

# LEILA AND ABEL A MODERN ODYSSEY



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# odyssey:

*/ˈɒdɪsi/*

- (1) (noun) a Greek epic poem (attributed to Homer) describing the journey of Odysseus after the fall of Troy;*
- (2) (noun) a long wandering and eventful journey.*

## 1.Prologue

*« I had always hoped that this land might become a safe and agreeable asylum to the virtuous and persecuted part of mankind to whatever nation they might belong. » - George Washington<sup>1</sup>.*

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), at the end of 2021 there were almost 90 million people forcibly displaced world-wide. The reasons for such displacement include war, persecution and environmental disasters. Among those were 26 million refugees, half of them under the age of 18. There are also millions of stateless people, who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement. Prospects for refugees when it comes to hopes of any quick end to their displacement are diminishing. In the 1990s, on average 1.5 million refugees were able to return home each year. Over the past decade that number has fallen to around 385,000, meaning that growth in displacement is today far outstripping solutions<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> George Washington, Stephen Lucas (1999). « The Quotable George Washington: The Wisdom of an American Patriot », p.5, Rowman & Littlefield

<sup>2</sup> *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/refugees>

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1. Description of project

« *Leila and Abel – A Modern Odyssey* » is a story based on the actual life experiences of refugees. In 2020, as volunteer service for my ethics and ecology class, I signed up as a teacher's assistant in Viventa, a school for young immigrants to help them find an apprenticeship. During my time, I listened to the life stories of many of the refugees. These stories moved me as they were extraordinary, harrowing and far away from my own experience as an 18-year old growing up in Zurich. It struck me that these stories largely went untold. That's when the idea came to me that, with their permission, I should write a short story based on the their actual lives.

The story is told from the perspective of two fictional characters, Abel and Leila, alternating between them from chapter to chapter. Leila is a name in the Semetic (Arabic, Hebrew) and Iranian languages meaning « night »<sup>3</sup>. And Abel is a name in Eritrea, meaning « breath of air »<sup>4</sup>. The characters come from different countries, namely Afghanistan and Eritrea, with varying ethnicities, religions and politics. The two protagonists also leave their homes due to different reasons: Leila is fleeing from an arranged marriage and Abel, not having good enough grades, is forced to go into the Eritrean Defence Force. However, what they both have in common is hope for a better future.

### 2.2. Objective

My objective for this project is spreading awareness amongst the younger generation; the purpose of the book is therefore largely educational. The immigrants I met arrived in Zurich at the same age as, or in some cases younger than, me. But their stories are largely unknown. I would therefore like to help my generation understand what these immigrants have endured in their everyday lives. Hopefully this will also encourage young adults to discuss issues relating to refugees with their friends, family and more widely on social media. Before I met the refugees, I had very little understanding of what these extraordinary people go through in search of a better life. My hope is that my book will promote a greater awareness amongst

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<sup>3</sup> Campbell, M. *Meaning, origin and history of the name layla, Behind the Name*. Available at: <https://www.behindthename.com/name/layla>

<sup>4</sup> Campbell, M. *Meaning, origin and history of the name abel, Behind the Name*. Available at: <https://www.behindthename.com/name/abel>

young people, as well as a greater empathy with, and social acceptance of, immigrants in Switzerland.

### 2.3. Choice of topic

Choosing a topic is perhaps the most important step of the writing process. It determines the rest of the steps to be taken – what sources you use, what research you undertake and the writing techniques you will employ.

As stated above, the topic of my book is, at its broadest level, refugees fleeing their homelands for a better life. The inspiration for the topic of my book was obviously the refugees themselves. However, within the broad topic, I was also able to identify themes that resonate with me personally, such a women’s rights, and which are strong and engaging, but also educational.

### 2.4. Themes

Third world countries are subject to substantial social, political and environmental challenges. My book seeks to develop some of those themes, experienced through the eyes of Leila and Abel. These include child labour, exploitation, women’s rights, arranged marriage and violence.

#### Child Labour/Exploitation:

Child labour deprives children of their right to go to school and reinforces intergenerational cycles of poverty. Child Labour is the result of many factors, including poverty, social norms which condone them, lack of decent work opportunities for adolescents/young adults, migration and environmental or social upheaval. A total of 152 million children – 64 million girls and 88 million boys – are estimated to be in child labour globally, accounting for almost one in ten of all children worldwide<sup>5</sup>. Migrant children receive less pay, work longer hours and face higher death rates at work than adults. In my book, Abel needs to work to provide himself with food, a roof over his head and to save up money to pay for his journey to Europe. In prison in Sudan he is forced to work in the most despicable conditions and in Libya he is forced to take a job to survive. As a mechanic, he is not paid until he is able to work without supervision.

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<sup>5</sup> *Child labour and exploitation UNICEF India*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/child-labour-exploitation>

Being an inexperienced 15-year old child, it takes months of work before he is able to master such a job. He works long hours every day without any break. Even when he falls ill due to Malaria he insists on continuing work as he cannot survive without income. When he takes up a job for a stranger to finance his journey to Europe, he is then exploited, made to undertake criminal activities and is ultimately not paid for his work.

#### Women's rights:

The Taliban's interpretation of Sharia law enforced in Afghanistan has led to a deterioration in the quality of the lives of women and girls, affecting all aspects of their human rights. It has denied them the opportunity to access education, healthcare, work and the ability to escape from domestic violence. Keeping girls out of school not only violates their right to education and prevents them from realizing their full potential, but it also puts them at increased risk of early marriage, early pregnancy, violence and abuse<sup>6</sup>. Although Leila left Afghanistan before the Taliban takeover in 2021 she is still excluded from all aspects of life. She has no freedom of speech, her grandfather and uncles decide how she should live her life. No matter how much potential Leila has, it is the men of her family, and not Leila, that dictate her future.

#### Arranged and forced marriages:

Child marriage is any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age and a forced marriage is a marriage in which one and/or both parties have not personally expressed their full and free consent to the union. Worldwide, more than 650 million women alive today were married as children. Every year, at least 12 million girls are married before they reach the age of 18. The practice is particularly widespread in conflict-affected countries and humanitarian settings<sup>7</sup>. In my book, Leila is forced to marry an older man at the age of 14 due to her family's poverty following the death of her father. Her family needs financial support in order to ensure their security and reinforce social ties. However, the « price » of the arranged marriage is that Leila must give up school and any aspirations of a working life to become a housewife. This is the principal motivation for Leila's decision to flee her family and country.

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<sup>6</sup> *UN agencies recommitment to women, girls in Afghanistan one year after Taliban takeover | UN News, United Nations*. United Nations. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/08/1124662>

<sup>7</sup> *Child and forced marriage, including in humanitarian settings OHCHR*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/child-and-forced-marriage-including-humanitarian-settings>



## Gun violence:

A thousand people die each day from gunshot wounds, and three times as many are left with severe injuries. Populations around the world are facing an increasing burden of firearm violence on mortality and disability. Firearm violence also places a substantial burden on healthcare systems, economies, and societies around the world. In Afghanistan, an oversupply of weapons to Afghan security forces as well as poor tracking and record keeping of these weapons has left the country even more vulnerable to gun violence in recent years. This leads to trauma, anxiety and constant fear in the population<sup>8</sup>. Leila was an eye-witness to gun-violence as evidenced in one of her flashbacks and consequently suffered from post-traumatic stress. Gun violence affects not only the wounded victims, but also those who witness it, friends, family members and the wider community. “*Gun violence is a systemic trauma in that it permeates and impacts the social and interpersonal systems of those shot*” says Charles Figley, PhD, a professor of social work and director of the Traumatology Institute at Tulane University in New Orleans<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> 2017 Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence Report Available at: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/15.-4.2-Week-of-Action-report-2017-IANSA.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Founder: Dr. Charles Figley, Tulane University Traumatology Institute. Available at: <https://tulane-traumatologyinstitute.com/charles-figley>

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Interviews

#### 3.1.1. How to find interviewees

The inspiration for my book came from the young adult immigrants attending Viventa, the school in which I volunteered to be a teaching assistant. Most of the immigrants willingly shared their life stories with me, but I was very concerned that when I asked whether I could write a book about their lives that their consent would no longer be forthcoming – after all, their stories were traumatic and deeply personal and many fear persecution.

As a first step in writing my novel, it was therefore important that I build trust with them. I therefore started this process by introducing my project in three classes at the school. The most important message for me to convey was that it was my duty to protect their stories and identities and that their names would therefore not appear in my book. I was also clear that everything was confidential and that their stories would only be used for the Maturitätsarbeit. It obviously helped that I already knew the pupils, and we were of a similar age, but to further put them at ease, I told them we could do the interviews wherever and at whatever time they wished and in the language, they preferred, be it German, English or French. I asked them to write their names and numbers down if they were willing to participate and I would then contact them. I was conscious of what bravery it would take from those young adults to participate in the project and I was concerned that no one would respond. I relieved and deeply grateful when ten of them volunteered to share their life stories with me.

#### 3.1.2. Interview questions

Part of the challenge of conducting an effective interview is finding the right questions. The questions I asked had to be relevant to the topic but I was also conscious that in a number of cases, the stories were deeply traumatic, so I had to be sensitive to each individual's personal circumstances - as these immigrants had just arrived to Switzerland, many were still in the healing process.

As I prepared my questions, I had to think how each question would contribute to the story's plot and the understanding of the two protagonist's lives.

My first questions were based on the interviewee himself. His family, his hobbies and then slowly transitioning to his life in his hometown. What was their life growing up in their village? I asked questions ranging from school, infrastructure and the dangers of everyday life.

Next, I focused on their decision to leave their homeland. I wanted the questions to be chronological so that it was clear and easier for them to remember their journey. Where needed, I added supplemental questions when I wanted to better comprehend their experiences. However, I also needed to be careful not to go too deep into their story as it could make them feel uncomfortable. The most complicated thing was therefore finding a balance between trying to get as much information as possible but avoiding making the interviewees feel uncomfortable.

I did not want to stop the interview abruptly at the end of their journey so I added some questions about their life in Switzerland now and their hopes and dreams for the future. Hope is an important theme for my book and I also wanted to finish the interviews in a positive way, much like the ending to my book when Abel and Leila eventually find each other. My last question was: "*What do you hope people can take away from your story?*"

### 3.1.3. Interview process

As stated above, I let the interviewees choose the place and time for the interview to make it as comfortable as possible for them. The places ranged from the school, to coffee shops, to parks.

Interviews typically lasted one hour. At the beginning, I explained to them that if they didn't want to respond to a question that they could, of course, abstain. I also made it clear to them, once again, that everything was confidential and described to them my project one more time. I asked them if it was all right for me to record them and then we started talking. I had my notes with my questions and I let them talk as much as they wanted without interrupting them; if they didn't talk enough I would just add questions to go deeper into areas they were discussing. When they couldn't explain something in German, we tried to find another way of understanding each other – whether in another language, google searches or simple body language or hand signs.

Importantly, I also always added some personal information about my life to make it feel more like a conversation and less like an interview. I would always try to be light-hearted to put them at ease, but without detracting from the seriousness of the events they were discussing.

## 3.2. Research

The majority of the content of my book was based on stories told to me by the interviewees. However, inevitably the stories were not complete. Research was therefore an important part of the writing process. First, it allowed me to better understand the social and political context of the interviewee's stories. Secondly, after choosing the genre, writing techniques and themes, I knew it would make the stories themselves more credible.

### 3.2.1. Research oral history

Oral history is a method of conducting historical research through recorded interviews between a narrator with personal experience and historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of adding to the historical record. As an author you need to verify your findings, analyse them, and place them in an accurate historical and social context.

Given that none of the interviewees had travelled together, I had no opportunity to corroborate their stories or interview other people in order to verify the truth of what I was being told. It is perfectly possible, therefore, that for a myriad of reasons their stories were changed, exaggerated or even invented. However, given that the interviewees essentially had nothing to gain from the interview process – either in terms of personal reward or publicity - I would hope that instances of this were rare. Further, in carrying out research into the social, political and historical context of their stories, I was able to test at a high level the veracity of the interviewees' stories.

### 3.2.2. Research of the country situation

My interviewees came from countries ranging from Afghanistan, Eritrea and northeast Syria to Ukraine. To understand where these immigrants come from and what they have been through, it was of the utmost importance for me to dig deeper in their country situation. I needed to know what pushed them to decide to leave their countries and their homes - was it the political situation of their countries, climate change, food shortages and aid cuts or if it was because of women at risk of gender-based violence?

