POST GRADUATE WORK PERMIT AND SOCIAL SUFFERING (A CASE STUDY)

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Golbon Moltaji has a Ph.D. from the University of Ottawa. Her dissertation focuses on Canada's Post graduate Work Permit Program as the primary pathway for international students to immigrate in Canada. Golbon received her master's degree from the University of Windsor in Human Kinetics with specialization in motor control and learning. She is an avid visual and sound artist and spends most of her time creating music and illustrations.

Abstract: This study is an art-based autoethnography that examines the author's first-hand experience of immigration-related adversities in four drawings created during transitioning to permanent residency in Canada via the Post Graduate Work Permit Program. The article takes a different route from the studies which acknowledge immigrants' experiences of social suffering yet, explore the possibilities of eventual integration through adaptation and acculturation for immigrants. This article argues that marking suffering as an organic part of integration normalizes suffering and, even can be perceived as an attempt to eliminate the presence of suffering from the discourse. More importantly, this article emphasizes that the social suffering of immigrants cannot be comprehended separately from the entirety of a society that undoubtedly plays a part in inducing their suffering. Artistic content includes the researcher's drawings made during her time under PGWPP that express her relation to the social landscape in Canada as an international post-graduate transitioning to permanent residency.

Keywords: immigration, art-based autoethnography, immigrant suffering, post-graduate migration, suicide

This art-based autoethnography provides an introspection of the representations of pain and social suffering associated with immigration (Hron, 2009) through the researcher's experience of transitioning from an international student to a permanent resident in Canada via the Post-Graduate Work Permit Program (PGWPP)[1]. PGWPP is a temporary work permit that allows international students to stay in Canada for up to three years following their graduation, find work, and apply for permanent residency (Citizenship Immigration Canada [CIC], 2017). This art-based autoethnography employs my expressions of social suffering in four drawings created during my transitioning. The analysis of the images elaborates on the representation of pain and suffering, including bodily transformations and torments, signs of anguish and regret. It associates these adversities with the relation of the researcher to the social landscape infused with temporariness (Rajkumar et al., 2012) as a condition forged by PGWPP, and relates them to the notion of *anomy* (Durkheim, 1951). Anomy is a prevalent condition in industrial societies and a product of detachment from the society. This concept provides an appropriate theoretical explanation for the intensity of suffering – a suicidal state – expressed in the artwork.

In short, the field of post-graduate migration is devoid of many introspective explorations of the hardships experienced by these students beyond the implications made in surveys and interview-based studies (Brooks & Waters, 2013; Chira, 2016; Khawja & Stallman, 2011). This absence of non-conventional outlooks towards post-graduate immigration can be related to the fact that the applicants (international graduates) are often identified for their high human capital (CIC, 2017), and that the state does not seem to consider the possibility of any intense experience of immigrant suffering among them. This is despite the fact that immigration narratives, those other than post-graduate migration, are often laden with suffering, tragedy, and enduring of feelings of alienation generally referred to in the literature as "immigrant suffering" (Hron, 2009,pp.10,16,78).

Similar to other immigrant groups, international graduates tend to develop social and psychological anxieties that are often associated with culture shock, limited financial resources, and an absence of social networks in the host state (Neiterman et al., 2015). Despite elements of reality in the existing qualitative literature on migration and suffering, the discourse itself is conceptually subject to neoliberal and colonial perspectives that singularize personhood in economic production (Skeggs, 2013). In other words, studies that seek to understand immigrant suffering redundantly exploit terms such as multiculturalism, pluralism, and hybridity which are admittedly, and from experience, the "circulating currency in contemporary immigration discourse" (Hron,

2009,pp. 10–16). These terms do more to mask suffering than to highlight and address the problem. Pluralism, more often than not, goes hand in hand with the definition of the successful immigrant, or as Hron (2009) puts it, happy estrangers overcome their inevitable social suffering through accepting their inefficiencies, lack of skills, and naivety. It is often upon us to believe that *assimilation* – the process in which immigrants gradually become more similar to the native population in terms of earnings, human capital, occupational status, fertility and many other social and personal dimensions (Djajic, 2000) – resolves immigrant suffering. Even if it does not, the immigrant who lays their dispute against the system through joining a cause that opposes discrimination, is laterally exploiting and celebrating suffering and otherness (Hron, 2009). Suffering becomes an acceptable and even an expected rite of passage. By embracing this mentality, very little is done to address the problem, and is not even looked upon as being a problem in the first place. In other words, the conventions of immigration suffering generally rely on these conditions to either find ways for improving immigrants' situations through social and cultural education, or through politicizing their suffering (Stein & de Andretorri, 2016).

By identifying *social vulnerabilities* – salient immigration stressors of social suffering and the personal and social resources that increase the persistence of the state of anomy and endanger the mobile person's well-being – this research can inform research and policy. This requires the text to employ a paradigm that allows for coherent and non-linear narratives. This can be found in immigration narrative that expose the difficulties of immigration that often go untold in favor of the integration agenda. This article, therefore, employs the *Mobilities Paradigm* (Urry, 2007), a research practice that allows the study of what Urry refers to as *things of mobility* – essentially narratives and non-linear parts of mobility that are not usually included in conventional research.

