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**'Less Like a Wall': Negotiating Asylum in Contemporary
Australian and UK Reality Theatre**

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Abstract

This thesis takes as its starting point Elaine Scarry's theorisation of the benign room, which enables civilisation by acting as a filtering mediator between the body and the world. With this theoretical underpinning, I explore how contemporary Australian and UK reality theatre about asylum navigates and interprets what I have termed necrocivilisation (society predicated on the impermeable or overly porous cell rather than the room). Important work on performance and asylum has proliferated over the past twenty years, including compelling investigations of several plays discussed in the present project. This thesis draws on but also recasts these insights into ethics and political expediency, bearing witness, hypervisibility, and hospitality. The porosity of borders is a central concern in this burgeoning body of work, and this thesis will serve to illuminate past and future research by way of an extensive analysis of filtered and filtering boundaries in contemporary theatre about asylum. It offers a framework for reading these plays based on the concept of the filter, a metaphor that manifests in various ways (from sieve-like boats to the bodies of hunger strikers to plastic carpet runners) as the plays under investigation employ it to comprehend and communicate the individual and collective implications of necrocivilisational boundary production.

Australia and the UK are linked by Anglo colonial histories, theatre traditions, and the migratory imaginaries of both are intensely shaped by the sea. Given these connections between the two liberal democracies, as well as the tendency of European states to look to Australia's hard-line asylum policies as a guide, an examination of Australian asylum theatre alongside UK examples provides insight into continuities but also often subtle but significant points of divergence. The thesis examines three settings of asylum filtering: the journey and arrival, the holding cell, and civilisation. Each of these Parts contains two chapters focusing on two to three plays produced in Australia and the UK respectively. 'Part I: Vessels' examines plays involving both porous and impermeable vehicles that convey asylum seekers toward hoped-for security in the UK and Australia, and contextualises encounter on shores characterised as points of siege. Examining the Scarrian room's carceral perversion, 'Part II: Cells' locates the non-arrival of immigration detention and other carceral asylum measures in the filtering devices that construct and justify material and discursive cages for people seeking refuge. Finally, 'Part III: Civilisation' investigates plays that take for their subject Australian and UK civil society and its relationship to people seeking asylum. I argue that filters utilised in the plays I discuss frame how necrocivilisation thrives in each of these settings, and, importantly, how each play proposes to resist it. The thesis as a whole demonstrates that the filter as lens to investigate physical and discursive boundaries leads to important insights into both the power and limitations of theatre of asylum in western liberal democracies.

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Introduction

The public discourse of western states routinely describes racialised asylum seekers as threatening 'flood'. Borders must be shored up, the argument goes, or civilisation as westerners know it will end. In the midst of this prevailing attitude, safe passage for forced migrants is less and less assured. Though deaths at sea in heavily patrolled Australian territorial and neighbouring waters and the English Channel in the case of the UK, cannot be compared to the enormous loss of life in the Mediterranean Sea, policies that seek to limit numbers of arrivals to states like Australia and the UK merely serve to increase violence through refusal to engage. Operation Sovereign Borders established in 2013, for instance, effectively halted boat arrivals to Australia. However, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions Agnès Callamard notes in her 2017 report *Unlawful Death of Refugees and Migrants* that Australia's policy of pushing boats back to their ports of origin not only violates the principle of non-refoulement but constitutes 'excessive force' as it places forced migrants into circumstances of extreme danger (10). Thomas Albrecht, then UNHCR Regional Representative in Canberra, declared in response to Australia's role in the distress of asylum seekers in detention centres in Papua New Guinea and Nauru that '[h]aving created the present crisis, to now abandon the same acutely vulnerable human beings would be unconscionable ... Legally and morally, Australia cannot walk away from all those it has forcibly transferred to Papua New Guinea and Nauru' (Albrecht). Western countries (with the notable exception of Germany) have accepted a minute fraction of the current forcibly displaced populations that countries like Uganda, Lebanon and Jordan have received. Those people who do gain admittance into western states encounter immigration and asylum systems often deliberately and explicitly hostile to their needs. While civil society in these places encompasses a broad spectrum of attitudes and backgrounds, even sympathetic citizens struggle to intervene in a discourse that demands frequently impossible and traumatic feats of asylum seekers in the name of preserving civilisation.

Much academic work has addressed the situation of forced migrants the world over since the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees ratified an official definition of a refugee and the 1967 Protocol extended duties of protection to refugees world-wide. If national and international policy is to be effective, however, we must examine barriers to and facilitators of inclusion, as well as what inclusion means, through the many lenses that art enables. In recent years, scholars of literature and theatre have begun to add their expertise to critical discussions of encounters between citizens and noncitizens. Emma Cox and Caroline Wake note that work on performance and asylum has proliferated in the 10 years between Helen Gilbert and Sophie Nield's 2008 special issue of *Research in Drama Education* on this topic and their own in 2018 (141). In the introduction to the latter special issue, the editors observe

that although policy in Australia has not abated in its forceful exclusion of asylum seekers, public outcry as well as scholarly engagement with the topic has slowed at a time when this attention is on the rise in Europe (Cox and Wake 142). Considering the important historical and contemporary relationship between the UK and Australia, the present project looks at how theatre in both locations has responded to 'refugee crises' since 2000 and how this development interacts with dominant discourses.

The Room and the Cell

To explore how contemporary Australian and UK reality theatre about asylum navigates and interprets the forces that imperil life, I build my theoretical foundation from Elaine Scarry's formulation of the room as basic unit of shelter:

In normal contexts, the room, the simplest form of shelter, expresses the most benign potential of human life. It is, on the one hand, an enlargement of the body: it keeps warm and safe the individual it houses in the same way the body encloses and protects the individual within. But while the room is a magnification of the body, it is simultaneously a miniaturization of the world, of civilization. ... [I]ts walls, for example, mimic the body's attempt to secure for the individual a stable internal space — stabilizing the temperature so that the body spends less time in this act; stabilizing the nearness of others so that the body can suspend its rigid and watchful postures; acting in these and other ways like the body so that the body can act less like a wall. (Scarry 38-39)

A vital intervening space between body and world, Scarry's room provides the protection necessary for the individual to encounter the world without being overcome and destroyed. The room's key function of relieving the body's need to assume the hardness of walls 'enables the self to move out into the world and allows that world to enter' (Scarry 38). Shelter cannot be impenetrable but affords the basic safety of a boundary that enables bodies to encounter and negotiate the world with openness and a degree of porosity. Scarry's sheltering room permits the body to assert itself as an entity but also to grow and change in accordance with its own needs and the needs of others in the world.

This sheltering room is, in turn, a building block for a more expansive space of negotiation and co-creation. Scarry defines civilisation as the collection of 'acts of making' enabled by the room as fundamental unit of shelter (39): 'the walls are also, throughout all this, independent objects which realize the human being's impulse to project himself out into a space beyond the boundaries of the body in acts of making, either physical or verbal, that once multiplied, collected, and shared are called civilization' (Scarry 39). Scarry explicitly describes 'acts of making' as encompassing both the physical and the verbal (Scarry 39). The room is a physical space regulating temperature and the nearness of others so that the body need not act as a wall (Scarry 39). But the concept of the room represents psychological shelter, as well, filtering

otherwise overwhelming amounts of stimuli so that individuals and groups can perceive meaning and share it in language. The impulse to project the self 'beyond the boundaries of the body' constitutes the vital act of taking up space in a symbolic world, of having meaning (Scarry 39). Within civilisation's principle of 'advanced social development' ('civilisation'), Scarrian shelter requires the tools and ground to build, maintain and shape the room as enabling space for 'acts of making' (Scarry 39). Civilisation encompassing verbal space draws on and feeds into discursive environments. Such a lens conserves the social element that Sara Ahmed also draws out in her formulation of the role of emotions in the formation of boundaries and surfaces: 'emotions are not "in" either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects' (Ahmed *The Cultural* 10). To think of the room in discourse as well as physicality is to think about the body's need for shelter on a discursive as well as physical level.

To use the room as critical lens, we must also pay attention to the way shelter materialises through furniture in addition to walls. In English, the development of the word 'furnish' runs closely parallel with that of the word 'frame', both verbs based on 'from' meaning "forward movement, advancement, progress" (Ayto). Scarry links this etymology to her conceptualisation of the sheltering, civilising room in terms of the room's function as facilitator of the individual's movement beyond to build the social world in concert with other bodies:

Both in the details of its outer structure and in its furniture (from 'furnir' meaning 'to further' or 'to forward,' to project oneself outward) the room accommodates and thereby eliminates from human attention the human body: the simple triad of floor, chair, and bed (or simpler still, floor, stool, and mat) makes spatially and therefore steadily visible the collection of postures and positions the body moves in and out of, objectifies the three locations within the body that most frequently hold the body's weight, objectifies, finally, its need to become wholly forgetful of its weight, to move weightlessly into a larger mindfulness. (Scarry 39)

Along with Scarry's emphasis on furniture as bearer of bodily weight, I would also stress the discursive as well as physical role of furniture as frame. To make visible the weight of a body through furniture is to frame that body as a presence or absence, delineating where it is and where it is not. Just as the room's walls allow its occupant to admit manageable amounts of stimuli to produce and locate herself in meaning, so the framing function of furniture supports the body's shape in flux. Discursive furnishings constitute what serves as a given in terms of basic tools, the 'triad of floor, chair, and bed' that allow the body to rest and to change posture in negotiations for space in the world (Scarry 39).

So far so civilised. The room and its furnishings are the basis for civilisation's unfurling. However, in this very capacity they also have the potential to become civilisation-obliterating.

In Scarry's discussion of torture's structure, she highlights this capacity as critical to the torturer's active destruction of another being:

The room, both in its structure and its content, is converted into a weapon, deconverted, undone. Made to participate in the annihilation of the prisoners, made to demonstrate that everything is a weapon, the objects themselves, and with them the fact of civilization, are annihilated. ... In the conversion of a refrigerator into a bludgeon, the refrigerator disappears; its disappearance objectifies the disappearance of the world (sky, country, bench) experienced by a person in great pain; and it is the very fact of its disappearance, its transition from a refrigerator to a bludgeon, that inflicts the pain. The domestic act of protecting becomes an act of hurting and in hurting, the object becomes what it is not, an expression of individual contraction, ... when it is the very essence of these objects to express the most expansive potential of the human being, his ability to project himself out of his private, isolating needs into a concrete, objectified, and therefore shareable world. (Scarry 41)

Being confined for inordinate amounts of time, for instance, unmakes the civilising act of resting. As the body needs to change its posture, the once comfortable chair presses and becomes painful when the required movement is restricted. Likewise, in language a term like 'asylum seeker', employed to designate a person requesting refuge, becomes oppressive as it sticks to individuals and accrues connotations that impede shelter and negotiation for space in the world.

Similarly, the four sheltering walls of a room may become the oppressive barriers of a cell. As the shelter is solid but permeable, the cell physically and/or discursively prevents the body and the self from moving beyond the space, effectively shutting down the encounter and negotiation necessary to achieve and maintain shelter. The cell can work in two ways: through impenetrability and/or through exposure to dissolution. Just as the room's key function is to protect a basic bodily autonomy and boundary, in the case of impenetrability, the cell envelops the body in impenetrable walls that suffocate and cut the body off from negotiations with the world for what it needs. Like a boat full of holes, dissolution involves an over-porosity of the walls, amounting to extreme exposure and ultimate destruction of the body's integrity. In both cases, the person is denied the tools, material and ground required to shape a place in civilisation.

In her definition, Scarry acknowledges civilisation's link with the basic requirement of bodily shelter. However, she does not explicitly extend this definition to all bodies (though her definition certainly has this potential). Civilisation simply gathers together the acts of making of those with sufficient shelter to perform these acts and have them register in the wider world. Marginalised bodies, however, continue to be physically and discursively caged with lethal consequences. To bring this fact into theoretical focus, I define as necrocivilisation the collections and processes of making that dominate Australia and the UK. These civilisations

are largely predicated on the proliferation of cells rather than rooms. The term necrocivilisation acknowledges the emphasis Achille Mbembe's necropolitics reclaims from Foucault's biopolitics. While biopolitics usefully identifies the key feature of modern sovereign power as the ability to divide those who deserve to live from those who do not, it does not sufficiently 'account for the contemporary ways in which the political, under the guise of war, of resistance, or of the fight against terror, makes the murder of the enemy its primary and absolute objective' (Mbembe 12). By showing ultimate sovereignty to rest 'in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who *must die*', Mbembe makes explicit that active destruction is the *modus operandi* of modern western sovereignty (11; emphasis added).

The instances Mbembe lists (war, resistance, anti-terror) trigger states of exception in which the sovereign acts beyond the law, suspending rights to neutralise a perceived threat. Giorgio Agamben argues that in modern western arrangements of sovereign power, these states of suspended law have become the norm, a structure in which democracy and totalitarianism converge. Agamben illustrates the product of this modern sovereign imperative in the figure of *homo sacer*, a classification in ancient Roman law of an individual cast out of society who may be killed with impunity but not religiously sacrificed (72). *Homo sacer* exists as 'bare life,' that is, not natural life (*zoe*) but its politicised manifestation, stripped of the political purchase of the social (*bios*) and wholly abandoned to sovereign violence (28). Agamben posits that this little interrogated origin of modern sovereignty (the power to continually reduce individuals to the 'bare life' of *homo sacer*) is the key enabler of totalitarian behaviour in modern democratic states (122). It is the margin at the centre that asylum seekers and other non-citizens inhabit most visibly, but Agamben's implication that this exception has become the norm effectively extends *homo sacer* precarity to the citizen population, as well.

While Agamben's concept of sovereign power's ability and imperative to strip individuals of rights and social purchase is clearly visible in detention centres, asylum accommodation measures and the borders of western nations from the UK to Australia, critics often find his definitions too absolute. Indeed, in a project that examines the ways individuals resist dehumanising state, national and even international narratives, recognising the potential of the dispossessed to reclaim political subjecthood is crucial. Engin Isin and Kim Rygiel establish that frontiers, zones and camps are all spaces where states attempt to neutralise political agency by rendering migrants invisible, non-existent, abject (189). However, they go on to argue that these are also places whence abjects constitute themselves as political subjects by claiming rights (Isin and Rygiel 190). Adam Ramadan sees Agamben as a starting point but observes that nuanced and empirical investigation of refugee camps (in his study, Palestinian camps in Lebanon) reveals that sovereignty is far more dispersed than Agamben allows for, with political movements taking place within camps that are also governed by

international agencies often with little input from the nation-states in which the camps are located (72).

Patricia Owens furthers Ramadan's claim arguing that, while much of what Agamben posits is accurate and helpful, where he departs from Hannah Arendt in his non-differentiation of refugee camps from concentration camps (and, I would add, from detention centres as well) the emancipatory scope of his work becomes limited. While Owens allows that theorists like Jenny Edkins and Véronique Pin-Fat do employ Agamben in politically positive ways to evaluate lip sewing among asylum seekers as an effective political action, their claims that these acts embrace 'bare life' cannot create a new politics unless 'bare life' is consequently repudiated and transcended rather than celebrated as the pure human (578). Owens warns that refugee studies replaces Arendt's relational politics with Agamben's 'bare life' at its peril for it is 'when individuals *begin to create a public space* in-between them' that new political worlds can emerge and not by focusing on Agamben's 'pure human' who, as *homo sacer*, is stripped of rights (Owens 578). For Owens, who applies Arendt's ideas of the political to asylum seeker lip sewing, it is not the act itself but the discourses that surround it that are the location of protest's political meaning.

In light of these discussions of abject spaces and the extent to which Agamben's theories are appropriate and applicable to the symbolic and actual spaces that asylum seekers inhabit in Australia and the UK, it is opportune to point out here that these points will rest heavily on the specific and evolving policies of those nations. Certain aspects of Agamben's theorisation of the camp may be unhelpful in understanding many modern refugee camps. However, Ramadan also observes that the concentrated sovereign power acting in an asylum seeker detention camp like Australia's now closed Woomera detention facility (as opposed to the dispersed sovereignty of the refugee camps he studies) may be much more suited to Agamben's ideas (68). In the following chapters, I will make use of Agamben in analyses of specific spaces of asylum within the concrete histories of Australia and the UK noting where nuanced differentiation may need to be introduced and departures from Agamben are necessary.

If the state of exception is the norm and we are all *homo sacer*, the difference between those of us who may live and those who must die as per Mbembe's necropolitics are, I contend, the tools and space each of us has access to for building physical and discursive shelter. This is not to negate the critiques of Agamben noted above. Rather, the '*public space* in-between' where Owens locates political meaning involves a contextualisation that is vital to discursive shelter-building (578). The lack of shelter and the physical and discursive tools to build it derives from and perpetuates an active epistemological impoverishment. The sovereign

withholding of discursive legitimacy from bodies with particular characteristics masks and shifts the abandonment that Agamben notes all are subject to. Understanding western states as operating under a necrocivilisational logic of cell proliferation and creating borders to shroud a normalised state of exception productively frames resistance intervening in filtering borders.

The Border: Weaving Filters between Land and Sea

Australia and the UK are linked by Anglo colonial histories. Of particular import here, these histories share migratory imaginaries profoundly shaped by the fluid, isolating but also connecting border of the sea. This liquid boundary acts as a membrane or filter both dividing each landmass from and simultaneously connecting it to the world. This is true of both states though the UK shares a land border with Ireland and now arguably with France, as well, since the Channel Tunnel opened in 1994. Seaborne settlers have dramatically shaped the modern populations of both Australia and the UK, often to the great detriment of people already living there. Discourses deployed against 'boat people' coming to Australia and asylum seekers crossing to the UK from France and to Europe via the Mediterranean draw on the water's threat of dissolution through flooding to shore up the discursive and material borders of these states.

Present in the room's porous boundaries that shield but also open, the filter is an apt image to explore borderscapes, especially those incorporating such a strong liquid element. A filter is a 'selectively permeable barrier' designed to let some things in and not others ('filter'). The eye and a camera make images by filtering light, for instance. Psychologically, human beings filter to make meaning, letting in what the mind can cope with and filtering the rest away. This vital mechanism allows us to exist and move through the world with a crucial degree of agency. Such is also the function of Scarry's nurturing room: to let in only what allows our bodies to act less like a wall. In these ways, filtering is a vital action, but it can also be a destructive one: some may have much power to filter away what is uncomfortable or displeasing. This raises the question of the implications of this filtering on a civilizational level particularly for people that pervasive western discourses render as 'matter out of place', as destructive and invading flood (Douglas 35).

The filter manifests through different intensifications of civilisation from the body's own skin to the room to the landmass to the state as semi-porous entities. However, discourse threatens the vital porosity of these boundaries when it demands hard, impermeable borders. Ahmed's discussion of the 'soft touch' approach to immigration brings into focus the way hegemonic discourse insinuates that porous borders (to particular bodies) are ineffectual, skin-like, no more able to protect the citizenry than a naked body exposed to invasion:

the metaphor of 'soft touch' suggests that the nation's borders and defences are like skin; they are soft, weak, porous and easily shaped or even bruised by the proximity of others. It suggests that the nation is made vulnerable to abuse by its very openness to others. ... The demand is that the nation should seal itself from others, if it is to act on behalf of its citizens, rather than react to the claims of immigrants and other others. ... Such attributes are of course gendered: the soft national body is a feminised body, which is "penetrated" or "invaded" by others. (*The Cultural Politics 2*)

Such discourses suggest that the boundaries of the state are not wall-like enough, are too much like the body to allow it to suspend its 'rigid and watchful postures' (Scary 39). Anti-migrant discourse conceives of the outer perimeter, which in the UK and Australia is the liminal shore, as a space not of encounter and negotiation for mutual shelter but of invasion.

As a device that also works to 'recover a solid' ('filter'), the filter elucidates the negotiation that would take place on the shore for solid ground upon which to build shelter. Public discourse addressing immigration in Australia and the UK reference 'floods' and 'invasions' of immigrants and asylum seekers, producing a need to stem the tide with stricter border policies. Upon claiming refuge, asylum seekers are discursively and physically caged as those *hominis sacri* held in thrall to the law and simultaneously abandoned by it via Agamben's exclusive inclusion. In this way, the filtering away of these bodies works discursively in necrocivilisation to recover a solid, as well. It produces and maintains ground upon which to build and preserve shelter for white Anglo bodies who undergird their legitimacy with further power to reproduce filtering discourse that naturalises narratives imposed on other bodies. This necrocivilisational mechanism filters away asylum seekers that it designates 'flood', an overwhelming force without the human legitimacy to claim ground and tools to take up shelter on their own terms.

The ground that narrow, largely impenetrable filters produce, however, also imperils these white bodies. The discourse that understands the border of the nation as skin rather than land accommodating a multiplicity of shelters compels citizens to act like walls. The production of the asylum seeker as constant threat to national integrity normalises Agamben's state of exception, producing a multitude of brittle dwellings upon insubstantial (because necrocivilisational) ground. This ground, however, as well as the impervious filters it requires, can act as a site of resistance. As this ground is brought into crisis, theatrical renderings may represent it as crumbling, shattering or otherwise disintegrating, the narratives that founded it exclusively for Anglo populations ultimately unable to support life.

Ahmed's formulation of affective economies offers a useful vision of these filtering boundaries as surfaces delineating and connecting bodies through the circulation of objects of emotion. Emotions, argues Ahmed, function through impressions that accrue to and can saturate the surfaces of bodies, producing them as objects of emotion:

Drawing on Marx, I argue that emotions accumulate over time, as a form of affective value. Objects only seem to have such value, by an erasure of these histories, as histories of production and labour. But whilst Marx suggests that emotions are erased by the value of things (the suffering of the worker's body is not visible in commodity form), I focus on how emotions are produced. It is not so much emotions that are erased, as if they were already there, but the processes of production or the "making" of emotions. In other words, 'feelings' become 'fetishes', qualities that seem to reside in objects, only through an erasure of the history of their production and circulation. (*The Cultural Politics* 11)

Ahmed describes a process through which objects of emotion like "asylum seeker" become charged via circulation prior to encounter, a charge that conditions the meeting of bodies. Like Scarry's observation of the forward movement that is the root of 'furniture' and 'frame', Ahmed notes that "emotion" comes from the Latin *emovere* "to move out" (*The Cultural Politics* 11). In her discussion of Audre Lorde's account of a white woman moving away in disgust when Lorde (as a black child) sat next to her on a train, Ahmed notes how the bodies of the hated are imbued with emotions that become characteristics. This occurs when discourse erases the histories of the emotions' production. Bodies that accumulate these affects are locked in hatefulness while privileged white bodies move away, mobile in their ability to filter away the violence they inflict: '*Some bodies move precisely by sealing others as objects of hate*' (Ahmed *The Cultural* 57). In an inversion of Scarry's furniture supporting the body's weight to enable projection beyond the room, Ahmed's emotional accumulation enables a filtering and framing that removes this support from those whose surfaces trap them under the weight of displaced pain and violence. In this way, necrocivilisation shrouds the all-pervasive ban by filtering away histories that implicate hegemonic white bodies in brutality while locating the origin of uncivilization in racialised others.

Ahmed calls the work that emotions do a "'sticking" of signs to bodies' (*The Cultural* 13), and she describes her project as one of evaluating how the circulation of emotions conditions the way bodies surface in discourse and the effects these emotional demarcations have on the bodies in question: 'I am tracking how words for feeling, and objects of feeling, circulate and generate effects: how they move, stick and slide. We move, stick and slide with them' (*The Cultural Politics* 14). Bodies do indeed become stuck when their rooms turn to cells and they become trapped by the way their bodies surface discursively. Given my focus on filters, however, it is more precise to acknowledge a quality of the woven in this adhesion. Though its root in 'felt' denotes compressed wool through which liquid is passed to remove impurities or recover solids ('filter'), a filter is often woven. In this way, its structure is like that of a text, the root of which is also weaving. Additionally, 'context' produces significance through weaving together 'the parts which immediately precede or follow any particular passage or "text" and determine its meaning' ('context'). If we think of the filters or surfaces to which Ahmed

attributes a sticki- or slipperiness as consisting rather of a more deliberately woven weft of experiences threaded through the established and stationary warp of known concepts and objects of emotion we come to an understanding of a social fabric that shelters some and exposes others. As Owens stipulates, this context determines the meaning of the body and its protest (578). Resistance to hegemonic discourse and physical caging, therefore, can be usefully understood as an unpicking and re-weaving of experience through other warps. Resistance might even rip apart the warp altogether as what has not been permitted to surface overpowers the filter's strands.