My two main countries, Afghanistan and Eritrea, were chosen because they fit perfectly with the two protagonists. In Afghanistan, women have been deprived of their rights, are under

constant threat of violence when leaving home and education is denied to them<sup>10</sup>. I thought this would fit perfectly to the theme of women's rights and to Leila being a very smart girl with a lot of potential, but having her rights denied by the Taliban.

Eritrea and Ethiopia erupted in May 1998, as a result of a border dispute. Since then, violence has had serious humanitarian implications for the civilian population of both countries<sup>11</sup>. Eritrea is a country where boys and young men are forced to participate in Eritrea's conflicts with no hope for a better future. As this was the situation for a lot of immigrants I know, I took it as an opportunity to use it as the reason for Abel to flee his country.

I did research on the countries' political situation, the countries' foods, traditions and geography to make the stories more credible and trustworthy and to truly put myself in the position of the immigrants. This allowed me to introduce a richer narrative, drawing on the actual social and political history of these countries and using local names and vocabulary.

### 3.2.3. Research of immigrant trauma

Migration-related trauma is common in many immigrants. A person's experience with actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence via direct exposure or bearing witness can impair a migrants' life. Traumatic experiences can keep migrants from integrating in their new homes. Migration-related trauma can rob people of the opportunity to live to their fullest potential; this should not be a limit placed on anyone, regardless of their geographic or social position<sup>12</sup>. My goal was for the protagonists to feel like real people. Living characters have passions and desires. To be able to write, putting myself in Leila and Abel's position, I had to understand how they would act in different situations - for example Leila's gunshot trauma.

Researching immigrant trauma therefore allowed me to empathise better with the interviewees. This was important from two perspectives. First, this allowed me to better describe their experiences and create more developed and compelling characters. Secondly, I felt a personal responsibility to retell, as faithfully as possible, these deeply personal and harrowing stories; and this simply would not have been possible without research.

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<sup>10</sup> *Gender alert no. 2 - UN women*. Available at: [https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Gender-alert-2-Womens-rights-in-Afghanistan-one-year-after-the-Taliban-take-over-en\\_0.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Gender-alert-2-Womens-rights-in-Afghanistan-one-year-after-the-Taliban-take-over-en_0.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> *UNMEE: United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea – background, United Nations*. United Nations. Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/past/unmee/background.html>

<sup>12</sup> *Refugees and migrants (5 December 2018) United Nations*. United Nations. Available at: <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/>

### 3.3. Writing process

#### 3.3.1. Reading and preparation

After deciding the topic of my book, I started the process of researching (as summarised above) and following current affairs. I also read a wide range of literature to give me examples of literary techniques and themes relevant to my characters.

For example, I read:

- (a) "*Little bee*" by Chris Cleave, the story of a Nigerian refugee seeking Asylum in England. I was inspired by the way the author alternated protagonists every chapter and drew on this in my book;
- (b) "*Brick Lane*" by Monica Ali, that helped me understand some of the issues immigrants experience; and
- (c) "*I am Malala*" by Malala Yousafzai, based on a true story of a girl shot by the Taliban.

After having interviewed the interviewees, I transcribed their stories to have a better overview of their journey and experiences. I then used these stories to create the two central characters, Abel and Leila and the main plot. Given that I was planning on alternating chapters between the characters and using chapters, I needed the story to develop coherently from chapter to chapter. It was therefore important to properly structure my story. Accordingly, I made a table summarizing every chapter of the book. This allowed me to develop the detail of each chapter, whilst ensuring that, as a whole, the narrative developed in a coherent way. This process was iterative, adding new ideas to the table as they occurred to me.

During this preparation stage, it was important for me to set deadlines and meet them. Once I had adequately developed my story and my characters, it was time to draft my novel.

#### 3.3.2. Drafting a novel

I gave myself 10 days to write my book. The writing process seemed daunting, but I already had a map for my story. This allowed me to split the writing process up into chapters and set deadlines for each of these. I woke up early every morning and went for a run – sport always has been a great motivation enhancer and tool to clear my head. Upon my return, I would write down any ideas that had come to me during the run. I would then start the relevant chapter. I was keen to write fluently and my initial goal was therefore to complete the chapter in one go, without focusing on accuracy or details.

### 3.3.3. Completing the draft and editing

In view of my writing approach, the editing process became important, to fill plot holes, to make the story more viable, to rewrite sections more persuasively and to remove any mistakes. I also asked my family, friends and supervisor to read and give me feedback on my book, which was invaluable as they had very different perspectives, not having read it before. As can be imagined, it took a number of drafts and “polishing” to produce a draft I was happy achieved the personal and literary goals I had set myself.

### 3.3.4. Challenges and resolution of problems

The choice of using two narrators and alternating between chapters made writing difficult.

First, you need to differentiate their vocabulary and behaviour. Whilst this was more natural for Leila, as a woman, I found it hard initially for Abel. However, as my book progressed and my characters developed and I understood them better, this became easier.

Second, as stated above, it was challenging to switching from one character to the other for every chapter, particularly as the storyline was not always linear – for example, the flashbacks experienced by the characters often took them from the present deep into their past. There was also a risk that the repeated change in narrator could disrupt the narrative pace of the story. As referenced in the section above, I therefore planned a detailed “skeleton” of each chapter before writing and which evolved as I wrote the book.

Another problem was trying to stay truthful to the immigrant’s stories and combine them with fictional elements coming from my imagination. I wanted this story to be as close to reality as possible, therefore trying to understand the immigrants and writing it down from their perspective was quite a challenge. This is where my research and reading of relevant literature helped me produce a rich narrative that, which I hope, remains faithful to the immigrant’s original stories.

Perhaps one of the greatest and most surprising challenges I faced was the changes of tenses throughout the story. As my story uses a lot of flashbacks and time is not linear, the tenses change quite often. The tenses therefore vary from the present for much of the first-person narrative, and then past simple for flashbacks and past perfect for moments that happened even further in the past. If the tenses are not correct the narrative becomes confusing and jumbled. Getting the tenses write was intellectually challenging and took several editing iterations.

## 4. Theory of creative writing choices

### 4.1. Choice of Genre

Literary genre falls into two principal categories: fiction and non-fiction and there are sub-genres within each category. A book may be solely one literary genre or it may combine elements of fiction and non-fiction.

My book is predominantly non-fiction, as it is based on the actual stories of the immigrants I interviewed. In terms of sub-genre, it is largely biographical. To a great extent, the genre and sub-genre were self-selecting. The stories of the immigrants largely tell themselves and are so powerful and extraordinary, that I didn't need to use fictional genres such as fantasy, mystery or science fiction to embellish the stories<sup>13</sup>.

However, on the other hand, there also remain some elements of my book that are fictional. For example, names of characters are not real and elements of the stories are invented. However, that is not because I was trying to dramatize the immigrants' stories. It was necessary because of my commitment to blend the stories so as to preserve the immigrants' identity. Further, whilst the interviews I conducted with immigrants were thorough, there were clearly gaps in the stories which needed filling. I was able to do this by, for example:

- a. Reading book such as, *I am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai with Christina Lamb, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, which are autobiographical and cover themes relevant to my book such as the courage and determination to fight for education and equal rights for women; and
- b. Research into the country of origin of the immigrants

As I was writing my book, I felt strong duty to remain true to the culture and history of the immigrants' countries of birth. Accordingly, whilst these « gaps » are fictional, they remain strongly linked to real cultural references and events.

The only element of my book which is truly fictional is the ending. All the immigrants I spoke to have lived through unimaginable hardships in their journeys to Zurich. Having interviewed

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<sup>13</sup> Forbes, Jamie M. (1998). "Fiction Dictionary". In Herman, Jeff, *Writer's Guide to Book Editors, Publishers, and Literary Agents 1999–2000*, pp. 861–871. Rocklin, California: Prima Publishing.



them and listened to their harrowing experiences, I want them to be happy. The ending which brings Leila and Abel together is allowing both the readers and me to believe this is possible.

#### 4.2. Narrative perspective

The two principal narrative techniques are the third-person omniscient narrator and the first-person narrator. My book is written using the first-person narrative perspective of the two main protagonists, Leila and Abel.

As said above, the stories told to me by the immigrants are so powerful and extraordinary that the first-person narrative technique seemed to me the best way for the reader to experience the immigrants' journeys. A first-person narrative provides the reader direct access to the narrator's thoughts and feelings, making reading more intense and passionate<sup>14</sup>.

In my book, the reader can experience what Abel and Leila feel, hear and see. It allows readers to be like an eye-witness to events; and equally allows the interviewees to tell their stories directly to the reader. This contrasts the third-person omniscient narrator where there is more distance between the characters and the reader.

The principal disadvantage of using first-person narrative technique is that it is limited to a single-story thread. This makes descriptions of the characters more limited as the story is only seen through one pair of eyes. This contrasts with the third-person omniscient narrator where the reader benefits from a much wider perspective with respect to the characters and their experiences.

To overcome this limitation, I chose to narrate through the perspective of two characters, which allowed me to introduce more variation and a wider experience than would have been possible with one narrator. Alternating narrator from chapter to chapter also allows the narrative pace to remain high and maintain the reader's interest.

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<sup>14</sup> Seb Reilly. (2022, May 31). *The advantages and disadvantages of first-person perspective: Essays*. Seb Reilly. Retrieved November 13, 2022, from <https://sebreilly.com/essays/the-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-first-person-perspective/>

### 4.3. Narrative pace

Narrative pace determines how quickly or how slowly the writer takes a reader through a story. Pace moves forward as a history of transformations in narrative movement<sup>15</sup>. Fast paced stories move quickly from one action to another and may have little dialogue. This type of pacing is used to create action and excitement in the reader's minds<sup>16</sup>. Slow paced stories allow for more character development through dialogue and description.

The refugees' journeys to Zurich from their homes took months, and, in some cases, years. I was therefore obliged to use a fast-paced narrative to recount their journeys – in the case of Leila, she travels through eight countries from Afghanistan to Zurich in the space of 6 chapters. I also maintain narrative pace through two other techniques. First, the events through which Abel and Leila live in each chapter are varied and different for each character – I achieved this by combining the experiences of all the interviewees I spoke to, instead of just one or two. Secondly, I chose to alternate chapters between Adel and Leila, which maintains the interest of the reader, and retains narrative pace.

However, whilst narrative pace is important, I did not want my book to be an action thriller. As said above, I wanted to remain true to the immigrants' stories, their backgrounds and the history of their countries of origin. I slow paced narrative to that end. Given first-person narrative, I was able to use flashbacks and interior monologue to develop Abel's and Leila's characters and focus on moments in the immigrants' lives that were important for the readers' comprehension of the characters' past such as Leila's trauma further to the Taliban shooting. What I hopefully achieve in my book is a balance between fast and slow narrative pace to maintain reader interest, but also ensuring Abel and Leila's characters are fully developed and remain true to the immigrants' backgrounds and history.

### 4.4. Narrative style

A narrative is writing that unites distinct events by concept, idea, or plot to tell a story. Narratives invariably involve telling a story through dialogue or descriptive text. It is a string of events that form a complete, continuous account that helps you tell your story<sup>17</sup>. A narrative

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<sup>15</sup> Gingrich, B. (2021) *The pace of fiction: Narrative movement and the novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Matt (2022) *What is narrative pacing? definition, examples & how to use it effectively • filmmaking lifestyle, Filmmaking Lifestyle*. Available at: <https://filmlifestyle.com/what-is-narrative-pacing/>

<sup>17</sup> *Narrative style guide: Overview and types* (2022) *INK*. Available at: <https://inkforall.com/ai-writing-tools/descriptive-text/narrative-style/>

style is a writing style an author uses when writing a story. The common types of narrative are:

- (a) the linear narrative, that follows a chronological order and relays the events of a story in the order in which they happened;
- (b) the non-linear narrative that, by contrast, does not follow a chronological timeline of events, as it jumps back and forth in time to pursue different characters or explore events out of sequence;
- (c) the viewpoint narrative that tells a story from the perspective of a particular character and does not have a specific structure, but focuses primarily on the character, not the events around the character<sup>18</sup>; and
- (d) the quest narrative, a story in which the protagonist is relentlessly working towards a goal. This goal becomes their all-consuming passion, and they have to face seemingly insurmountable obstacles while pursuing it. The object of their pursuit is far away, and they must travel a long way to find it<sup>19</sup>. For example, *The Odyssey*, where Odysseus (Ulysses) returned home to his wife after years of adventures and dangers.