Review of Literature

This article problematizes two of the main conventional outlooks that are present in post-graduate migration literature; the first conventional perspective is the state's discourse in which post-graduate migrants are expected to turn their cultural capital into economic capital with an eye on recuperating their economic status. (CIC, 2012; Skeggs, 2013). This rhetoric anticipates social success and integration for international students (CBIE,2015; DFATD, 2014; Pham et al., 2018; Scott et al., 2005), and does not foresee that their mobility could become anything short of an economically productive activity. In other words, student mobility and economically productive activities are seen as synonymous. In the case of any less than ideal social experience where the outcome of transitioning is proven to be lamented by social isolation (Belkhodja & Esses, 2013;

Chira, 2016), bureaucratic struggles (Kelly, 2012), or low income (Picot et al., 2007), the investigations seek ways for accelerating graduates' integration. These investigations are often preoccupied with correctional approaches that seek fixing the flaws of the system, which might have resulted in these less-than-ideal post-graduate migration experiences (Pham et al., 2018; Smith & Khawja, 2011).

These existing studies suggest that the negative experiences of post-graduate migrants are linked to international graduates' precarious and temporary status (Rajkumar et al., 2012), as well as their levels of acculturation and adaptation (Smith & Khawja, 2011), and an absence of satisfying social networks (Andrade, 2006). From this vantage point, integration is often associated with levels of communication skills, sociocultural adaptation, and acculturation, defined as eventual reciprocal change following encounters of two different cultures with a new society (Smith & Khawja, 2011; Stein & di Andretoni, 2016). They proceed by recommending better regulations of information distribution regarding immigration policies (Belkhodja & Esses, 2013) and development of programs that can assist. As an example, international students could have higher levels of contact with host nationals and attain better fluency in the host country's language (Smith & Khawja, 2011; Thomson & Esses, 2016). These qualities are undoubtedly a newcomer's instrumental ability to negotiate day-to-day social tasks in the new culture (Thomson & Esses, 2016). Yet, these studies seem to take for granted that social suffering can take place despite expertise in language and contact with the host nationals, and that it might be a result of a broader scheme of issues beyond a migratory narrative. More importantly, the experience of suffering does not need to be eliminated, but rather can be used to describe and critique the existing conditions that induce it (Hron, 2009).

Parallel to the studies that focus on an acculturation and adaptation viewpoint is research that links hardships of post-graduate migration to race, ethnic, and socioeconomic issues that are inextricably linked to colonial history of south to north migration (Stein & de Andretorri, 2016). There are exemplary former international students who write about immigration themselves, and who often address systematic issues of colonialism that perpetuate a structural deficit in integrating immigrants (Chira, 2016; Winter, 2014). Yet unlike general migration schemes, work around post-graduate migration continues to be devoid of expressive and unconventional research material that highlight the social suffering of post-graduate migrants.

Social suffering here is equivalent to social disintegration and speaks to issues such as lack of collective sensibility, as well as the presence of culminated detachment that is a source of depression among people (Durkheim, 1951). These conditions are in

fact more present among immigrants (Hron, 2009; Smith & Khawja, 2011). This presence makes revealing these conditions substantially important in Canada with its more than 20% foreign born population (Statcan, 2017) whose suicide rates rise as their stay in Canada prolongs (Saunders et al., 2019). Thus, it is important to attain a more comprehensive understanding of the existing suffering among immigrants as opposed to normalizing and positioning it within typical nation building and multiculturalism discourses (Hron, 2009). There appears to be a space for research that offers a closer dissection of post-graduate migrants' experiences with social suffering.

Attempting to provide this dissection, this article stays away from fetishization of mobility, but rather considers suffering associated with migration as a very tangible and an academically relevant part of the human condition. It explores this condition through my experiences as the researcher and as expressed in vignettes that I created during my time transitioning from an international student to permanent residency status under PGWPP. This study identifies social suffering as recurrent and pervasive events that lead to a prolonged sense of alienation among immigrants (Hron, 2009). It seeks to challenge the generic immigration narrative with its underlying assumption that there is an inevitable trajectory for all immigrants; that the mentioned suffering is their "rite of passage" and, will and should lead to eventual social integration and relative success – even if that success comes only for their off-spring (Djajić, 2003; Hron, 2009). The present study argues that both the economic oriented perspective of the state, and the academic discourse that seeks reduction of suffering, perpetuate suffering at the cost of successful integration, and underline immigrants' progress by making suffering an expected norm. This attitude inevitably silences this substantial part of the human condition and reduces the emotions involved in the mentioned suffering, especially social suffering, as a justifiable part of immigration (Hron, 2009) via PGWPP.