Official filters, though seemingly objective to the hegemonic culture, are informed by the accumulation of affect-steering orientation and cultural norms. Often anticipating having reached a measure of safety, asylum seekers find they must continue to navigate discourses that trap them with impenetrable filters and dissolve the ground beneath their feet. The filter as a border functions as a site of oppression, but theatre makers also identify it as a site of resistance. Filter metaphors and imagery abound in the plays I analyse here. In the world beyond the theatre space hegemonic discourse machinery painstakingly weaves filters to smother equal encounter, producing demarcations that uphold a permanent state of exception and disavowing the violence that privileged bodies inflict upon epistemologically impoverished ones. The theatre space presents an opportunity to reframe the object of emotion 'asylum seeker', to contextualise on different terms and make meaning of what in popular and official discourse is pointedly filtered away. The agency of actively re-filtering in the theatre space subverts not only necrocivilisation, but also the absoluteness of Agamben's *homo sacer* status. While the transformational power of this temporary recasting may be temporally and spatially bounded, it nevertheless intervenes in a foundational filtering structure that functions oppressively in the bordering discourses of western liberal democracies like Australia and the UK.

Theatre space and the room

A Body Enters a Room

Ahmed notes that "a body can enter the room and cause a shift in the atmosphere because of what that body brings with it; histories that linger as mood" ("Not in the Mood" 22). To illustrate this point, she presents bell hooks' example of a black feminist transforming a mood from celebratory to tense by entering a room of white feminists who were previously "attuned" to each other through their experience of shared womanhood. This newly visible body, though also a woman, complicates the atmosphere inhabited by bodies that up until that point were able to ignore the histories she bears. Like hooks' room, theatre affords a space to encounter the histories of individuals who are systematically silenced. It may be an encounter that

generates, as it did for Helena Grehan seeing a performance of *Le Dernier Caravansérail*, 'a feeling of shame so profound that I wanted to flee the performance space and indeed the nation' (17–18). As the embodied figure of the asylum seeker takes the stage, the mood changes. The space becomes theirs to affirm the humanity or brutality of citizens in whose name violence has been enacted and who are members of a target audience for these works. In most of the plays I discuss here, these audience members enter the theatre space 'without guarantees', as David Farrier characterizes 'the glimpse of an ethical engagement with the narratives of those asylum claimants who, in a far more fundamental sense, offer themselves to be read without any sort of guarantee' ('Reading Without Guarantees' 60). The theatre space in particular facilitates conceptual shifts, unmaking and remaking filters that frame asylum seekers.

Michel Foucault's heterotopias offer a useful way to understand the dynamics of mood-troubling entrance. Heterotopias describe real sites where an abrupt break occurs that opens a space whence the arrangement of all other spaces within a culture can be contemplated (Foucault 24). Researchers looking at asylum often invoke heterotopias to describe the arrangements that cage asylum seekers, notably because heterotopias juxtapose several incompatible sites in a single space as well as opening onto heterochronies (distinct types of time) (See Palladino and Miller). These openings of space and time form a structure that permits, for instance, the island of Lampedusa to exist as a popular tourist destination and simultaneously as a place of detention and death for migrants. Necrocivilisational filtering keeps these simultaneous worlds apart, hence the power of troubling filters.

Foucault notes that in modern western societies heterotopias of crisis (sites reserved for bodies in transition: adolescents, those menstruating and pregnant, the elderly, etc.) have given way to heterotopias of deviation such as psychiatric hospitals and prisons, sites for people whose behaviour departs from the acceptable norm (25). Heterotopias of crisis involve identity; heterotopias of deviation concern behaviour. That said, a slippage occurs that aligns modern heterotopias of deviance with identity rather than conduct. In terms of asylum, this manifests as the discursive and material caging of those racialized bodies that stand for the asylum seeker as object of emotion. The melding of identity and deviance emerges as a result of what Ahmed describes above as the fetishizing of feelings, which, when histories of their production are hidden, become characteristics (*The Cultural Politics* 11). The tourists that visit Lampedusa need not be mindful of their implication in histories of oppression because racialized migrants arriving at the same shores disappear into detention or beneath the waves. '*Some bodies move precisely by sealing others as objects of hate*' (*The Cultural Politics* 57).

A staple in the foundations of every human society (Foucault 24), heterotopias are as necessary as Scarry's four walls and just as ambivalent. Their specific social function, which can change radically (Foucault 25), and a system of opening and closing ensure they are fundamentally bounded spaces (Foucault 26). Precisely because dramatically different experiences of the same place exist simultaneously, heterotopias require borders delineating what Agamben has called 'inclusive exclusions', that is, those who are included in the social order by virtue of their exclusion from it: *homines sacri*, not free but abandoned (Agamben 85). All citizens are effectively *homines sacri* according to Agamben (89), but the creation of heterotopias ostensibly based on citizenship permits the filtering from sight and abandonment of non-citizen asylum seekers, thus obscuring the *homo sacer* status of all people. Jacques Rancière conceives of the political efficacy of art residing 'not in the model (or counter-model) of behaviour that it provides, but first and foremost in partitions of space and time that it produces to define ways of being together or separate, ... being inside or outside' (Rancière 144-145). The theatre space presents a site where these inclusive exclusionary spaces and mechanisms can be contemplated and interrogated. Theatre offers asylum seekers a visibility different to the hypervisibility of the media and government discourse. In the theatre space, the object of tension can become the behaviour of citizens. Unlike the white woman on Audre Lorde's train, Helena Grehan could not flee though she wished to. The shame attached to her white body would remain.

Foucault explicitly names the theatre as a heterotopic space: "The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theatre brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another" (25). The theatre pieces I investigate here are also reality theatre, which I broadly defined as theatre with explicit links to the real world outside the theatre space. Much of the time this reality claim takes verbatim or documentary form, bringing the body of othered individuals into the room through what Carol Martin has called 'bodies of evidence': material documentation, audio recordings, performance of testimony, or simply framing an absent person, process or object. Theatre as heterotopia offers a further conceptual link between real sites and the theatre space through the freedom to reorder context and decide what incompatible sites surface on stage. Significantly, some of these other real sites, notably the courtroom, have similar performance and heterotopic elements to the theatre, but with marked and immediate material outcomes.

Distinctions between performance and performativity are important to understanding the power and limitations of the theatre space in addressing political inequity and grievance. Performance and performativity are linked: we perform quotidian roles according to social scripts of expectation continually re-inscribed, and we may be troubled by deviations from

these norms. However, the mediated nature of theatrical interpretations as interventions in our everyday 'real world' performativity are nuanced and complicated even if the physicality of theatrical performance in general manages to blur the lines more effectively than other genres. Judith Butler encapsulates a key difference between performativity and performance in her discussion of the socially disruptive potential of drag. To illustrate her point, she considers the difference between seeing cross-dressing on stage as opposed to on the bus:

In the theatre, one can say, 'this is just an act,' and de-realize the act, make acting into something quite distinct from what is real. Because of this distinction, one can maintain one's sense of reality in the face of this temporary challenge to our existing ontological assumptions about gender arrangements; the various conventions which announce that 'this is only a play' allows strict lines to be drawn between the performance and life. (Butler 'Performative' 527)

In reality theatre, however, the 'body of evidence' enters the room announcing that 'this is *not* just a play'. While Martin rightly calls for 'our obsessive analytical attention' to truth claims in reality theatre (15), it is the very staging of a different reality that pointedly troubles assumptions that Butler shows can be largely maintained in other forms of theatre. Reality theatre does not simply present an alternative version of events (though it does this, too), but rather challenges its audiences to attempt to reconcile truth claims of the public sphere with those that the theatre foregrounds.

The designation of the theatre as space of truth blurs the boundaries of spaces beyond it that retain elements of performance in the form of protocols and procedures. Richard Schechner describes performance as a fan-like continuum and web of interacting nodes that encompass, among other manifestations, everyday performativity, theatre, play and ritual (xvii – xviii). Similarly, Baz Kershaw notes that, when thinking about how theatre works in the world, it is useful to broaden the scope and think about how a performance might feed into and draw from wider shifts in culture (3). The heterotopic theatre space interacts with official spaces like the performance context of asylum adjudications, for instance. In asylum proceedings, a profoundly important material change in status is at stake (the transition from asylum seeker to settled refugee or to 'failed asylum seeker'). However, the official performances that inform and constitute adjudication proceed from a single line of narrative among many (Woolley 'Questioning' 40). The ability of a piece of non-official theatre to foreground this fact can potentially trouble the ontology underpinning asylum decisions and policies.

Of special import to analyses of performance, Hannah Arendt points to the artificiality of politics in the mask of the public persona that is 'given and guaranteed by the body politic' (*On Revolution* 98). Arendt does not deny the existence or importance of bodies. Rather, she emphasises that politics is relational and as such only deals in the perceptions people have of

one another mediated by the discourses of a public sphere. The discursive body politic builds walls that shelter or confine depending on the ascribed identity or political 'mask' of the body within. The discursive capacity of and tools available for these bodies to project themselves out into the world by troubling the givenness and guarantees of dominant discourses is, therefore, vital. An examination of the affects that public discourse repeatedly ascribes to particular identities in the public sphere is central to understanding how shelter-building works by challenging discursive givens and in the theatre as potential incubator for these challenges.

Arendt's emphasis on speech as requisite for political being emphatically calls to mind Scarry's verbal acts of making that project and protect the body out into the world. Arendt's thought has in recent years been critiqued by those who find her formulations exclusionary to groups unable to access her public sphere (Hedva). However, given that the subject of this project is theatre of asylum and therefore predicated upon the insertion of excluded narratives into a public sphere in which they are otherwise invisible, Arendt may yet be helpful without negating the legitimacy of current critiques of her work on the political and the public sphere. In fact, reading Arendt alongside Scarry brings a more inclusive understanding to the former without sacrificing Agamben's focus on the body (a focus that Owens dismisses): building protection out into the world nurtures and allows for the inner life of the body that Arendt fervently disassociates from politics to exist, flourish and, in Scarry's terms, act "less like a wall" (39). Arendt's theory would define this verbal world-making as political to the extent that shelter is built in concert with others.

Sitting in the Space Where I Was Not

Arendt's separation between the inner life of the body and the political persona recalls the challenges of making pain visible. Scholars frequently cite Scarry's theories presented in *The Body in Pain* to bridge the conceptual gaps between pain, language and art. Pain, Scarry observes, is not only ineffable, but ultimately the destroyer of all language (4). In a gesture toward an ethical engagement with ineffable pain and trauma that 'cannot be shared through empathy', Ahmed suggests 'a different kind of inhabitation. ... learning to live with the impossibility of reconciliation, or learning that we live with and beside each other, and yet we are not as one' (*The Cultural Politics* 39). In productions representing asylum seekers, Ahmed's engagement requires a simultaneous seeing and acknowledgement of unknowability. Reality theatre is fraught with the danger of appropriating and universalising pain, but it also has the capacity to move beyond the re-inscription of asylum seekers as tragic objects of emotion.

The danger in representing asylum seekers on the stage stems from a system that enforces an exceptionally narrow filter. Western asylum processes increasingly demand asylum

seekers have others speak for them, eloquent others from the citizenry tasked with interpreting the asylum seeker to fit into the sovereign's self-legitimizing demands. Didier Fassin and Estelle D'Halluin's investigation of France's growing reliance on physical and psychological marks of trauma reveals silencing as the physical body is made to speak for the person seeking asylum via these citizen agents (598). France in this aspect is similar to the UK and other western states where doctors provide official reports of trauma for asylum adjudications. A perversion of Scarry's creative and sheltering acts of making, this sort of 'embodied' body playing a role in its own protection is produced under the confining exigencies of western states that demand clinical corroboration of already narrow (linear and 'credible') narratives of victimhood. Fassin observes that accounts presented in recent years are less and less likely to be asylum seeker voices: 'lawyers speak in their stead; volunteers help with their application, some even specialising in the so-called preparation of narratives; physicians and psychologists attest to their past experience' (285). In these real-world situations where the state along with lawyers, charity workers and doctors (and, in the wider world the media, as well) write the parts of asylum seekers, resistance requires an alternative place of encounter between the person seeking asylum and citizens in whose name the sovereign decides.

In light of Fassin and D'Halluin's observations of the heavily mediated stories the state demands, we must qualify Scarry's theory of bodies and rooms. When Fassin and D'Halluin talk about the asylum seeker's body, it is a body deprived of the creative tools to project a voice out into the world. It is passively inscribed, labelled abject victim or bogus asylum seeker. Scarry also investigates a body rendered voiceless by trauma. However, the body that Scarry describes does have the tools to project itself out into the world; 'in normal contexts' it has a voice, a presence and potential that Fassin and D'Halluin's 'protected' body does not. Enforced inability to shape narratives and spaces of encounter leaves little room for troubling and recalibrating relationships. Moreover, even in the theatre space the body seen to project itself out into the world is not the sole or even the primary author of its own highly mediated protection. The involvement of citizen theatre makers does not preclude the troubling of political relations with more than simplistic counter-narratives of refugee contribution to society. However, I will draw attention to the complex dynamics of discursive protection and exposure for citizens, state and asylum seekers made manifest through the spatial lens theatre offers.

Voyeurism is of great concern in the production of theatre working to empower marginalised subjects in discourse. Julie Salverson uses the example of a student's romanticised portrayal of the complete loss and uncomplicated sadness of an imagined Bosnian refugee: 'Anita, with the best of intentions, could imagine nothing of the Bosnian woman's strength, her possible humor, her complexity or her courage' ('Change' 124). This flattened-out representation did

prompt 'sympathy, guilt and horror ... but also a complete inability to respond' (Salverson 'Change' 124). Salverson notes that the student herself was invisible in the delivery of the story and points out this lack of an "in" to place themselves in relation to the other depicted as a source of voyeurism ('Change' 124).

Anita's absence from her performance of, consequently, universalised loss speaks to a tension in reality theatre that springs from an arguably universalist susceptibility to voyeurism when removed from a local context on the one hand, and the local's reduced reach on the other. It is a tension that has led some practitioners to question verbatim being performed outside the source community. Actor Paul Makeham goes as far as to say that a universalist response to a verbatim play like *Aftershocks*¹ is a form of censorship:

[T]o understand the play in terms of a dehistoricised, unlocalised 'universal human spirit' is ultimately to negate its power as a history written by a particular group of people in unique circumstances ... Ultimately, the universalist response is one of appropriation, a falsely inclusive reading, which serves the purposes of the dominant 'Art' culture ... Such appropriation has the effect of a form of censorship, a censorship of inclusion rather than exclusion - but serving nonetheless to repress the voices of a particular socio-political formation. (36)

While Anderson and Wilkinson disagree with Makeham's position that verbatim theatre should remain within its community of origin, they do recognize a shift in a play's authenticity when it is staged outside the community that inspired it. The popularity of *Aftershocks* beyond Newcastle, they argue, suggests that audiences are now responding to its credibility rather than first-hand knowledge of what was said (Anderson and Wilkinson 159-160).

Anderson and Wilkinson's treatment of the local/universalist tension does not substantially address the dynamics that come into play as a representation of specific bodies is taken into more extensive iterations of civilisation. While they quote Kate Gaul saying the 'upswing' in verbatim theatre has come as, 'losing our way in the bigger world, we go to something smaller and start there. Getting back to basics and telling the stories of the community' (qtd in Anderson and Wilkinson 41), the implications of how these 'basics' function in the broader reception of political theatre leaves many questions unanswered and unasked. The depoliticisation Markham points to is linked to Salverson's concerns about voyeurism. When asylum experience is appropriated into a universalization of sadness, pain and trauma, what is at stake is the critical apprehension of the increasingly impenetrable boundaries that are being built in the name of audience members with the power to constructively respond.

¹ Australia's first verbatim play, *Aftershocks* was produced for and with the Newcastle community coming to terms with the trauma of the 1989 earthquake.

In his examination of the Swiss films *Escape to Paradise* and *La Fortresse*, Roger Bromley observes how, in the west, asylum seekers must face nationalist narratives that seek to erase them and hamper aesthetic acts that create possibilities of different political configurations between citizens and asylum seekers (107). The trouble with representing asylum seekers as emblems of tragedy is that this, in turn, overwhelmingly fortifies dominant narratives of generosity on the part of the state and its citizens. The citizen virtue narrative maintains the position of the privileged citizen rather than troubling the foundations of their power, making room only for a 'narcissistic charity' (Salverson 'Change' 124). While theatre makers may be well intentioned, so are the charity workers, lawyers and doctors who work to silence the voice and draw evidence from asylum seeking bodies for a better chance at sanctuary.

Salverson identifies witness as the constructive alternative to voyeurism and appropriation ('Taking' 249). Describing the difference between the voyeur and the witness in psychoanalytic practice, Ghislaine Boulanger applies W.R. Bion's concept of the psychoanalyst's role as witnessing 'container' (29). The witness enables the subject to make meaning of trauma via an other who receives the fragmented, affectively overwhelming telling without imposing a narrative (Boulanger 28). Witnessing, Boulanger emphasises, involves suspending the urge to 'explain away traumatic reactions' in favour of allowing 'our minds and our selves to be temporarily undone. ... Meaning must emerge from the process, it cannot be imposed' (Boulanger 28). To extend Scarry's theoretical frame, witness acts as a sheltering room that contains the body's raw traumatic experience that, once transferred into the containing space, allows the person to begin to order their experience and weave context, returning them to their thinking and speaking selves. Boulanger's description alongside Salverson's of witness in performance as a personal, social, structural and deeply relational transaction, creates an emphasis in the asylum theatre space on surrender to the chaos of stories as real as the official line or of facts retold in new lights (Salverson 'Taking' 245). Boulanger's witness is changed, as is Salverson's who bears witness at 'the cost of allowing oneself to be impacted upon and ultimately changed by what one hears' ('Taking' 248-249). This ability to change and be changed through continual address and response forms the basis of Kelly Oliver's witnessing structure of subjectivity, to which I frequently return in the chapters that follow (*Witnessing Beyond Recognition* 7). Once the asylum seeker comes into view to challenge the citizen's self-legitimizing borders, responsibility demands crisis and re-definition.

Vivian Patraha's discussion of Leeny Sack's *The Survivor and the Translator* offers a helpful image to appreciate the audience's positionality within this witnessing dynamic. The Holocaust is a legacy that Sack's grandparents as survivors passed down to her. Though she has no memory or language for the experience, the performance provided a way for her to 'sit inside the memory of where I was not' (Sack qtd in Patraha 105). The idea of sitting inside the

memory of others as a way 'to better understand how that history has shaped us in the current historical moment' has resonance for the positioning of reality theatre audiences in a different way (Patraka 106). Sitting inside the heterotopia of the theatre space can revealingly situate an audience within the mechanics of the present heterotopia that divides citizens from those that necrocivilisation encourages them to filter away and abandon. The body that enters the room in reality theatre about asylum is not necessarily a memory from a previous generation continuing to have force in the present, but rather a contemporary occurrence that is shaping citizen audience members, and demands they define themselves in direct response to it. As an audience is forced to make sense of the histories the theatre space encourages to surface, a discursive unravelling can take place. Like Grehan (17-18), audience members might feel the compulsion to 'flee the performance space and indeed the nation' out of shame. They might be made to feel the need to leave their seat within the room, but be unable to as they are locked, if only temporarily, in a space where they surface as other than virtuous. The intervention into filtering borders that the theatre space facilitates, their unpicking, exploding or reassigning, has the potential to yield a different solid ground that recognises that the civilisational entitlement of all people.

Definitions and Histories of Reality Theatre

If the Scarran room is an extension of the body and a miniaturisation of civilisation and through this mechanism either shelters the individual or confines them, then the effectiveness of the theatre space in terms of asylum representation lies in its ability to embody the playful potentiality of the non-serious as well as the ontological serious of the perceived real. This framing may account for the popularity of verbatim theatre in the representation of asylum. Not all the performances I examine here are verbatim plays. Works vary from the highly aestheticized *The Bogus Woman* to the testimonial *Souvenirs*. Nevertheless, all are inspired by and refer to actual situations of contemporary asylum. They all stage the 'serious' in some way and any fiction involved is at the service of coming to terms with real and current situations. An account of the origins of reality and verbatim performances will shed light on its popularity as a civilising intervention in the Scarran sense (protecting bodies that hegemonic discourse delegitimises) as well as its limitations.

While taxonomies of reality theatre vary, Wake formulates a useful categorisation that locates verbatim theatre in the middle of a continuum. This starts with the individual autobiographical play through community theatre made by and for a community (often with community members playing themselves); verbatim, typically involving a playwright and actors interviewing and playing community members; documentary theatre, composed of a variety of documents in addition to interviews; tribunal plays, scripted with official documents; and finally history plays,

inspired by actual events but taking more liberties with factual information gleaned from historical sources (Wake 'Verbatim' 6). Wake places these forms under the banner of reality theatre, noting that overarching and technical terms differ for theatre overtly connected to real events. US academics and practitioners, for example, prefer the term documentary theatre while in the UK these forms are likely to be talked about as verbatim theatre. In the present study, I use reality theatre as an umbrella term as per Wake's categorisation.

Most reality theatre is a mixture of the techniques Wake describes but it is useful to think of them through Scarry's lens as representing multiplications of alternately sheltering or confining structures. The forms start from an individual body (autobiographical plays), then to the communities of which that body forms a part (community theatre), through manifestations of bodies in official documentation (documentary and tribunal plays) to versions of a history (history plays) on a much broader and more universalising scale. Asking what bodies are represented and how they are portrayed at each level of the reality theatre continuum gives some insight into the recent popularity of reality theatre in representations of asylum seekers and refugees. When mainstream media and officialdom excludes and vilifies particular bodies, publics become receptive to re-stagings that include voices drowned out, versions that are 'truer' to life.

It would be simplistic and inaccurate to understand a theatrical intervention in each form to correlate to interventions on a like scale in reality: to understand autobiographical theatre as merely an exercise for individual reflection; community theatre as transformative of the communities under discussion; and tribunal and documentary theatres having direct consequences for policy decisions. If this were the case, then the techniques involving the smaller units of civilisation such as autobiographical and community theatre would hardly be worth doing: why focus on the small when you can influence wider reaching policy directly? Such an understanding gives both too much and too little credit to these forms. It is rare for a piece of theatre to change the course of policy and never as an isolated event. Rather, their influence is more realistically seen as cumulative, digesting and distilling events into a language that draws on and feeds into current discourses. That scale equates to like impact is also clearly not the case as reality plays making use of autobiographical and community-focused approaches abound and, in any event, a piece of reality theatre is likely to strategically combine these techniques.

At times of political crisis, reality theatre intervenes to present other versions of an official story. The idea of Scarran rooms – what they allow and what they inhibit in the context of theatre's role in testimony and witnessing – sheds light on the discursive shifts and resistance that happen when 'going out and finding a story and putting it in a room where lots of other

people can hear it' (Gaul qtd in Anderson and Wilkinson 41). These acts of creation realising 'the human being's impulse to protect himself out into a space beyond the boundaries of the body' open up spaces for different understandings and relationships at times when hegemony narrows public discourse (Scarry 39).

Origins of Reality Theatre

Though not strictly documentary, Attilio Favorini argues that the "documentary impulse" to digest and come to terms with current events is evident as early as the plays of Herodotus, Phrynichus and Aeschylus in Ancient Greece as well as royal chronicles and tragic "true crime" theatre of the Renaissance. The pivotal genealogical origins of the theatre that has become popular in western representations of asylum, however, lie in the *Sturm und Drang* school of 18th century Germany (Garde et al 9). Playwrights like Schiller and Goethe expanded drama's remit to experiment, rebelling against Neoclassicist universality with realist drama that aimed to address divergent human realities (Garde et al 9). Half a century later, Victor Hugo's 1827 manifesto in the preface to *Cromwell* rejected classical divisions of genre and unity and became a document that James Roose-Evans has called "the most important manifesto of the new realism" (15). Hugo states:

Let us throw down the old plastering that conceals the façade of art. There are neither rules nor models; or, rather, there are no other rules than the general laws of nature, which soar above the whole field of art, and the special rules which result from the conditions appropriate to the subject of each composition. The former are of the essence, eternal, and do not change; the latter are variable, external, and are used but once. The former are the framework that supports the house; the latter the scaffolding which is used in building it, and which is made anew for each building. In a word, the former are the flesh and bones, the latter the clothing, of the drama. (22)

Hugo's manifesto evidences a broadening of what drama was capable of addressing. His description of theatre trappings being changed as different materials suit different houses (I would add, for different bodies) is apt, as is 'clothing' acting as the mask, the potential protection or exposure through visibility, that drama may afford the body.

