people in Iran and Afghanistan. Therefore, there was no need for an interpreter during the workshop.

The children sat on the asphalt of the street in the shade of the wall, and the workshop began. There was no mediator and nothing separated them from their daily life but the act of painting.

the residents of this place are mostly Afghans who had relocated to Iran in the past year, and unfortunately have not yet secured legal residency. Consequently, they could not find proper jobs and housing. They live in very small houses with few facilities, which are inadequately furnished. Their living conditions could be described as modest, and they subsisted under challenging circumstances. Upon my arrival in the neighborhood, two children were seated in the shadow of the wall of their houses, and they were talking to each other, which appeared to be a friendly chat with a sense of maturity. I introduced myself directly and without an extensive introduction, and asked them to draw a picture of a home for me using the colored pencils and drawing sketchbooks that I gave them. It was natural to see that the first reaction in facing a stranger with an unusual request was accompanied by doubts and concerns. However, ultimately, with the acceptance of these two children to participate, gaining the trust of the rest of the children in this neighborhood was not difficult. They sat on the asphalt of the street in the shade of the wall, and the workshop began. Unfortunately, due to special conditions in their family (some of them have even lost one or two members of their family, and some arrived in Iran unaccompanied and are living with the help of neighbors and some relatives), immigrant

children often have to accept responsibilities along with their elders. Housework and cooperation in taking care of younger siblings for girls, and aiding the father of the family for boys are among the daily activities of these children. Consequently, what I witnessed during the workshop was crossing the everyday routines, which was easier than I initially anticipated for them.

Soon, the children overcame the fear of encountering a stranger like me. The workshop was conducted within the same neighborhood that constituted their living spaces. No perceptible demarcation existed between the workshop environment and their customary daily surroundings, even to the extent of a bench or a classroom-like space. And this was precisely what I intended it to be. Being in the heart of everyday life but separated from it by drawing. After a while, when the number of children increased, the families noticed our presence and the major challenge was to win their trust for the continuance of our work. With the assistance of local contacts, I succeeded in gaining the trust of their families, enlisting their cooperation in the project through friendly talks.

During this project, the children were tasked to draw their home. Evidently, children from all over the world depict home in a similar manner, and this unspoken tradition also remained applicable to the children within my research. Most of them portrayed idealized homes, indicating that their mental models – harnessed to concretize these depictions through symbols – align with their conceptual ideals.

Furthermore, despite these children having undergone numerous relocations and experiencing diverse social and cultural conditions, their paintings of a home remained remarkably uniform. For me, painting a home resembles a moment of intuition and insight, during which children temporarily distance themselves from the harsh realities of their lives or exhibit a form of forgetfulness. At the time of drawing, this form of forgetting reflects their disregard for the often burdensome circumstances in which these children's families have lived, stemming from years of conflict-induced displacement in their countries of origin or their humble accommodations in the host country. The moment of insight for the children can also be seen as a moment of remembrance, as a recollection of their identities and aspirations, symbolically manifested in their

drawings. Apparently, children do not directly overlay the concept of migration, including exile or refugee experiences – which constitute the core of their existence – onto their mental world. In the eyes of these children, their world retains a perceptible advantage over the harsh reality of migration and detachment from their places of origin. Their current place of residence – regardless of how modest or underprivileged it is – becomes their home. Even if it lacks grandeur or amenities, it is home to them. They also view the houses of the non-immigrant Iranian neighbors (often larger and better-equipped) with a degree of indifference. Another observation offers that children desire to unify all essential elements under a singular conceptual umbrella. Besides the home, prominent components include symbolic representations such as trees, sun, clouds, humans, and animals, which are featured in my studied examples. These elements serve as reminders of the extension of children's own selves (bodies), first encompassing the notion of home and subsequently extending to encompass other objects, both near and far. Although, in general, most of the children have represented the subjectivity of their ideal homes instead of what they see in reality, there are some details in the drawing of my studied group that are worth remarking. When the age of children exceeds seven years, they usually start paying more attention to the tangible aspects of the world around them. They begin to incorporate a heightened awareness of reality into their drawings and pay more attention to changes in perspective and details. In other words, they try to show themselves through the painting of more tangible and detailed elements.[17] When the child grows up, the extension of the body that spreads to the house becomes wider and extends to the alley, street, city, and country. Most of the children in my workshop have depicted the yards and alleys as the unquestionable extension of their existence in their drawings and have even depicted themselves alone or with their friends in the streets. However, the home remains the home, which symbolically has a close relationship with its geometry.