Leila and Abel – A Modern Odyssey combines all of these narrative styles.

Linear narrative – the characters' stories progress from them leaving home to arriving in Zurich which is chronological.

However, flashbacks also allow a non-linear narrative to aid character development and maintain reader interest.

Viewpoint narrative – as above, character development is very important in my book. So a viewpoint narrative, achieved through the first-person narrator, flashbacks and interior monologue allowed me to do this.

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<sup>18</sup> Jordan: *What is narrative? 5 narrative types and examples*, *Now Novel*. Available at: <https://www.nownovel.com/blog/narrative-examples-strong-narration/>

<sup>19</sup> Nick: *The quest narrative: A great way to tell a story*, *The Writer's Workshop*. Nick. Available at: <https://www.thewritersworkshop.net/the-quest-narrative-a-great-way-to-tell-a-story/> (December 1, 2015).

Quest narrative – ultimately, this is what the book is about and explains the choice of title. It describes the immigrant's quest to escape their homeland and why - Leila leaves Afghanistan because she has no rights in her country and is fleeing a forced marriage while Abel leaves as he does not have the grades to prevent him going to the Eritrean Defence Forces. It also responds to the questions: Will Abel and Leila achieve the quest? In spite of their harrowing experiences, can they achieve happiness.

#### 4.5. Rhetorical devices

Rhetorical devices are tools used by authors to persuade readers of a particular viewpoint. Through the use of language, they enhance impact, generate emotions or make a position or argument more compelling than it would be otherwise. There are many types of rhetorical devices. My book is largely biographical as it recounts the lives of the interviewees. The scope for using rhetorical devices was necessarily limited. However, I used them to emphasize the dramatic aspect of the interviewees' stories. The rhetorical devices I used are as follows:

- Alliteration: A literary device in which a series of words begin with the same consonant sound. It is more poetic and a more beautiful way to express something and to emphasize its meaning. Especially when describing a landscape an alliteration adds creativity and flavour to the sentence.

*“Before I arrived, I had pictured Greece as a beautiful country, with heavenly sand beaches, turquoise water, stunning sunsets, islands with white houses and ancient sites.” P. 44, l 8-11*

- Allusion: An allusion is a literary device that references a person, place, thing, or event in the real world. This allows the author to connect with the readers. Perhaps the best example of this is the reference to the Taliban when Leila witnesses the shooting of the villagers. Following their invasion of countries such as Afghanistan and their association with terrorist activities they are known throughout the world and likely to evoke fear in the reader.
- Anaphora: A literary device in which a word or group of words is repeated at the beginning of two or more successive clauses or sentences. The repetition therefore stays in your head and is used to show kindness, horror or fear. It strengthens and intensifies Leila's fear of getting caught at shore arriving at the Greek coast. I use a lot of anaphora

throughout my book to dramatize situations to reflect how the immigrants were feeling during their journeys.

*"I pray to God that the police aren't there. I pray to God that no one will be injured. I pray to God that we will make it, alive."* P.40, l. 1-3

- Juxtaposition: This uses comparison or contrast to create dramatic effect. There are a number of occasions in my book where characters find beauty in their surroundings which contrast strongly against the situation in which they find themselves. For example, Abel admires the moon whilst lying in appalling conditions on the prison floor.

*"I can see the moon through the small gap. The night sky is so clear, I can almost see every crater. Tonight, the moon is glowing white-gold, looms large and is surrounded by an ethereal glow."* P. 1, l. 5-9

- Foreshadowing: Foreshadowing refers to the use of words or phrases that set the stage for the story to unfold; it gives the reader a hint of something that is going to happen without revealing the story or spoiling the suspense. For example, before Abel's boat sinks he looks out on the horizon and describes the sea as follows:

*"The sea is not blue like on the postcards from school. It is grey and it merges into the grey sky. Everything is just grey."* P.46, l.3-5

This creates a melancholic atmosphere that anticipates the impending disaster.

- Parallelism: The use of components in a sentence that are grammatically the same; or similar in their construction, sound, meaning, or meter. Parallelism provides rhythm, enhances ideas and organizes complex passages in the book.

*"The prison's ground is uneven so the risk of tripping, slipping or falling during construction work is always there."* P.15, l.12

- Repetition: Repeated use of particular sounds, words, phrases etc. Repetition creates a pattern and increases a rhythm in the text. By repeating what the character sees, I can make the situation more interesting.

*“Here I am, after months of hostility and fear, I look around me and see people, small people, black-skinned people, white-skinned people, girls, boys, women, men, grandparents.”* P.52, l.12-15

- Simile: A comparison between two unlike things as though they were similar through the words ‘like’ or ‘as’. This is a way for the reader to create an association between two dissimilar ideas that illuminate each other and enhance the meaning of both. In this situation Leila compares the Taliban with their rifles with stalking wolves. This description evokes even more emotions and fright for the readers.

*“They were walking at a fast pace, like stalking wolves hunting down their prey.”* P.21, l. 5-6

## 5. Conclusion

From an emotional standpoint, this project was hard. The events related in these stories are far removed from my own experiences and are often harrowing and violent. This is particularly true when I think of women subjected to forced marriage, domestic violence, rapes etc... I choose to incorporate these events in my book so that the reader is made aware that this is still happening, today and not so far from here.

This was also my first experience of creative writing. I found the process in many ways frustrating, as I frequently experienced «writer's block». However, I was able to overcome this, through a combination abiding to a rigid timetable, detailed skeleton for each chapter and re-reading my interviews.

In spite of the above, writing this book has been immensely rewarding. I am proud of what I have achieved and I hope my book goes some way to help appreciate the social acceptance of immigration in Switzerland.

## 6. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor Ina La Serra who gave me the opportunity to do this wonderful project and who worked so diligently with me throughout the past year.

In addition, I would like to thank my parents, my mother, father and Léo, readers and editors, who overcame busy schedules to give me feedback and support me throughout the process. My biggest supporters who have always been here to give me a hand and who pushed me to be the person I have become today.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the bravery of the interviewees that volunteered to share their stories with me and that allowed me to create «Leila and Abel – A Modern Odyssey». In spite of their experiences, they remain the most positive and optimistic people I have ever met. It is a privilege to have known them and a privilege to tell their stories.

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#### **Images for the book:**

- Cover: Afghanistan Pashtun girl, Israel Cohen, Pinterest  
Powerful look, Miguel Catalan, flickr
- Map: A large blank world map with oceans marked in blue.PNG available at:  
[https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A\\_large\\_blank\\_world\\_map\\_with\\_oceans\\_marked\\_in\\_blue.PNG](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_large_blank_world_map_with_oceans_marked_in_blue.PNG)

## 8. Bestätigung/Eigenständigkeitserklärung

«Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel verwendet habe. Alle wörtlichen und sinngemässen Übernahmen aus anderen Werken habe ich als solche kenntlich gemacht. Ich nehme ausserdem zur Kenntnis, dass meine Arbeit zur Überprüfung der korrekten und vollständigen Angaben der Quellen mit Hilfe einer Software (Plagiatserkennungstool) geprüft wird»

Datum:

Unterschrift:

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## 9. Appendix

## Work log

When and where?	Who?	What?	Problems? Comments? Next steps
17 February 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacted teachers of Viventa (Frau Lutterbeck, Herr Fiedler) for presentations to win over volunteers for interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure presentation, contact former students from volunteer work</li> </ul>
24 March 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations in two classes in Viventa. Eight volunteers (mostly boys). I received contacts through former volunteer work adviser.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explaining that I have worked with immigrants before, that it is a school project, it is voluntary. Repeat the same thing a couple of times structuring sentences differently, asking if they understand.</li> </ul>
2 April 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacted Volunteers. Texts/Calls per WhatsApp explaining what my project is and how they can help me develop my project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting dates and places in their favour</li> </ul>
7 April 2022 at KSH	Manon and adviser Ms. La Serra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamentals of Manon's project</li> <li>• 10 interviewees, 5 fixed dates, mostly Muslim, mostly boys</li> <li>• Will condense the info into two characters (1 female/1 male) → needs more girls' interviews (Ms. La Serra suggested Ukrainian student in her</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manon studies theory of dealing with traumatized people / oral history (find pages in English as a source-</li> </ul>

		<p>class, but Manon has enough contacts through Viventa)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One boy's story is too harsh, he does not want to share</li> <li>• theory about how to deal with traumatized people (for the interviews): needs to have some theory on that in the documentation</li> <li>• theory for interviews: question types (closed vs. open questions) and the "problems" of oral history - Manon needs to have short theory parts in her documentation on these two aspects (websites given by La Serra but in German)</li> </ul>	easier) / how to make interview questions
8 April 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview with Z, Starbucks Bahnhofplatz 6 (1:48:07).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffee shop too loud, music and people, can't hear clearly on the recording. Very interesting story, useful for book. Take more notes during interview and write down time when interesting stories come up, that could be useful for my book.</li> </ul>
April 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manon will send interview questions for feedback to Ms La Serra</li> </ul>

April/May 2022 various places	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducts and documents interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Records and thinks about proper documentation</li> </ul>
2 May 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview M, Viventa (45:07)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask more if language is incomprehensible. Ask more about the refugee himself and go step by step through the travel – don't move on to fast</li> </ul>
8 May 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview E, Park Kreuzplatz (1:33:57)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very interesting story! (Take story about his dad and the snake attack as flashback). Good place for interview. Take more notes.</li> </ul>
8 May 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview B, Starbucks Kreuzplatz (57:36)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not story about refugee</li> </ul>
9 May 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview M, Rennweg (30:01)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language difficulties, not ideal place for an interview (his choice)</li> </ul>
10 May 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview E, Viventa (50:16)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interesting story, good, quiet place.</li> </ul>
11 May 2022	Manon and adviser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 interviews until now; 2 people have to be contacted (strangers); one girl she met with (3<sup>rd</sup> girl); two girls (difficult to reach)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 more girls need to be contacted</li> <li>• (3 girls to be interviewed)</li> </ul>

	Ms. La Serra		
11 May 2022	Manon and Ms. La Serra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matura Paper <b>Contract</b> feedback by Ms. La Serra</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manon is to send the final version to Ms La Serra for signature, then hand it in to the school office by 20 May</li> </ul>
11 May 2022	Manon and Ms. La Serra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Format and content <b>Arbeitsjournal</b> (working log) discussed and Ms La Serra will send model</li> <li>• Manon to complete with entries from work so far</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work log by Manon; completed work log has to be sent to Ms La Serra prior to each next meeting (<u>allow 2 days</u>)</li> </ul>
11 May 2022	Manon and Ms. La Serra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of interviews in the document part; can be a transcript or an online file (or on a stick). Whenever these are quoted in the documentation the exact time of the recording has to be given (e.g. Mohammad 17:22:50)</li> </ul>	
25 June 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Found a comic to read as inspiration (l'odysee d'hakim) and news paper articles (LeMonde)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read them</li> </ul>
4 July 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visited Maturainformation for researches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See notes taken with websites</li> </ul>
7 July 2022	Manon and Ms. La Serra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking about how to structure the book and move forwards. Criteria for the Bewertung. Light Faden (403_2_Maturitaetsarbeit_Wegleitung, read and ask questions until 13<sup>th</sup> July). Read a short story, classic writer (Brick Lane) recent (quote Little</li> </ul>	