Theoretical Perspective

This article examines the social suffering through Durkheim's interpretation of the exasperation and weariness of mood among persons who find themselves socially disintegrated (Durkheim, 1951). Durkheim's concepts of exasperation and weariness are employed here as the precursors of anomy; a state that is blatantly present in [post-graduate] migration. Research has demonstrated its accounts of social, physical, and psychological defect (Andrade, 2006; Chira, 2016). Anomy begets a state of exasperation and irritation which may turn one against themselves or others (Durkheim, 1951). International students open up about their suicidal thoughts and dissatisfaction with the detached social interactions they experience (iamnotok.ca). So, it is known that

such experiences do exist, yet not much theorization has taken place to describe their prominence academically.

For Durkheim, anomy is not merely a problem associated with individuals, but a reflection of the society as a whole (Durkheim, 1951). Durkheim's anomy provides an explanation for various forms of suicide and homicide within post-industrial societies. He theorizes that the underlying reason for suicide, for the most part, is the [low] level of social integration of the group (Berkman et. al, 2000). In other words, anomy has many representations, and is a collective state for which increased suicide rates are a symptom. Relevantly, immigration research has shown that increased migration in Canada has been accompanied by an increase in suicide rates (Trovato, 1986). The presence of anomy, as an existential state accompanied by a chronic suffering among individuals, has been in fact illustrated in forms other than suicide, including psychosocial pathology of immigration (Hron, 2009). In these studies, accounts of sadness, hurt, and trauma are paramount (Hage, 2008). The cause is said to be the severing of one's social relations, the financial distress, and cultural shock often present in immigration (Trovato, 1986).

In *Suicide,* Durkheim states that efforts for representation of the collective state of anomy should be made as opposed to oppressing it for the sake of "pluralist success" (1951, p. 333). Durkheim defines this notion of illusion of success as a machinery response to relative financial security and overwhelming emphasis on the singularity of persons in industrial societies. This article responds to Durkheim's call for reflexivity and is an acknowledgement of the hardships resident within the human condition. The drawings I have focused on in this research display my transformation into a whale that appears to be dying while painfully dragging her bloody body along the streets of Toronto. Through Durkheim's concept of anomy, this symbolic representation of suffering reflects on the results of unsettling of social integration and loss of recognition (Durkheim, 1951), both of which have become central to immigration.

Methods

Art-Based Autoethnography

McNiff (1998) defines the domain of arts-based research as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expression in all of the different art forms, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies. Incorporation of art pieces allows the research to encompass a different capacity for communication through

imagination and reflexivity (Chenail, 2004; Holt, 2003; Osvath, 2017). By becoming simultaneously the researched and the researcher (Finley & Knowles, 1995; Forde, 2013), or putting the researcher's own body on the stage rather than writing about others (Moreira, 2017), this article places an emphasis on how explicit artistic expressions regarding the aesthetics of experiences and events can integrate into and advance research (Collins & Chandler, 1993).

This method is inspired by contemporary autoethnographers who explore narratives of estrangement (Keenan & Evans, 2014), political divergence among family members (Lanthorn, 2017), violence and racism (Moreira, 2017), and even generational clashes (Buchner, 2012) and race (Forde, 2013). In autoethnographies, such as *Bird on the Wire* (Buchner, 2012), and in *Decolonizing Narratives of Silence Between Being and Belonging* (Lanthorn, 2017), the authors seek closure to some form of mourning, hurt or suffering that is directly or indirectly related to social, cultural, and political issues. Similar to the work of immigrant literary writers who seek to communicate their misunderstood suffering (Hron, 2009), the search for healing is also present in this work.

The use of drawing as a method of inquiry has become a part of social research for a variety of reasons, including the drawings' tangibility and concreteness, their capacity for prompting or eliciting further data, and their potential for moving the audience (Derry, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2011; Pink, 2013). Drawing enables the creators to freeze and study their memories, aspirations, or thoughts (Mitchell et al., 2011). When researchers use drawings to make experience, perception, or emotion visible, the analyses of the drawings are only sufficient once they engage the creators to make meaning out of what they are seeing. This goes one step further when the researcher is the creator (Forde, 2013) and engages in the very process of analyzing and understanding the drawing (Mitchell et al., 2011). Working across a variety of disciplinary areas including cultural studies, literary studies, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and art history, non-textual records re-frame what counts as data and how it can be read. As a projective technique, drawings make parts of the self and/or levels of development visible (Mitchell et al., 2011). Similar to Forde (2013), I provide my written narrative and description of the drawings to generate data about my transitioning memories to unravel fallacies within the host society's policies and interplays (Hron, 2009). This allows for close examination, and better understanding of life events as the drawings represent both the events, as well as how I felt about those events. An important factor to keep in mind, while reviewing the analysis and the drawings, is that I did not create these pieces with any specific intention; as an artist I allow my drawings to come out as I have envisioned them. The current analyses, therefore, are my

objective and conscious understanding of the work that has been created in the past, while I was a PGWPP holder transitioning and aspiring to Canadian permanent residency. Like children's ability to capture feelings and emotions through drawings prior to developing spoken or written language, as someone who was only distantly familiar with social theories, these drawings captured my mindset about my social suffering at the time; the images' implications as material for social research have multiple overlapping, as well as very present-day issues regarding temporariness and clashes with capitalism. In other words, these drawings can function as a mirror to view our perceptions of self, as pieces give life to personal experiences and yet are frequently overlooked or downplayed in public accounts of social research (Hron, 2009).