17 Examples of such drawings are few in our study group. The reason for this may be attributed to factors such as limited access to education and other environmental influences.

From forgetting to imagination and daydreaming

The first thing that drew attention when seeing their drawings was the distinction between interior and exterior spaces.

- Most of the children have emphasized the outer space of the house (ten paintings)
- Less than one-third of the children painted the outside and the inside at the same time (four paintings)
- Only one child has paid mere attention to the interior of the house.

Norberg-Schulz and many other thinkers consider human spatiality and identity to be tied to both of these external and internal spaces. However, reading these paintings showed that the outdoor space is more important for them. In the four drawings that also illustrate the interior of the homes, children have used elements such as light and heat to depict brightness and warmth. For immigrant children, home is where they meet their family, those with whom they share memories of their homeland. Outside is where they experience playing with friends and within the natural environment. There are signs of the future for them outside the house. The outdoor elements used in their drawings, such as water, nature, friends, street, and car, all have signs of movement, hope, happiness, and progress.[18] Things with them they have far and close relation at the same time. Ordinary things of today's life of every one of us which is lost and gained again through their loss of homeland and placement in the new land. They even do not own some of the elements they have drawn. For instance, none of them had an aquarium. There were no pools, fruit trees, houses with gables or wooden garden fences in their houses. Instead, the heater that warms up the space and the lighted lamps are present in their drawings as a symbol of warmth, love, security, and support. It could be seen from the drawings that most of these children leave their memories behind the walls to go outside their houses to look for dreams and the future. One could argue that for migrant children, the walls of their place of living are the boundary between memory and imagination.

18 NDFAuthors. "Learn to Decode Children's Drawings - Novak Djokovic Foundation." Novak Djokovic Foundation, accessed February 14, 2023. https://novakdjokovicfoundation.org/learn-to-decode-childrens-drawings/.

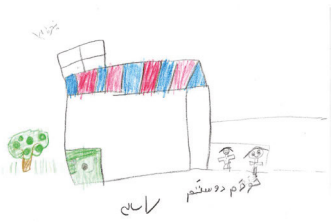

The house of two children is shown in these two photos. The workshop was conducted in the shade of the wall of this house.


Two of the children's drawings. Houses depictions are far from reality.

In studying these drawings, I discovered that imagination was a concept I had missed in analyzing the phenomenon of forgetting. The presence of imagination became visible to me when I realized that the children's drawings of homes have no resemblance to the reality of the houses they live in. Only in two drawings we notice that the children have tried to accurately picture their current living situation. In one of them, a small black home in the bottom right corner is depicted, which symbolically emphasizes that the inside is less important than the outside for this child. Experts believe in children's drawing, small figures drawn at or near the lower edge of the paper, or in a corner, express feelings of inadequacy or insecurity. Indeed, when it comes to positioning on the page, apparently the right side relates to an interest in the future, and a need to communicate.[19] Placing a small house with the shaky lines in the bottom right corner of the painting reflects the child's interest about the future, and the lack of a sense of belonging to the past and the current home. The feeling of not belonging at home primarily due to inadequate family support became apparent even in the short conversation with

19 Ibid.

She depicted a small and black house in the right corner.