		<p>bee) and classic non recent (Rise of Levinsky or short story) Inspiration.</p> <p>Secondary sources, read about immigration literature (2-3 titles).</p> <p>Research immigration trauma.</p> <p>Everything that sheds light on background of protagonists.</p> <p>Interviews write most important times down, gather information, make mind-map. Decisions before writing: who are protagonists, antagonists...</p> <p>narrative tense, plot line, how many flashbacks and exposition - Introduce setting (country, weather, person...).</p> <p>Bewertungsbogen: declaration (formal), bibliography (alphabetisch geordnet)...</p>	
7 July 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview with A about her story in the Ukraine (19:55)</li> </ul>	
13 August 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Afghanistan and key moments Interview with M (transcription)</li> </ul>	
20 August 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finished reading inspiration book Brick Lane from Monica Ali</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlighted inspirational quotes from the book and did research and preparation for book presentation</li> </ul>
26 August 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Syria and key moments Interview with Z (transcription)</li> </ul>	
2 September 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Eritrea and key moments Interview with E (transcription)</li> </ul>	
11 September 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear planning of timetable, what has to be done: what do I need? What do I have? Setting dates to start writing, gathering information, structuring my</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next steps are on the document "planning" with deadlines that</li> </ul>



		ideas and plans. Found names of characters and where they come from.	have to be met. Discuss with Miss La Serra the process and your ideas. Ask questions in document.
12 September 2022	Manon & Ms La Serra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talked about what had to be done until 25. September (characterization, transcripts, individual country researches, structure the book).</li> <li>• Asked what I need to focus on the most in the Maturitätsarbeit (documentation) -&gt; academic, educated choices, -&gt; manufacture beginning and ending -&gt; point of view why I made that decision</li> <li>• -&gt;choices I made about the plot</li> <li>• -&gt;metaphors, symbols, motifs, why did I chose them? -&gt;point of view, structural decisions, telling names</li> <li>• Discussed how many pages or words my Novella needs to be -&gt; it doesn't really matter as long as I show I am aware, my format is falling beside</li> <li>• How to proceed writing?</li> <li>• -&gt;less passive, more active voice</li> <li>• -&gt;flashback in present, don't jump back &amp; forth between the tenses</li> <li>• -&gt;use a lot of adjectives and adverbs</li> <li>• -&gt;vary sentence structure « if clause », direct speech, interior monologue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next steps until 25. September:</li> <li>• -Characterization</li> <li>• -Relationships</li> <li>• -individual country researches</li> <li>• -Decide on main plot/structure book (chapter per chapter)</li> <li>• -Interview transcriptings</li> <li>• Hand in to Ms La Serra until 19. September:</li> <li>• -Bibliography</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• -&gt;stay rather short, not too long sentences</li> <li>• Recommends sending chapters to editor, offer stands Ms. La Serra edits first chapter.</li> <li>• Bibliography -&gt; quoted correctly, everything I have so far (PDF, website, books)</li> </ul>	
17 September 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finished transcript and key moments Interview with E (transcription)</li> </ul>	
18 September 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bibliography</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning how to do a bibliography</li> </ul>
23 September 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key moments interview with E (transcription)</li> </ul>	
24 September 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• -Key moments interview with A (transcription)</li> <li>• -characterization (relationships included)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characterization:</li> <li>• -Read all interviews, chose facts about family, everyday living, person, mixed them and gave them to Leila or Abel</li> </ul>
25 September 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured book chapter per chapter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last minute changes while writing</li> </ul>
13 - 23 October 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on day, lack of inspiration</li> </ul>

17 October 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent first chapter for feedback from Ms La Serra</li> <li>• -Be careful tenses!!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark which events take place in the here and now.</li> <li>• Style is good</li> </ul>
23 October 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finished writing book</li> </ul>	
26 October 2022	Manon and Ms La Serra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting documentation</li> <li>• Update about where I stand. Explained how writing the book went and what I plan to do.</li> <li>• -Read book, keep editing, changing until I'm happy with the outcome</li> <li>• -Start documentation: send a chapter of documentation until 6. November 2022 -&gt; Methodology (Interviews, research)</li> <li>• -Looked at bibliography, need to finish up details, alphabetical order...</li> <li>• -Looked at table of contents</li> </ul>	
1 November 2022	Manon and editor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Received edited version of book</li> </ul>	
5 November 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maturitätsarbeit chapters (Theory of creative writing choices) of documentation</li> </ul>	
11 November 2022	Manon and Ms. La Serra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback Ms. La Serra on chapter (Theory of creative choices: Choice of Genre) of documentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haven't answered the question. I.e. Why have I chosen my particular genre?</li> </ul>

18-19 November 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rewrite chapters (Theory of creative choices) of documentation taking Ms. La Serra's feedback</li></ul>	
20 November 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chapter Prologue of documentation</li></ul>	
25 November 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chapter Methodology of documentation</li></ul>	
26-27 November 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chapters Interviews of documentation</li></ul>	
30 November -1 December 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chapters Research of documentation</li></ul>	
3-4 December 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chapters Writing Process of documentation</li></ul>	
4-6 December 2022	Manon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Re-read whole book; editing</li></ul>	

## Transcripts

Interviewers' (Student's) name: Manon

Interviewee's name: Z

Interviewee's Country of Origin: Northeast Syria

Interviewee's Current Resident: Zurich, Switzerland

Date of birth: 15.06.1996

Date of Interview: 08.04.22

Place of Interview: Starbucks, Bahnhofsplatz 6

About Syria: The Syrian refugee crisis is the humanitarian emergency resulting from the Syrian civil war that began March 15, 2011. Conflict in Syria has exacted a heavy toll on hundreds of thousands of children and their families. The Syrian civil war started with peaceful protests. Young people took the streets seeking government reforms. As protests spread through Syria, they were countered by strong government crackdowns and increasing violence from both government forces and protesters. By the following year, Syria was embroiled in a civil war, with the Syrian military opposing a growing number of military groups. As government forces and militant groups fight to take and rule territory, conflict has torn apart the lives of millions of Syrian children and families. The country's weakened governance, as well as the destruction of its social services and institutions, make Syria a very dangerous place.

<https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/syrian-refugee-crisis-facts>

He has three sisters, four brothers. He has a twin sister (Adya) who has three children. He is the oldest son. (3:10)

At the beginning, when he was small, he went to school, but then he stopped. He had no interest in learning and was always stressed, so he preferred working. Schools were dangerous in Syria, there were fights with teachers, students had no respect towards the teachers. In Syria he was stateless, so he didn't have the privilege of being able to do further studies. His father owned a garage that sold cars. Z worked with machines and tractors. (4:00)

Before the war finances weren't a problem for his family, but as the war went by, they had less and less money for a longer period of time. (5:30)

They have two houses. In the summer they went to the house in the country and in winter they went to the city. He had a group of seven friends and every evening they all lived at the house

of one them. They played cards, eat, cooked, played football. But mostly they had to work. (6:20)

When he first started working his father did not want him to work with others because they were way older than him at the time. Because they mistreat children labourers, don't pay them enough and make them do illegal things. His father didn't know that Z was secretly working with others behind his back and when he found out he beat his son. He forbid him to work with others so he worked with his father and uncle and other family's members. (9:00)

<https://www.unicef.org/mena/press-releases/child-labour-caused-by-syrian-crisis>

They lived in a small, old village. Everyone knew each other, families, friends. From time to time there were family problems because of finances, business or land. But every family has problems. He came to Switzerland so that his family didn't have to worry about him and the military during war at the time. Like that he could continue living his life and get a job. (11:40)

His best memory in Syria was when his uncle and other male family members went on trips to work with agricultural machines. Between boys they had fun in the evenings, living together, drank with friends. It was his definition of real friends. « I can't get those times back ». (15:50)

2012 (Age 16) he arrived in Switzerland. The first thing he thought was: « what am I doing here, I need to go back » (18:00)

He always thought he had everything back there in Syria, but if he goes away he can continue living and live better. He would have freedom. No one can tell him what to do and what to do. Just freedom. And he needs to fight for that. And that's exactly what he did. (20:10)

Life in Switzerland (20:40-30:10)

His family lost his house due to the war. They had to leave everything behind. You don't have money? You go to war. The government takes everything from you. You don't have a choice. You say something, you die. They take everything, sell it and make money with it. It happened twice. They took the house. Everything. They don't have electricity, they don't have running water. Because of climate change it doesn't rain anymore. It's too warm. (31:00)

- Trip: Syria-Turkey; Turkey-Italy; Italy-Switzerland

- From Syria to Turkey he was in a car with 5 people. They illegally went through the border by crossing a lake that was dry because of the heat. They walked for three hours until they saw a Main Street with two cars. The group was separated. Two of them went to Esmer and three went to Istanbul. After one day he arrived in Esmer with his group. 150 people women, children, men, girls, boys. They all came from different cities and villages. They stayed there for 15 days. From there they walked up a hill in Esmer, they slept in the mountains for 3 days. After they arrived with boats from Turkey to Italy. 4 days in the middle of the ocean, no one could believe they would make it out alive, they never thought they would one day see land again. The boat was very old and small about 100 m with 150 people on it. Two hours before they arrived in Italy, the police found them with helicopters and three motorboats. Took everyone from the boat and put them behind bars. The Italian police took their finger prints. He stayed in Italy for 15 days. All the people under 17 (including Z) normally get sent to a home. A woman arrives for breakfast, lunch and dinner, cooks for them, brings them food, helps them shower. The other boys were studying there, but he wanted to leave and go to Switzerland. His place in Switzerland. He left everything behind just took his clothes and left. As he was leaving on the street, the woman of the institution found him and asked him where he was going. He started running and suddenly two people start following him. They brought him back and locked him up. So he thought he was going to jump from the balcony on the second floor. As he was going over the balcony barrier with both feet in the air the woman took his hand and told him to come back. So he told her or I die or you let me walk out that door. She opened the door and let him flee. He ran until Milano. He stayed there for 2 days with no sleep. He just kept going buying tickets going from one train to the other, from one tram to the other. There were no trains he could take until Rome, so he just walked into a bus. He was cold, thirsty, hungry. The controllers sent him to Milano. There was a wedding in the garden of the main station, so he sneaked between the people that were dancing and singing and took some food, some drinks. No one saw him. After an hour he took a ticket to Milano. He slept at the house of two people that were in contact with Z's father until the next day. A boy picked him up and brought him to Zurich.... (33:30)

In Syria when he secretly worked behind his fathers back he put the money he earned in the bag and went to bed. The next day when his father saw the money in the bag he knew exactly it was his son who worked and beat him. It was like that every day. His father kept asking him where were you, what were you doing yesterday evening and beat him. And at one point, Z told his father he needed to work, he wanted to be able to provide his family in the future and his father wouldn't pay for that in the near future. So, he asked him to let him work. Z had everything he had a car, he had a motorcycle, private lessons, so his dad was wondering why he had the urge to work. (47:35)

Motorcycle story:

- Z didn't have a driver's license, so he was only allowed to drive in his village because there everyone knew him. But in the center of the village there was the police so he wasn't allowed to go there. Z went to buy some groceries. The police stopped him and his father had to pick him up and pay them to let his son free. (48:50)

When he was in Italy it was his first time in prison. It was a very hard time for him. For the first time on the boat he saw death in his eyes. He thought: I don't care if I live or die. The day I die will come anyways. (52:40)

On the boat they had no food, no sleep. They drank a gulp of water every hour. They had very dry cookies, that's what they had to survive. Him and a group of young men took turns falling asleep. One slept on the lap of another while the other stayed awake. So, they slept about 2-3 hours a night. And during the day they stayed awake the whole time. During the whole trip if something had happened wrong, he would have been dead. When the boats and the helicopters arrived on the 3rd day they didn't have any fuel, any food or any water left. Everyone under 15 got sent to a home and everyone over got sent to prison. Z was 15 but the man in the prison didn't believe him because he looked older than he was. They took pictures of his body. They provided them with food and water, put some fuel in the boat and two hours later they arrived in Italy. There were 6 small bedrooms (1.5 m<sup>2</sup>) with a toilet and a shower but without water in the boat like 5-6 people in each bedroom and it smelled like fuel all the time. Everyone slept during the whole trip to forget their sorrows. Z was on the balcony outside where it didn't smell like fuel anymore, it was better than outside. (56:15)

The people stole the boats. They came down the hill in Turkey and arrived on a big place. They waited an hour, then the boat arrived and they all boarded. The police from turkey contacted the Greek police so they couldn't go on Greek waters. So, they took one more day to arrive at their destination. (1:02:05)

He didn't want to live anymore. The only thing he saw during those four days was the ocean and the sky coming together. When he saw a bird, he knew he could still feel something. But the only thing that mattered was life or death. He had the chance to live, to set foot on the earth once again. (1:04:10)



There were storms. The boat went up the waves and crashed down on to the ocean again. They were really scared. Especially when the boat wobbled from side to side. They were terrified. There were too many people on a boat too small not able to carry the weight it had to carry. The waves were too big and more water went on the deck when the boat was drifting. The water slapped them in their backs trying to hold on wherever they could. (1:05:15)

The boat that arrived after them sank in the water because of the storm. No one survived. People from Z's village lost their lives, people that he knew. (1:06:05)

Last words: "We're human beings. I fought way too much in my life. Sometimes you just need to let go. Live your life." (1:30:20)

Interviewers' (Student's) name: Manon

Interviewee's name: M

Interviewee's Country of Origin: Afghanistan, Zarsang

Interviewee's Current Resident: Zurich, Switzerland

Date of birth: Januar 2003

Date of Interview: 02.05.2022

Place of Interview: Viventa

Today, more than 6 million Afghans have been driven out of their homes or their country by conflict, violence and poverty. As the humanitarian crisis continues, the resilience of Afghans and their host communities is being stretched to the limit. Four decades of conflict and instability in Afghanistan have left millions of people on the brink of hunger and starvation.