Drawings Made During My Transition from Graduate to Resident

I created 4 drawings, which are presented in this research, during the time period when I transitioned from an international graduate to a permanent resident via PGWPP, between 2011 and 2013:

- *400 Univ. Avenue*
- *York Mills Road*
- *Queen at Spadina*
- *Hudson's Bay*

These whale drawings are a dedicated series among my illustrations, stylishly distinguishable from my other creations. This 52Hz series consists of 12 drawings; the title is representative of the whale in the drawings that appeared to me very similar to the 52Hz whale; an individual species that calls at a significantly higher frequency than the blue and fin whales. The frequency is considered unidentifiable by other whales, remarking the animal as lonely and unseen (Baraniuk, 2015; Persico, 2020). The 4 selected drawings were chosen based on their creation date (these were the first of the series) and also the order in which they were created (the birth of the whale and the whale's journey through places I visited often at the time). I would not presume that the 12 drawings of 52Hz are the only illustrations that I made that were influenced by the experience of living with PGWPP. However, for the purpose of this research I noticed the symbolism in these particular pieces had the introspective power that was needed to convey the essence of suffering.

I had moved to Canada as an international student from Iran, pursuing a master's degree at the University of Windsor (2009 – 2011). Following graduation, I moved to Toronto as I awaited my permanent residency under PGWPP, and continuously looked

for field related jobs in health research. During this period, I held zero-hour contract jobs[2] at a restaurant, a fitness gym, and as a door-to-door salesperson. I lived in shared houses, and I often was harassed by roommates and landlord[ladies]. The processing of my immigration application took 2.5 years[3] ostensibly longer than the advertised time by the CIC (CIC, 2017). The unsettling living conditions and ever-extending delay formed an erosive sense of living in limbo that is specific to temporary residence status; a condition that is known to have detrimental effects on post-graduate immigrants (Chira, 2016; Moltaji, 2017; Robertson, 2014). Understandably, I had grown to despise and suffer from the ongoing subordination to the subsequent un-satisfying social condition. These conditions never improved until I landed as an immigrant in 2013 and was able to finally register as a doctorate student. Please note that a PGWP holder cannot register at any degree program and therefore, following my master's thesis defense, despite my yearning, ai did not go back to university from 2011 – 2013 which is the period of time discussed in this article

In short, my drawings demonstrate my self-transformation into a whale. The whale keeps dragging herself on the streets of Toronto, while bleeding and in a state of dying. It is a surreal description of my relation to the social landscape through alienation and suffering at the time – almost a pathological response to the suffering induced by the feelings of un-belonging. The whales in these drawings represent "not belonging" and draw a parallel to this as symbolic representation.

Whales are not to be seen on land, but they do shore and they strand themselves on beaches. Numerous pictures and videos taken of real beaching incidents of whales – a grim, deathly scene – can be seen in various news sources and on social media. In some of these images, dozens of whales, each of which weighs many tons, lay packed together in the surf. The catastrophic outlook is likely a consequence of disturbance to their echolocation caused by human generated under water sonic activities (Gibbens, 2018; Talpalae & Grossman, 2005). These sonic activities generate signals and frequencies from a variety of sources, from oil and gas exploration or military sonar, that the whales process and interpret as vital (Cressey 2008; Yusof & Kabir, 2012). If this happens during a deep dive, failure of echolocation, which is crucial for their orientation, may lead to the whales' disorientation. In other words, they escape their very habitat at a speed that their body cannot bear while taking wounds from the high frequency radio signals burning their skin and innards (Gibbens, 2018; Tablar & Grossman, 2005). In my first drawing, the whale is birthed at a moment where I come face to face with my social condition as a barrier to connecting with the cityscape and the social scene. Whether a form of escapism or acts inherently intended to enhance the symbolism of that escape,

in the following three pieces after birth the whale grows full size, beached, and bleeding, as I become the very expression of disintegration, weariness, and exasperation.

One of the speculations around mass whale beaching is that they – knowingly or unknowingly – revolt against the intruding signal so therefore their ascending is at least partially intentional; one whale's response to the deteriorating sonic waves or resultant sickness is followed by other whales because they do not want to leave the disoriented whale's side (Gibbens, 2018). The whale in my drawings, however, is more reminiscent of the 52Hz whale, an individual species that calls at a significantly higher frequency than the blue and fin whales. This has been perceived as making it unidentifiable by other whales, remarking the animal as the loneliest creature[4] in the world (Baraniuk, 2015; Persico, 2017) The whale in my drawings is a singular entity as the city where she is at had an incredible indifference, and unnamed ability in not seeing monsters, and not seeing blood (Moreira, 2017). And even if the city did see her, it would turn the other way as if the bloodied monster didn't even exist. Not to be seen is painful enough, but for others to pretend not to see you is even more painful, for there is a realization of the absence of human empathy. And in that absence, a deep sense of anomy and disconnection sets in. Blood is life, and when enough of it pours out, death ensues.