This opening up led to more innovative techniques for communicating the real, particularly the lives of ordinary people. In 1830s Germany, Georg Büchner quoted recent historical texts and incorporated first-hand observation into the first plays resembling docudramas in order to give voice to those habitually marginalised in mainstream accounts. This preoccupation was sustained by 19th century Naturalists like Zola, Chekhov and Ibsen. However, it was the advent of taped recording, which Erwin Piscator first mobilised in his political drama in 1920s Germany, that initiated modern documentary theatre as a roundly political tool to question mainstream media with the word-for-word accuracy that new technologies afforded (Garde et

al 11). Favorini describes Piscator's play *In Spite of Everything!* as an 'alternative to the capitalist newspaper accounts of the same events' (xvii – xix). Combining music, film, photography and cartoons, Piscator pioneered drama meant to inspire political action.

Much of the 1920s and 1930s documentary theatre developed in Europe and the US, including Piscator's work, was inspired by the USSR's Living Newspaper shows. The Department of Agitation and Propaganda (Agitprop) commissioned these sketches to present information on the progress of the Russian Revolution using slides, songs and segments of film to a largely illiterate and dispersed Russian population (Paget 'Documentary' 379-380). In the US, these Living Newspaper-style current events-based plays adapted for the stage by journalists and dramatists proved the most popular form presented by Roosevelt's Federal Theatre Project (FTP) (a government-funded programme to support performing arts during the Depression) (Garde et al 11-12). While agitprop theatre is primarily didactic, it laid the foundations for a theatre that sought to build the political profile of ordinary people. Piscator's leftist theatre, firmly grounded in working class struggle, used technology and construction on an epic scale to question mainstream norms and ideologies that perpetuated oppression of the labouring masses. Piscator's contemporary Bertolt Brecht developed and theorised this Epic Theatre emphasising "alienation" techniques (slides projecting a message across the stage, ending scenes abruptly before climax and resolution) to prompt critical approaches to ideology rather than emotional exploration of the characters. While these documentary and epic theatre influences are clearly visible in Unity Theatre's productions in the UK for example, Wake points out that the character identification techniques of much modern testimonial and verbatim theatre (especially recording and performing vernacular language) are more akin to realism or naturalism than many theatre scholars acknowledge ('To Witness' 107). Many of the plays I examine at in this study corroborate Wake's observation.

Both Brecht and Piscator fled Germany when Hitler's National Socialist Party came to power, and the Cold War "Red Scare" in the US, including the House Un-American Activities (which interrogated Brecht in 1947), ended the FTP in the US in 1939. However, the renewed social unrest and political consciousness of the 1960s brought reality theatre to the fore again as young West Germans tried to come to terms with the atrocities of their parents' generation; and the civil rights movement and opposition to the Vietnam War in the US as well as student protests throughout the world demanded accountability from governments. Brian Barton understands the advent of the first and second waves of reality theatre in the German context of the 1920s and 1960s as grounded in social and political questions 'considered too urgent, too complex or too overwhelming for fictional plots or characters being able to deal with them adequately. Under these circumstances, artistic truth needs to be certified by concrete documentary evidence' (qtd in Garde et al 12). Barton's insight carries through more recent

reality theatre booms, most recently in the post 9/11 era as the War on Terror reduces discourse to combative binaries and, as Rancière recognises, 'art is starting to appear as a space of refuge for dissensual practice, a place of refuge where the relations between sense and sense continue to be questioned and re-worked' (145). It is important to remember, however, that much of this early reality theatre performs to an audience that theatre makers wish to empower in their working-class identities. This audience dynamic is not the same for citizens in the 21st century watching asylum theatre that often attempts to trouble the stability of their sense of self.

Reality Theatre in the UK

The roots of reality theatre in the UK as a cluster of practices that emerge in moments of crisis are tightly bound up in the trajectories of 20th century working class struggle with emphasis placed predominantly on political processes rather than aesthetics (Filewod 63). A relationship between Roosevelt's FTP in the US and London-based Unity Theatre brought versions of the Living Newspaper to UK audiences during the Depression. Dedicated to cultural production for a working class denied political power, Unity Theatre spearheaded left-wing drama movements of the 1930s and during the Second World War combining diverse techniques including choral declamation, poetry, film, dance, drama, naturalism, revue, pantomime and Brechtian socialist realism (Chambers 21). Also prominent innovators during this period, the more expressionist Joan Littlewood and Ewan MacColl of Theatre Workshop, who had also produced versions of the Living Newspaper since the early 1930s, brought a commitment to representing the richness of working-class experience notably drawing on autobiography rather than a strict adherence to social realism's aesthetic unity. Ultimately unable or unwilling to serve burgeoning gender and racial political movements on the left, Unity Theatre began its decline in the 1950s, though directorship of Theatre Workshop's home, East Stratford's Theatre Royal, continues to stage underrepresented voices of East London. Both companies and the theatre makers they inspired and made room for established a foundation and traditions of empowerment for the politically marginalised that modern theatre companies continue to build upon.

In the 1960s, verbatim theatre began to separate itself from documentary theatre as a distinct form. Derek Paget, who first presented an account of verbatim theatre, locates its beginnings in a series of plays devised by Peter Cheeseman in 1960s Stoke-on-Trent. In plays like *The Jolly Potters* (1963), *The Knotty* (1966), and *Fight for Shelton Bar* (1974), Cheeseman distilled diverse personal narratives collected through interviews with local community members. Productions focused on processing and gaining perspective on events shaping the community: *The Fight for Shelton Bar* is about the closure of a local steelworks and *The Knotty*

looks at the railway's impact on Stoke-on-Trent. The difference Paget identifies between documentary theatre and Cheeseman's verbatim form rests on how the theatre director was using technology ('Verbatim' 318). Rather than relying on the projection or recitation of press or official documents, Cheeseman created the story from scratch with the community, sticking strictly to the recorded testimony's words and inflections.

In Paget's history of Cheeseman and his influences, authenticity is linked to advances in radio and documentary film as well as recording, cultural awareness, and an emphasis on vernacular speech. Paget defines the form's boundaries as 'firmly predicated upon the taping and subsequent transcription of interviews with "ordinary" people, done in the context of research into a particular region, subject area, issue, event, or combination of these things' ('Verbatim' 317). This primary source material becomes a text which is acted, usually by the performers who collected the material in the first place. The audience is aware that what they are hearing is 'real'. Though reality dramatists pay increasing attention to diversity, tensions between universality and particularity continue to be a prominent issue in this pointedly political theatre and emphasis on colloquial speech and idiomatic forms of expression remained a key concern in the development of verbatim theatre in the 1960s and 1970s.

While the 1970s and 1980s saw more feminist, queer and minority voices on stage, the shift that was the new experimental theatre of 1990s Britain is worth noting for the techniques and sensibility it pioneered. Playwrights like Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill and Anthony Neilson developed what Aleks Sierz has dubbed the In-Yer-Face aesthetic characterised by provocations of intense emotional response with explicit scenes of human extremity. While not usually explicitly contextualised with 'real' events or people as in reality theatre (though Kane has said of her play *Blasted* that the reality of human violence is much worse (Sierz *In-Yer-Face* 102-103), In-Yer-Face productions nevertheless critique the social conditions of a world its playwrights saw 'in a more complex light than their more ideological predecessors' (Sierz 'Still' 20). The staging of extreme pain along with the deeply private and taboo produces a strong response: the audience feel their space in the room is threatened, that they are in danger (Sierz 'Still' 18-19). Julia Boll has characterised such plays as presenting *homo sacer* on the stage (7), and Sierz makes similar Agambenian associations when he distinguishes new productions from shocking theatre that had gone before in that what had been the exception became the theatrical norm ('Still' 21). In shocking proximity and degree, In-Yer-Face brought the radically exposed body under free market economics into the room.

True to reality theatre's tradition of coming to the fore at times of political turmoil, its most recent resurgence across the western world has come as neo-imperial wars have escalated and most intensely in the context of the War on Terror. Noteworthy in Britain is Tricycle Theatre

(now Kiln Theatre), which continues the reconstructions of public inquiries that it began in 1994. Post-9/11 Tricycle Tribunal Plays interrogate the country's involvement in the War on Terror in productions such as *Justifying War: Scenes from the Hutton Inquiry* (2003), *Guantanamo: Honour Bound to Defend Freedom* (2004) and *Called to Account: The Indictment of Tony Blair for the Crime of Aggression Against Iraq* (2007). Recent asylum theatre has been largely testimonial (Ice and Fire Theatre Company) or explicitly based on real events and testimony (Kay Adshead's *The Bogus Woman*). In 2001, Banner Theatre's 'video ballads' (indebted to Ewan MacColl and Charles Parker's BBC Radio Ballads) began and included stories of forced migration as the human cost of capitalist globalisation (*Migrant Voices* and *Wild Geese*) (See Watt). More recently, 'Theatres of Sanctuary' among other asylum arts projects are appearing across the UK presenting the stories of local refugee and asylum-seeking populations.

Reality Theatre in Australia

Relationships with Communist theatres in the US, Europe, Russia and China in the 1930s nourished Australia's working-class theatre movement. Under the slogan 'Art is a Weapon', Sydney's New Theatre opened in 1932 as the Sydney Workers Art Club and claims its place as one of Australia's oldest continuously running theatres ('Our History'). Like Unity Theatre, New Theatre companies operated across the country and, until the 1950s, shared an emphasis on mobile theatre as a political strategy, performing for audiences everywhere from dole queues and parks to down mines (Brigden and Milner 331). Touring with a broad range of styles including the Living Newspaper, New Theatre politicised and revealed the social nature of spaces, if only briefly, as 'a product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions ... [and] always under construction' (Massey 9). Not only did New Theatre and its ilk broach topics underrepresented in the mainstream but it performed to underrepresented communities, as well. As with Unity in the UK, waning working class solidarity and Cold War anti-communism took a toll on New Theatre and mobile efforts largely ended (Brigden and Milner 340). However, its community-oriented reality theatre legacy would continue.

Though documentary and oral history plays had been staged for many years in Australia, the country's first technically verbatim play was *Aftershocks* in 1991 about the Newcastle Earthquake (Garde et al 15). Since then, Australian verbatim and documentary theatre has dealt with issues ranging from the exclusion of a local club from the National Rugby League (*Run Rabbit Run*) to fallout from nuclear tests (*Half a Life* and *Career Highlights of the Mamu*), to war (*Sandakan Threnody* and *Minefields and Miniskirts*) and prostitution (*Conversations in a Brothel* and *Bring a Nice Dress*). A significant part of recent Australian reality theatre concerns the grievances of marginalised indigenous people of which *Tribunal* is one example.

Australia also tends to stage verbatim productions from elsewhere. *The Laramie Project* from the US received wide acclaim, as did David Hare's *The Permanent Way* and *Stuff Happens* from the UK (Garde et al 16). Reality theatre, especially post 9/11, continues to feature in Australia, perhaps most prominently concerning conditions of asylum.

Rand Hazou has documented the unprecedented output of Australian plays engaging with the issue of asylum in the first years of the 21st century: 32 separate plays in just three years, from 2002 to 2005 ('Staging'). Of the earliest asylum plays was Urban Theatre Projects' 2001 play *Asylum*, devised by former detainees the same year the Tampa affair escalated 'policy and mood on unauthorized asylum seekers' and 9/11 ushered in the War on Terror (Cox *Performing Noncitizenship* 1). A number of plays focus on specific incidents like the Tampa, SIEV 4 and SIEV X, including most notably version 1.0's *CMI: A Certain Maritime Incident*. Hazou notes a shift in public opinion between the French company Théâtre du Soleil's 2002 show *The Flood Drummers*, which received considerable public backlash in Australia, and their 2005 production for the Melbourne International Arts Festival *Le Dernier Caravanserail*, 'a hit with both audiences and reviewers' ('Staging'). By 2005, other theatrical work had paved the way for *Le Dernier Caravanserail's* reception with the first mainstream Australian asylum play, Ros Horin's *Through the Wire*, achieving a successful run the year before. Much asylum theatre has been produced in conjunction with advocacy groups like Actors for Refugees and Refugee Action Coalition who raise funds for groups to tour. Asylum continues to engage reality theatre makers and audiences into the present as Australians come to terms with one of the most contentious facets of their national identity, though perhaps, as Cox and Wake note, not as forcefully as it once did (142).

Since Operation Sovereign Borders' shift to boat push-back and offshore processing in 2013, successive Australian governments have lauded their success at having 'stopped the boats'. The Australian government's website on the operation states that its aim is to 'combat people-smuggling, prevent illegal migration to Australia, and deter people from attempting unsafe journeys on people-smuggling boats' as well as reiterating the position distributed throughout asylum seeker origin countries, that '[n]o-one who travels to Australia illegally by boat is allowed to remain in Australia' ('In Australia'). This fixation on delegitimising (making unsafe choices) and criminalising (illegal migration) the asylum seeker who approaches Australia by boat symbolically converts the water surrounding the country from fluid place of connection and negotiation to hard border that triggers automatic non-response. Though the only Australian play I examine here that appeared after the establishment of Operation Sovereign Borders is *Tribunal*, the policy represents a necrocivilisational culmination of the measures treated in previous productions. As I will show, the Australian government has long instrumentalised the rhetoric of humanitarianism to justify and shroud its automatic and

indefinite caging of asylum seekers as well as their abandonment to situations of immense danger.

This project looks at how reality theatre makers in the modern liberal democracies of Australia and the UK represent filters to interrupt boundaries between asylum seekers and citizens. I argue that the coupling of Scarry's theory of the room with ideas of the theatre space and political sphere creates a conceptual framework and language with which aesthetic renderings of asylum space and material barriers between citizens and asylum-seeking noncitizens can be fruitfully analysed. As a Scarrian room, the theatre provides a space in which to comprehend, to witness and to feel the mechanisms that produce boundaries in civilisation entire. However, this lens also needs to be qualified, as shelter in one intensification of civilisation does not automatically translate to a like effect in others: psychological shelter of individual asylum seekers is sometimes sacrificed, for instance, in the interest of political gains in the wider community. Furthermore, the protection afforded a mute but scarred body is quite different from the body with space to encounter responsive others in negotiation for mutual shelter. A function of necrocivilisational discourse is forfeiture of civilisation for racialised and gendered others whose responses to violence western liberal discourse reads as in contravention of its values. In the chapters that follow, I will examine and compare how contemporary Australian and UK asylum plays handle the mechanics conditioning environments of uncertainty, how each interpolates citizens, and discourages or enables voyeurism or witness. Three Parts correspond to three settings of asylum filtering in Australia and the UK: the journey and arrival, detention, and civilisation. These all begin with an introductory section that lays out the theoretical facets relevant to each. The filter as a metaphor to investigate physical and discursive boundaries that connect as well as divide enables vital insights into both the power and limitations of theatre of asylum in western liberal democracies.

Part I: Vessels

Essentially a room on the move, I understand the provisional protection that a vessel affords as Scarrian vessel-shelter, and its necrocivilisational counterpart as a vessel-cell. The vessel-shelter protects the body, while the vessel-cell imperils it with suffocating, impermeable walls, or water gushing into an overly porous hull. The necrocivilisational discourse and policy of nations aiming to keep asylum seekers from arriving transform a hoped-for escape into a death sentence. Part I: Vessels charts six theatrical interventions into citizen understandings of the vessel-space and how citizen audience-members are positioned in terms of its systemic production beyond the performance. As the plays I analyse here bear out, the asylum-seeking vessel is often simultaneously shelter and cell, both the last hope of moving away from life-threatening circumstances and a route that exposes people to death. As Scarry makes clear, the 'acts of making' beyond the body that the room facilitates can be 'either physical or verbal' (Scarry 39). Beginning with this observation, the present project investigates how the metaphorical informs the material and the material the metaphorical in terms of the room's walls themselves. The physical surfaces of vessels, be they porous, impermeable or a balance of each, are indicative of the civilisation (based on sheltering) or necrocivilisation (based on caging) that holds sway over the idea of encounter between individuals and groups. Where necrocivilisation predominates, the shore is no longer a place of encounter and negotiation for survival and thriving.

The selectively porous surfaces of filters such as the shore or the walls of a room function to enable movement 'out into the world, and allows that world to enter' (*The Body* 38). In the context of asylum seeker reception, Derrida notes that the principle of hospitality 'demands, it even creates the desire for, a welcome without reserve and without calculation, an exposure without limit to whoever arrives [*l'arrivant*]. Yet a cultural or linguistic community, a family, a nation, cannot not suspend, at the least, even betray this principle of absolute hospitality' (6). The just but infinite claim on hospitality is unavoidably tempered by the limitations and needs of the finite host. Where necrocivilisational systems and discourse prevail, however, the host configures the infinite claim as overwhelming multitude and the attendant discursive and material conditions make negotiation for mutual shelter increasingly impracticable. The resulting necrocivilisational filterscape produces a Foucauldian heterotopia, a spatial juxtaposition that Joseph Pugliese describes as 'the conceptualization of absolute difference within the space of simultaneity' (664). In necrocivilisation, heterotopias make it possible for the abject to live alongside but remain largely invisible and/or inconsequential to those from a sphere of privilege that permits them to filter such people (as well as their subjectivity as people) from view. Through what I have described above as a reconfiguration of the host/guest power dynamic, the privileged white body not only disavows the violence of refusing

negotiation for mutual shelter but also binds that violence to the other, producing Ahmed's fearsome, hateful and pitiable object of emotion 'asylum seeker'. Vessels signify hope because they promise a route to shelter, but necrocivilisation reconfigures them as vessel-cells to ultimately and fatally weigh down and immobilise those for whom the preservation of life demands migration.

While all of the plays I look at here make visible a largely impenetrable discursive and material boundary and the violence that it wreaks, *Tampa* and *CMI: A Certain Maritime Incident* are the most exacting in their refusal of citizen affect that necrocivilisation employs to shore up borders. Clare Bayley's *The Container* and Adrian Jackson's *Pericles*, likewise, foreground the hardening and narrowing of filtering discourse and bordering technologies, though in a less directly confrontational manner. In the analysis that follows, I make use of Kelly Oliver's understanding of the witnessing structure of response-ability and address-ability as the foundation of subjectivity. The above plays highlight a necrocivilisational disavowal of the violence inherent in the non-encounter it cultivates, its refusal to enable negotiation based on mutual witnessing. While Towfiq Al-Qady's *Nothing But Nothing* keeps the ever-looming and enduring refusal visible, his interaction with audience-members models Oliver's address and response as an alternative filtering principle, which he maps onto broader communities. It is Anders Lustgarten's *Lampedusa*, however, that is the most explicitly hopeful representation, with characters seeing a way forward in mutual hospitality and negotiation.

Chapter One: Australian Vessels

Isolated from and connected to other states, nations and landmasses by the water that circumscribes it, Australia physically and discursively defines itself by the ocean through which temporary vessel-shelters move in search of safe and solid ground. In fact, the beach often figures as a metonym for Australia itself. Bonner et al observe of Sydney's 2000 Olympic Games opening ceremony that thirteen-year-old Nikki Webster on a beach towel conveys that "the most salient characteristic of our "wide brown land" for this modern identity is that we are "linked inextricably to the sea". ... She "represents young Australia", says the voice-over—this young, white Australian woman—and her representativeness comes in her fantasies, as she "dreams, as we all do, of wide blue skies, the sand and the sea" (271). The Australian plays I examine here, particularly the site-specific *Tampa*, deeply trouble this idyllic image of the Australian coastline. Australian public discourse has long depicted asylum seekers approaching its coast by boat as violent, treacherous and, at best, wretched. *Tampa, Nothing But Nothing* and *CMI: A Certain Maritime Incident* work in different ways to jam and redirect this affect, highlighting the country's violent filters that citizens as well as their representatives line with a one-way discourse that prevents encounter on the shore.

Since the Australian Federation in 1901, the White Australia Policy ensured the hegemony of white European, especially British, immigrants and their descendants. Though successive governments dismantled the White Australia Policy from 1949 through the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act, consistent and highly regimented immigration control has replaced the outright insistence on white settlers. While it is now unlawful to discriminate based on race, strict border controls continue to work as a mechanism for what Ghassan Hage articulates as the white national spatial manager to control concentrations of racialised others (*White Nation* 131). In a 2017 Q&A in which Liberal party Senator George Brandis falsely alleged that Australia has the most generous per-capita refugee migration programme in the world, the Senator voiced the prevailing view of the compassionate-hearted but hard-headed nation: "the reason the Australian people are willing ... to be so generous is they know that it is the Government that decides who comes here and how they come" ('Fact Check'). Generosity is contingent on white Australia's control over national spatial management. As a signatory to the UN Convention on Refugees and 1967 Protocol, Australia accepts refugees and humanitarian migrants and its offshore refugee resettlement scheme is indeed one of the most generous per capita in terms of number ('Fact Check'). But even official UNHCR refugee status is not a ticket to resettlement, and refugees often languish indefinitely in camps and other holding arrangements ('Resettlement'). For those who do not surrender ultimate control

to western governments and dare to actively seek the refuge to which they are entitled in international law, Australia's punitive measures continue to be unforgiving.

Asylum seekers who attempt to enter Australia by boat have met with disproportionately harsh treatment at the hands of both right- and left-wing governments. Keating's Labor Government brought in mandatory detention in 1992 in response to increasing unauthorised Indochinese maritime arrivals. Though mandatory detention for these asylum seekers was meant to be temporary, the policy remains largely unchanged. Mandatory detention applies strictly to unauthorised non-citizens arriving by boat, though the Australian Government issues bridging visas to asylum seekers arriving by air with a valid visa. It is the seaborne approach that holds a special threat for the Australian Government and public, a state of affairs that came to a head in the early 2000s with the *Tampa* affair and John Howard's Pacific Solution.

A watershed moment for Australian asylum discourse and policy that in Mireille Astore's performance piece stands for the entire asylum regime, the *Tampa* affair marks the point when Australia's current asylum practice began in earnest. On 24 August 2001, the Norwegian cargo ship MV *Tampa* rescued 438 asylum seekers, predominantly Hazaras of Afghanistan, from a leaking fishing vessel near Australia's Christmas Island. After repeated attempts to stall and turn back the ship, Australian authorities refused the *Tampa's* landing arguing that the rescued people were Indonesia's responsibility. On 29 August, MV *Tampa's* captain Arne Rinnan entered Australian waters. The Australian Government sent 45 Special Air Service troops who boarded the vessel, arrested the asylum seekers and sent them to a camp on the island of Nauru. The motivation behind these actions and the subsequent Pacific Solution policy of detaining asylum seekers on Pacific islands excised from Australia's migration zone was to prevent people from claiming their right to seek asylum in Australia. Excising Australian territories from the country's migration zone was expressly intended to '[limit] the ability of offshore entry persons to make valid visa applications' ('Migration Amendment'). Though the policy was briefly suspended, offshore detention continues to be a cornerstone of Australian asylum policy. Schlunke observes that 'perhaps we are making of these places what Australia was once to England - sites of human disposal far, far from the centre.' With the Pacific Solution, the Australian Government could place asylum seekers at an even greater remove from mainland and mainstream Australia. It is a practice that has the effect of further criminalising asylum seekers, and, with restrictions on media scrutiny, attempts to remove any ground, physical and discursive, that they may hope to build on.

Australia's border patrolling, habitually in the form of militarised interventions like Operation Relex, has been involved in a mounting death toll. Version 1.0's *CMI* deals directly with the

SIEV X disaster of October 2001, in which 353 people perished in an area of international waters that Australian border control had kept under close surveillance (Kevin 3). The main focus of *CMI's* Select Committee inquiry, however, had occurred only two weeks prior. The Children Overboard affair remains a controversial and enduring symbol of the Australian asylum debate. The media ran with government claims that asylum seekers on the SIEV 4 had thrown children out of the boat to manipulate the moral sensibilities of Navy rescuers and secure passage to Australian territorial waters where they could make a claim for refugee status. That these claims were false came to light the day before the November 2001 national election, though the cumulative affect that the media and the Government had generated against 'boat people' sustained John Howard's position in public opinion to emerge victorious (Marr and Wilkinson 383-384). Years later in 2006, Howard continued to characterise the SIEV 4 asylum seekers as coercive and perverse, insisting that "they did after all sink the boat" though reports cite the strain of being towed as the cause of the sinking (qtd in Marr).