At least 24 million Afghans are in need of humanitarian assistance due to hunger, the collapse of the country's economy, climate crisis, lack of development aid and freezing wintertime temperatures. The impact of the conflict on women and children has been particularly devastating — 80 percent of newly displaced Afghans are women and children. The fundamental rights of women and girls are under threat and many children are out of school. Nearly 23 million people, or more than half of Afghanistan's population, suffer from acute hunger. Forty years ago, Afghans began fleeing the violence in their country and seeking refuge across nearby borders. More than 400,000 people fled the violence of the Communist-led Taraki and Amin government.

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>

His life in Afghanistan life was hard, because there wasn't a lot of technology and his family was very poor. He went to school for three years, but the school wasn't very good. He had family problems with his aunt and uncle. He lived in a small village in Afghanistan. His father and aunt had conflicts concerning the property of their house. In his village there were about 20 families.

M has two sisters (15,16) and three brothers (5,12,18). He's the oldest one. (3:15)

He never really had any free time because there were always problems in his house with his aunt and father. He played football but never really had the opportunity to play. (4:10)

The school was bad. The teachers didn't understand their language and couldn't explain anything to the children. There were 6 classes with nearly 150 students. Every family in their village had 6-7 children. The school was about 50 minutes away from his house and with his siblings and friends they had to walk there every morning by foot. (4:40)

In Afghanistan it's hard to have a job as it's so poor. His father went to other cities, like Iran, to work and provide the family with food and money. His father passed away 5 years ago as he was on his way from Iran to Afghanistan. The whole family wanted to move to Iran, he was 14 at that time. But the police stopped them, told them they couldn't go there as they did not have a passport. They had to go there by foot and with the car. They couldn't continue living like that with family conflicts and with so much poverty, they were looking for a new life. (7:10)

In his village he never felt safe. He lived in constant fear from his neighbors and his uncle. Because in Afghanistan everyone had weapons. It happened on a daily basis that people got shot. He saw such an event, two three people got shot right in front of him. The police in Afghanistan aren't the same as in other countries, they don't protect people. There is no safety guaranteed. His whole family including himself were scared of his uncle. (9:20)

He only has sad memories of his childhood. The only things that made him happy were moments like Christmas, they had three days holiday. His neighbors and family got together and cooked together, talked together... (10:25)

He was very small when they decided to leave their country. Five years ago, the whole family left to go to Iran but on the way, they lost their father. The police took him and they never saw him again. Maybe he died, maybe he's still fighting for his life. Nobody knows why the police took him. M and his mother and siblings stayed in Iran in a prison for 3-4 days or maybe even a week. They cried, they prayed that their husband and father would come back. But he never did. They said they would find him, they looked for days. But they never found him. (11:10)

They let them go as the children were so small, his brother was 6 months at that time. After being released from prison they went back to their house in Afghanistan. They stayed there for a year, hoping their father would return. These times were very hard for M, as he was the eldest in his family. He had to take his father's responsibilities at the age of 14. He had to take care of his house, his siblings and his mother. (12:50)

He has 6 uncles, who live in Iran. They offered to take him in and help him and give him money. So, he left his house and went to Iran for the second time. He worked in Iran for almost a year as a builder, trying to provide for his family back in Afghanistan. But he was only 14

years old. Everything was very heavy, he wasn't strong enough as a 14 year old boy. One day his uncle told him he wanted to go to Europe, to Germany. He asked M if he wanted to go with him and as M didn't have a lot of money he took the chance, thinking he would maybe be able to offer something more to his family back at home. (14:20)

<https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/refugee-children-crisis/afghanistan-refugee-stories>

Trip: Afghanistan-Iran-Afghanistan-Iran-Istanbul-Lesbus-Athens-Belgrad-Bosnia-Croatia-Slovenia-Italy-Switzerland

He went from Istanbul to Lesbus (a Greek island) with the boat. He was alone in an immigrant hostel for about six months. His uncle and his family were in an other hostel for almost a year. He gave him about 1000 euros to survive. From Athens he then went to Belgrad (Serbia) with some friends. From there he went to Bosnia with about 300 euros. He then managed to arrive in Croatia, Italy with 800 euros sent by his uncle. He got a lot of friends on his way to Switzerland. (16:35)

He was in Croatia for nearly a month. They arrived, the police took them and started to beat them up. They had to go back to Bosnia, stayed there for 20 days and then tried leaving again with a lot of people. (19:15)

From Iran to Istanbul he had 300 euros. He gave the money to someone to go pick them up and bring him to Istanbul with the car or by foot. His uncle organized everything. From Italy to Switzerland they were two to go to Zurich. It took him one and a half years to arrive in Switzerland. (20:30)

The worst countries were Iran, because there are a lot of people who kill others. He was very young and he saw it with his own eyes. It's very hard. The second one is Croatia. The police were very aggressive. (22:20)

In Iran he looked at some videos on YouTube of Switzerland, of the best countries to live in. What countries you get the best schools and education in. He saw Switzerland and he wanted to go there. That's how he chose his goal. He talked about it with his mother a lot and did a lot of research. (23:00)

His siblings and mother are still in Afghanistan. A lot of people flee from his village. Most of them don't stay. There is no future. You can't get a job, you can't earn money. There are so many financial issues. Even buying food, buying clothes is problematic. Especially now that the Taliban came. Now there is so much war. (24:25)

He wants his siblings and mother to come to Switzerland but right now he doesn't have the money to help them. He needs to find a job first. It's very hard. (25:50)

He knew every day that there was no purpose of living there. He knew how it would look like if he stayed there. He can't do anything. His mother was very sick for four years. Now she feels a little bit better because he sent some money for her. He doesn't know what she had, but everything hurt her. Her hands hurt, her head hurt, her legs hurt... she couldn't sleep. Now that he's in Switzerland he can send them money and provide his family like that even if it means being far away. They're happier now. A lot of people in Afghanistan do not know what to do with their lives, they can't get a job, they can't see a meaning to their lives all they do is smoke, because they lost a family member. (28:05)

He is grateful for Gods help and for his uncle, for giving him that money during his long trip. He is thankful for his family and for being in Switzerland, being able to go to school.

The first thing I thought when I arrived in Switzerland was maybe I'll be able to start a new life here. He has seen a lot of different people, he has seen 12 countries. Arriving in Switzerland it was the first time he saw people that were polite and happy, that's what gave him hope. He learnt a lot of things, he was a small boy but he became a real man during this trip. (37:10)

"When I first arrived, I was scared and tired. I didn't have anybody."

Interviewers' (Student's) name: Manon

Interviewee's name: E

Interviewee's Country of Origin: Eritrea, Keren

Interviewee's Current Resident: Zurich, Switzerland

Date of birth: Januar 2001

Date of Interview: 08.05.22

Place of Interview: Fachschule Viventa - Schulhaus Wengi, Kernstrasse 11, 8004 Zurich

There is little internal migration, but migration abroad is significant, due particularly to compulsory military service, which affect traditional livelihoods; land expropriation; and the dependence of Eritrean families on international remittances due to economic decline. Other core drivers of international migration include the lack of educational opportunities, poor infrastructure, and insufficient access to goods.

In the past fifteen years, Eritreans were one of the major asylum-seeking nationalities in many European countries. Most of them were fleeing conflict, economic hardship, and human rights abuses. They usually pay a high price physically, financially and psychologically to reach Europe in order to live a better life. Therefore, they are often happy to arrive after a long and dangerous journey.

<https://migration-control.info/en/wiki/eritrea/>

<https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/eritrea/>

E has 7 siblings. Before they left they were 6. His father is a police driver and his mother is a housewife. They were not very rich nor were they a poor family, they lived in two houses. He started working in transportation with a so-called karosa (carriage) at the age of 8-9 years old. It was very dangerous because to turn he had to pull on a string and for that you need a lot of strength. As an 8-year-old it was very dangerous. Sometimes there were some accidents and he fell to the back of the karosa. (1:30) (play 1)

He went to school until 7th grade. For him school was normal with good teachers, good subjects, good pupils. He liked school and wasn't a bad student. (4:25) (play 1)

He had two houses. They were two in one bed, he slept with his big sister who was three years older than him. He is the second oldest. (7:10) (play 1)

In his free time, he always played football with his friends. But he didn't have a lot of free time, when they had time they always had to work and help out the parents. But E liked working, he preferred working than going to school. His father wanted him to go to school so he could earn money as an adult. But when E could earn some money by working he would do so. (8:15) (play 1)

When E was a boy it wasn't as critical as it is nowadays. Now the people don't have any future in Eritrea. The students need to go in the military under any circumstances. Until 11th grade everything is normal, but in 12th grade all the Eritrean go to a camp (SAWA). If you have good grades you continue, but if you don't have enough good grades you can't go study. The majority went to the military at the time, now everyone has to go. His older sister was a very good student. She went to school until 11th grade and then she got married. (9:03) (play 1)

In the family they are 4 boys and 4 girls. His big sister is 25, then him, then a brother, a sister, another sister, another brother, then a brother and a sister, who is 2 years old. There is always a three year gap between the siblings. The girls helped out for the housework, but as they weren't so poor not everyone had to work. (11:55)(play 1)

He played football in his free time. He started at around 8-9 years in school. There were around 1000-2000 students in his school and about 50-60 students per class. In Eritrea when it's summer for us there it's winter: it's rainy and school is closed. The holidays are 2-3 months, but then they have school for the rest of the year. During the holidays he had football tournaments that were organized by the school and he had to work too. His father never knew about this (00:00)(play 2)

He could walk to school. His house wasn't far away from his school. There were some people that had to walk to school for 2 hours. (3:20)(play 2)

When he was small his dream was to be an engineer. But then as he grew up and you realize how the world works. E wanted to become a mechanic. His aunt had a garage not too far away from his house so he tried it out. He always told his father he had to go work there, but his father told him he was too young to work in such an environment and that he would get bad in school. Especially at the beginning his father thought education had to be a very important part of his sons life, but then he realized that Eritrea had no future, especially for those who weren't good enough in school. (4:20)(play 2)

When he was small he once nearly drowned. I got pushed in the water, but at that time he couldn't swim. He couldn't breathe and at one point, people started jumping in to save him. If no one had been there he would have died. (7:45)(play 2)

2008 he was working with his father with the carriage. He was 7 years old, that's when he started working with his father. They had just bought the transport carriage and he loved driving around with it. School was in the afternoon. After school E was told to go get the carriage with his father to bring it back home. He went to school, which ended pretty late, so it was dark outside. His father said it was too late to bring the carriage back home, so they would just take the donkeys home, otherwise there could be an accident. But E wanted to drive on the carriage, he wanted to take the whole thing home. E was very laborious and stubborn when he was a child, when he wanted something he would always get it. He didn't listen to his father. So, his father told him he could drive alone at the front. His father wanted to scare him and went a little bit further away. But E wasn't scared, so he attached the donkeys to the carriage, it was the first time he did it by himself. He wasn't allowed to drive in the city at night because it's very dark and dangerous, even though there are some lights in the streets. Their garage was at the edge of the city. When he saw the lights, he thought that it was over. He arrived in a village which was 1-2km away from the city and that's where it is dark. There were gardens where it was a little bit dangerous at night. His father was waiting for him in his aunt's garage, but E thought he went home and that he had to drive alone. When it's dark the donkeys don't want to move either. So, his father told him to leave the carriage in the garage and take the donkeys. They had to quickly go home, because as it gets darker the donkeys can escape and because they had three donkeys they had to be careful. They were jogging towards the house in the gardens. His father was in front of him with the bike to make sure the donkeys don't run away. And suddenly E can feel a snake bite him on his foot. So, he starts shouting that a snake bit him. His father had his phone and was able to put the light on and look at his foot. When a snake bites you, you bleed a little bit and it hurts at the beginning for a while but afterwards you don't feel the pain anymore. When it's poisonous you can die in like 14 minutes. But luckily the snake that bit E wasn't poisonous. When there is no water for example in the Sahara then the snakes can be poisonous, but when it's in a garden it is usually not poisonous. So, his father had to take him on his shoulders, push the bike and take care of the three donkeys at the same time. The village was a bit higher up, on a hill, so his father had to go up that hill. (8:00)(play 2)