For analyzing the drawings, I follow analytical methods conducted by Howells & Negreiros (2013) and Forde (2013), which mark the corresponding figures with the main themes in analysis in each drawing. Every image in the series has indications that can be interpreted as a combination of a) disdain for capitalist notion of success consumed by both the general and immigrant public, b) social immobility as a result of temporariness which is described as the uncertainty of immigration application outcomes and, infinitely unsuccessful attempts for securing an income, and c) feelings of alienation and estrangement specific to un-empathic [sub]urban environments.

Drawing One: 400 Univ. Ave.

Figure 1

400 Univ. Ave, 8.5" x 11", 2011.

This drawing shows me kneeling in front of Zurich building, No. 400 University Ave., which is where I submitted my application for the Provincial Nominee Program (CIC, 2017) as a part of the preparation for the federal immigration process. The vision for the drawing comes from the day I made my way to this building to deliver my hand-made birthday card to an immigration officer whom I had met at the University of Windsor. This trip essentially marked the conclusion of my interactions with him. The fact that we never met that day, or any other day, could simply be described as an indiscriminate failed romantic endeavor. But in this drawing, the abhorrently industrial background, the building "looking-down" on me, with the CN tower and the Canadian flag by its two sides, as if they are

guarding it, all imply a form of oppression and some form of inferiority complex (Galarza, 2014). This complexity of visualization stemmed from the fact that my urge for attaining membership in Toronto's society was often hostilely downplayed by people that I interacted with.

Yearning for membership in a society is considered to be among the classical elements of citizenship[5] (Urry, 2012), as distinctly separated from one's formal status. Yet, failure in acquiring membership in the host society appears to be an integral part of immigration. This absence of membership is mainly influenced by the attitudes of the host society towards the newcomer, and it is namely this structural violence (Hron, 2009) that causes it. In order to compensate for this, I sought out participating in certain

activities, which I hoped would bring me close to those with similar interests (Bourdieu, 1984). However, most of my social circles seemed to recognize success in a pluralist frame and found satisfaction in making one's ends meet (Hron, 2009). For immigrants, I knew specifically that this set of pluralistic and capitalistic (Skeggs, 2013) values appeared as the hegemonic collective and the meaning of their presumed path towards integration (De Leeuw & Wichelen, 2012). The only friendship I formed that was remotely similar to this membership or social bond was my interaction with one particular immigration officer, or at least with the numerous interests we shared. His short-lived company made me feel "that I existed again." The miscarried attempt to reconnect, yet another social failure, meant to me that he had retreated back to the structure that demonstrated hostility towards me. I had to understand that he was possibly a part of that structure that continuously reduced and rejected me to begin with. I had to acknowledge the fact that I am a temporary worker – a nobody with no connections, and no capacity for emotions that I could even express for the purpose of experiencing simple human connections. In this drawing, I am removing a mask that represents my failed attempt at fitting in, or for looking pleasant, for appearing less like a temporary resident who is running around to find a place to live and seeking employment, and more like a woman with pop-culture feminine attributes. This in and of itself is an indication of an effort to comply with a system that asserts that a person's recognition, and even level of desirability, depends on their economic and social status (Skeggs, 2013). This moment, therefore, was shockingly painful and I felt like:

"I was dying."

As is evident, I had not died. Even, paraphrasing Durkheim (1951), my act in creating this drawing was not even directly antecedent to death for death to be regarded as its effect. There is the indirect relation and the nature of the phenomenon that remains dreadful nonetheless – creating in response to pain, giving birth to a new identity that is manifested in corporal suffering, and an urgent need for relief (Hron, 2009). I bleed, and a whale is born from within me.

Drawing Two: York Mills Road

Figure 2

York Mills Road, 8.5" x 11", 2011

From this second piece, I disappear from the drawings, and the full-size whale represents what I had become – my social suffering. As she bleeds and drags herself on the streets, an embodiment of being overcome by the magnitude of the suffering and rejection looms. The whale is a symbolic revolt against the self – a normally-must-suffer imagery that was imposed on me by my surroundings. There is a long-standing history of various forms of embodiment of suffering in migration literature. Embodiment of suffering, *mal partout* – an ache or hurting all over, or malaise, has been studied in clinical pathology as an established phenomenon (Hron, 2009). Hron herself summarizes one of these experiences that captures the pain of the rejected who revolts against the hostile system by self-harm. Similar to Adda's sister in *Ce pays dont je meurs* (Zouari, 2000 as cited in Hron, 2009) who dies due to refusing food after dealing with negative attitudes towards her for being an immigrant despite her relative success

at school, the bleeding whale recounts a clear negative and revolting attitude towards her surrounding resulting from anomy (Durkheim, 1951). My yearning to be a part of urban life in Toronto had brought me to mark myself in contrast with the structure that deluded my desire to think I had to be content with my conditions. Being pushed to live in places where there was no sign of a dynamic life-style, my suffering as a bleeding whale on land is a manifestation of the commonplace sacrificial immigrant experience.