Asylum seekers arriving by boat produce a perpetual unease in the hegemonic settler society established through maritime invasion. This deep-seated disquiet along with the very recent fear brought on by political commentary on 9/11 and the consequent War on Terror was stoked by the charge of the object of emotion 'boat people' to the point that it was the issue that quite directly won John Howard the 2001 election (Marr and Wilkinson 383). In this environment of simultaneous media deluge and restriction of asylum seeker presence and voice due to official policy, theatre became a vital tool of resistance. Rand Hazou observes that the three-year period between 2002 and 2005 saw an 'extraordinary output of theatre productions' (thirty-two separate plays and performances) focusing on the single political issue of asylum seekers arriving in Australia ('Staging'). *Tampa, Nothing But Nothing* and *CMI* all premiered during these three years of feverish production. In my analysis, I will focus on how all use filtering devices to intervene in the necrocivilisational bent of discourse and policy that attempts to scuttle vessels even before they arrive.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, Operation Sovereign Borders' emphasis on boat push-back and offshore processing managed to effectively stop the boats. Though the performances I examine in this section were staged before 2013, this extraordinary reduction in maritime transit merits acknowledgement and a brief contextualisation in terms of filtering. If water flooding in and immobilising a boat, turning it from mobile vessel-shelter into sinking vessel-cell, was previously a central hazard in plays like *CMI* and *Nothing But Nothing*, Operation Sovereign Borders removed the mobility of the vessel-shelter and framed it as Australia doing its part to prevent migrant death. The blanket removal of mobility for asylum seekers that further criminalises them and justifies their abandonment represents a culmination of Mireille

Astore's *Tampa* cage: the non-response of automatic abandonment is built into any movement on the part of asylum seekers. As Australian policy has made its coastal border practically impenetrable to seaborne asylum seekers, however, internet and mobile technologies have recently enabled artistic collaborations to penetrate discursive filters. Examples of this include Behrouz Boochani and Arash Kamali Sarvestani's 2017 film *Chauka, Please Tell Us The Time*, produced while Boochani was held in detention on Manus Island, as well as the paintings of Abbas Al-Aboudi produced from detention on Nauru. While I will focus on detention more closely in future sections (and on the internet question in particular in my analysis of *Adam* in Chapter Five), it is worth noting that the filter permits the acknowledgement of a degree of continuity in terms of migrant caging between periods of greater and dramatically reduced coastal transit.

Tampa

With its invocation of caged asylum seekers on an affluent Sydney beach, Mireille Astore's *Tampa* starkly offers up for scrutiny the filtering practices that mask and uphold necrocivilisation in Australia. The Australian beach is a bastion of white Australian leisure. Of particular renown, Sydney beaches like Manly and Bondi are internationally recognised as extensions of the tourist resorts, hotels and affluent suburbs that line the Sydney coast. However, racially driven outbursts like the 2005 Cronulla Beach riots, which took place only 30km down the coast from Bondi, challenge this idyllic image with the realities of a deeply riven heterotopic space administered by what Ghassan Hage has termed the white national spatial manager. Onto the Bondi-adjacent Tamarama Beach, Astore puts this heterotopia on display by placing on the shore a cell and its occupant. Performed as part of Sydney's annual 'Sculpture by the Sea' exhibition, from 10am until 6pm every day from 30 October until 16 November 2003 Astore occupied the *Tampa* cage structure taking photographs and noting down comments of passers-by, both of which she later shared online ('When the Artwork'). The work is pointedly site-specific with a minimalist set and props, and no staged sound or lighting. The audience's proximity to the performance and the performer was not prescribed beyond the division indicated by the cage of bamboo bars. As Astore's online photographs indicate, some viewers came up to the bars, others can be seen walking by or sunbathing at varying distances from the cage.

The work's title indicates that the bamboo bars spaced 15cm apart trace the scaled-down outline of the Norwegian container ship MV Tampa, which rescued and, on 29 August 2001, unsuccessfully attempted to land 438 asylum seekers on Australian shores. As a watershed moment in Australia's hard-line practices and discourse around asylum, the Tampa

affair acts here as a symbol of a rigid border, with Astore understanding herself, the artist within the cage, as 'the personification of a refugee' ('When the Artwork' 242). Emma Cox observes that Astore's silent recording in response to comments 'implied an impasse in the possibility for conversation between Australians and detained asylum seekers' (*Performing Noncitizenship* 128). My analysis of *Tampa* charts how Astore invokes this impasse through the cage as filter, making relentlessly visible not simply the beach as heterotopia, but also the discourse that attempts to stop up the gaps in white virtue that the cage's violence holds open.

The Shore as Filterscape

Tampa's site-specificity draws to the forefront the filtering practices of white Australia on terrain that circumscribes and permeates the hegemonic imaginary. The shore is already a liminal and contested border space due to its continued colonisation as a heartland of a national regime that understands this site as simultaneously of leisure and siege, and as such requires intense white spatial management by white Australia. This spatial management casts the shore as a filter which appears open and leisurely to white Australians and tourists because non-white and otherwise non-normative Australians as well as refugees and asylum seekers are disciplined, contained and filtered away in various ways both discursive and material. *Tampa* highlights the shore as charged filterscape, bringing to the surface the caging involved in Australian spatial administration. A closer look at this managerial framing of the Australian shore, with a focus on how white Australia channels affect in this space, will lay the foundations for a discussion of *Tampa* as an exercise in refiltering this space through photographic and written record.

By placing her *Tampa* cage on the shore, Astore makes a tangible heterotopia of what had seemed an uncomplicated space of leisure to privileged frequenters of Tamarama Beach, also known as Glamarama due to a famed abundance of glamorous sunbathers. This idyllic image, however, has been challenged by natural disasters, shark attacks and human violence for as long as Australia's colonisers have cultivated it. Even the area's recent history reveals the hetero and cis normative state's spatial administration to include negligent police and ambivalent public and media response to an epidemic of anti-LGBT hate crime. The eastern suburbs became a place of such murderous violence in the 1980s and 1990s that, in October 2018, Waverley Council endorsed Tamarama's Marks Park, a known gay beat on the stretch of boardwalk between Bondi and Tamarama, as the site of a future memorial to the victims. In a heterotopic dynamic similar to the contradictions that permit white Australia to visit extreme violence upon asylum seekers and yet maintain moral legitimacy, Kristen Davis notes that, though not all members of these gangs were white,

the construction of the ['gay gang murders'] perpetrators as everyday Aussies operates simultaneously alongside their production as 'gang members', a reading which symbolically distances them from mainstream Australian culture. Their representation is thus based on an irresolvable contradiction which seems to allow for symbolic (if not literal) punishment on the one hand, while carefully covering the traces of endemic cultural homophobia on the other. ('The Bondi' 508)

In a different but also revealing exercise of spatial administration, Sydney's most affluent coastal neighbourhoods successfully lobbied Sydney Water in 2005 to continue to pump their raw sewage into the sea near Bondi rather than run a pipeline 50 meters beneath their houses (Davis 'The Gay Gang Murders' 92). It is also fitting in terms of the nature of the beach as filterscape that, despite Tamarama's popularity with 'the beautiful people', Surf Lifesaving NSW considers it one of New South Wales' most dangerous patrolled beach ('Lifesaving'). Though no lives have been lost while lifeguards have been on duty, powerful, constantly shifting and ever-present rip currents silently pull unprotected bodies out to sea.

As surely as white Australia governs the country, the territory of the shore is an important site for white supremacy's framing and filtering of the other. Hage posits that white nationalist fantasies undergird the role of white Australians as 'national spatial managers,' arbiters of national space who understand 'the "other" as an object to be managed [...] while treating the self as spatially empowered to position/remove this other' (*White Nation* 42). Paraphrasing Denning (*Performances*), Katrina Schlunke shows that the shore as space of arrival, encounter and ambivalence makes it an especially apt space in which to define this other for the purposes of management: 'the shore, the repressed beach is after all an in-between space neither land nor sea, a threshold of becoming where strangers are made rather than met'. Schlunke's analysis points to the shore not as site of negotiation for mutual shelter, but of coercion and stranger-production. To this end, white Australia produces the beach as uncomplicated space of leisure for predominantly white bodies, tolerating small numbers of ethnic minorities with equanimity so long as, Hage stipulates, they do not achieve the numbers and concentrations to constitute a rival collective will. How this panorama is achieved and maintained has to do with discourses and affects deployed when these others threaten the position and legitimacy of white Australians as spatial managers (*White Nation* 112).

Whether white Australia sees the sand and sea as inspiring fear or comfort depends very much on the type and condition of bodies visible on it. The militarised enforcement of a hard-line asylum policy exemplified by the Tampa affair reveals a prevailing national idea that if the beach is not a site of white-dominated leisurely comfort, it is a site of catastrophic invasion. Much scholarship and activism has addressed white Australia's birth via seaborne invasion

and subsequent settler anxiety that unauthorised entry will similarly destabilise white Australian hegemony (Ang 259; Wolfe 402; Schlunke). The bordering that conditions the arrival of the asylum seeker foregrounds the uneasy relationship Anglo Australia has with Aboriginal sovereignty based on the British colonial siege of *terra nullius*: 'Only in the figure of the un-announced stranger and on the body of the refugee does the no-longer white Australian nation get to exorcise its own illegitimate colonial beginnings and the potential displacement of its anglo centre' (Schlunke). If Tamarama beach looks like a space of predominantly white leisure, it is because fear keeps at bay what Hage terms the multicultural Real ('that part of the subject's practical reality whose acknowledgment can lead to endangering the minimum of coherence and stability that the fantasy needs in order to reproduce itself') (*White Nation* 133). Caging results, Hage argues, when citizens 'project the fear that is inherent in the fragility of their relationship with their own nation onto everything classified as alien' (*Against* 21). Such projections characterise as dangerous queue-jumpers those 'Third-world-looking' asylum seekers possessed of the will to step outside the script and procedures that the white Australian nation has prescribed.

On these shores that white Australia so tenaciously manages, Astore places the MV *Tampa*-shaped cage and herself as its occupant. The artist describes the sculpture and performance as expressing 'a dichotomy between the sense of freedom and grandeur the individual experiences at the seashore and the imprisonment refugees faced as a result of their trust in the most basic form of humanity at that seashore' (*Tampa* 2003). The juxtaposition reveals the Australian beach as heterotopic borderscape, the appearance of carefree leisure for white bodies intimately linked to the country's policy of caging asylum seekers arriving by boat. *Tampa* confronts beachgoers with Agamben's ban, which white supremacist management works so hard to filter out of sight. The performance makes visible how the white shore and its discursive mechanisms of reproduction via spatial management attempt to stop up the gaps, to shore up the porosity that would permit asylum seekers to negotiate for shelter on the land.

The effect of dragging the cage up from the depths and placing it on the beach puts on display a curious symmetry. As politicians and the media in Australia talk of asylum seekers 'flooding' the country, as if the land and citizens themselves would sink under their weight, asylum seekers bail water out of porous, unseaworthy vessels that threaten life even as they offer hope of preserving it. The idea of flood triggers a counter tide of discourse that normally enables border filters to become ever more impermeable, effectively sealing those arriving by sea into a cage, a vessel-cell that consequently flounders and sinks out of sight and out of mind. This is the structure that Astore places firmly on the shore out of reach of the water. The

artwork highlights the discursive and material production of the beach as rigid either/or space rather than in-between place of negotiation, refocusing the crisis of Australian civilisation as one of filters. *Tampa* makes visible the methods of Hage's national manager as a filtering agent in a space central to white settler society's continuing colonisation. Astore broadcasts the discursive onslaught through written records and photographs that she posts online in a second component of *Tampa* that, I will argue, is equally on display in this performance.

Reversing the Record to Stem the Tide

The artist as 'personification of a refugee' keeping a record from behind bars on Tamarama Beach works to recast a space that proved difficult for many citizen viewers to simply move away from ('When the Artwork' 242). The reversal of the surveillance relationship filters the images of passers-by through the bars. These images and the presence of the camera summon the discursive display that Astore records in her notebook, the contents of which she later transfers to her website. Astore's refusal to respond to hostility and sympathy alike is not so much a filtering out of emotion as a redirection of its flow. *Tampa's* online record shows necrocivilisational discourse attempting to weave affect through the warp of the bars. Narrative threads evoking pity, disgust, and white citizen virtue would normally twist over and under these bars until the cage and its occupant are obscured and the legitimacy of white spatial management tightly shored up. Sara Ahmed notes that '[s]ome bodies move precisely by sealing others as objects of hate' (*The Cultural Politics* 57). Sealing others as objects involves privileged white bodies filtering their own violence away, attaching it instead (as hatefulness, but also tragic abjection and fearfulness) to the bodies of others forced to bear its caging weight. *Tampa* puts on show their discursive attempts at distancing and absolution from the unmoving cage and its unmoved occupant.

A work of 'reverse ethnography' in the tradition of Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña's caged performance piece *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit...*, *Tampa* flips the gaze on the Australia's national spatial managerial regime (Fusco 'The Other History'). Astore emphasises this reversal by photographing her audience and making notes from her position within the cage. Roland Barthes links the photograph to death through its transformation of the subject into an object (*Camera Lucida* 13–14). This objectification, Ariella Azoulay observes, is compounded in 'places where people are irredeemably exposed to the practice of photography, such as disaster zones ... For many such individuals, this is the very essence of photography. The camera is a tool that promises a picture that they will never see' (Azoulay 19–20). With the camera lens pointing at onlookers who exist in a place where disaster or ethnographic images are typically consumed rather than taken, Astore presents an exercise in filtering her subjects' images through the bars that cage her. This act draws attention to

what Azoulay theorises as the 'event of photography' (the surveillance inherent in the 'infinite series of encounters' surrounding the presence or potential presence of cameras and photographs) but filters what typically constitutes that event against the hegemonic grain (Azoulay 26). Astore writes 'I wanted to disrupt the perception of the refugee as someone to gaze at, and then look away' ('When the Artwork' 242). In *Tampa's* configuration, predominantly white beach-goers meet the embodied asylum seeker as observer and arbiter of their fitness for their national managerial role.

The silent woman in black taking photographs through the bars provoked people passing, whose comments Astore wrote down in her notebook and posted online along with her photographs. Passers-by attempts at engagement ranged from concern for the artist's wellbeing ('Have you eaten?') and congratulations on the piece ('Brilliant...very clever...congratulations!') to shame ('I went overseas recently and I was ashamed to say I'm Australian') to comments on Astore's race ('It's hot in the sun, isn't it! Ah! well! you've got the skin for it!') and harassment ('We vote One Nation. You're probably a filthy rich bitch! Why don't you go home and cook dinner for your husband? ... Who do you think you are?'). When *Tampa* makes visible the violence of the leisure-oriented beach, the white managerial discourse that administers necrocivilisation confronts the challenge to its legitimacy. While not all the comments blatantly other, treat as unreasonable and/or demean the cage's occupant, most expressions of concern, shame and congratulations read as efforts at distancing the speaker from those the work critiques. Concern and congratulations attempt to bypass violence and establish attunement between speaker and performer. Ahmed observes that expressing national shame ('I was ashamed to say I'm Australian') '*means that we mean well, and can work to reproduce the nation as an ideal*' (*The Cultural Politics* 109). Astore's reverse ethnography puts on display the discursive resources citizens deploy to distance themselves from or justify complicity, to make the interpersonal implications of the human in the cage disappear.

Much of the language *Tampa* incites is a bordering discourse, but Astore's refusal to engage with those she observes from the cage structure means that the confrontation cannot be contained and concealed discursively. The cage stands rigid along with its intractable occupant, challenging and frustrating the efforts of passers-by to weave the unspoiled beach anew with their words of rage, shame, understanding and indignation. Importantly, the artwork evokes these emotions in response not only to the filter of the cage but the filter of the performer's own body. Astore's 'ethnic' Lebanese Australian person produces instances of slippage in which audiences conflate the artist with the asylum seekers she represents. This is in many ways unsurprising as Hage, also Lebanese Australian, comments that the racist

structure that appoints white Australians as national spatial managers operates a caging logic that permeates Australian society. Seaborne asylum seeker caging is only the most blatant example: 'Port Hedland [detention centre] works as a psychoanalytic symptom: what are these pictures of ethnic caging being offered to us but images of ourselves as domesticated Third-World-looking ethnics that constitute the very support for the reproduction of the White national fantasy of a multicultural Australia?' (*White Nation* 116). The cage, Astore and Hage show, is not over there; it is right here. It is present in every discursive response to overt caging while asylum seekers continue to be detained, in every attempt to humiliate or attune with and thus obscure the trapped racialised person. Astore presents what Hage has characterised as a counter will, but, more importantly, in her refusal to engage while caging persists she actively inhibits the weaving of the necrocivilisational filter that offers shelter via legitimacy to white Australians by caging others even before those others arrive on the shore.

A metaphor that appears in *Tampa* and that develops throughout Part I is the land and sea as emblems of Derrida's infinite claim of hospitality (the sea) meeting the concrete and finite body and resources of the host (the land). Astore employs both the cage ship and her own body to confront the discourse of white spatial management with the impermeable filter that this necrocivilisational arrangement creates and maintains. Even the most heartfelt expressions of care would not depoliticise the cage or Astore's gaze. In fact, white spatial managers in Australian necrocivilisation appropriate expressions of shame, care and other virtue-coded feelings into the narrative of a compassionate people needing protection from queue-jumping asylum seekers. At the outer perimeter of the nation, necrocivilisational discourse produces devious invaders rather than encountering people seeking refuge. While water pouring in, is a concern for the finite bodies of asylum seekers in the boat as well as discursively for white land managers constructed as sympathetic and thus vulnerable to the abuse of queue-jumpers, the asylum seekers are ultimately the ones who languish and perish. *Tampa's* provocation illustrates that compassion also builds cages when the shore is no longer a place where the infinite claim to hospitality, like waves on a beach, enters into negotiation with the finite ground of the land.

Nothing But Nothing: One Refugee's Story

While *Tampa* presents a 'personification of a refugee' who categorically refuses engagement, theatre-maker and asylum seeker Towfiq Al-Qady spends the entirety of the autobiographical *Nothing But Nothing: One Refugee's Story* in effusive affective engagement with others including audience-members ('When the Artwork' 242). This does not mean that Al-Qady eschews the hard refusal that forms the core of Astore's performance, however. On the

contrary, it is instructive to examine how *Nothing But Nothing* maintains this affect-jamming element embodied in the ever-present wooden 'NO' structure centre stage, while also exploring a different filtering principle. The starkly backlit wooden 'NO' structure located up stage, centre is the only structure in a minimalist set occupied by the actor who is barefoot, dressed in white and carrying 'a handbag containing water, toothpaste, a wallet and paperwork' (*Staging Asylum* 190). Al-Qady also uses a short strand of razor wire to indicate his time in detention. Leah Mercer served as directorial and language assistant and Taj Mahmoud provided musical accompaniment on the oud. Though usually performing in the stage space, the actor often moved amongst and got very close to viewers, at times addressing them or using them as extras, at one point moving amongst them like shoppers in a shopping centre for example (*Staging Asylum* 191).

Nothing But Nothing premiered in association with the charity Actors for Refugees at Brisbane's Metro Arts Theatre in April 2005, four years after the Tampa affair that had placed asylum seekers firmly into Australian public discourse. As an Iraqi artist and, in Australia, an asylum seeker on a Temporary Protection Visa who had spent nine months in detention, Al-Qady could and did speak to his own experience of necrocivilisation's abject spaces. He related stories of trauma in Iraq, the precarious ocean journey and the similar non-arrival of Australian immigration for asylum seeking people arriving by boat. Moreover, through bearing embodied witness to the experiences of other individuals and communities that have shaped him in a performance that merged identities, the actor advocates by intersubjectively becoming all those forced to flee from conflict. In this display of the relationality of the self along with address-and-response engagement with his audience, Al-Qady models what Kelly Oliver theorises as the witnessing structure of subjectivity formed of address-ability and response-ability. Al-Qady takes on a great deal of risk in performing the intersubjective witness, however, as it leaves him open to necrocivilisation's appropriation and erasure of his individual experience and life. This he acknowledges in the scene showing his meeting with immigration in which he must make himself understood as 'five million Sinbads' hailing from border zones where national spatial managers produce outsiders. With the enduring 'NO', Al-Qady emphasises that meaningful action is frustrated as long as Australia upholds necrocivilisation's ultimate, fundamental and systemic refusal of response-ability.

The 'NO' as Impermeable Filter

In the centre of an otherwise empty stage, the backlit wooden 'NO' structure stands unmoving, producing a shape and casting a shadow that Al-Qady uses to build the settings of his stories (*Staging Asylum* 190). Where Astore gives her audience a cage that their discursive responses could not make disappear (and indeed are, via necrocivilisation, responsible for

upholding), Al-Qady makes relentlessly visible the enduring negative that their discursive responses ultimately amount to in necrocivilisation. I argue that Kelly Oliver's definition of subjectivity modelled on the address-response of witnessing makes evident the oppression that Al-Qady represents in the unnavigable and untraversable 'NO' filter (Oliver 'Witnessing and Testimony' 79). Accordingly, the 'NO' represents more than just a refusal of entry, but a more fundamental denial of the epistemological grounds to achieve full subjectivity.

The 'NO' keeps present the Australian state's fundamental refusal to treat asylum seekers as subjects with valid claims to civilisation. Oliver argues that the address and response structure of witnessing forms the conditions for subjectivity: 'The subject is the result of a response to an address from another and of the possibility of addressing itself to another' (Oliver 'Witnessing, Recognition', 485). Oppression operates, therefore, by attacking this structure, working 'to undermine the ability to respond and thereby undermine and destroy subjectivity' (Oliver, 'Witnessing, Recognition' 485). The 'NO' structure, representing the filter that already conditions the asylum seeker's journey and arrival, makes it clear that the audience's 'yes' response to Al-Qady's call for hospitality has not overcome the rigid and impoverished institutional and public discursive framing. Al-Qady's inability to achieve the material conditions of shelter despite incessant acts of address and response indicate the proliferation of a necrocivilisational system embodied in the 'NO' that refuses to respond, denying all negotiation for mutual shelter.

This necrocivilisational system does not simply erect a wall around the geographical perimeter of the nation and refuse entry. The 'NO' is discursive as well as physical and ultimately thwarts the actor's attempts at self-definition. From the shapes and shadows of the backlit 'NO', Al-Qady forms a house, a workplace, a grave, a mirror, a prison. This interaction intimates a richness of stories, nuance and, indeed, subjectivity, but the 'NO' structure that frames abilities and prospects nevertheless continually denies discursive shelter. While Al-Qady, like Astore, produces a visually simple and strong division of space between the audience's affirmatives and the 'NO' on the stage, the central prop's positioning reveals that his journey is not from a place of prohibitive 'no's' in Iraq to 'yesses' in Australia. *Nothing But Nothing's* enduring 'NO' represents necrocivilisational continuity in the two locations. A series of ultimatums (be a soldier or go to prison, fight or be executed, be executed or become a refugee) drive the actor's journey. Ultimatums are not consistent with Oliver's witnessing structure of address-ability and response-ability but rather constitute its perversion. These impossible choices that Al-Qady faced in Iraq reappear in Australia as the 'NO' remains in the form of Hage's ethnic caging: narrowly prescribed approaches and responses dictated and rigidly enforced by the white national spatial manager. To return to Scarry, the Australian

necrocivilisational context transforms the to-ing and fro-ing of address and response that the room facilitates into the appearance of choice via ultimatum. Where Astore defies the non-response of the caging 'NO' with her own unwavering non-response, Al-Qady represents the dynamics, iterations and repercussions of this refusal through his continuous interaction with the structure.

Though continually denied, it is important to note that Al-Qady's constant creation amid the 'NO' is manifestly not an exhibition of Agamben's bare life in a state of exception. Where Astore pointedly withheld speech, Al-Qady talks throughout, weaving myriad stories with his body around the 'N' and the 'O'. The 'N' is first a prison and then the grave of Al-Qady's father, and the 'O' acts as mirror, womb, spot-light, chair and boat. Significantly, Al-Qady even presents himself as born out of the 'O', at first appearing as a silhouette in shadow standing *'in the light filtering through the letter 'o' of the wooden structure'* and then emerging from it *'as if he is being born'* (191). If the 'NO' represents what Isin and Rygiel formulate as the abject frontier and zone's interruption of the practice of claiming rights, then Al-Qady constitutes himself and others as political subjects (is, in another sense, born out of the 'NO') by challenging the negation with a display of subjectivity predicated on Oliver's witnessing structure (Isin and Rygiel 190). The 'NO' seeks to deny the asylum seeker's existence fundamentally as a speaking subject entitled to the mutual shelter of civilisation (Isin and Rygiel, 189). Al-Qady illustrates, however, that this denial does not stop subjectivity from existing and reaching out for relationship. Rather the denial is violent *because* it oppresses this vital subjectivity.