When he thinks back at this story, he thinks about how proud he is of his father and how grateful he is for what his father did for him. He then went to hospital. They had to take out a poisonous part of the snake, if you leave it for too long in your skin, you can eventually die from it. (14:50)(play 2)



He lived with his grandparents, because his grandmother was very sick and she needed to be taken care of. There aren't retirement homes in Eritrea. (10:50)(play 2)

He was 13 when he left his country and 16 when he arrived in Zurich. He hadn't planned to come to Zurich at the beginning. First, he wanted to go to the UK, so that he could play football and become a professional Manchester United player. (16;15) (play 2)

Eritrea - Ethiopia (1month) - Sudan (2 years) - Libya - Italy (Calabria) - Switzerland

He left Eritrea because there was no future there. If you spend your whole life in the military camp, then it's not fair. A lot of people leave the country to look for a place to improve their life and make up their own future. He stopped school to help his parents work, with time he went less and less to school until he didn't go there at all. But if you stop going to school they send you to the military directly. (18:30)(play 2)

He had no safety. Until that point it was okay because he was still young, but as he grew up he wanted to flee. So, he did so, but later he came back from Ethiopia and the military found out about him. So, he had no choice but to leave indefinitely. The military started scaring and threatening his father. (21:25)(play 2)

Ethiopia. He stayed in an immigration camp. For a week he had to make an ID card and then he stayed there for three weeks, before fleeing to Sudan. In Sudan he was in a prison for a month. If you can pay, you can go directly out of prison, but if you can't you need to stay in prison until you have the money. It was bad in prison, he was just 14. In prison you work for them, but because he was still young he didn't have to do as much as the adults. They were way too many people in one cell. You need to sleep, but you can't, because it smells, it's unhygienic and it's disgusting. You don't get a lot of food nor do you get enough water. You drink once a day. He had to wait a whole month for his parents to send him the money to let him free. (1200 dollars) His father gets 25 francs per month. You can't buy a lot of things but for survival, for food it's enough. He stayed in Sudan for 2 years because he didn't have the money to continue fleeing to Europe. So, he had to work to get the money. He had to look out for himself. When he was out of prison he went to Khartoum (Capital of Sudan). (22:30)(play 2)

His best friend from Eritrea had fled before him, so he could stay at his place and they started living together. His best friend lived with his aunt's girlfriend, because his aunt went back to

Eritrea. It was a little apartment with only two beds, but there was no place for anything else. At one point the lady didn't want E to live there anymore because there were too many people in such a small place. She told him that he needed to find a new place even though he was working to get money. At the beginning the lady hated E, she never greeted him. She was 4-5 years older than him. His best friend was also 2 years older than him. Because he didn't have a lot of money it also caused trouble. He got the immigration ID card, that his best friend paid for. So, he worked with his best friend as a mechanic with tuktuks. (28:00)(play 2)

He had gotten left out of prison on the Friday. On the Monday he started working. The problem was if you didn't work well if you weren't a good worker from the start you couldn't work. But if you can repair the cars, then you get money. If you are just learning you don't get money. At the beginning he didn't really know what to do so he just helped his friend. His friend paid him his lunch and all the things he needed, while waiting for him to get his own money. (31:45)(play 2)

One week after he had gotten out of prison he fell ill. It was the worst time for him. He had Malaria, because he hadn't eaten enough and because the air was bad. It's a common disease in the African region. He had the worst case of Malaria which is called P.falciparum according to WHO. E was always cold, had a very high fever, headaches and chills. Even though he was very ill, he still went to work. Everyone told him to go home, to relax and recover. But he insisted, because he needed the money to survive and pay his friend back. His friend always proposed to pay him his medicine, his food and his rent, but E couldn't accept his money anymore. He needed to help his friend, because in truth his friend was just like him. An immigrant who started with nothing and is still working to survive. (32:45)(play 2)

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malaria>

Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes. It is preventable and curable. The WHO African Region carries a disproportionately high share of the global malaria burden. In 2020, the region was home to 95% of malaria cases and 96% of malaria deaths. Children under 5 accounted for about 80% of all malaria deaths in the Region.

E's disease got worse every day at work, so he went to hospital. In Sudan you don't have health insurance, you need to pay to get help. E didn't have enough money to save him, so his friend once again paid his treatments. After E did manage to give his friend back the money he lent him, because his family managed to send him money. He only told his family he had

been sick after he managed to recover, as he didn't want his family to worry. With time he also paid his rent which had been paid by his friend until then. E stayed in bed for a week with vaccinations all alone every morning and evening. He was in a foreign city. He was lost, trying to find his way to the treatment center. (34:20)(play 2)

Khartoum is a dangerous city. There's no definite safety. People come and start beating you up. You can't say anything. A lot of people die because of this everyday threat in the streets. E didn't have too big problems because he spoke the Arabic language, so they let him be. (36:40)(play 2)

He started to go back to work. He wasn't very good at the beginning as a mechanic and didn't get a lot of money. Sometimes he couldn't even pay his lunch. In addition he had to save money for his rent and the rest of his journey, On some days he would just eat cookies and drink Coca Cola, because he couldn't afford anything else. But he survived these hard times. Nothing could be worse then the time he had spent during sickness. He was so grateful he had survived. (37:25)(play 2)

He was a very respectable young man, keen to learn and improve. So the woman from the apartment was willing to let him share the rent and with time they got along very well. So well that they got along better than his friend was getting along with her. She was a student in the equivalence of the Gymi. (38:10)(play 2)

He earned more and more money as he improved with time. His friend then moved to Egypt and the woman moved to Angola a bit later. Then some relatives of the woman came and he had to live with them. He was a mech, nearly at a professional level, for 1 year and two months. He could do everything. (39:45)(play 2)

His friend was his best friend. They grew up together even though he was 2 years younger than his friend. They were neighbors in Eritrea. They went through thick and thin together. (41:20)(play 2)

So much happened in Sudan. So much that he could change his life. Everything started there. He learned how it is to earn his own money, he learned how it is to have responsibilities. He learned how it is to not have any money. He learned how it is to not know if you will survive when you wake up the next day. He then became a chauffeur. As a chauffeur you earn a lot of money in Sudan. He helped and treated immigrants, the way his best friend helped him and became the respectable and courteous man he is today. He supported those people financially

and mentally to get through those hard times, because he had been through the same situation and knew how hard it was. (42:00)(play 2)

When he had saved up enough money he left Sudan and went to Libya. Then came a dark time again. He had organized everything, because he was more mature and was able to take care of himself. When he had left Ethiopia to go to Sudan he hadn't thought about what may be the consequences. He just left without warning his parents, that is also the reason he had to wait so long to continue. Now he had grown up and he had thought this through. The only issue was, because he helped other people he hadn't put enough money aside. He had worked three months for a man, to pay him his trip from Sudan to Libya. This man transported people for business reasons. E had worked for him, so that the man could pay him the trip. But these people are unreliable and unfaithful people. The man ended up not giving him the money for the trip even though E had been working for him for three months and had been nothing but good to him. E had known him from his village in Eritrea. He trusted him. (43:30)(play 2)

The man had a restaurant in Sudan and E worked as a translator because he spoke the Arabic language very well. When the police came E translated everything for him. He worked just for him. Transporting people, transporting goods, translating discussions. For three months.

E hadn't taken one penny from him, but as a deal, he had promised to pay his trip. He had told him that the trip from Libya to Italy would cost him 1000 Euros. E had put the money aside for his trip. When he arrived in Libya he was sent to prison for 5 months. It was the worst time of his life, because he got fooled and betrayed. He went to a little house. He wanted to go outside to get the money his family had sent him, because that would be the last sum of money he would have to pay. That's when one of the organizers told him he had been robbed from another person. There was no safety for E. The price went up and E had to wait for his family to send him money once again. That's why he was in prison for so long. Because he had learned Arabic he had to translate discussions in prison. For women it was the worst. They got raped and beaten up. (47:00)(play 2)

One day the guard pulled E out and asked him to translate for a young woman. She was a very strong woman. He had never seen anyone like her in his life before. She was Eritrean and had two kids who were still in her hometown. Normally women are scared, I would even say terrified or petrified. The woman did not show one single emotion. She could understand Arabic but she couldn't speak it. The guard wanted to have her. She started to offend him, calling him names. The guard didn't understand the woman's language and asked E to

translate. E didn't want to say what she said in Arabic. He didn't want her to get in trouble. So, he said to the guard, that the woman had said she was on her period. The woman understood it and told E to tell the guard what she had said. She wanted to insult the guard. The guard understood it and wanted to hit the woman, beat her up. She just said no. The strongest woman ever. Even E was scared of her. The guard had a gun in his hand, threatening her. They were in a narrow room. In any moment it could escalate. The guard wanted to scare her and E for fooling him. He pulled the trigger and shot against the wall. But the bullet jumped off the wall and ended up in his eye. The guard screamed so much it hurt. He was screaming in pain. The other Libyans came to the small room and brought him to hospital. That's how E and the woman were released. With time they started laughing about it and told the story to the other prisoners. They stayed in that prison for a month. They never saw the light, they didn't have any electricity. Nothing. Just darkness, they eat once a day. Drank once a day. They were starving. It was the worst time of his life. (55:20)(play 2)

He went to Italy on a ship. It was a small ship with way too many people. So much that it was on the edge of sinking any minute. He was on the ship for 5 days. 32 people died on the boat. The boat had caught fire. There was smoke coming out of the boat. Everyone started panicking. Everyone ran to the top of the boat. There were two kinds of basements at the bottom of the boat. That was where E and some other young boys were sleeping. They were the closest to the fire. They all thought it was the end. They all thought they were going to die. Finished. They saw their life flash before them. They had the least chance of surviving. They needed to go out of the basement. They managed to put out some of the fire with water, but the air was unbreathable. They were suffocating. They managed to run out of the basement. A lot of people were stuck down in the basement. Everyone wanted to go out, so they were all stuck in the narrow corridors. Everyone was panicking, no one listened to everybody, because they were fearing for their lives. One of the girls that was with him in the boat got stuck in the crowd in the corridor and passed away. They tried saving her by pulling her out but it was too late. Some of them died because they couldn't breathe. Because E was young he managed to breathe, but the only thing he could think about after seeing such a scene was that he didn't care if the boat sank. He thought he could be able to swim. Thankfully the boat did not tilt on its side. A lifeboat from Italy arrived before such a catastrophic event could have happened. Helicopters surrounded them and help arrived after 8 hours. A Lot of people were swimming, E was on the boat. The helicopter sent them life buoys, that's what they survived with until the boat arrived. They were 1080 people on the boat. The first boat that arrived took the people that were in the water, those on the boat had to wait for another boat to arrive. They waited 24 hours. They didn't have anything on the boat. They couldn't eat, couldn't drink. For 24 hours. (47:50)(play 2)

The other boat then arrived and brought them to Calabria, in the south-east of Italy. Then he continued to Milano. In Italy he had to sleep outside in the freezing cold for three whole days. They didn't have enough warm clothes. But he wasn't the only one suffering. Then Milano-Zurich. One of his friends was already in Zurich. (59:15)(play 2)

The first thing he saw when he arrived in Zurich was snow. He arrived in Winter in Zurich. He slept at his friend's apartment who also lived in Eritrea. It was illegal for him to take him in, because he was underage. But they managed to hide him. They used to work together in Sudan. His friend's uncle was his boss in the mech company. They had experienced a lot of things together in Sudan. They used to play billiard together. His friend gave him a lot of work too to help him financially. (1:00:00)(play 2)

After signing up in Kreuzlingen and getting a place to live. That's when his life started. (1:01:10)(play 2)

He is grateful for god. He is grateful that he is still in good health. He is grateful for his family. He has a goal and that goal is making his family proud of him. Everything he has achieved is thanks to god. He is grateful for his family, his mother and his father. He is grateful that his mother brought him to life. He is grateful for his father for always being here, like in the story with the snake that bit him. He is grateful for his relatives that had a big part in financing his voyage. He is grateful for his best friend for supporting him in Sudan. He is grateful for Katrine (teacher). She is the person to thank for him being able to get an apprenticeship and seeing a future. (1:07:30)(play 2)

« You should always be grateful. From my experience if something doesn't turn out the way you expected, don't lose hope. Hope is everything. For me especially. I went through a lot of tough times and I never lost hope. If you work hard, you will find a way out » (1:11:00)(play 2)