From a sociological perspective, *York Mills* represents a non-place (Urry, 2007). A non-place among many that I had to commute through – a cut-off community with wide, empty, and senseless surroundings. In these suburbs the most human form of activity, and the only form of practicing social power, is *shopping* – an accumulation of goods and fetishization of accumulation. In this proverbial no-man's land, success was defined by an ability to commodify everything. In *York Mills*, commuters seemed to define themselves in some culture that did not go beyond identifying consumption as power.

"They think this is life in Canada. And I despised this life."

The whale is enormous, yet, invisible, stained, and frightening in an undesirable way. Even though her blood stains are everywhere, no one cares to rid themselves of her. The whale is a monster whose only purpose is to bear the suffering. And she is hopeless that the magnitude of her pain will never bring about change, attention, or sympathy. My revolt, unlike Adda's sister, remained symbolic. Notwithstanding, actions of self-inflicted hurt (in the case of Adda's sister) or pathologic responses (such as psychosomatic gastrointestinal disorders that I developed back then and prevail today), amidst social suffering related to immigration are recurring events in the immigration literature. These events or revolting actions, from Hron's (2009) point of view, make the immigrant authentic and distinguished and from Durkheim's (1951) point of view are provoked by indifference and social detachment. Provocation is another theme in Durkheim's critique of the pluralistic philosophy of industrial societies; where in these societies that have attained this view, success is, defined in accumulation of values, marked by financial security.

Drawing Three: Queen at Spadina

Figure 3

Queen at Spadina, 8.5" x 11", 2011

This drawing is related to the role of the host state in inducing suffering (Hron, 2009), specifically through temporariness as subsequent to PGWPP's conditions. PGWPP defined me as a temporary resident who could not use immigration employment services and was not allowed to register into any degree program either. Thus, a feeling of entrapment, or what in social sciences referred to as social immobility (Urry, 2007), was prevalent in my sensory experience.

Queen at Spadina was the center of the world. I kept coming around this intersection as much as I could for many reasons, including for spoken word poetry competitions at Drake Hotel, for attending the University of Toronto's socio – cultural studies classes (as a free participant), for science and business meet ups that I would read about online, for the University of Toronto's summer school, for Nuit Blanche, for the Comic Book Festival, for employment workshops, and for recruitment meetups.

Despite my efforts, I would either find myself back in the suburbs I lived in, or in the dichotomizing corridors of immigrant settlement and employment centers. Often questioned about why I could not "sell myself" well, or acquire an "elevator pitch," or be "happy," "feminine," and "smile" enough to get a job, I had eventually internalized a sense of inefficiency (Hron, 2009). As if I had accepted that I had to adjust accordingly, I remained focused on monetizing my ability, my degrees, my body, my looks, my intellect, and all of that was external and attached to me (Hron, 2009; Skeggs, 2013). For doing so, I would agree with unfair employment and accommodation offers, falsely thinking that a temporary degradation would eventually help me gain work experience by the time I landed as an immigrant.

In other words, I experienced the very eventual internalization of self-disrespect and acceptance of suffering as an outcome of the mentioned structural violence (Hron, 2009). This, from Skeggs (2013) point of view, is an integral part of colonial formation in which the respectability of a person relies on the possibility of a self that can conceive of a future in which value is realized as a specific exchange-value. This transforms any story into employability adventure (Skeggs, 2013), which means that if I appeared unemployable, it automatically deterred me from respect and increased my social suffering.

This piece arguably poses a critique to the fetishization of mobility (Sheller & Urry, 2006), which is a common concept in international education and skilled migration discourse (CIC, 2019). From my perspective, the economic criteria/social class that is imagined for student immigrants (Chira, 2016; Picot et al., 2007) seemed absurdly bogus in the context of temporariness. I was pushed to believe I was unemployable, unrespectable, and socially immobile, blocked in my ability to make any substantial decisions about my future.

"I was essentially a mobile person who had become socially immobile,
frozen in a moment of suffering."

The image reflects this by the whale trapped on a vehicle and between wires, as does any effort on the part of the whale to move does not lead to its liberation, rather exacerbates her suffering.

The emphasis in the artwork is not only on the symbolic presentation of death, but the suffering that is a predecessor to that death. The act of dying, or being murdered, theoretically relates this piece to anomy – the state that, as Durkheim describes, can manifest itself in acts of violence against oneself or others. The artwork is an indicator of

bafflement by subjectivity, to the point of aesthetic excess and implosion. The self transforms into another being. "The self no longer has any real existence, only a perspectival appearance as a site where all the referents converge and implode," (Skeggs, 2004, p. 83). The subconscious expression of violence makes explicit the non-conventional discourse about suffering. The beached whale is only magnifying her suffering by letting herself die on a vehicle that is iconic to downtown Toronto. Making explicit what suffering looks like, here the drawing carries an introspection towards the conventions that partially reproduce the existing homogeneous perception about international students as immigrants.