With his resistance, Al-Qady shows the 'NO' to be functioning as an instrument of necrocivilisation. At the end of the play, the performer states 'It has been a very long journey between two words' and, holding *'out each hand to the audience as he speaks. YES or NO. That is the question'* (202). This is to say that the journey has not been from one word to the other, from the 'no' of Iraq to the 'yes' of Australia, but between the two, an abject space that racialised asylum seekers and refugees continue to inhabit. At the end of the show the stage is unchanged: the 'NO' still overshadowing it, Al-Qady standing between the structure and his audience. It is a place actively denied definition in discourse, still all water and no land. Al-Qady ended *Nothing But Nothing's* run of performances with an act that marked a shift in the nature of his protest, however. At the end of his last performance, the actor walked up to the 'NO' structure and wrote across it the words 'thank you' and 'freedom', recalling his story of drawing a dove of peace on the cell wall of the prison where he was held in Iraq (Cox "The Intersubjective Witness" 196). Al-Qady reported that when a prison officer demanded he wipe the drawing away he realised that 'art was more powerful than prison. / More powerful than

the government' (195). The actor had repeated the words 'thank you' and 'freedom' many times throughout the performance, so much so that they began to take on the quality of compulsive utterances. Now inscribing these spoken words directly onto the 'NO', which he thus equates to his previous cell wall in Iraq, Al-Qady produces an emblem of Isin and Rygiel's abject spaces. The 'NO' with 'thank you' (the relationship) and 'freedom' (the demand) written across it presents at once the legitimate claim to civilisation and its discursive and material denial.

A Witnessing Filter

While the ultimate refusal of the 'NO' remains standing through the entirety of *Nothing But Nothing*, Al-Qady also offers within his theatre space a glimpse of an alternative filtering principle. As a foil to the 'NO', I argue that Al-Qady models Oliver's witnessing structure of subjectivity through his interactions with the audience, bearing witness to the experiences of others and even in the heterogeneous composition of his audiences that were able to interact in question and answer sessions at the end of the show. The rapport that Al-Qady builds with his audience through address and response as well as his vivid weaving of characters and stories comes to signify nothing in terms of his ultimate shelter, however, when the discourse (represented by the 'NO') will not permit his claim to civilisation to materially register. Necrocivilisation undercuts the acts of witness and relational co-creation that Al-Qady models and advocates by demanding his subservience. His body and voice as vessel bearing witness to the communities that shape him register in the Australian necrocivilisational filterscape as fearful invading horde. Rather than constituting a radical conceptual departure from *Tampa's* silent witness to hegemonic discourse, Al-Qady also illustrates his silencing by the discursive filter that continues to thwart meaningful co-creation of mutual shelter and proliferate necrocivilisational cells within and beyond Australia.

The address and response structure that Al-Qady sets up between himself and his audience is a demonstration of Kelly's witnessing structure of subjectivity. With the 'NO' of non-response at his back, Al-Qady begins the play by eliciting affirmative responses from the audience members: 'At the end of tonight I will be happy if we all become friends. Will you be happy with that? [...] *The actor asks the audience different questions, attempting to draw as many "yesses" as possible*' (191). Al-Qady moves amongst the audience as well as across the stage, speaking to his public or directing himself to individuals and eliciting affirmatives from many locations in the room (*Cox Performing Noncitizenship* 49). In her review of the show, Mary Ann Hunter describes the effect of this approach as creating a witness-bearing experience for a 'newborn audience-community' (30). In contrast to the oppressive ultimatums of the 'NO', this exchange with the audience dramatises witnessing's address and response structure, which

is the bedrock of subjectivity (Oliver 'Witnessing, Recognition', 485). Al-Qady's exchange with audience-members establishes a counter-community modelling a different filtering principle to the 'NO' onstage.

This exchange of address and response blurs divisions not only between stage and audience, but also among heterogeneous members of this nascent community of witness. *Nothing But Nothing's* audience-community included many Iraqis, which, Hunter notes, produced a 'vibrant post-show discussion' (30). While *Tampa's* audience was not strictly white either (one commenter, for instance, said to a group of friends 'Hey... she's Lebanese like me!'), the Iraqi community's strong presence in *Nothing But Nothing's* audience constructed a dynamic that bore witness to the stories on stage and also understood itself as consisting partly of people with experiences that often intersect and overlap with those Al-Qady represents in the play. Where Astore represented the enduring hard border in her refusal to engage, Al-Qady attempts to model a different filtering principle rooted in Oliver's witness-based subjectivity of address-ability and response-ability. The audience space of encounter that is activated by the performance and digested in post-show discussion provides a seemingly immersive element that is in fact a reality claim. The Iraqi presence in the audience for whom Al-Qady's stories resonated and who brought their own experiences to the post-show discussion formed a real community foil to what the actor presents in the play as 'five-million Sinbads' (202). Al-Qady's own address-ability and response-ability that he cultivates in the theatre space acknowledges the subjectivities of marginalised audience members in the midst of their white neighbours. Al-Qady's filtering principle is based upon evolving and negotiated relationship between bodies in the world rather than discourse's overwhelming rendering of them.

As well as in his exchange with the audience, this filtering principle manifests as Al-Qady's own body. Though the play's subtitle *One Refugee's Story* suggests the singularity of the experience presented on stage, Al-Qady acts as a vessel for the experiences of other people in his community as well as past iterations of himself. Cox has described Al-Qady's performance as 'intersubjective witnessing' and 'effectual generalisation' in which the actor situates testimony within wider social entities to expand its significance, 'gathering' the experiences of others of his Iraqi community and refugees globally ('The Intersubjective Witness' 196). If subjectivity is predicated on Oliver's witnessing structure of address and response, then subjectivity is already intersubjective and composed of mutual witnessing. What Cox reflects in the phrase 'intersubjective witnessing' is Al-Qady's demonstration of subjectivity as fundamentally relational. Cox notes that 'every point of his physical and emotional journey is contingent upon the outcomes of his human relationships and encounters' ('The Intersubjective Witness' 195). Al-Qady is in constant conversation and calls different

subjectivities to surface always in relation to and in dialog with others. Against the 'NO', Al-Qady finds that 'My ID, my scars, my body. / My documents, my humanity' do not open the door to civilisation (202). He, therefore, returns to his reserves of subjectivity to negotiate relationships and, in that capacity, begins to manifest a social world in which he also permits audience-members to surface as interlocutors.

There is a significant risk, however, both in consequence and meaning, in Al-Qady's demonstration of the witnessing relationality of subjectivity. By opening his body to other stories, Al-Qady risks dissolution, the flooding of his own subjectivity that comes of 'de-specifying individual experience' (Cox 'The Intersubjective Witness' 194). The subjectivity-forming witness of address and response is facilitated by a degree of porosity in the walls of the Scarran room ('in [the room's] windows and doors, crude versions of the senses, it enables the self to move out into the world and allows that world to enter' (Scarry 38). With this in mind, it is helpful to understand Al-Qady's intersubjective witnessing against the ultimatums of the 'NO' as analogous to the vessel on the water, with all the hope and danger that this suggests. *Nothing but Nothing's* stream-of-consciousness style gives the impression of a tide of words and emotion that are connected by free association rather than a contrived structuring. Likewise, Al-Qady presents fluid transitions between one subjectivity and the next, as if different realities were flowing into and out of the actor, who moves into ever-vaster embodiments of other Iraqis, the Iraqi civilian community, and refugees globally. The risk that Cox notes of Al-Qady sacrificing his own subjectivity to bear witness to others is mirrored in the circumstances of the boat, which vacillates between shelter ('You, boat, you are my choice. / You will be my country, you will be my home' (199) and exposure (Oh, boat, you are very small, very weak' (199). The porosity of the boat and the dissolving state of Al-Qady's subjectivity cannot offer reliable safety. Like the rickety vessels that transport asylum seekers to Australia, the discourse that is available as the asylum seeker's hope of protection, can prove to be a doomed vessel-cell despite human creativity.

The exceptionally fluid persona and myriad scenes and stories that the actor constructs against the 'NO' dramatise both human capacity for creation and the pointed paucity of the discursive tools available within the abject spaces of non-arrival where asylum seekers are contained. Al-Qady represents this deficiency as conditioned by necrocivilisation, a consequence of the hard 'NO' that offers choice only in the ultimatums that drove Al-Qady to sea in the first place. Within the necrocivilisational structure, the risk that the performer takes to open a space of possibility turns into an illustration closer to Astore's impasse than was at first apparent. This is evident in how Al-Qady attempts to convey the plight of asylum seekers while suspended on the ocean and how he answers questions once he reaches Australian

immigration. To the unresponsive sea, Al-Qady says: 'Now, I would like to write freedom on this water. / I would like to make a huge sculpture of the refugees of the world from this water, to say to the world, look, look what the war has made for the people' (199 – 200). But the sea is not a place on which asylum seekers can build shelter and signify, and when Al-Qady reaches what he thought was safety on land, the collective he had come to represent becomes a stereotype and a flood: representing an interview with immigration officers, Al-Qady says

my name.

I forget, I can't remember.

Please write down my name is Sinbad.

My number? Five million.

Five million refugees, they escaped from my country.

My address? Okay, please write airports, checkpoints, ocean, boat. (202)

As regards Al-Qady's 'address', Sandra Ponzanesi notes that for 'postcolonial migrants, refugees and asylum seekers these non-places are zones more of stasis than of transit, of entrapment more than consumption ... They actually embody what Foucault meant by heterotopia, ... a perspective on what mainstream society labels as "other spaces", relegated for the construction, organisation and management of otherness' (Ponzanesi 689). Indeed, these Australian filterscapes constitute Al-Qady as fearsome stranger, a characterisation that Hage argues does not fundamentally change among non-white Australians even with citizenship (*White Nation* 116). In his immigration interview, Al-Qady resists being singled out and recognised as one that Hage's national spatial manager grants entry to while others languish. His declaration as five million Sinbads acts here in a similar way to *Tampa's* filtering cage: as long as this fundamental refusal operates, Oliver's witnessing subjectivity that Al-Qady fostered at the beginning of his show cannot flourish.

Despite Al-Qady's protest 'I am not a stranger, I am from this world' (199), his unsanctioned arrival at the Australian shore marks him as threat. White Australia understands this threat as so overwhelming ('five million Sinbads') that this characterisation becomes an attempt to render the infinite obligation to hospitality as an overwhelming but apparently finite (countable and concrete) force. Presenting this nevertheless discursive and affective understanding alongside interactions between himself, Iraqis present at the show and other Australian audience-members, Al-Qady not only models real-world witnessing negotiation between finite bodies for mutual shelter, but also illustrates the dangerous absurdity of white Australia's discursive reversal of the infinite obligation. The fundamental refusal that *Tampa* presented with the cage and its impassive occupant, Al-Qady manifests with the 'NO' filter that remains regardless of his claim to civilisation. Oliver's subjectivity, like Scarry's civilisation, is

fundamentally relational. Al-Qady models this foundation of subjectivity and civilisation in his fluid performance of intersubjective witness, making of his body a vessel for the stories of others. While there must be an instability in human perceptions of others (what Oliver calls a 'remainder' that keeps us looking for better ways to live alongside one another), Al-Qady demonstrates how necrocivilisation exploits this connectedness to produce asylum seekers as too overpowering for negotiation (Oliver 'Rethinking Response' 625). With this collective association, the designation 'refugee' affords little protection. Australian necrocivilisation works to transform that fragile vessel-shelter of a category into a vessel-cell: overly porous and threatening to swallow its bearers totally if they do not reach firm ground (both metaphorically and physically). Al-Qady ends the play with 'YES or NO. That is the question' (202). The choice that is not a choice returns attention to the fundamental refusal that began the play. Necrocivilisational authorities in both the land the artist fled as well as the place of arrival deny him the discursive and material means to negotiate for shelter in civilisation.

CMI: A Certain Maritime Incident

Like *Tampa*, *CMI: A Certain Maritime Incident* presents the weaving of a filter of citizen discourse attempting to shore up white Australian virtue from the violence it visits upon asylum seeking bodies, a penetrating violence Al-Qady renders as the ever-present 'NO'. *CMI*, produced by version 1.0 and funded by the Australia Council, was first staged at the Performance Space, Sydney on 26 May 2004. The show adheres to elements of a tribunal play with the spoken script taken largely from the official proceedings Hansard of the CMI Senate Select Committee inquiry into the sinking of the SIEV 4 and 'children overboard' incident. These documentary elements withstanding, *CMI* is pointedly anti-verbatim. The performers acting as heightened versions of themselves voice the parts of Senators and witnesses striking a comedic and absurd tone spinning props, inserting metatheatrical asides on an overhead projector, and both literally and figuratively firing shots at one another.

Audience-members occupied tiered seating with a single corridor entrance to the theatre space down the middle of the bleachers opening out onto the performance space in front. The layout of the proceedings generally consisted of a row of seated performers facing the audience from behind a long conference table upstage with witnesses and other speakers stepping up to a microphone in the foreground stage left. This actor configuration changes, however, with often fast-paced, abrupt and surrealist action incorporating elements of physical theatre like a sudden aerobics class led by Senator Jane Halton, for instance, and episodes set against 1980s elevator music. Though the set is minimalist, furnished mainly with the conference table, chairs and an enormous upside-down Australian flag, the actors employ

various smaller props like telephones, an overhead projector and handguns. A screen behind the conference table for a time shows Samuel James' video montage circling Parliament House followed by the interior of a seaborne vessel, and at the end of the play this screen displays images of the sea and the words of SIEV X survivors with audio of their testimonies.

Version 1.0 sets a general tone of high-spirited hilarity against lifeless bodies that begin and end the show as well as a recording of the SIEV X survivors bearing witness to a tragedy that left 353 people dead. Astore's *Tampa* stood impassively bearing silent witness to this asylum seeker caging before even reaching the shore, putting the discursive filtering attempts of beachgoers on display. Al-Qady performed the relational witness that characterises all human subjectivity but that necrocivilisation, in the form of the wooden 'NO', ultimately turns against asylum seekers who are trapped eternally pleading for access to Scarrian civilisation. The SIEV X testimony, which was not part of the original hearings, alongside the farcical inquiry presents a verbal account of both Hage's white Australian managerial discourse as testimony and the words of those witness-bearers who, like Al-Qady and Astore, relentlessly present the fact of bodies systemically denied Oliver's response-ability.

Filtering Bodies

Dwyer explains that *CMI* aims 'to pull apart the 'ideological lining' in which our elected representatives tried to frame and contain [asylum seeker] experience' (Dwyer 'Inner' 134). From the categorised dead bodies the audience must step over to get to their seats to the voicing but only partial embodiment of the Senators and witnesses, version 1.0 represents this 'ideological lining' as a working through of white bodies that filter. The corridor of corpses becomes the mismatched cast slipping in and out of character, with performers only ever incompletely and self-consciously embodying the politicians or witnesses whose lines they read. The most striking examples of this incongruity frame the play with a child speaking the lines of the former Defence Minister Peter Reith in the first scene and the body of actor Stephen Klinder ending the play with the last lines of the Committee Chair, which he speaks as a body prepared for mortuary storage. I argue that these slipping and slippery white bodies set against the completely disembodied survivor testimony at the end, characterise not only the inquiry but the performance itself as a dramatisation of erasure. Rather than embodying individuals in a verbatim performance, version 1.0 depicts the continual distancing and disassociation that locates necrocivilisational filtering in the very bodies of the performers.

The unmovable necrocivilisational filter represented in *Tampa* as the cage with its unresponsive prisoner and in *Nothing But Nothing* as the wooden 'NO' is most visible in *CMI* at the very beginning and end of the play. In order to take their seats before the production

proper begins, the audience must navigate a narrow corridor of performers representing naked, lifeless bodies strewn along the floor, 'prepared for mortuary storage' (9). These bodies, along with the prostrate Stephen Klinder and a recording of survivor testimony at the end of the play, recall the sinking of the SIEV X. Occurring less than two weeks after the Children Overboard affair, the SIEV X tragedy constitutes an event that haunts the perimeter of both the inquiry and national memory (Cox *Performing Noncitizenship* 46). The X indicates that the vessel was not intercepted and, given Australian asylum seeker deterrence practices, it is possible that Australian Federal Police played a part in the disaster that cost 353 people their lives (Kevin 2). As a frame for the play, the dead work as a physical filter for members of the audience, an initiating rite of passage that makes evident the stakes of the sense that official scrutiny makes of the Children Overboard affair. Ultimately, it frames the inquiry as necrocivilisational apparatus in which citizens are invested and implicated.

Considering the ordered nakedness of the toe-tagged dead and their manifest whiteness, it is instructive to understand these corpses as a perverse representation of the border as skin rather than an embodiment of the SIEV X dead. As mentioned above in the Introduction and discussions of Mireille Astore's *Tampa*, Sara Ahmed elaborates the border as skin metaphor in her discussion of the so-called 'soft touch' approach to immigration that John Howard defined his government against: 'the metaphor of "soft touch" suggests that the nation's borders are like skin; they are soft, weak, porous and easily shaped or even bruised by the proximity of others. ... The demand is that the nation should seal itself from others' (Ahmed *The Cultural Politics* 2). Hegemonic discourse presenting the national border as skin underpins the construction and enforcement of the largely impermeable filter that *Tampa* and *Nothing But Nothing* manifest so strikingly. The filter is a mediator that enables meaning making and, thus, produces solid conceptual ground, but the only solid thing this filter appears to produce in *CMI* is the bodies of the drowned. In the heterotopia of *CMI*, the surfaces of the nation are defined and circumscribed by corpses, a weighty fact that the audience must reconcile with the ensuing action. While the tagged white bodies may recall the SIEV X dead, however, they do not straightforwardly embody them. Significantly, the actors that point to the border as deathscape are the white bodies of the performers that go on to play, however partially, the governing authorities of white Australia while also performing as themselves. Insofar as the nation's borders are like skin, the frame of dead bodies seems in accordance with Ahmed's assessment: the soft skin, the vulnerable because virtuous body that must be protected is the white body. In an image that recalls Hage's argument that the cages of white spatial management permeate Australian society, this skin circumscribing white Australia, the skin that the hard border is meant to protect, constitutes the unresponsive border itself (Hage *White Nation* 116).

Ahmed's analysis of the 'soft-touch' narrative notes how '[t]he use of metaphors of "softness" and "hardness" shows us how emotions become attributes of collectives' (*The Cultural Politics* 2). The unresponsiveness of the discursively defined 'soft' compassionate citizen as manifested in the lifeless bodies constructs citizens as animated by necrocivilisation. Accordingly, the actors as corpses cleaned and tagged for mortuary storage recall Foucault's categorisation for a given end in his discussion of heterotopias:

This problem of the human site or living space is not simply that of knowing whether there will be enough space for men in the world – a problem that is certainly quite important – but also that of knowing what relations of propinquity, what type of storage, circulation, marking, and classification of human elements should be adopted in a given situation in order to achieve a given end.' (23)

From this perspective, the bodies and the real drownings that the end recording testifies to cast the inquiry as tasked with determining the cause of death, a discursive autopsy.

At the same time, this framing of white bodies finishing with the last swirling of rhetorical weft spinning out from the mouth of the dead man with no warp to catch and hold it, gives the impression that the necrocivilisational discourse machine animates these bodies but does not support life. Paul Dwyer describes the effect of the computerised voice speaking the graphic testimony of SIEV X survivors before Stephen Klinder's body speaks the last lines of the Chair in the final scene:

I scan the stage looking to invest hope in something, somewhere, while the performers clear away the detritus from an inquiry turned mad-hatter's tea party. To my continuing bewilderment, it's as they neatly fold away an Australian flag they have been using as a dishcloth that tears well up in my eyes: what have we become when our elected representatives do these things for us? (135)

The dead bodies of *CM/* intimate that what we have become is a product of the necrocivilisation that thrives in Australia in the form of white spatial management, which, ultimately, renders citizens unable to take response-ability in Oliver's sense for violence perpetuated in their name. David Williams describes the desolation of the closing scene as embodying "an ethical problem that persists no matter how 'converted' to the cause any spectator might be" ('Performing Refugee Policy' 203).

Though *CM/*'s morbid frame marks the outcome of necrocivilisational processes, the actors draw attention to the means to this end throughout the play in comical asides with profound implications. The actors distance themselves from the Hansard through interruptions that

range from calls to jump forward in the script ('Matt, Dave. Again. Can we fast forward a bit again to CMI page 164?') to Brechtian asides displayed on an overhead projector reading, for example, 'WE KNOW THAT YOU KNOW WE ARE NOT REALLY THE SENATORS WHO TOOK PART IN THE CMI SENATE INQUIRY. STEPHEN IS A LOT SHORTER THAN SENATOR COOK AND DEBORAH WHO PLAYS SENATOR FAULKNER IS ACTUALLY A WOMAN' (13). These asides parody the pedantic precision of the Senators' empty language, as well as reminding the audience 'about the gaps between historical event testimony and theatrical representation' (Cox *Performing Noncitizenship* 44). But they also echo more profoundly the idea that, in such an inquiry, the politicians are also playing parts: 'the "script" of the inquiry, while not pre-determined, reflects the given roles assigned to the Senators as a consequence of party politics' (Dwyer 133). The drive to produce the 'political verbiage' that animated the inquiry appears here as animating the bodies of the performers who draw attention to this distance between the person and the discourse by disavowing any spontaneous human connection to the words they are voicing (Dwyer 133). The lifeless, categorised bodies and SIEV X survivor testimony recall the rigid necrocivilisational filter, the outcome which the discourse disassociates white Australia from. *CMI's* metatheatrics demonstrate how Oliver's address-ability and response-ability are undermined by discursive processes that distance the Senators from the implications of their policy and the actors (and thus audience-members) as citizens from the deeds of their elected representatives and liberal democratic system.

The most glaring embodied disjunction opens the play proper with a child reading a speech before a lie detector as the former Defense Minister Peter Reith, a speech asserting the 'fact' that children were thrown from the SIEV 4, an accusation that was subsequently disproven. When subjected to a lie detector test, the child performing as Peter Reith produces a reading that appears to register as 'true' when the interviewer says 'much better than you did last time' (10). Cox explains that this shows 'that truth-telling is something that can be rehearsed and crafted until it may be said to 'pass' ('Intro to CMI' 5). Bryoni Trezise notes that the opening inaugurates 'a performance code in which voices and gestures sifted from the Senate transcript are assumed, dropped and wrestled with as a way of imagining the kind of dubious political operations that can make national headlines alternately happen or disappear' (6). Trezise's use of 'sifted' to describe the process of deploying the 2,200-page Hansard emphasises the show as a demonstration of a filtering exercise. Version 1.0 encapsulates the terms of this demonstration in the audience's entry and this first scene. Reith's accusation coming after the weightier fact of dead bodies already reveals an alarming discursive framing that implicitly links the tangible existence of the dead and the alluded-to explanation of their condition: they are dead because they are the sort of people who throw

their children into the sea to get into Australia. Rear Admiral Geoffrey Smith sums up the Government's initial claim: 'the use of children as a means of intimidating the boarding parties – the sailors and the soldiers – is one of the techniques being used by these people ... [Using children] was designed to appeal to our moral values. That was designed to strengthen their position and weaken our own and invite us to not persevere with the mission' (23). In a breathtaking illustration of Ahmed's observation that '*Some bodies move precisely by sealing others as objects of hate*', Dwyer notes that the child-as-Reith 'waves and exits, scot-free, home to bed', compelling audiences to consider the contrast between Reith's escaping 'scot-free' and the fate of the asylum seekers (Ahmed *The Cultural Politics* 57; Dwyer 135). To emphasise this extreme access to movement through disavowal of accountability for violence, after the child exits the interviewer notes that Reith will not be present at the inquiry on account of his being on a flight to London (10).

The Australian Discourse Machine

These white bodies, as weighty and circumscribed with the same porous tissue as any human body, nevertheless achieve a remarkable mobility and slipperiness through what Dwyer calls a 'discourse machine' (Dwyer 133). The work this machine does in the context of the inquiry permits the weaving and reweaving of filters. As boundary and meaning-making surfaces, filters undergird accepted narratives of cause and effect as well as legitimacy. Vice Admiral David Shackleton's testimony shows how national spatial managers 'produce political verbiage' until only certain 'threads and strands' coalesce into a filter that yields a convenient understanding (Dwyer 133). He describes operating within the 'fog of war' as

trying to pull threads and strands from many miscellaneous and sometimes disconnected information flows. You are trying to build a puzzle from many disconnected pieces. Sometimes the pieces fit accurately, sometimes they do not. You are dealing with millions of shades of grey and it is only as events start to get to a point of culmination that they start to form up into a real pattern, and then sometimes it disintegrates again as the events change. This is constantly moving and going up and down all the time. (12)

Echoing Dwyer's 'discourse machine' with the added significance of systemic obfuscation, Williams asks '[d]oes such a "fog or war" actually exist, or is there simply a fog machine?' (Williams 'Political' 116). In addition to the performers as bodies that filter, *CMI* employs props that twirl and surge around the stage to make visible the distracted and distracting language of the inquiry that worked for 15 days, sometimes past midnight, to re-hash minutiae until what is happening to the people bearing the weight of Australia's border regime is no longer discernible.