A lot of people look up to people that are above them. That are better than them. And they keep asking themselves why they can't be like those people. But you need to take a step back sometimes and look at the people under you. People that are suffering, people that are in prison, people that are sick. You need to be thankful that you aren't in their position. You need to believe in yourself. Not in others. (1:13:00)(play 2)

The thing that makes me happy, is seeing from where I came from and what I achieved today. And that I'm still in good health. I hope I'll be able to inspire people in believing in themselves. (1:16:30)(play 2)

« If you want to feel how it is having a good life, you need to experience the bad life first »

Interviewers' (Student's) name: Manon

Interviewee's name: M

Interviewee's Country of Origin: Eritrea

Interviewee's Current Resident: Zurich, Switzerland

Date of birth: 05.03.1990

Date of Interview: 09.05.2022

Place of Interview: Park Bahnhofstrasse

He lived in a small village. He grew up living a normal life with his siblings. He has 3 brothers and 2 sisters. He is the second youngest child of the family. He grew up in a loving family and had a good and stable relationship with his parents. In his free time, he played football, but nothing compared to playing in Zurich. He used to play on the solid ground in the middle of the street with bare feet using sticks as a goal. He went to school every day for half a day. For half a year school is in the morning and the other half school is in the afternoon. He wasn't too far away from the school. It took him about 10-15 minutes. But there were some kids that took 30 minutes or nearly an hour to get to school. (1:00)

It was dangerous in Eritrea. There was no future, especially because of the military. (3:10)

He loved the fact that everyone played together and spent time together. They all knew each other. The neighbors, the families everyone knew each other in the village. (3:50)

He came to Switzerland because there aren't many possibilities in his hometown. You can't do what you wish to do. You can't make your own choices concerning studies or jobs. He has been in Switzerland for 2 years now. He came here alone, without his family. Some of his siblings and parents are still in Eritrea. But some of his siblings also fled and ended up in England, Ethiopia, France. He didn't choose to come to Switzerland, but as he was in the train to continue his trip the police found him and they brought him here. (4:30)

Eritrea-Ethiopia-Sudan-Libya-Italy-Switzerland

He fled from Eritrea to Ethiopia by foot. He stayed in Ethiopia for about a year in a refugee camp for young immigrants. At that time, he was about 13 or 14 years old. After one year he left for Sudan and stayed there for 3-4 months. Then continued to Libya. He went through the Sahara with a car with a lot of people. They didn't know each other, they just met at the meeting point and tried fitting in the car. They were about 29 people in a normal sized car. From Libya, after living there for 3 months, he crossed the Mediterranean Sea until he reached Italy. He



was on a plastic boat. There was no safety at all. They were about 120-150 people on a small plastic boat. (6:30)

When he arrived in a country he had to wait until his parents could pay the money for him to continue. The whole trip cost about 7000 Dollars. Some have to pay double or triple the price. The people that organize the process of bringing people from one border to the other do illicit work. They can take complete advantage of the immigrants and ask them to pay as much as they wish. Sometimes they even just keep the money and ask them to pay more. After they get paid they send them to the next black labour. If you have luck and find the nice guys, you don't have to pay too much. (9:00)

M never went to prison because the organizers never know if they have a passport and where they come from. M didn't work in Sudan, but he had to hide for three months. They gave them food, but only one piece of bread per day. And they were allowed to drink water once a day. In Libya it was worse. They never really gave them food and they were forced to drink salty water. They were nearly 200 people in a hall sleeping on the hard floor. (10:15)

During the night when they got the message that they could finally continue, they all ran down the beach with the organizers being brutal with them if they weren't fast enough. They had to be fast and they all had to manage to get on the small boat. The trip on the boat was very dangerous. He was on that boat for 8 hours until the big boat from Italy came to pick them up and then they were in the middle of the sea for about 3 days, they were about 1000 immigrants on the boat. They were from a lot of different countries. (12:00)

In Italy he was in a small camp for about a week. Then they just left. He originally wanted to go to England but didn't manage to arrive there. He needs to stay now. (14:00)

Nobody wants to go to the military that's why so many people leave Eritrea. Even the girls are forced to go the military. (15:00)

Not everyone managed to flee. When the police see you fleeing in Eritrea they send you directly to the military They even start shooting. Luckily, they didn't see him. All you have to do is look ahead, never look back. You can't tell your parents you're leaving. No one knows you're planning to leave. You just do it. When he left Eritrea, he didn't have any contact with his family. Not all the parents want their children to leave. He was the first one that took the decision to leave and the everyone came following his footsteps. In Ethiopia he then called his parents to tell them he had left and needed money to continue. (15:30)

In Eritrea there is no safety, there is no democracy. You don't have the right to do what you want, there is no freedom. You can't protest, you can't say a word. It has been a dictatorship for 30 years. It gets worse and worse with time. (18:00)

School in Eritrea is different. They're about 62 students in one hall and just one teacher depending on the subject. It was very hard to work, they were very strict in school. If you didn't do something correctly they would hit you with a stick. (19:10)

You have very small chances of actually getting over the borders of Eritrea. That's why M's parents stayed there, because you don't have a big chance of surviving.(22:40)

The first thing he saw when he arrived in Zurich were white people. He hadn't known this diversity as a 15-year-old boy. (24:40)

Traditional food. Injera: bread with sauce and meat. (26:00)

Be kind, grateful and believe in god. (28:30)

Interviewers' (Student's) name: Manon

Interviewee's name: E

Interviewee's Country of Origin: Afghanistan

Interviewee's Current Resident: Zurich, Switzerland

Date of birth: 2003

Date of Interview: 10.05.22

Place of Interview: Fachschule Viventa - Schulhaus Wengi, Kernstrasse 11, 8004 Zurich

After more than four decades of conflict and instability in Afghanistan, an estimated 24 million Afghans are in need of humanitarian assistance. Of the more than 6 million Afghans who were forcibly displaced from their homes by the end of 2021, 3.5 million were displaced within Afghanistan while 2.6 million were hosted as refugees, accounting for one of the largest protracted refugee situations in the world.

Afghans have suffered more than 40 years of conflict, natural disasters, chronic poverty, food insecurity, COVID-19 pandemic and most recently a changeover in government authorities. The events leading up to the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in August 2021 intensified instability and violence in Afghanistan – causing even more human suffering and displacement. The impact of the conflict on women and children has been particularly devastating — 80 percent of newly displaced Afghans are women and children. The fundamental rights of women and girls are under threat and many children are out of school. Nearly 23 million people, or more than half of Afghanistan's population, suffer from acute hunger.

The Taliban, a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist and predominantly Pashtun movement, controlled most of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. In October 2001, U.S. and allied forces invaded the country and quickly ousted the Taliban regime following its refusal to hand over terrorist leader Osama bin Laden in the wake of al-Qaeda's 9/11 attacks. Following the U.S.-led invasion, Taliban leadership relocated to southern Afghanistan and across the border to Pakistan, from where they waged an insurgency against the Western-backed government in Kabul, Afghan national security forces, and international coalition troops.

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-afghanistan>

He was in Afghanistan until he was 12-13 years old and then he took the decision to leave his hometown and then he fled to Iran. He lived in Iran for about three years. He was in a bad

situation, he went through a lot. He started working on a construction site as a 13, 14-year-old. He was very small. He tried finding work, but when the employer then saw him, they said they wouldn't take such a young worker. The employer said he was too small, that he should be in school at his age. E then asked himself what he should do. He was lost. It was really very bad. So, he told himself he would leave to Europe, maybe there would be a possibility for him to go to school there. (0:20)

Afghanistan - Iran - Turkey (2018) - Greece - North Macedonia - Serbia - Hungary - Austria - Switzerland

He was born in Afghanistan, then stayed there until he was 12 years old. His time in Afghanistan was very bad. He didn't have enough food and he lost his parents, he didn't know where his parents were. He lived with his aunt and uncle for about 12 years. It was really very bad. He didn't go to school in Afghanistan and he didn't work either. He was on the streets most of the time. He even slept on the streets from time to time and sometimes he slept at home. During the day he sometimes played with other kids and during the evening he went to his uncles. When his uncle wasn't home during the day he had to stay outside until he came back. Sometimes he even had to sleep on the streets. It was really a bad time. His uncle worked as a farmer, he had animals. His aunt didn't work. Women never worked in Afghanistan. Now it's even worse than before. The whole situation is worse than in the old times. (2:10)

In the moment women can't go to school, they are not allowed to work. They can just stay home and be a cleaning lady or a housewife. Just taking care of the kids, cooking, cleaning and staying home all day. The men get to work. Women don't have any freedom. Even those that do work are very limited in what they are allowed to do. They need to dress specifically, they are not free to just live as they want like in other countries. (5:10)

When he was a child he didn't really know what was going on. He asked his aunt and uncle (calls them his parents) where his biological parents were and why they left, but his aunt didn't know either and couldn't explain to him why they left. He understood that his aunt couldn't help him. And then as he was 12 years old he left and told them he didn't want to come back. (6:15)

He had an older brother when he was small but he left too and he doesn't know where he is. He was about 18 years old when E was 10. He used to play cricket with the other kids in the streets. He always asked himself what his future would look like if he stayed as unhappy as

he was in Afghanistan. He kept thinking if he should leave. If he had the courage to leave. He wanted a good future. But at the time he didn't know it was possible for him to have a good future. He still doesn't know but at least it is clear to him now that if he goes to school, that he can maybe achieve what he always wished for. (7:30)

From Afghanistan he then went to Iran. He went there mostly by foot in the mountains, as it is illegal, moving with a car was a critical way to flee as a refugee. They are all refugees, they can't just walk on the streets. They don't have any papers or passports, they need to find a way to move without the police seeing or catching them. They left as a group of 50-60 people. Sometimes they were a lot sometimes they were less. They just followed the organizers blindly. (9:00)

His aunt and uncle didn't know he left. He just left. Without saying a word. His aunt had told him and warned him before that he wasn't allowed to leave the country. He told her he wouldn't, but then he thought if he stayed in Afghanistan with his aunt he would never be able to have a bright future. And then if he grew up in Afghanistan and then become an adult there, he would have to work again. It's not easy to find a job there. A lot of people studied, but now even they can't find a job. They stay home and don't have the chance of doing anything. It's corrupt. (10:25)

There are a lot of people that suffer from lack of food, lack of money. They don't have jobs, to earn money to eat. Jobs are very hard to find. A lot of people are homeless. People want to sell their kids so that they can buy themselves something. Human trafficking is a big issue there. They would do anything just to survive. When E thinks about it, it just makes him feel sick. He would like to help people, but he was in the same situation as they were. You can't do anything about it. Afghanistan is also very dangerous. There is war everywhere. Before it was even worse. The evening you couldn't go outside. You would think somebody is going to come and kill me. Even during the day, you always fear this is going to be your last day. Around 7 o'clock there was no chance if you were outside. (11:30)

He stayed in Iran for about 3 years. He worked every day and then went home in the evening. In Iran there are no refugee camps. When you work you however get a bedroom, where you can live. A place you can sleep in. They were about 20-50 people in one room. They cooked all together and eat all together. He tried going to school in Iran, but he never managed to go there. He wasn't allowed. If you have a passport you're allowed to go to school, otherwise you couldn't. E didn't have a passport. So, he worked. Found something to eat. He worked as a constructor on a construction site. It was very bad, building structures. He was small, they

didn't want to give him work. They said, he wouldn't be capable of working. He wasn't big and strong enough. There are some things that are very heavy and difficult for small kids to lift up. (13:30)

When you work in Iran, even if you get a job. You don't get paid enough to buy food or clothes. (43:00)

The smugglers helped him get to Switzerland. But E organized the travel himself. In Iran he didn't have enough money to go to Europe. He paid to go to Iran and then worked and put money aside. He then told another person he wanted to go to Europe and he said he could help him get there. E didn't have enough money and told him that. The person then told him E could give him a little bit of money and that E could give him back the rest of the money later. E told him when he's in Europe and finds a job he will repay the man what he owes him. (15:45)

E doesn't have any good memories of Iran. You can imagine a small kid between 14-15 years old. How can he work as a constructor? It's really a very difficult situation. (17:15)