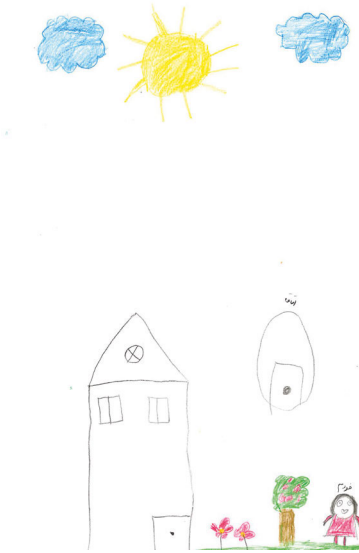
In the right side of this drawing, the child has written: "my friend and I." She also explained that she and her friend are playing outside on a rug.

this child after the workshop. Another drawing showed a disorderly house, while the area outside the house was depicted as secure. This painting was created by a child who positioned the building's sole window on the roof and pictured herself on the opposite side of the wall, playing with her friend on a small carpet (The child provided a description of these specifics after completing the drawing). With the exception of these two drawings, the rest of the children's works differ significantly from their actual living circumstances.

A combination of past memories with future daydreams.
The imagination of a 12-year-old girl from Afghanistan who recently migrated to Iran through a difficult path.

One can see the zenith of this different picture in the mushroom hut. In this enchanting moment, a young girl temporarily set aside her household responsibilities to fully engage in the workshop, allowing her imagination to seamlessly blend past memories with future daydreams. A tiny plant next to the window and a small pond in the garden, reminiscent of the homeland, symbolized her past, and a desire to have a goldfish aquarium and an imaginary place to live coming from somewhere in the future.

Just like a little girl whose imagination had given her the power to have her desired private room depicted like a magic door hanging outside the house. And finally, the most peculiar of all drawings was the one in which the imagination could connect the past memory of playing kites in the homeland to a home in the future.



She decided to draw her desired private room like a magic door hanging outside the house.

A profound link exists between memory and imagination, as memories serve as a catalyst for the imagination's flight. They give wings to the imagination. And because the experiences and memories of migrant children are more intensive than those of children who have not experienced displacement, they often have a heightened ability to turn past memories into daydreams. Therefore, they find it easier to immerse themselves in the realm of fantasy, casting aside present circumstances in favor of drawing upon their past encounters. In the drawing of girls flying kites, the distinction between the past and the future, inner and outer, *self* and *others*, has disappeared. The physical boundaries and walls of the depicted house have vanished, leaving a sense of transparency within the home, akin to the transparency of joy and play shared with her friend. Looking at this painting, I realized that the children have the power to forget not only in their drawings but also when they play. Forgetting is the gateway to entering the realm of fantasy. Children fantasize by painting and playing and gain empowerment and strength through this.

Here, the walls and border of the depicted house have been omitted to show no border between the past and the future, inner and outer, "self" and "others."

The elements indicative of play within these children's drawings are prominently displayed in five specific drawings. These include cheerful facial expressions, open-handed gestures, the presence of friends, depictions of kites, and scenes set in natural environments, all of which strongly suggest engagement in play. During play, forgetting plays an essential role in dispelling the fear of becoming lost. In these moments, children no longer realize the strangeness, unfamiliarity, or hardship of their living situations. Instead, their imagination becomes a catalyst for altering the reality around them. Those of us who have experienced becoming lost – even for a few seconds – in childhood can confirm that the sensation of being lost is more challenging for children than for adults. However, children are able to forget the existing situation and start to play more easily, since in children the imagination can be shaped more effortlessly. For a child seeking ways to relate and communicate with a new living environment, both drawing and playing quickly help to find ways to enter the realm of imagination and pause in the routines of everyday life. In fact, this workshop reminded me that forgetting is the first step. Forgetting can only take us to the train station. For traveling, one must board the train and embark on the journey. This means that imagination is an indispensable tool to explore and know oneself, functioning as a lifesaver for migrants. When coupled with the power of forgetting, it enables individuals to carve out unique identities and define themselves as *individual* within their new surroundings. A poetic expression can better metaphorically describe complexities – like the relationship between the home and self – that everyday and formal expression is incapable of.

In the final days of March,
The migration of violets is beautiful.
In the bright midday of March,
When they bring violets
From the cold shadows
Into the atlas of spring's fragrance,
With soil and roots,
Their wandering homeland
In small wooden boxes
In the corners of the street,
A thousand whispers within me:
Oh, I wish,
I wish a person could carry their homeland
Like violets (In boxes of soil)
One day
With themselves
Anywhere they desired,
In the clarity of rain,
In the pure sunshine.

Shafiei Kadkani