Central to version 1.0's depiction of the 'discourse machine' is the leitmotif of the circle. Circularity dominates the movement of props which the performers spin around, from the conference table to the tea trolley. Performers spin on chairs stirring tea and coffee; Danielle Antaki even reads part of Shackleton's statement from the back of a round beer coaster. Ulrike Garde observes that 'the spaces that are generated through the circular revisiting of the central question invite audiences to listen for what is not being said because it is being avoided or unspeakable' ('Destabilising' 8). Version 1.0's abridging and reframing of 2,200 pages of Hansard comes to no climax or conclusion. The unmoored circularity of the questioning and answers give the impression of endless revisiting and deferral polishing a surface clean. The effect of the centripetal force this discourse machine generates, replete with comic absurdity, is to lighten white bodies of the weight of violence, to indefinitely forestall the redress response-ability would entail.

It is instructive to consider these spinning props, and more particularly the conference table, in light of Scarry's understanding of furniture as serving a similar civilisational role to the walls of a room: 'Both in the details of its outer structure and in its furniture (from "furnir" meaning "to further" or "to forward," to project oneself outward) the room accommodates and thereby eliminates from human attention the human body' (Scarry 39). A table, in this governmental context, is a place of discourse and negotiation. To have a 'place at the table' is to be accepted, to belong to and participate in civilisation because those at the table have a part in negotiations for mutual flourishing. Though the Select Committee invited detainees from Nauru and Manus Island, the Department of Immigration could not guarantee that their testimony would not negatively impact their asylum claims (Williams 'Political Theatrics' 125–126). The table is occupied exclusively by white Australians, spinning 'like a ship giddily changing course' (Trezise 30). The effect, along with noises of gunshots, ringing telephones and musical numbers, is one of disorientation. Significantly, Tony Kevin, after a short exchange with the senators about the clearly unpalatable fate of the SIEV X, is '*pushed off the stage by the conference table*' (38). The table as ship, a reference to the origin story of white Australia, and those at its helm use this ostensibly civilising object to move away from and displace, to spin and rub away, narratives of cause and effect that would implicate white Australia in the discursive othering, torture and death of asylum seekers. In *CMI*, the table works in the service of white spatial management producing extraordinary lightness for some while it consigns others to such extraordinary heaviness that they cannot keep their heads above water.

The last image of the play is a table, as well: not the spinning, charging, listing conference table of the previous scenes, but a heavy and unmoving mortuary slab, the piece of furniture that bears the weight from which the conference table disengaged itself and moved away. On

this table the actor Stephen Klinder, who voiced the lines of the inquiry's Chair, lies naked 'cleaned and prepared for the mortuary' as the other performers clear away all evidence of the inquiry (39). Klinder's motionless body speaks the Chair's last lines, closing an inconclusive inquiry with 'outstanding matters yet to be settled as well as other information that has been requested' (42). Only now he is bereft of the trappings of Dwyer's discourse machine. This image, recalling the bodies at the beginning of the play and the conference table as vessel but deathly still, reveals the fundamental undermining of Oliver's witnessing subjectivity. It represents the oppression that characterises the colonial origins and present of white Australia that the inquiry maintains through performative concern. The still slab in the place of the spinning and lurching table of the discourse machine conveys that the threat of annihilation, which the hegemonic discourse stokes as asylum seeker invasion, lies in fact in the swirling, rubbing, sanitising discourse apparatus itself. David Farrier describes Australia's rigid bordering practices as 'a means of exorcizing the ghosts of contemporary Australia's difficult past and of excising "undesirables" from its future. If postcolonial studies can be said to have a singular message, however, it is surely the lesson of history as *revenant*' (Farrier 'Beyond Biopolitics' 263). Indeed, the bodies of *CMI*'s white performers may be productively understood as revenants in the framing of the play, lifeless corpses animated by a whirling discourse machinery that divorces white Australia from reckoning with the violence attendant upon its refusal of response- and address-ability. The inquiry's theatrics of purported truth, justice and fairness represented by the conference-table and the border of dead skin offered up again at the end by the corresponding mortuary slab are two aspects of the same necrocivilisational filter.

Before Stephen Klinder speaks the final lines of the play, *CMI* concludes with a backdrop screen showing a projected video of the open ocean while a computerised voice reads out the testimony projected onto the screen of asylum seekers who survived the SIEV X disaster. The recorded testimony, which was never heard by the inquiry, presents a similar affect-jamming device as Astore achieved with her non-response to passers-by in *Tampa*: 'By the end of the evening, a computer-simulated voice programme is churning through fragments of the transcripts of interviews with survivors from the SIEV X: the details are graphic and profoundly shocking but of course the unmodulated computer voice doesn't care about my emotional response. I scan the stage looking to invest hope in something, somewhere' (Dwyer 135). Here, Dwyer registers the last scene's removal of 'something, somewhere' to transform his emotions, to allow him to atone by an attunement that the empty discourse and computerised recording now refuse him.

Dwyer's response recalls Ahmed's reaction to an aboriginal interviewee's story in the *Bringing them Home* report by the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (1996). Though torn from her mother to be assimilated, Fiona refuses uncomplicated assignations of blame, frustrating Ahmed:

No "them" appears to allow me the safety of such a projection. You refuse to blame those whom I feel caused your injury. And yet, in that refusal, you do not express the language of forgiveness. [...] My anger at this story, at the possibility of this story, does not find an object; it cannot be contained by an external object. In not having a "them" to blame in the story, my anger seeps outwards, towards all that makes the story possible. [...] You don't forget the hurt. But they do not become the other against which you define yourself. They become part of the body you now inhabit. (*The Cultural Politics* 37–38)

Though recorded immediately following the disaster as opposed to decades later, the SIEV X testimonies convey a similar even-handedness. The survivor testimony, of course, makes evident that asylum seekers are bearing the unsupportable weight of necrocivilisation's discourse machine, and yet it is the witnesses in the inquiry that heard no asylum seeker voices whose testimonies revolve around placing and avoiding blame. Survivors of the SIEV X do not locate responsibility for the horror (even in those who, in their panic, pushed children under the water more times than those children were able to recover their buoyancy) except a man described by a survivor who, in despair at his loss, blamed himself.

The flat, computerised homogenisation of asylum seeker testimony that refuses an individuated point of entry contributed to many audience members construing these multiple accounts as a single, coherent narrative from one asylum seeker. This tendency resonates with the singular and multiple identities that Al-Qady claims in *Nothing But Nothing* and, to a degree, with audience conflation of the artist Astore with the asylum seekers she stands in for in *Tampa*. All three plays refuse affective 'ins' that would differentiate one asylum seeker from another as more worthy of civilisation. In the spirit of Shackleton's '[pulling] threads and strands from many miscellaneous and sometimes disconnected information flows', the inquiry as a discourse machine weaves a tight filter around the white nation from indeed often 'disconnected information flows' (12). Like *Tampa's* bars and Astore's silent countenance, the computerised testimony stating the experience of survivors with all inflection removed presents a sort of anti-loom, unpicking the threads and strands so tightly bound to the understanding that 'boat people' are fearsome, manipulative and, at best, pitiable. The public discourse machine automatically weaves tidings of asylum seekers arriving by boat through the established 'boat people' warp, knitting the bordering filter that these bodies cannot negotiate for shelter. *CMF's* final scene presents what the unpicking of this filter reveals, a

filtering process undone when the object of fear and blame adds its threads and strands but does not supply a counter-object for weft to hold fast to. The asylum seeker voices do not, as Ahmed has it, produce a 'them' either 'to allow me the safety of such projection' (*The Cultural Politics* 37–38). In this refusal to offer a simple narrative, the asylum seeker testimony turns the theatre space into a container for witness that asks what a civilizational warp might look like - not necrocivilisation that turns people into mouthpieces and explains drowning as justice, but one that opens a space for bodies to negotiate their own weight on a common surface that secures the discursive and material ground for each person.

Chapter Two: UK Vessels

If the Australian vessel plays presented the unwavering fact of white Australia's refusal of Oliver's response-ability, their UK counterparts that I discuss here highlight a creeping process of filter ossification reflective of a less stark but equally deadly necrocivilisational regime. I noted in the Introduction how Didier Fassin and Estelle D'Halluin document expert-verified evidence of trauma increasingly filtering people's own voices and context from consideration in their asylum claims: 'In this process of objectification, it is the experience of the victims as political subjects that is progressively erased' (597). In the terms I have set out in this project, shelter is made so conditional on asylum seekers fitting through a narrow filter that it inhibits Oliver's reciprocal witness-based negotiation out in the world. The vessels in these UK plays function simultaneously as vessel-shelter and vessel cell. Container walls, broken vessels and the drowned reveal the workings of necrocivilisation's hard borders. However, the UK's practice of non-mandatory detention along with its geographical location in northern Europe and policy it supports to keep asylum-seeking survivors in other European countries mean that UK plays must also highlight the incremental nature of what might otherwise seem a less categorical refusal than Australia's. Though the Mediterranean Sea (clearly brought into focus in Anders Lustgarten's *Lampedusa*) is the main locus of asylum seeker death, Clare Bayley's *The Container* shows that the vessel metaphor clearly develops overland to Calais and Dover, as well. The impermeable walls of the container appear in *Pericles*, too, representing, I argue, a progressive hardening of the narrative filter that, as per Fassin and D'Halluin's filtering away of asylum seeker voice and context, produces a legitimated asylum-seeking hero who erases those he purportedly represents. Moreover, the precarious vessels articulated within the theatre spaces discussed here highlight the borders that citizens exist and operate within. Partial immersion in *The Container* and *Pericles* creates a visceral sense of the veiled but strictly enforced heterotopic divisions that *Lampedusa* highlights explicitly.

In the UK, these veiled necrocivilisational borders have proliferated in the wake of Empire. In contrast to the White Australia Policy, the UK entered the 20th century with virtually no laws on who was and was not allowed to stay ('Explore 50 Years'). However, subsequent developments such as war in Europe and globally, improved standards of living, incorporation into the EU, the end of the British Empire and the rise of more covert neo-imperialist (and, as I argue in this project, necrocivilisational) practices have led the UK to develop one of the most stringent asylum, and more broadly controlled immigration, systems in the world. A founding member of the UN and signatory to the 1951 UN Convention as well as the 1967 Protocol, the UK nevertheless has seen both Labour and Conservative governments continually tighten asylum laws, most recently since numbers of non-European refugees and asylum seekers have increased since the 1990s. Though both *Pericles* (2003) and *The Container* (2007)

premiered under Labour Governments and *Lampedusa* (2015) after five years of David Cameron's Conservative-led coalition, both sides have maintained a 'firm but fair' rhetoric towards asylum, differing on which side can deliver the 'firmest and fairest' solution rather than questioning the legitimacy of this language and policy.

As in Australia, government and press have predominantly characterised UK citizens as 'tolerant' and 'generous' while maintaining that these national characteristics must not be taken advantage of. Hence immigration and asylum controls that root out 'bogus' asylum seekers to protect 'genuine refugees.' However, focus on reducing asylum applications, as Tony Blair emphasised in a 2005 speech on asylum and immigration, underscores a preoccupation with keeping asylum seekers from applying for refugee status in the UK rather than protecting refugees (Blair). Further to this aim, in 2012 the UK coalition government formalised its 'hostile environment' policies and established the 'Hostile Environment Working Group', which sought to render housing, health care, work, education, family life and other necessities so inaccessible for undocumented people so as to force them out of the country (Webber 77).

The racial and ethnic profile of asylum seekers has likewise played into deep-seated fears voiced in public discourse as 'flood'. While the UK has historically encouraged targeted immigration from Commonwealth countries to fulfil labour needs, events such as the 2018 Windrush scandal and 2016 Brexit campaign to renounce EU membership have highlighted the marked racial inflection in discourse and practice that informs asylum policy, as well. William Hague's 2001 speech proclaiming 'the UK will become a foreign land' under another Labour Government contained echoes of Enoch Powell's reference, in his 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech, to white UK citizens being 'made strangers in their own country'. Though Hague received criticism for his speech and ultimately lost the election, the Labour Government nevertheless continued to pursue a rhetoric and policy of reducing asylum application numbers and penalising 'failed asylum seekers' for their purported abuse of the system (Blair). The then Prime Minister David Cameron described asylum seekers in 2015 as a 'swarm' ("PM Blames"). These are examples of weaving the weft of asylum-seeking people, their experiences and motivations, through a warp of grateful, contributing, genuine refugee or unreasonable, overwhelming mob dishonestly taking advantage of citizen generosity to the point of drowning compassionate white bodies. The discourse codes difference and context filtered away in asylum administration as dishonesty and unreasonableness, a failure to embrace the virtues of UK civilisation. What this fabric obscures, I argue, is the effective necrocivilisational sentencing of those individuals to destitution (if they are forced to abscond in the UK), indefinite detention or a likelihood of persecution if they are deported.

To reduce asylum claims even as numbers of displaced people increase globally, the UK has used its clout in the EU to police the borders of Fortress Europe, keeping asylum seekers to EU border zones and well away from the UK mainland. While EU legal instruments require all asylum seekers to be assessed and granted or refused asylum based on the perceived merit of their claim, the UK has managed to keep potential claimants from approaching its shores and has been able to repel these when they do through iterations of the Dublin Regulation, which requires those fleeing persecution to claim asylum in the first European country they enter. Because of its geography and location, the UK has processed a fraction of asylum seekers as other European countries such as Italy and Greece. Since the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994, camps like Sangatte (visually alluded to in *Pericles*) and Calais (a future stop for the travellers in *The Container*) have served as de facto extraterritorial holding places for asylum seekers while French and UK authorities, who operate a system of juxtaposed controls at ports and the Channel Tunnel, dispute responsibility. Since the Calais 'Jungle' was demolished in 2016, the UK has spent over £100 million policing and securing the French side of the Channel Tunnel, and in 2018 announced an additional £44.5 million to go towards fencing, surveillance and detection technology as well as relocating people away from ports to the French interior (Travis and Stewart).

Instruments like the Dublin Regulation carve out a political moat for a besieged fortress. The English Channel transforms from a strip of water that connects the UK to the rest of the world, like the Mediterranean is to Lampedusa, to one that isolates. However, because the UK is intimately connected to Europe through histories and realities of migration and bodies of law and trade (though the shape of this connection will alter with Brexit), the UK's fortress mentality and influence extends to the Mediterranean shores that Stefano patrols in *Lampedusa*. It is this frontier where the Italian Navy's 'Mare Nostrum' search and rescue operations became EU Frontex's Operation Triton, a shift in emphasis from saving lives to militarised border patrol. Increased deaths at sea reached a discursive pitch with the physical and media surfacing of Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi's dead body on a Greek beach in September 2015. Anders Lustgarten's play had premiered that April and referenced the massive losses of life in 2013 that had prompted Operation 'Mare Nostrum' but appeared at a time when the EU had answered increased deaths at sea with tighter border controls. In February 2015, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres responded to the recent deaths of at least 300 people travelling in four dinghies from Libya by calling Operation Triton's border control focus a 'woefully inadequate replacement for Italy's Mare Nostrum' (Edwards). Frontex's Operation Triton, which received UK support to deter people from crossing into Europe ('UK Opposes'), is a necrocivilisational policy (largely maintained in its 2018 successor Operation Themis) that Lustgarten represents in *Lampedusa*.

The popular travel website TripAdvisor's short description notes that Lampedusa, a frequent addition to the site's 'Top Ten' lists, 'is treasured by visitors for its fine white sandy beaches, its clear turquoise waters and its excellent scuba diving' ('Lampedusa'). The small Mediterranean island is also the site of an infamous detention centre and, in recent years, hundreds of bodies of asylum seekers have washed up on its shores. The UK theatre critic Joyce McMillan observes that transport containers like the one that frames Clare Bayley's play and plays the vessel in *Pericles* make invisible the people and movement of goods upon which UK society depends. Islands and vessels, as well as the waters that surround them take on discursive and physical functions to keep asylum seekers away from shores and other heterotopic veils where the UK's necrocivilisational practices might become more difficult to hide. *The Container*, *Pericles* and *Lampedusa* represent opportunities for audiences to conceive of necrocivilisational discourse and practice, particularly the way it more subtly binds citizens to violence as long as discourse and policy prevent the conditions that Kelly Oliver's response-ability requires.

The Container

In blunt contrast to the precariously porous vessels discussed in the previous chapter, Clare Bayley's *The Container* presents a decidedly impermeable one. Telling the story of five asylum seekers from Somalia, Turkey and Afghanistan being smuggled to the UK, Bayley makes a 40-foot freight container not only a prop but the theatre space itself. In both major productions of *The Container* (at the 2007 Edinburgh Fringe and a 2009 Young Vic revival in London), the audience sat along two sides of the closed interior while performers moved around and amongst them². The show also came to Australia, with a production staged in 2013 in Melbourne's Footscray Community Arts Centre. Though Bayley has been criticised for both attempting to reproduce an incommensurable experience and not emphasising placement within wider capitalist networks, such concerns, however important to voice, tend not to recognise more complex possibilities for understanding how both physical and textual aspects of the play interact on a conceptual level. Thinking through the 'immersed' position of the audience alongside the particulars of the drama unfolding within the heterotopic and Scarrian container space allows us to consider how the west's border production is constitutive of necrocivilisation.

² Container theatre is not new and not always related to issues of refugees and capitalism, though Bayley's is a particularly well-known example that has been staged repeatedly since its debut. Sissy Helff lists container-based productions alongside testimonial plays as the two major subgenres of contemporary refugee theatre. Among the first examples are German Christoph Schlingensiefel's 2000 Big Brother-style asylum seeker art project and television show *Ausländer raus! Schlingensiefels Container (Foreigners Out!)* staged as part of the annual Vienna Festival, and Maxim Biller's 2001 *Kühltransport: Ein Drama* (Refrigerated Transport: A Drama) which investigated the June 2000 container deaths of 58 Chinese migrants on the border between France and Britain (Helff 102 - 103).

Theatre Space as Impermeable Cell

Criticism of *The Container* chiefly takes issue with the semi-immersive element of the audience's confinement to an actual shipping container. However popular the idea of walking a mile in someone's shoes, the universalising danger of appropriating traumatic experience is ever present. Michael Shane Boyle also warns that the play's single narrative

sidelines imagination of the complex systems of which containers are a part ... [The] infrastructural fact of performance does not free *The Container* of a story-generated container fetish—if anything, the intimacy of shared space intensifies it by leaving audiences even less room to consider the container's consequence beyond what the narrative provides. (Boyle 63)

Boyle's concern is an important one, as an implicit and key animating element of theatre about asylum seekers is audience response beyond as well as within the theatre. Helena Grehan describes a desirable result as enduring discomfort, a 'nagging' (6), that provokes deeper reflection, and she goes on to clarify that audience responsibility involves 'the burden a work places on [the spectator] ... It is about spectators working out how to respond and ultimately what responsibility might mean for those who engage with politically inflected work' (7). For such a work as *The Container*, a citizen audience's ability to situate themselves within and in relation to the space and the characters, to 'consider the container's consequence beyond what the narrative provides' is crucial to its success. I argue, however, that, though these concerns are relevant and pressing, the immersive and narrative elements of *The Container* also offer an opportunity for citizen audience members to comprehend their own positionality within the heterotopic and necrocivilisational structures that produce the situations depicted and referred to in the play.

The audience's immersion inside a container is pivotal to the work, but it is both more productive and ethical to view this as emphasising a conceptual filtering regime rather than as a straightforwardly immersive experience of asylum journey. Josephine Machon defines immersive theatre as typically containing one or more of three elements: full audience involvement in terms of 'concentration, imagination, action and interest' (*Immersive* 62); transporting the audience member-participant to 'both a conceptual, imaginative space and an inhabited, physical space' (*Immersive* 63); and total immersion, which constitutes both absorption and transportation producing 'an uncanny recognition of the audience-participant's own *praesence* within the experience' (*Immersive* 63). *Praesence*, which Machon borrows and extends from Scarry's understanding of 'that which stands before the senses', emphasises the 'tactile proof' of being present and describes the particularity of fully immersive theatre's 'continuing, immediate and interactive exchange of energy and experience between the work

and the audience' (*Immersive* 44). Asylum seeker experience of container travel cannot be replicated bodily in any theatrical format as is revealed, to a degree, in director Tom Wright's comments about staging the play: 'Recreating the smell of excrement would have been too overwhelming, says Wright, but the heat, darkness, smell of sweaty bodies and claustrophobia will make the experience real enough' (Moss). The container in which the play is staged at the Young Vic also had extra holes drilled in the sides for ventilation and Wright's original idea of having the truck in which *The Container* was staged in Edinburgh drive around was ruled out due to health and safety requirements (Moss). Given these telling barriers to hyperrealism as well as the ethical dubiousness of appropriating asylum seeker experience, reading *The Container* against the grain as an exercise in feeling how the concept of the impenetrable filter works in the lives of citizens opens up more fruitful avenues for analysis.

If we consider that Bayley's set is immersive only insofar as it aims at feelings of confinement and claustrophobia, the play also opens possibilities for responses that Machon notes in her second definition, that have an emphasis on conveying the conceptual in the physical. Gareth White observes that the immersion in traditional immersive theatre suggests not only a multisensory exploration of space but also 'this impression you are inside somewhere normally hidden. ... [Immersive plays] require the audience to move within the space occupied by the performers, a space that is replete with associations and which becomes performative in new ways in consequence of the audience's presence within it.' (White 224-225). Bayley's audience does not move through the space once they take their seats in the container, nor are they called on to interact with performers. Their physical presence within the room is radically passive, and their immersion limited to the confinement of the theatre space and the proximity of the performers. In this way, audiences cannot be lulled into a false sense of agency that traditional immersive theatre may inspire. Being made to passively sit within a dramatisation of the hard filters of necrocivilisation represented by the walls of the container provides an opportunity for audience members to comprehend their own position as citizens within this oppressive arrangement. In a set-up conveying an affect reminiscent of the powerlessness of Astore and Al-Qady's audiences, *The Container* is most effective as a representation of filtering logics that extend to the lives of privileged citizen audience members.

The reading I propose emphasises the positionality of *The Container's* audience as privileged citizens rather than asking audience members to empathise with uncommunicable experience. The building blocks of capitalism, shipping containers, now deliver the means of life to western citizen audience members. The usual contents of the ubiquitous container (food, clothes, medicine, furniture, etc) form the shapes of daily discourse, making invisible these

impermeable blocks that hem in citizens on all sides. Like Astore's cage and prisoner, *The Container's* theatre space confronts the audience with the entrapment the discourse conceals. The impermeable container, like the discourse that obscures it and filters the oppressed out of sight, is necrocivilisational in its capacity to prohibit mutual shelter-building through encounter and witness. In the previous chapter, I used Kelly Oliver's understanding of subjectivity structured by the address-ability and response-ability of witness to explain how *Tampa* and *Nothing But Nothing* in particular conceive of the necrocivilisational filter as oppressive: by narrowly prescribing what is permissible for an asylum seeker to be worthy of civilisation (i.e. not arriving by boat), it prevents any encounter of witnessing subjectivity. Oliver offers this model of subjectivity in opposition to an ethics of recognition, which, like the permission of Hage's national spatial management, 'is experienced as conferred by the very groups and institutions responsible for withholding it in the first place' ('Rethinking Response' 620). Reading *The Container* as an exercise in purportedly experiencing the horror of forced migration aligns with recognition as argument for taking measures to ameliorate the suffering of the afflicted. To understand the walls of the container as preventing citizens themselves from the address-ability and response-ability of subjecthood, in contrast, permits the privileged to comprehend both the arrangement that traps them in relationships of violence without hope of redress as well as how this necrocivilisational arrangement saturates their world.