Drawing Four: Hudson's Bay

Figure 4

Hudson's Bay, 8.5" x 11", 2012

During the transition period, I felt more depressed and estranged in the winter months, especially around the holidays. This depression and estrangement was amplified by an overdose presentation of signifiers of the holidays in Canada. The whale's explicit despair here among Christmas shoppers, however, is not a cry for joining the collective of holiday celebration or to resist it – she is impervious, disturbed, and subconsciously continues an urge to break with the structure.

This very structure is one that bares an over-representation of immigrants during the holidays since those in weak socio-economic conditions should not have time for holidays (or any form of ritualistic celebration per se) which marks their marginalization (Moreira, 2017). And, this structure is the one that categorizes immigrants as a hegemonic group, the one that reduces the criteria for recognition to those qualifications that alienate them with the very colonial markers of singularity and marginalization. These markers have become the presets of theoretical happy endings to the immigrant's integration journey (Henley, 2016); the hard-working immigrant, who takes on anonymous positions and odd working hours, is usually depicted as the naïve hero that is eventually integrating into the host society (Hron, 2009).

In this structure, the naïve hard worker, the immigrant, is given an alternative option – to belong to the pain-filled discourse of politics that fights for equality of marginalized people. This latter is aimed at attaining political recognition and in doing so, celebrates the social suffering that it is opposing as a means to represent hybridity, otherness, and resistance (Hron, 2009). And doing so, it affirms the same anomy and isolation that created it in the first place.

The spiteful monster I had become revolted against living within the dominance of these two discourses, both of which seemed to perpetuate suffering.

"I had simply become an ultra-thing."

I had become a malevolent and infinitely sad thing, dragging myself along some of the most commercial spots in Toronto, hoping to stand above and beyond the holidays' routine. In fact, I recall that in some moments, I felt that my sadness was so enormous that it could turn into an extra ordinary piece. As if this whale was real, it would turn heads, it would frighten some, and it would be phenomenal.

Discussion

The drawings in this study converge in the symbolic use of whales, blood, and urban spaces. The feel of the space emboldens pondering social outcomes of mobility wherby the internalization of inefficiency and disrespect takes place due to interactions with a society that subscribes to the pluralist notion of success. Yet, a part of suffering is concealed in the fluctuating sea of feelings towards the places of living and working. On the one hand the researcher is aspired to become a part of the dynamic downtown, but her social positioning puts her in a disempowered condition that makes her presence in that very location anomic and unrelatable. On the other hand, she is torn between the downgrading effect of living in an environment and a community that identifies her supposedly ordinary-first-world pointless snobbish aspirations. In such condition, these aspirations seem to effectively act like a swamp drowning her nervous pursuits heedlessly.

These become the generative engine of depression and plant a sense of alienation in her conscience that her artistic presentation of self, formerly done through self-portraits, alters into the symbolic anomic state of a whale. The creature is caught in a friction and absolute suffering, to the point that it encloses the subject – the whale – to death. In this article, this alienation is referred to mainly as a consequence of inaccessibility of physical and social mobilities in the suburbs and urban places, being pushed into the margins, is due to socio-economic status and temporariness, and provides integral parts of immigrant suffering discourse (Hron, 2009).

These art pieces are not seeking to politicize the pain, nor do they demonstrate hope for turning the whale into a happy estranger. That is the status integrated immigrants seem to comply with despite their pain throughout the process (Hron, 2009). The suffering here is more relevant to Urry's (2007) explanation of inequality that is manifested in an absence of membership in societies – one that is regardless of one's formal status and resonates more with human connections. As both Urry (2007) and Durkheim (1951) mention, such membership in capitalist societies is less socially constructed and depends more on the individual's success in accessing the desired networks (Durkheim,1951; Urry, 2012). The more capitalist and hegemonic illusions of success become centralized within a society, the more potentially desired networks become decreasingly accessible. Relevantly, inequalities in this sense affect immigrants more, only for that bonding with any new society that is immersed in its consumption of capitalist values is less likely. The inability to access institutions, while bearing the weight of unhealthy social interactions, are completely different issues from that of facing outward racism or encountering a lack of recognition for foreign degrees, both of

which are often brought up in anti-discrimination discourses (Arthur & Flynn, 2013; Bodycott, 2009). These interactions, nonetheless, bring crucial moments of suffering into one's trajectory.

The main arguments and contributions of this article can be divided into considerations for reviewing the conditions of PGWPP, an emphasis on social immobilities magnified by the living conditions that proceed temporariness and relentless efforts of fulfilling the capitalist prospects of success. As well, there is an argument for an expansion to the body of post-graduate migration literature into expressive and subjective narratives. For the former, the review of the art pieces demonstrated the effect of temporariness as an influential element that can produce feelings of suffering and alienation for the PGWPP holder as the condition slips away from the individual towards social interactions, personal relationships, and especially wrong networks which this text refers to as undesired networks or social interactions. This analysis emphasized on the detrimental impact of an absolute absence of access to institutions, particularly the inability of a PGWPP holder to benefit from immigration services in employment searches. These conditions only deteriorate respectability, perpetuate demeaning living conditions, and aggravate the state of anomy. In a way, such an anomic state reflected in these drawings provides an alternative introspection towards the proclaimed mobility of the educated and skilled migrant, which is linked to the study's first appeal calling for a review of the conditions of PGWPP, as per permit holders' access to immigration services, as well as their inability to register in academic degree programs.