After Iran he then proceeded to go to Turkey. Always moving from country to country in groups. He stayed in Turkey for about 3 months. He tried fleeing to Greece 5 times in those couple of months. When you don't have a pass-port you can't just leave. The police from Greece started attacking them and sent them back to Turkey. They send you backwards not forwards. They sent him back 5 times. He didn't eat for 5 days. They were about 25 people and never got something to eat. They were all in a small place, all trying to get to Greece. But their plans to cross the borders never went as planned. The police found them, attacked them, beat them up and sent them back to Turkey. It was cold and they didn't drink anything. They kept searching food, but they couldn't find anything. They eat a little bit of salad, but the salad was dirty and not fresh. But without even washing it they eat it, because there was nothing else to eat. E got very bad tummy aches and was sick for another 5 days. In Turkey you can't just go to the doctors when you're sick. All he could do was take a glass of water and stay in the place until he could try going to Greece again. He didn't work in Turkey. The smugglers that sent them to Greece have a house, a big building, where they can give them food and a place to sleep. He had paid some money that he had earned by working in Iran to stay in that house. Before leaving a country, you need to pay the smugglers to then continue the travel and so on and so forth. It costs so much, from Iran to Switzerland it costs about 10'000 Fr. It depends on the smugglers and the people. Some people even need to pay 50'000 Fr, some pay less than 10'000 Fr. (18:00)

From Turkey they then went to Greece. He crossed a small distance with the boat for about 10 minutes (he compared the distance with the lake of Zurich) and then continued the travel by foot for about two days and then the police cars arrived. He got caught 5 times after arriving before being able to carry on. They crossed the borders overnight. Sometimes they had to run and sometimes they could walk. Always stressed and anxious. There was one smuggler that knew exactly where to go as he did the trip about 20 times, so he could show them the way. When the police caught them, they couldn't just run back. They caught them and then sent them all back. They could run, but there was no use. The police were with the car and they were all by foot, hungry, tired and with no strength. Sometimes the police hit them, attacked them, beat them up. They would shoot to scare them but they wouldn't aim the refugees. They wanted to scare them so that they would stand still. There were times where they wouldn't stand still, they would tell them they weren't going back, that they were staying there. But they didn't leave them a choice. The fifth time he finally managed to get over the borders. (22:45)

He stayed in Greece for 4 months. He couldn't work there, it was even trickier to find a job. E thought that when he would arrive in Europe, in Greece, he could maybe get a job, so that his life could get easier. But then he was in Greece, he didn't get enough food, didn't drink enough, didn't have any money. In Greece there are refugee camps, where they only give you food for dinner. They would tell them to come get food at a certain time and then told them to go away again. He told a person in Iran he wanted to go to Austria and paid him enough to go to Austria. That person told him he would bring him to that specific country. Greece is also part of Europe but he didn't want to stay there. Greece is also not in a good position at the moment. Refugees can't really live in Greece. (25:30)

He then continued to Macedonia and proceeded to Serbia. He stayed in Serbia for 9-10 months. In Serbia it was a little bit better than in Greece or Turkey. There was a refugee camp in Serbia where you can eat and sleep. (27:15)

He landed in Hungary. The police and the politics in Hungary aren't good. He tried crossing the Hungarian borders 10 times until he managed to land in Hungary. They just want to hit the immigrants, they tell them they aren't allowed to come into their country. One of the policemen hit E. E couldn't stand on his leg for two days after that incident. He just sent him back to Serbia. His friend helped him to heal his leg. There were always different people in the groups from a lot of different countries. There were still some people that were with E for the whole trip. (29:00)

There are some people that never managed to cross the borders. They stayed in Serbia for 4 years before crossing the borders. They just live in the refugee camp and get enough food in comparison to other countries. They weren't allowed to stay in Hungary. So they just had to walk through Hungary until they get to the Austrian or Italian borders. He stayed in Austria for 3 days and then arrived in Switzerland. In Austria there weren't so many people in the train station and the police attacked him there too. They asked him where he wanted to go and E just said he didn't know either. So, they gave him the choice to stay in Austria or leave. So he chose to leave. He had a friend that had lived in Austria for 6-7 years and still hasn't found a job. He just goes to school and never had the chance to get a formation to study. He told him if you stay in Austria you might go through the same trouble as me. They gave him 3 days to leave Austria. So, E took the decision to continue. (30:50)

At the time his goal wasn't to stay in Switzerland. He didn't think Switzerland would be such a nice and peaceful country. He never saw photos and had no expectations. He just wanted to arrive to Zurich HB and then leave to arrive in France. But when he arrived in Zurich HB, he saw so many people. People that had clean clothes on. The train station was full with people. He thought maybe this is the place for him. He went twice to a policeman and told them he was new and that he wanted to stay here, he wanted them to take his fingerprints. They both told him he couldn't stay here. They sent him to the police station, they told him that they couldn't help him. So, he looked for someone that came from Afghanistan to be able to talk to that person and understand what he had to do. He never found someone. He was really sad. He asked himself what should he do? He went to someone else and asked that person for help. The person said he didn't understand what E was asking for, so E, without understanding what that person said, just said "it's okay I'll leave". The person just said: "leave, leave". E said: "I'll leave, I'll leave... just please don't tell the police you saw me" and left. (32:30)

He was really so sad. He didn't understand what was going on. He was just a lost 17-year old. He went to another policeman and he was really nice. He said he would be happy to help. He told him to come with him. And E whole face just lit up. He was so happy. He was such a nice person. E followed the policeman. He received a paper and then got sent to the camp in Hardbrucke, then after 3 months he moved to Affoltern am Albis and made some friends there. (34:50)

There are a lot of people that leave Afghanistan. Now more than ever. The situation there just keeps getting worse. Some people also go back to their country, because they are scared. E also questioned if he should go back a couple times. He considers himself lucky that he left when he did. Now he says, he doesn't think he would've made it. He had a friend that kept



telling him not to give up. He told him he was going to get a good future. That he would continue and look in front of him. He told him he was young and that he could do it. E even wanted to go back three times, but his friend didn't let him go back home. Iran was the most difficult time for him. He is very grateful that he had this friend. He is grateful that he didn't let him go back home. Sometimes he thinks back and thinks what life for him would be if he were still in Afghanistan. It would be so difficult. He wouldn't be able to pay for his trip to Europe and would be stuck there forever. He's still in contact with that friend. (37:00)

E wants to become a Hotelfachmann. (43:35)

Sometimes E is happy. He is happy of what he achieved. He has the feeling he can achieve anything. But there are still some days where he asks himself why he is alive. What meaning life has. Talking to me was already a hard decision for him, but he took the courage to talk about his past to show people what immigrants go through and find help for others that go through the same thing as E. (46:00)

If he could go back to Afghanistan he would. Just not now. It's his hometown. It will always be his hometown. But right now, he wants to stay where he is. Get an apprenticeship and get a job. Then one day he might go back. (47:00)

Never give up. Never lose hope. He really lived so badly, he experienced the worst things. He knows what it feels like. And some times, he also told himself he would give up. That it's the end. But he never lost hope. Don't just give up. Think about the future. Never look back. Just look in front. Everything will be okay. (48:00)

Interviewers' (Student's) name: Manon

Interviewee's name: A

Interviewee's Country of Origin: Ukraine, Odesa

Interviewee's Current Resident: Zurich, Switzerland

Date of birth: 2005

Date of Interview: 07.07.2022

Place of Interview: Kantonsschule Hottingen, Minervastrasse 14, 8090 Zurich, Mediothek

Armed conflict in eastern Ukraine erupted in early 2014 following Russia's annexation of Crimea. The previous year, protests in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to reject a deal for greater economic integration with the European Union (EU) were met with a violent crackdown by state security forces. The protests widened, escalating the conflict, and President Yanukovich fled the country in February 2014.

One month later, in March 2014, Russian troops took control of the Ukrainian region of Crimea. Russian President Vladimir Putin cited the need to protect the rights of Russian citizens and Russian speakers in Crimea and southeast Ukraine. Russia then formally annexed the peninsula after Crimeans voted to join the Russian Federation in a disputed local referendum. on February 24, 2022, when Russian forces invaded a largely unprepared Ukraine after Russian President Vladimir Putin authorized a "special military operation" against the country. In his statement, Putin claimed that the goal of the operation was to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine and end the alleged genocide of Russians in Ukrainian territory.

A was born in Ukraine in Odesa 2005. Odesa is very popular because of the sea, so in the summer there are a lot of tourists. A had a very nice childhood growing up. She says it mostly depends on the parents and she has a very good relationship with her parents. She would even call it a perfect childhood. She did a lot of trips with her family and friends, visiting Ukraine and cities in other countries. Ukraine is a very big country and they have very open people in their country. People in Switzerland for example are a lot more reserved. When you come from a country like Ukraine you are always very open to the whole world. (0:10)

In Ukraine school was pretty normal. It's not that easy to study in Ukraine though, because teachers are unfair when they give grades. Even though you may have deserved a good grade, because the teacher dislikes you he will give you a bad grade. (1:45)

A doesn't have any brothers or sisters. She always wanted to have a sibling, but her parents are divorced. So, she never got that chance to have a sibling. (3:00)

In Ukraine for the last two years she wasn't really attending classes anymore, because she was preparing for the last years before going to University in Ukraine. So, she was preparing a lot of work to have better grades. But before she attended dance, art and singing classes. She was a very artsy person. (3:30)

Odesa is a very big city. In Ukraine everyone celebrates traditions together. They stick together. They're a very open nation. Usually you talk to people everywhere, for example a friend's mother. All the friends and families get together and spend time together. (4:20)

It all began in 2014 when Ukraine was occupied by Russia. Back then they didn't have a good president, A interprets, so he did nothing. He was useless. A remembered she had called her dad in the evening and she had asked him what do you think? Will the war start? She asked everyone's opinion. Do you think the war will start? Every single person said: no, we don't think the president is so stupid that he would begin a war with Russia. Because all the countries would be against him and he would lose the war. She left in the hope that everything would be fine and tried to believe in what the others said. (5:40)

She was sleeping and preparing everything for school on the 24. February. And then at 5 o'clock in the morning she woke up because she heard some sounds. She first thought the sound was made by teenagers making big noises and then she went to her mom and asked what the sound was. She said I'm sure it's just teenagers in the streets celebrating. Don't worry. After A woke up she couldn't sleep anymore, so she began preparing her stuff for school and made breakfast, lunch for school. Like a usual morning. And then at 7 o'clock her mom watched the news, where Putin was announcing the beginning of a war. A doesn't know why but at that moment she really wanted to go to school. To see her school, her classmates, her friends, be able to talk to someone. But her mom didn't let her go to school. She told her it was too dangerous, because of the sounds they heard at 5 o'clock. A understood and prepared herself for the online class they were going to have. She remembers her mom telling her, if something happens, just take the most important things, the things you like the most, like your favorite clothes and just put it in the luggage. Just in case. In case of an emergency. A did so. She was crying, scared, packing her luggage. (7:40)

She then had the school distance lesson. At 10 o'clock in the morning she heard this really loud sound near her home. Her mom and her were in her room. They both began to cry, started shaking. Her mom told her she didn't want her to cry and to see what was going on. So, she told her to take her luggage and go to her aunt's place. She went there and asked her mom will you go with me now? She said no, she still needs to pack some things and she was

waiting for her mom at her aunt's place. Her uncle is a sailor, so he was at sea at that moment. His whole family was there. Her mom and aunt were deciding what to do, if they should stay there or if they should go somewhere abroad or maybe go to another city. It was a little bit complicated, because on one hand it was A's plan to go abroad after school, to Germany, France... But on the other hand, she didn't want to leave her home. She didn't want to leave everything behind. Not in this situation. Even though she may have found it boring at one point and just wanted to leave after finishing school. This is not how she had planned to leave. She had just gotten a new room. For one year. All her stuff, her friends, her classmates, her teachers. Her whole life. Her whole childhood was there. It was very scary to leave everything behind. (10:00)

But they slept one night at her aunt's place. They thought something would happen. But fortunately, nothing happened in her city. The next morning her parents decided to go abroad. So, they packed their stuff and went to the car and drove to Poland. It took about 4 days by car. Normally it wouldn't take that long. But because of the war they had to go through little parts of Moldova, Romania until they arrived in Poland. (12:50)

Her aunt and uncle decided to stay in Poland. Her and her mom stayed in Krakow for 3 days. They were deciding between going to France, Switzerland or Germany, because her mom had her sister lives in Switzerland. France because she can speak a little bit of French. And Germany because there's a high life standard there. Her uncle and aunt told her mom that they should go to Switzerland, because her family is there and they can help you with everything. It was always a bit A's dream to visit Switzerland. So, every night she kept telling her mom it might be a good idea to go to Switzerland. That's how she convinced her. (13:45)

The first thing she thought when she got out of the train with all her baggage in the evening, as she was looking around, she just thought wow I want to stay here. It was a very beautiful atmosphere. (15:55)