Bayley explicitly suggests that she wants to create the impression of, as White expresses it, 'being inside somewhere normally hidden' (225): 'Our lives are so sanitised yet, in the midst of them, all this is going on. It's so close to us and so invisible. [*The Container*] is about taking people inside that experience.' (Moss). I suggest that the container theatre space as heterotopia does indeed take 'sanitised' citizens into the decidedly unsanitary side of the container. However, it is not the inside of asylum seeker experience that they have access to, but rather the implication of the container in omnipresent necrocivilisational systems that seek to maintain citizen hypermobility by erasing their response-ability. Audience understanding of the ubiquity of the container is apparent from one of the first reviews about Bayley's play, published during its 2007 Edinburgh Festival run:

We see them everywhere in our cities and along our motorways, the big containers on which our civilisation depends for the daily transport of everything we buy, sell, and eat; so much so that we're often barely aware of their presence. But every year, for thousands of illegal migrants trying to make their way to the west, these containers become a dangerous, stinking, short-term home as they rumble across Asia and Europe, the place where their dreams will be made or broken. (McMillan)

Though Boyle's concerns highlight the risks of the single narrative obscuring the container's consequence, Joyce McMillan's review points to the pull of the container as already rooted in an awareness of the pervasive capitalist network of which it forms a part. Knowledge of the simultaneity of this heterotopic space provides a key insight that inflects the visceral experience of entrapment with wider necrocivilisational knowledge. McMillan goes on to observe that '[t]he effect is devastating, as the big metal doors slam on the audience, and we are plunged into the sweaty darkness of a different world that must often be only inches away from us, as we go about our daily lives.' Audience members passively observing the action are afforded an experience of the impermeable filters that 'sanitise' them by shielding them from address-ability and its attendant response-ability.

It is helpful to understand the audience's positionality within the *The Container's* theatre space in terms of Vivian Patraka's discussion of Leeny Sack in *The Survivor and the Translator* that I mentioned in the Introduction: the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, Sack '[sits] inside the memory of where [she] was not' (Sack quoted in Patraka 105), which Patraka (106) sees as a way 'to better understand how that history has shaped us in the current historical moment'. What audience members are witnessing in Bayley's play is not so much a memory from a previous generation that continues to have force in the present, but rather their place within a contemporary necrocivilisational regime. As McMillan notes, containers deliver all the trappings of civilisation to citizens in the west, but the audience members sealed inside Bayley's container catch a glimpse of how this arrangement traps them in necrocivilisational relationships. The container's opacity prevents relationships of Oliver's address-ability and response-ability. While the experiences of asylum seekers and privileged citizens in necrocivilisation are in no way commensurable, Bayley's container permits passive audience-members to viscerally perceive their oppressive relationship of crushing dependency with those who container walls filter from view.

Bodies Like Walls

Bayley fills *The Container's* immersive but immobilising theatre space with recognisable and multi-dimensional personalities. These representations demonstrate resistance to abject space as well as the physical and discursive hardening that Scarrian unshelter produces as bodies must act more like walls when walls do not facilitate life. *The Container's* characters are predominantly identifiable in terms of their social roles, connected relationally to wider civilisation based on their duty to others. This, along with virtuous as well as negative actions, presents them as multi-faceted human subjects, a miniaturisation of a population under duress but with full entitlement to the tools and space to build their own place in civilisation as they had previously done. What is more, richness as well as the hardening are reminiscent of the

civilisational and necrocivilisational discourses prevalent in western citizen populations. The container itself as abject space in addition to the bordering technologies Mariam and Jamal discuss, however, present a definitive filtering away of the relational richness that had begun to emerge from each of the characters inside the container. The container, like Al-Qady's 'NO' or Astore's cage, ultimately persists.

A major enabler of a broader sense of necrocivilisational entrapment outside the container as well as within is the character Mariam, a widowed Afghan schoolteacher in her 20s who enters the container midway through Scene One. In the dramatically enclosed space where time, we must imagine, is suspended and eternal for those who are travelling and where they have no eyes nor ears to know where they are, Mariam brings news first of location (the border of Italy and France). This, in turn, brings a sense of time to destination, how long they may need to survive without food and what little is left of their water: 'Two, three more days' (7). Coming from the outside, Mariam, *'her hand over her mouth and nose, because of the smell in there.'* (6), is also the first to intimate the state of the inside of the container that the audience must imagine. From this point on, the characters make such regular reference to the overpowering presence of excrement and vomit in the enclosed space along with lack of water and food, that audience members should be in no doubt that the discomfort is far worse for asylum seekers in real life. It is as if the container space is checking off all of Scarry's requirements of a nurturing room that it does not fulfil: the lack of air circulation impedes the stabilising of temperature, cramped quarters preclude the ability to stabilise the nearness of others. This all results in an environment in which the body cannot suspend its 'rigid and watchful postures' (Scarry 39), in which the body must act like a wall. Mariam brings to the container specifics (concrete time that allows for calculations of finite resources along with preoccupation with bodily waste) that are indispensable to finite bodies.

Mariam further acts as a bridge between the inside and necrocivilisational caging beyond the container by making visible the discursive counterparts of the impermeable container walls. Mariam cannot pay the extra 50 euros the Driver demands to continue their trip. She exits the container and *'We hear shouting. MARIAM cries out. More shouting'* (40). The excuses the characters present for not helping Mariam have the familiar effect of necrocivilisational discourse beyond the container. Ahmad, the Afghan businessman, deflects Mariam's plea for help by aligning himself with a duty to respond to the claims of children: 'I have my own children to think of! If I give all my money away, there will be none left for my own children! What kind of a father does that?' (35). Fatima uses the lack of knowledge and inability to imagine agency that the impermeable walls facilitate to produce a moral salve, convincing herself and the other characters that everything will be alright and they have done what they could: 'This is Europe.

Nothing with happen to her! ... (In Somali). *Wajirto waxaan kaqaban karno*. [There is nothing we can do].’ (36). When the Agent leads Mariam out of the container, Fatima says to Asha ‘she will come back’ (37). But Mariam does not come back, and her voice crying out is the last the audience and characters hear of her. The discursive filtering that Ahmad and Fatima deploy here recalls the distancing tactics of western necrocivilisation. As McMillan points out, containers are so ubiquitous that what they conceal ‘must often be only inches away from us’ (McMillan). Heavy discursive and material walls, however, permit the privileged to look and explain away what they can choose not to see.

It is apparent that the affective result of the asylum seekers’ precarious situation has produced a prevailing attitude of hardness. Extremely uncomfortable and unwilling to trust one another, the characters keep a largely impermeable barrier between themselves and their travel companions. When Jemal explains that he speaks the Turkish smuggler’s language as a result of his oppression in Turkey as a Kurd, for example, Fatima, without evidence to contradict him, simply replies: ‘I know when I can’t trust someone’ (21). Everyone has something to hide and as a vessel of arrival, the sealed container also reflects the narrow narratives the UK demands of asylum seekers: ‘We must lie’ says Jemal, who intends to pass himself off as Iraqi in order to find safety (43). The closed orientation of the UK’s filters will not accept stories that do not fit into a predetermined asylum seeker narrative, effectively foreclosing new political and ethical relationships. The container as theatre space brings awareness to the affective hardness that attempts to stand in as wall. Bayley’s container is a carceral perversion of Scarry’s nurturing room as well as the asylum seekers’ last hope for shelter. The familiarity of Ahmad and Fatima’s responses to Mariam’s expulsion from the container along with general attitudes of mistrust intimate that the hardness demanded of forced migrants to reach safety is an extension of necrocivilisation’s veiled violence.

Importantly, oppressive circumstances accentuate this affective hardness. Bayley’s characters, with the possible exception of the young Asha, are not uniformly virtuous or villainous as refugees are so often portrayed. While arguably racialized, the characters are also primarily recognizable for their social roles and personalities: Mariam as widowed schoolteacher, Ahmad the father and businessman, Fatima the mother and aunt, Jemal the young father. No character, again with the exception of Asha, appears especially brave or virtuous. Fatima’s scolding and inanity (‘You. Rude man. Why have we stopped?’ (6), Jemal’s disrespect and violence (‘Sit down, you stupid woman! (6), Ahmad’s meanness (‘Why should she get through and the rest of us have to pay?’ (33), Mariam’s alarmist stories (‘I heard of some people. ... They couldn’t get out. Someone took the front off the lorry and left the back behind and forgot about them’ (23), suggest a human pettiness that is recognizable and

accentuated in difficult situations. But neither are these characters the criminals that the stereotype of the virtuous and brave refugee is employed in public discourse to counter. While Ahmad refuses to pay for Mariam's continued passage to England, for example, he does pay for Asha's. Though Jemal is irascible and rude, he also looks out for his travel companions ('You keep some bread for yourself' (10). Their personalities, social roles, attitudes and prejudices readily correspond to those circulating in the western world outside the container.

This expression of complex humanity is crucial to understanding the container as affective metaphor. Mariam and Jemal discuss the bordering technologies of border patrolling that strip this civilisational richness from asylum seekers as they filter the bare body through otherwise impermeable container walls. Mariam talks about the information the hard container shell can still betray: 'The French police have machines that can see inside of lorries. They can see the warmth of your body. They can see your heart beating' (22). Jemal adds that 'The British test the air to see if people are breathing inside' (22). These technologies reduce forced migrants to their bare life: a beating heart, a breathing body, the mere heat of beings with no social voice, confined and unsheltered, exposed in their containment. Mariam's description of 'machines that can see inside of lorries' is a particularly apt image of how bordering discourse works to define and contain the asylum-seeking figure. A necropolitical discourse of radical othering works to strip the characters we come to know within this container of their relationality along with any hope of finding social purchase in the world outside the container. If, as I have argued, *The Container's* 'look inside' constitutes a visceral and devastating understanding of the enforced disavowal of Oliver's response-ability, then these technologies echo the container walls as the summary refusal of witnessing subjectivity in western necrocivilisational societies.

The container as Scarrian cell both taps into and reproduces the abject heterotopic conditions of necrocivilisation upon which western capitalism thrives. Contrary to what Bayley seems to intend, I propose that *The Container's* look inside this heterotopia is not productively viewed as access to the experience of forced migration in a container. Rather it provides an opportunity to witness the physical and discursive structures that produce this experience and the placement of citizens within it. By requiring the audience to passively view the show from inside a demonstrably more comfortable container space, *The Container* is more ethically read as not so much asking these citizens to imagine themselves into the asylum seekers' place as compelling them to recognise UK borders' physical and discursive rejection of Oliver's response-ability. In light of this interpretation, we might understand *The Container's* audience/actor relationship as similar to *Nothing But Nothing's* demonstration of addressability and response-ability. However, instead of the immersive element consisting of

interaction as responsive interlocutors, *The Container's* audience is cast as passively part of the unresponsive container walls. Though the play presents a single narrative of asylum, allusions throughout motion towards a much more extensive network of migration and bordering within which the characters and the audience are enmeshed. By focusing on immersion within the single narrative structure without examining what happens within it, critics overlook what the play has to offer in terms of conceptualising the western borderscape. Bayley's container proves a much better immersive metaphor for citizen entrapment in relationships of violence than a literal, and thus highly problematic, recreation of asylum seeker experience.

Pericles

Adrian Jackson's 2003 adaptation of Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* presents both the excessively porous boat and the impermeable shipping container. To these he adds mediated and procedural elements that, like *Tampa's* online discursive record, emphasise narrow discursive filtering as the heart of necrocivilisational non-response-ability. *Pericles* is the story of the tribulations of the eponymous hero as he flees death at the hands of King Antiochus whose incestuous affair Pericles discovered. On his journey, Pericles marries Thaisa who gives birth to Marina. The three are separated when Thaisa appears to die in childbirth and Pericles leaves Marina in the care of the governor of Tarsus whence, as a young woman, Marina must also flee for her life. Though he had thought his wife and daughter were dead, the play ends with the family's reunification. The co-production between The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and Jackson's homeless theatre company Cardboard Citizens is a nearly three-hour long epic staged in The Warehouse in Southwark, London. Part reality play, testimony of real people who have sought asylum in communities from London to Australia frame and punctuate the Shakespearean drama. These stories take the form of video testimonials and readings of story fragments by actors who also combine elements of physical theatre and dance set to music. Throughout this piece of promenade theatre through steel and concrete warehouse-like spaces, Jackson maintains recognisable elements of modern asylum seeker experience such as Sangatte-like tent settlements, containers, rows of camp beds and a line-up of washing machines recalling a launderette.

Pericles, however, sits uncomfortably as representative of people seeking asylum. Unlike Astore or Al-Qady who jar the affective channelling that masks necrocivilisation's foundational refusal or Bayley who emphasises dire and uncertain fates, *Pericles* surfaces as not so much ungrievable as unfortunate (and ultimately triumphant). With audience-members' bodies and

attention immersed but closely directed through the cavernous warehouse, however, the production also makes discernible the normally hidden discursive limits placed on reception of and response-ability to individuals seeking shelter. In my analysis of *Pericles*, I examine how stories of asylum fail to adhere to the figure of Pericles but rather succumb to the ossifying narrative that bears the prince safely across the sea. I argue that it is Thaisa, more than her husband, who displays the necrocivilisational filtering dynamics at work in narrow and rigid narratives of legitimacy in the west.

A Fraying Filter

Rather than presenting threads to be woven into the *Pericles* narrative as legitimate filter, the fragments of real asylum seeker experience interspersed throughout the play draw attention to the failure of the culturally sanctioned warp to gather the weft of people literally displaced. TV screens inside tents play recordings of asylum seekers and refugees recounting experiences of asylum journeys as audience members wander through a Sangatte-style room full of shanties that frame these fragmented points of light. In another scene, the audience sits at school desks with asylum formularies while actors take turns standing up amid and before the seated audience to tell their stories. Some speak in English, some in other languages without an interpreter, and an ear-splitting horn abruptly silences each before they have finished speaking. In both scenes, the audience is privy to glimpses into what compelled people to seek asylum and their journeys, but viewers also encounter opacity in the form of stories circumscribed and cut short and expressed in unknown languages. In possibly the most telling scene, an ESL teacher explains Shakespeare and provokes laughter when he tells a recently-arrived asylum seeker that her definition of 'stress' is 'incorrect': he meant emphasised syllables in iambic pentameter not the horrors of asylum. This exchange echoes the heterotopic juxtaposition of space: one word, two definitions. Insistence on the intricacies of a language after the fashion of *CMI's* wall of semantic quibbling, filter out of sight the immediacy of experience. While the audience may have more room to move around this immersive theatre space than that of *The Container*, the safeguarded narrative of the displaced prince shepherds the audience physically and discursively to the exclusion of actual asylum seekers.

As a collaboration which seeks to place marginalised stories within a canonical frame, how these two elements interact is crucial to understanding the potential of *Pericles* to reinforce and trouble relationships of necrocivilisational oppression. Though *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* is not a popular Shakespearean play, its use still draws substantial prestige given Shakespeare's preeminent place in the western and particularly Anglophone canon. Likewise, the involvement of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) lends cultural status to Adrian

Jackson's Cardboard Citizens, a company dedicated to working with homeless and formerly homeless people as non-professional actors, creators and audiences. Half of the 12 *Pericles* cast members were drawn from the Royal Shakespeare Company and the other half from Cardboard Citizens. Along with the cultural status of Shakespeare and the RSC, the mission and composition of Cardboard Citizens pointedly brings another form of credibility to *Pericles*: the lived experience of the marginalised. Though Jackson's was not the only play in 2003 to highlight the plight of refugees on London stages under the *Pericles* banner (director Yukio Ninagawa brought another adaptation to London's National Theatre earlier that year), theatre critic Dominic Cavendish points out that a company which exists to work with marginalised people has 'more claims than most to making the point'. As I established in the Introduction, the woven filter consists of a stationary warp that forms the meaning-making strands through which the weft of evidence and experience are woven. The *Pericles* collaboration between Cardboard Citizens and the RSC seeks to bring cultural significance to asylum seeker experience by threading it through a Shakespearean warp, while also displaying the relevance of that cultural frame by filling it with the weft of asylum seeker testimony. As I will go on to discuss, however, this alliance proves to be an unsettling one that does much to trouble the idea that such partnerships can unproblematically coalesce.

On his motivations for making *Pericles*, Jackson remarks '[t]here's lots of stuff talking about [refugees], but people's own words are still not heard enough' (M. Turner). While Jackson does fill the production with fragments of testimony from forced migrants, the neat Shakespearean frame illustrates how the nationally endorsed story falls oppressively short of fostering Oliver's ethics of response-ability. Fundamentally, the trajectory of the character *Pericles*, who ostensibly provides a unifying figure for these disparate stories, is profoundly different from most asylum seekers. Michael Billington notes that 'treating Shakespeare's *Pericles* as if he were a prototype asylum seeker seems faintly spurious in that he is actually a prince protected by fate, not an impoverished victim of tyranny.' Significantly, this title role is played by RSC actor Christopher Simpson rather than a cast-member from Cardboard Citizens. *Pericles* and the otherwise fragmented experiences he represents suggest a more culturally palatable version of *Nothing But Nothing's* five million Sinbads, portraying a guaranteed agency, resources and protection that asylum seekers, almost by definition, do not enjoy. It is precisely because they refuse abject victimhood by 'attempting to free themselves from the increasingly suffocating national order of things' that western states discursively and materially impoverish asylum seekers, refusing the foundational legitimacy of the hard-done-by but ultimately esteemed and protected *Pericles* (Hage 'Etat' 44). Paul Taylor argues that Jackson acknowledges this discrepancy by 'juxtaposing the often painful inconclusiveness of [asylum seeker] stories with the consolations of closure in art'. My reading

of the play will centre on the production's representation of the progressive hardening of filters against asylum seekers as a function of the very legitimacy that Pericles and his family accrue. Though *Pericles'* themes of exile, loss and reunion may resonate with Jackson's idea of the asylum seeker experience (M. Turner), the progression of vessels bearing the protagonists to safe reunion dramatises an oppressively violent erasure as asylum seeker weft is not engaged with but appropriated by the Shakespearean warp in a journey still beholden to Hage's white spatial manager.

The conventions of audience movement within the immersive theatre space reinforce this frame of directed, even policed, encounter. Audience-members progress through a series of warehouse spaces representing various stages of asylum seeker arrival: from the processing centre, to a Sangatte-style camp to the high seas where containers and rickety fishing boats transport people from one place to another. As in Bayley's *The Container*, Jackson is ostensibly placing the audience in the shoes of asylum seekers (being questioned, attending a language class, and filling out asylum forms, for instance), but the effect continues to be one of detached observation as actors soon draw attention to their own performances. With audience members free to move around many of the rooms they enter, Jackson's *Pericles* adheres more apparently to Machon's definition of immersion than *The Container* does. However, the audience is not free to explore the warehouse complex as they please but are shepherded through the various spaces, with their gaze and position dictated by the action. In an examination of contemporary stagings of Shakespeare, Michael Dobson emphasizes that '[t]he experience of attending a promenade Shakespeare today is characteristically not one of the emancipation ..., but one of subjection, made explicit by figures around the fringe of the play who serve as authoritarian mediators between the play's world and that of its helpless spectators' (23-24). Dobson describes having '[t]he sense that the promenade audience were there not to choose but to obey, albeit while thinking about what that obedience might mean' (24), and goes on to explain this as 'replacing those seats with a Shakespearean police force' (26). In *Pericles*, the 'Shakespearean police force', becomes yet another nod to the discursive authority citizens grant those who design these abject spaces and necrocivilisational processes that, in turn, direct their movement and understanding. Such conventions do not allow the audience to negotiate the stories that do not fit the narrative, the real accounts that haunt the play past its neat resolution.

The Filter Solidifies

The three major vessels transporting Pericles and his family represent steps in a discursive process that produces the restricted narrative environment I discussed above. These vessels progress from porous bodies to impenetrable container culminating in Thaisa's mediatized

delivery from container space as priestess of the goddess Diana. This movement, symbolic of discursive shelter-building within necrocivilisation, dramatizes a process that demands subjugation rather than mutual ceding to conditions and languages of negotiation. *Pericles* presents an illustration of Oliver's caution against the ethics of recognition, namely a hegemonic group's bestowing of legitimacy upon a marginalized community through a process of sense-making and new, often fleeting, awareness. Such a relationship does not disrupt the Hegelian master-slave dynamic, Oliver argues (Oliver 'Witnessing and Testimony' 78). Rather, 'recognition is distributed according to an axis of power that is part and parcel of systems of dominance and oppression' (Oliver 'Witnessing, Recognition' 474). I conceive of these systems of dominance and oppression here in terms of necrocivilisation, in that they actively thwart Scarrian civilization, which is comprised of projection in acts of making enabled by the room's bodily shelter. *Pericles* shows that recognition involves the hardening of filters that comprise the walls of buoyant vessels, against the terms of others. Unlike Astore or Al-Qady who also fashion themselves as standing in for an asylum-seeking community, *Pericles* represents grievable lives misplaced and then found rather than those whose future is perennially in dissolution because necrocivilisation will always refuse them. While I find Shakespeare's *Pericles* ultimately unsuccessful as a vehicle for asylum seeker stories, its manifest failure to facilitate mutual negotiation for shelter between citizens and new arrivals is nevertheless instructive

From the very first scene of the *Pericles* narrative proper the protagonist achieves shelter through appropriation of asylum seeker experience while filtering away asylum seeking bodies and their stories. RSC actor Christopher Simpson as *Pericles* fleeing from King Antiochus rides out a storm at sea on the shoulders of another actor while still more performers form the shape of a small vessel. The actors-as-vessel disperse as the storm dashes the craft to pieces and the prince washes ashore at Pentapolis. Here actors read out extracts of real asylum testimony and *Pericles* makes his way across a shore composed of piles of clothes and a line of juddering washing machines sloshing water. Those bodies that, in the absence of shelter, are forced to act like makeshift walls forming *Pericles*' initial vessel do not reach dry land. Rather than caging the prince as it does the asylum seekers that Astore and Al-Qady represent, the shore restores *Pericles*' princely status with a suit of armour with which he goes on to win Thaisa in marriage. Allowed to stand protected on dry land, *Pericles* emerges to eclipse rather than carry forward into significance those other stories. In his 2003 asylum play *These People*, which I analyse in Chapter Five, Australian playwright Ben Ellis also uses the washing machine as a purifying and filtering device, a symbol that removes the dirt and imperfections from not only clothes, but characters, and by extension the national character.

Here, too, Jackson produces solid ground through the donning of a washed, legitimised identity, filtering away the bodies that cannot fit.

It is Jackson's use of the ubiquitous shipping container, however, that most starkly conveys the relationship between the canonical characters and real-life asylum seekers. From Pentapolis with the now pregnant Thaisa, Pericles sets sail again atop the impenetrable box. The actors who tell the story of SIEV X survivor Amal Basry in this scene and who once formed Pericles' former vessel suddenly become waves that crash against the container. Bodies again dissolve into water and, as Clare Bayley shows in *The Container*, smuggle themselves within containers to survive or die trying. Pericles does not travel inside but on top of the container, visible and safe from both the dissolution of the overly porous vessel and the suffocation of the impermeable cell. The effect is similar to the *CMI* inquiry's silencing of asylum seekers through detention and bordering practices that see asylum seekers drowning in unseaworthy boats. Though Pericles is a more sympathetic asylum seeker rendering than many characterisations voiced in the *CMI* inquiry, his story works rather to present a hegemonically safe idea of an asylum seeker rather than intervene in the filters that cage those he is meant to represent. *Pericles* is buoyed by the pathos of asylum experience that he allegedly encompasses and yet does not engage with. The sealed container that keeps the protagonist and his story afloat aptly conveys this non-engagement with asylum seekers and their stories that, though voiced throughout the play, swiftly disappear, appropriated to the service of the canonical hero rather than the other way around.

In terms of witness-bearing the Pericles character is closer to *CMI*'s distancing cast than the overtly intersubjective Al-Qady, and it is Thaisa's story that more accurately embodies the canonical play's relationship to marginalised people. Atop the container, Thaisa appears to die in childbirth, and her body is cast into the sea like the physical and narrative casualties of the asylum filterscape that dissolve beneath the waves. Like the ungrivable asylum seekers not permitted to surface on their own terms, the impenetrable Scarrian cell of the container becomes Thaisa's casket that, in the next scene, washes ashore at Ephesus where she revives. The container as Thaisa's coffin but also her salvation is characteristic of asylum vessels and discourse in necrocivilisation: both shelter and cell, both hope of life and threat of death. Instead of letting the audience see Thaisa's body within, Jackson covers the mouth of the container with a projected image of the supine body. The camera zooms in to the actor's face, Thaisa opens her eyes and finally emerges bodily through the screen that had held her image. It is as if the camera brings Thaisa back to life, recalling Maud Ellmann's summation of Kafka's 'A Hunger Artist': 'it is not by food that we survive but by the gaze of others' (17). The camera's gaze, in accordance with Oliver's understanding of recognition, casts the

canonical play that drew this citizen audience paradoxically as a necrocivilisational filtering force. Thaisa is saved, yes, but her survival rests solely on the decision of her oppressor to look and confer upon her life that is always conditional. Her vessel's impenetrability, rather than representing possibility signifies core ungrievability, a precondition for mediated rehabilitation.