The analysis also focused on the ability of expressive forms as carriers of knowledge and truth about immigration suffering (Hron, 2009), and therefore connects post-graduate migration to a larger body of work that recognizes the significance of suffering and opposes the silencing of it. For the past several decades, the assumption underlying some social policy has been that humans can be treated as machines whose actions can be predicted by attempting to gain the maximum reward for the least expenditure of resources or effort (Graeber, 2018). Presenting those very people as the "cream of the crop" and as axes of progression is only a sugar coating for the very realities that many top down programs do not seem to consider in depth. The suffering presented here should be noted for the profoundness of the effect of such social immobility, one that is comparable to the doom of beached whales, anomic and dreadful. The suicidal state of the whale is largely due to being cut from relatable echolocation/communities, which is due to a disrespect for the sensitivity of the animals/ lack of realization of one's cultural capital from the side of her social circles.

As Hron (2009) clarifies, the host state is a determinant of the type of suffering and negative experiences that immigrants will face through policies and public assumptions. The issue of suffering of immigrants, therefore, can be traced back to a system that assumes the possibility that profit can be made from all practices, and that profit can then be stored in the self for the self to have value (Skeggs, 2004). Values in such a perspective are generated and organized via practices that are imposed by this colonial formation of the self. In such conditions, the essence of respectability is informed by the ability to monetize oneself. In other words, the individual in this system either has a place in the political economy or is romantic, gendered, and poor, and thus looked upon and does not have real value (Skeggs, 2013). There appears to be little room for anything in between these two dichotomies.

For immigrants and temporary residents alike who have severed their existing social relations, and those who are particularly barred from accessing institutions (PGWPP holders in this case), such a system is more detrimental and inevitably leads to emotional and physical distress for those affected. This distress, and the subsequent suffering, positions them in a state of anomy. Anomy is not specific to them as individual immigrants, but is the condition of industrialization, individualism, and singularizing, which are core elements of modern-day western societies (Durkheim, 1951). Such a state of affairs has shown to have specifically inflicted higher rates of suicides among immigrants in Canada (Trovato, 1989). Therefore, it is a reasonable proposition that expressions of immigrant suffering should not be divorced from the social arrangements and attitudes which have an impact on immigrants and who, as a result of this, display classic neoliberal symptoms (Springer, 2017).

What is at stake here is living in an anomic state that makes one feel as if they were passing through a slow and agonizing death. Even if there is no actual death in this article, the artwork can be interpreted as re-creations of a purely dismal mood, resulting from social suffering. In realizing this suffering, its magnitude should stand above and beyond monetization or fulfillment of conventional immigrant imagery. This study, in the end, is an invitation to abolish modesty in the academic literature when expressing internalized guilt for remaining invisible and under-employed (Skeggs, 2013). The impact of such suffering has been shown to be abiding and enduring (Hron, 2009; Moreira, 2017). The risk and toll of losing the existing connections and creating new ones for those on the move, especially in an era that is marked by its anomic state as a result of heightened signalization and individuality (Durkheim, 1951), should take center stage when defining sociological and economic studies of mobility. Both the feeling of alienation in space, and the embodiment of ineffable pain, are prevalent in immigration literary – yet not academic – writing.

Studies like this demonstrate that suffering and pain can be viewed as a source of knowledge in itself instead of viewing it as a rite of passage towards some economic goal which, in many cases, continues to be illusive (Hron, 2009). To speak in Durkheimian terms, to contend with pain as a part of life is the reason that there has to be, beside the current expectation of optimism which impels post-graduate migrants to regard the world confidently, an opposite current that is less intense and less general than the first, but one that is able to restrain it partially (1951). A country such as Canada, which relies on a diverse population, needs to avail itself of knowledge that is at arm's reach. People on the move, including post-graduate immigrants, are in need of monetary optimization just like any other human being. In addition, they carry a contemporary "feel" of where they are and who they are (Urry, 2012). And who they "are" may or may not have proved compatible with any state discourse about them. As long as their lifestyles and aspirations are forced to change so as to conform to the state discourse, the real narrative of who they are is left unexplored.

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ENDNOTES

¹Figure 5. An image of the Post Graduate Work Permit

²This meant that I would only have work if I could sell training sessions.

³Presumably due to closure of the Iranian Embassy in Ottawa (2012) that affected security check timing for Iranian applicants and the closure of the case processing center in Buffalo (2013) for which the government of Canada transferred applications to Ottawa.

⁴Upon knowing the case of 52Hz whale, I titled the full series of drawings which consists of 13 pieces "52Hz." They were formerly titled Toronto Series.

⁵Urry refers to this membership as classical citizenship