The video of Thaisa projected onto the mouth of the container initiates her into priestesshood for the goddess Diana. Jackson represents the goddess as a projected photograph of Diana Princess of Wales in front of which flowers and other offerings lie strewn, reminding the audience of the immense outpouring of grief that accompanied her death in a car accident in 1997. Princess Diana is an iconic UK figure whose image, especially in death, became a larger-than-life vessel for national feeling. By having Thaisa's reanimation bound up in the projected image and the service of the hyper-mediated Diana, Jackson highlights the process by which outsiders are afforded space in the nation and achieve a degree of grievability but only insofar as they adhere to that image. Thaisa survives by publicly devoting her weft to the warp of a national symbol, attuning to the hegemonic population and aligning herself with a grievable life. Ahmed, in an account of national affect and the marriage of Princess Diana's eldest son, notes that '[t]o share in the body of the nation requires that you place your happiness in the right things' ('Not in the Mood' 27). This observation applies to national moments of grief, as well, as the narrative precursor to the happy resolution: 'A bond of belief still turns upon a body, one that can concretize or "hold" that belief and convert it into memory. ... Who could fail to be touched by the memory of the young prince following the coffin of his dead mother? Here being touched into citizenship is to be touched by the trauma of a past and the prospect of its conversion' (Ahmed 'Not in the mood' 27 - 28). Jackson's portrayal of the fate of Thaisa (and her daughter Marina who marries the governor of Mytilene) and in *Pericles*' progression of vessels shows that, in the west, the legitimacy required to survive entails the subsumed concealment of stories and affect that do not fit sanctioned channels and figures.

The RSC and Cardboard Citizens' marrying of the Shakespearean hero with ungrivable lives does not succeed in providing meaningful warp to stories of people seeking safety in the west. But the *Pericles* vehicle's failure within an environment of policed immersion highlights the quietly closed and caging nature of discourses that maintain necrocivilisation. From the doomed vessel made of exposed bodies to the container that carried *Pericles* but sealed Thaisa in deathly obscurity, Jackson's vessel-rooms illustrate the hardening of a filter that subsumes the asylum-seeking person in abject discursive space which produces a corresponding physical space. If *Pericles* is a study of how context and difference are stripped

away until the protagonist is delivered to the comedy's neat resolution, then it is Thaisa who most readily conveys the submission to the canon that this resolution requires. Deriving her significance first from her father, then from her husband and finally from her devotion to the image of loving femininity, Thaisa continually works to attune and align herself to grievable identities to survive. The audience observes in the closing scene the range of ways stories have been mediated and told over the course of the play: from embodied readings of fragments, to videoed testimony like those framed by the Sangatte room, to the epitome of mediatised national affect-channelling in the portrait of Princess Diana. This final tableau that flattens the differences between what necrocivilisation shelters from and what it filters away, emphasises the protected Pericles' inability to convincingly bestow even recognition upon the multiplicity of stories that dotted the production let alone foster the response-ability that would permit negotiation for mutual shelter.

Lampedusa

In contrast to *Pericles'* illustrious hero and his family who survive by being and aligning themselves respectively with eminently grievable figures, the protagonists of Anders Lustgarten's 2014 play *Lampedusa* are anything but regal. Like *The Container*, the script is not verbatim and the stories are fictional while making reference to real events, though *Lampedusa's* focus on disenfranchised citizens forced to patrol borders for the rich offers a revealing testimonial viewpoint that positions citizen audience-members more explicitly than *The Container* or *Pericles*. With a minimalist set and cast of only two characters who alternately present their monologues to an audience seated on benches around a small stage, *Lampedusa's* staging creates an intimate space. The actors primarily take turns presenting their monologues, and occasionally interact with each other and the audience. The story receives its structure from a constant shifting between the small Italian island of Lampedusa and the Northern English city of Leeds.

Stefano's family have fished off the coast of the former for generations, but now the only employment the fisherman can find is working as a coastguard retrieving the drowned bodies of migrants from the sea. Denise works for a payday loan company, collecting debts from marginalised and struggling citizens of Leeds to put herself through school so she can leave their ranks. *Lampedusa's* tandem structuring device presented in the straightforward proscenium arrangement of the Soho Theatre in London, encourages the audience to examine the parallel structure and echoing similarities between these two ostensibly very different experiences. Though policing very different borderzones of Europe, the destruction

of the shelter of others and their own resulting precarity lead both characters to similar strategies of resisting necrocivilisational bordering practices in the liberal democracies of the west. These approaches come about when *Lampedusa*'s migrant characters introduce, as Al-Qady does in *Nothing But Nothing*, a different filtering principle, one of hospitality based on the mutual witness of Oliver's response-ability.

Witness to Heterotopia: Borders Speak Back

Though with slightly more movement via its in-the-round arrangement with the performers occasionally interacting, *Lampedusa*'s staging in which performers bear witness in front of an audience is a strategy most commonly associated in theatre of asylum with Ice and Fire Theatre Company's *Asylum Monologues*. Though the script for Ice and Fire's pieces changes depending on the audience and media context, their straight-forward format of asylum seeker and refugee stories told by actors sitting in front of an audience remains the same. This format of a person sitting bodily in front of an audience speaking a single verbatim account stands in stark contrast to the assumption-laden and often combative language of the press and public discourse. While *Lampedusa* does not claim to be a verbatim play and Denise and Stefano are both blatant regional stereotypes, the same didactic spirit and structural uncomplicatedness focuses the audience on making the connections Lustgarten lays out in his parallel monologues. In fact, the play's minimal reliance on a theatre space made it particularly suitable for radio dissemination, and the Soho Theatre commissioned an audio adaptation for the *Guardian* Newspaper Online's special edition of the *Guardian* Books Podcast, which is available to listen to for free on the *Guardian* website. This simple format, perhaps more saliently than more immersive theatre pieces, challenges the audience to locate themselves within the witness-bearing narratives of necrocivilisation's border-guards.

Lustgarten structures the *Lampedusa* theatre space around the listening audience in a subtle but central relationship of speaker and addressee. This basic structure sets up debt-collector Denise and coastguard Stefano as testifying to the effects of necrocivilisational bordering regimes addressing an audience that is largely sheltered from these outcomes. Tim Etchells' definition of witness captures the role that Denise and Stefano play: "to witness an event is to be present at it in some fundamentally ethical way, to feel the weight of things and one's own place in them, even if that place is simply, for the moment, an onlooker" (17). Denise and Stefano are citizens who have been compelled by their circumstances to enforce necrocivilisational bordering regimes. Ahmed's description of privileged bodies that "*move precisely by sealing others as objects of hate*" does not apply to Denise and Stefano in the way it applies civilisationally to *Lampedusa*'s more affluent audience (57). European citizen characters but also manifestly abandoned, Denise and Stefano give audiences in London (and

beyond through the audio recording of the play) an account of their attempts to escape the precarity of the borders they are also forced to maintain. Their testimony attempts to draw attention to the workings of this filter that removes context and connection from those it abandons. With references to demographics and current events, Denise and Stefano ask audiences to consider their own place in necrocivilisational policy and discourse.

With the jarring simultaneity of Mireille Astore's *Tampa*, Denise and Stefano describe the heterotopic leisure- and death-scapes of Italy and the UK while inhabiting a liminal space themselves. Stefano's description of bodies washing up on Rabbit Beach contrasts markedly with the location's TripAdvisor ranking as 'most beautiful beach in the world' (18). The coastguard's forebears had fished for generations, '[b]ut now the fish are gone. The Med is dead. And my job is to fish out a very different harvest' after years of unemployment (7). Likewise, Denise's UK contrasts citizens of a developed nation that enjoy health, leisure and education (exemplified by the privilege of inner London) with those forced to request loans they cannot repay, who are sanctioned for not getting or keeping jobs they are not able to perform, and who die, like Denise's mother, of preventable causes. Denise points out that 'nine out of the ten poorest regions in Northern Europe, in comparative terms, are in "Great" Britain' (10). The richest region is Inner London (10). Of East Asian and White British descent, Denise experiences racist and sexist abuse in addition to the generational marginalisation of people living in poverty in the UK. Joseph Pugliese describes how in heterotopias like Lampedusa 'the absolutely other space, the penal colony, becomes invisibilised and unintelligible within the enframing discourse of Western tourism: spectacular sunsets, sparkling waters and serviced luxury – all effectively work to disappear the squalor and suffering of the immigration prison just over the horizon' (673). Denise and Stefano offer a more nuanced view of this filtering out of sight. Though citizens of European countries, neither Denise nor Stefano can easily move away from the weight necrocivilisational bordering practices place on them and are forced to filter the human destruction comfortably out of sight of the affluent. While the juxtapositions Denise and Stefano describe are extreme, *Lampedusa* also elaborates spaces more accurately described as Isin and Rygiel's abject spaces whence political subjecthood is claimed.

Though Foucault stipulates that every culture has heterotopias, necrocivilisational practices have transformed these, like the Scarrian room to the cell, into instruments of death. Stefano and Denise testify both to the existence of these heterotopias and to the annihilation they visit upon those the discourses of western liberal democracies confine to abject spaces. In the Introduction, I described these modern heterotopias as a merging of Foucault's two main categories of heterotopia: deviation (for 'individuals whose behaviour is deviant from the

required norm') and crisis (for those in a state of crisis, particularly in a transformation period from one social identity to another) (Foucault 24-25). *Lampedusa* describes indefinite confinement to contain supposed deviant behaviour (heterotopia of deviation) which is bound to identity (heterotopia of crisis). The two people forced to maintain these abject spaces bring to the surface the mechanisms of their own entrapment, as well as that of the mortally weighted bodies with which they are entangled. The parallel and intertwined necrocivilisations that Denise and Stefano contextualise are composed of what once were or could be lifescapes: the Mediterranean Sea connecting Europe and Africa, and kinship networks. Instead, what the protagonists describe are places of stagnation, suffocation and drowning. As filtering devices, the spider's web and the overly porous boat trap those who reach out to claim the basic resources necessary to build shelter in civilisation.

Stefano contrasts the current illusion of the Mediterranean as lifeblood with images of this body of water as a death-scape. The opening lines of the play evoke a place where civilisations grow and mingle:

This is where the world began. This was Caesar's highway. Hannibal's road to glory. These were the trading routes of the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians, the Ottomans and the Byzantines. If you look carefully, my grandfather used to say, you can still make out the wakes of their ships. [...] We all come from the sea and back to the sea we will go. The Mediterranean gave birth to the world. (3)

Roads, highways, and trading routes imply that the ocean is life-giving, is sheltering, only when there is movement upon it, when it may act as a conduit, a blood vessel carrying oxygen from one place to another and always with ports on the horizon. However, for those who bear the weight of necrocivilisational violence with limited and dangerous options in terms of movement (the people the coastguard plucks from the waves and increasingly islanders like Stefano as well), the Mediterranean is now a place of increasing morbidity.

Lustgarten portrays this Mediterranean life-scape (in however an idealised way and without addressing how current society compares to these named civilisations of the past) as an illusion now that depends upon the most robust filtering mechanisms of which Stefano himself forms a part: 'On a clear day I am Caesar. The prow of the boat cuts the horizon in two. Sunlight shatters off the waves. Dolphins. Great flocks of seabirds. The ocean sucks and pulses like a giant lung, breathing life into the world ... I forget why I am here, except to be alive' (3). But because the precarity of his life as a fisherman has forced him into a job no-one else wants, Stefano quickly experiences the Mediterranean again as deathscape:

The lung has little black spots floating on its surface.
Distant. Hardly visible in the light.

The boat gets closer.
Salvatore cuts the engine.
We drift alongside...

Beat.

The bodies of the dead are more varied than you'd think. (3)

With 'black spots' Stefano indicates the visible manifestation of a disease that is killing a body that receives air from the Mediterranean-as-lung. The disease that produces the 'black spots' of the dead does not only destroy those bodies but is destroying the civilizational body entire and the encounter and exchange that nourishes it. The civilisations which once sheltered the bodies now washing up on Lampedusa's shores in Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Libya (8), descend from those Stefano names in his opening lines. In a manner familiar to discourse on asylum seekers, the coastguard likens the bodies to a flood: 'like an earthquake – you feel the tremors far away and you know the tidal wave is coming' (8). This flood, like a mindless natural disaster, will continually beat against borders and policies that attempt to dissuade it. Like Stefano, fewer and fewer westerners are able to filter away the dead or deny the wasting system that is their own necrocivilisation.

Denise's parallel life-giving kinship network takes on the suffocating role of a spider's web in the current necrocivilisation. Denise's mother lives in a run-down flat filled with nothing but the evidence of her own bodily functioning ('The grime between the bathroom tiles. The ring of encrusted shit around the toilet' (23). Observing that the place where her mother lives also lacks civilising objects 'to connect her to the rest of the human race' (23), Denise likens her mother's predicament to 'a dried fly in a web the spider forgot to eat' (23). I have noted that the function of Scarry's room is to shelter the body in such a way that it also 'enables the self to move out into the world and allows that world to enter' (Scarry 38). The porous filter that permits this negotiation with and belonging in the world appears in Denise's description as the spider's web. The almost invisible filaments of the web constitute a filter that appears to offer unhindered passage, but actually works as an immobilising trap that suspends its prey in abandonment. Not only does Denise's mum's flat/cell not enable her to move into and belong to wider civilisation, but this predicament becomes a trap for the person's network of human relationships, as well. Lustgarten dramatizes this with an ATOS judgement that Denise's mother is fit to work because Denise is there to help her: 'This woman I've spent my whole life trying to get away from, they're tethering me to her. Til the day she dies' (25). In an extension

to the concept of *homo sacer* that Agamben does not address in his work, the state reduces kinship connections to a perpetuation of bare life through generations. Denise had been and, had her mother lived, would have continued to be shackled to her relation who has been institutionally abandoned to a state of bare life. Like Stefano's Mediterranean, Denise's spider's web acts as a filterscape that hinders life-giving movement under the guise of facilitating it.

Islands, Vessels and the Hope of Hospitality

Necrocivilisation's filterscape is dotted with islands. These heterotopic spaces take shape above the waves by consigning some bodies to an underworld of abject spaces where Scarrian cells work to dissolve them or hollow them out. Denise and Stefano recount the sanitized experience of holidaymakers to Lampedusa and of UK citizens living in affluent areas, both filtering out of sight their enduring connection to bodies in abject spaces. The refugee centre's 'swamping' is a result of confining people who are trying to negotiate their own shelter in the world. Stefano observes that the conditions of this confinement simultaneously prompt a dissolution of its grounds in legitimacy: 'It's not part of my job to have to listen to these stories [of survivors]. There's too many of them. And it makes you think. About the randomness of I get to walk these streets and he doesn't. You start thinking about things like that, the ground becomes ocean under your feet' (13). Similarly, though Denise strives for formal education to lift herself out of the scarcity she was born into, she also recognizes this same education supports a system that produces precarity. This realization is driven home to Denise when she loses marks for 'lack of balance' in an essay citing official figures that starkly indicate necrocivilisational island-building in the UK. Denise goes a step farther than Stefano's 'randomness' and points to those clearly fomenting necrocivilisation by spreading the idea that migrants are the source of scarcity:

Migrants don't hide their taxes in the Cayman Islands.
Migrants don't privatise the NHS
And migrants don't scrape together their life savings, leave their loved ones behind, bribe and fight and struggle their way onto the undercarriage of a train or into a tiny hidden compartment of a lorry with forty other people, watch their mates die or get raped, all for the express purpose of blagging sixty-seven pound forty-six pence a week off of Kirklees District Council. (11)

Denise shows how islands that maintain affluence are built and shored up by binding hostile narratives to "migrants", weighing them down with the structural violence that necrocivilisation proliferates as abject spaces. Vessels like the precarious boats whose cargo Stefano pulls from the surf or, in Denise's case, the flats that she visits collecting debts, are the Scarrian shelters turned cells that provide a way out of this underworld or seal their passengers

definitively within it. The difference between successfully navigating the system for shelter, Lustgarten proposes, lies in peoples' ability to extend hospitality and receive it in their turn.

Necrocivilisation produces the impoverished condition of these vessels rather than simply constituting a location whence people flee or at which they arrive and works discursively to ensure 'migrants' never reach metaphorical landfall either in terms of claim to civilisation. Stefano's 'rickety little deathtraps' are the emblematic vessel-filter of Fortress Europe. These boats people migrants towards Europe and Stefano, in his coastguard's boat, collects their bodies from the sea. In the heterotopia of Lampedusa, the place where the rich go to escape responsibilities for a time is also the scene of their greatest responsibility, where those who bear the weight of their most extensive violence wash up on shore. Stefano refers to two major sinkings: one presumably the infamous October 2013 disaster in which more than 350 people lost their lives and the sinking of the boat carrying the Malian mechanic Modibo's wife Aminata. Only three survived the latter wreck and Stefano recovered the bodies of 57 dead. And yet necrocivilisation uses the very vulnerability of migrants against them, encouraging Stefano to meet Modibo's 'open smile' with attempts to keep him 'at arms length' (14, 13): 'And what if [Modibo] does get in [the boat] and we break down and he fixes it again and the bosses hear? That he can do stuff I can't do, for half the rate? You have to think about these things now. Here in Europe, 2015. You have to watch your back from every angle' (13). The skilled labour but perilous position of the forced migrant to Europe threatens Stefano with unshelter. Necrocivilisational logic persuades Stefano to erect a solid wall between himself and survivors like Modibo arriving at the shore, survivors who necrocivilisation had rendered ungrievable and then leveraged their ungrievability to filter them as fearsome and hateful.

Lustgarten's UK counterpart of Stefano's 'rickety little deathtraps' are the flats Denise visits in her job as a debt-collector, but most of all her mother's. Denise's mother's flat as 'deathtrap' vessel-cell is a place where the bodily cannot be filtered away and human making along with wider connection and consciousness have no place:

I hate going over there. The state of the place. The grime between the bathroom tiles. The ring of encrusted shit around the toilet. The memories of boredom and terror. In the whole flat there's not a single book. ... Not a book, not a picture, not a piece of culture in the whole house, never has been. Nothing to connect her to the rest of the human race. [...] And it'd be fine if Mam were happy with that, but she hates it. All she ever does is moan. (23)

Denise's mother's Scarrian cell, the abject space she inhabits, reduces her to functions as a body without social purchase or civilisational trappings that would 'connect her to the rest of

the human race' (23). The illegibility of her protest, which registers as moaning, pushes her further toward a state of bare life. Denise, having experience of how the payday loan company she works for operates, observes this process of reducing people to bare life in the government's ability-to-work assessments: 'they take all the little things people do to make a good impression, the things we do to prove that we are human beings, and they use them to fuck you. That's the cruelty, the breath-taking cruelty of it' (16). The physiological ailments that ultimately take Denise's mother's life correspond to Stefano's descriptions of the disease affecting the Mediterranean: a dangerously thick wall in her heart results in hypertension, resistance to flows of oxygenating blood to vital organs. '[The paramedic] said it's almost impossible to tell. If the worry killed her, or it would've happened anyway with her condition. But I know' (28). Denise knows that it was the stress of having her benefits removed that, in a final blow, literally took her mother's breath away.

These emblems of necrocivilisation are dire, but *Lustgarten* ends the play with the suggestion that hope may be found in spontaneous openings of response-ability, which take the form of mutual hospitality between individuals. In Stefano's storyline, the Malian asylum seeker Modibo responds to Stefano's pain by listening and not asking questions, just understanding (22). An affective filter opens up between the two men through which they can process overwhelming feelings that encounter impermeable walls, one-way filters, in discourse and policy. Likewise, in response to Modibo's worry, Stefano goes out in his boat in search of the mechanic's wife Aminata, who is making the crossing. When Aminata's boat breaks up in a storm, it is Stefano's vessel that saves her, a vessel that Modibo had mended. The vessel that saves Aminata's life highlights the material connection between relationships of hospitality or abandonment. That Stefano's vessel only managed to deliver three people to safety, however, is a reminder of the scale of necrocivilisation that remains. Modibo's occupation as a mechanic who mends vehicles and vessels that move across roads and highways on land and sea is symbolic of how he works on the impasse that kept Stefano trapped by nightmares. The address-ability and response-ability that he introduces into the narrative provides an opening for mutual acknowledgement and shelter built in concert. Modibo's exclamation 'Europe needs me! Boats, cars, planes, all I can do!' recalls the life-giving highways criss-crossing the Mediterranean that Stefano refers to in his opening speech. Their mutual aid, which constitutes a porous addressing and receiving between filters (Modibo's open smile, Stefano's 'Be rude not to' acceptance of Modibo's offer of coffee), brings hope to both through the one witnessing the other amid jarring logics, discourses and policies that prevent safe passage for those forced to navigate away from unliveable situations.

Denise's Modibo is Carolina, a Portuguese immigrant and single mother who Denise meets when she visits Carolina's flat to collect on a loan. Again, the spark of this mutual responsibility comes from the new migrant: Carolina sees Denise is agitated from her mother's constant ringing, asks if she is alright and invites her to tea (17). Lustgarten mirrors the language corresponding to the two encounters, describing Carolina like Modibo as 'guileless' and Denise like Stefano acquiescing with 'Be rude not to' (17). Carolina also witnesses Denise's mother in Oliver's sense as a person deprived of subjectivity:

I see *my* mam lying on the floor, gasping for air, in the midst of all this squalor, and nobody gives a toss and I'm the one that supposed to. And then Carolina steps through the door, and the look she gives me when she sees the state Mam's living in...

A *flood* of shame. You see the mildewed curtains and peeling ceiling in a new light then. (23)

Carolina offers a different filtering principle, 'a new light', that understands Denise's mother not as a predatory 'benefits scrounger' (or 'bed blocker' as her consultant refers to her) or the source of terror and disgust that she has been for Denise, but as a person living in a place not fit for a person. Carolina's opening of response-ability towards both Denise and her mother stands in sharp relief to the unresponsive necrocivilisational filters that have confined Denise and the people she describes. The civilisational vessel that parallels the one that Stefano and Modibo make work together is Carolina's flat, which she offers Denise a space in so the two women can save the money they need to stay afloat and keep moving. Instead of reducing Denise to overwhelming threat (the person pursuing her for payment), Carolina meets Denise's precarity with propositions of mutual shelter. Through subjective witnessing and response, Carolina, like Modibo, offers Scarrian civilisation amid unshelter of epidemic proportions.

Representing the fates of the marginalized people popular discourse frames as 'economic migrants' and 'benefits scroungers', *Lampedusa* is, in many ways, a dramatisation of Ahmed's observation that privileged bodies '*move precisely by sealing others as objects of hate*' (*The Cultural Politics* 57). Denise and Stefano exist on the border of necrocivilisational heterotopias that shore up islands for the affluent by binding hateful and fearful affect to other bodies in discourse and policy. Movement and connection are central to Ahmed's point and *Lampedusa's* heterotopias. The hypermobility of the island-hopping rich is *facilitated* by the violence they invest in the bodies they filter from sight and confine to abject spaces. 'Migrants' surface as the cause of structural violence that proliferates abject space amongst nominal but disenfranchised citizens who, likewise, become objects of disgust. The testimony of Denise

and Stefano, however, bears witness to the fact that the bodies sealed as objects of hate and fear also move, and it is this desire to survive that drives them to the boats and payday loan companies that necrocivilisation uses to drown them. Stefano quotes Modibo: ‘he says it’s deliberate. That our glorious leaders want the migrants to drown, as a deterrent ... “if those men in their offices knew what we were coming from, they’d know we will never, ever stop”’ (19). *Lampedusa*’s necrocivilisational filterscape operates by blocking relationships of witnessing response-ability to ensure the proliferation of abject spaces and people dying in these cells purportedly of their own making. Similar to Al-Qady’s role in *Nothing But Nothing*, Lustgarten’s new migrants present a civilisational filtering principle, modelling acts of making and negotiating for mutual shelter.

Lampedusa offers a road back to establishing relationships of mutual witnessing between citizens and forced migrants that *Tampa* refuses as long as caging continues. Chapter One began with Astore’s blunt and unassailable cage on the Australian beach, provoking passers-by with the occupant’s silence to attempt affective engagement in the face of asylum seeker caging. While Towfiq Al-Qady maintained this root refusal in the form of the ‘NO’ structure, his performance of Oliver’s witnessing structure of subjectivity shifted emphasis from *Tampa*’s categorical protest of inhuman filters to the life and relational possibilities that necrocivilisational filtering smothers in its proliferation of abject spaces and categories. In contrast to *Tampa* and *Nothing But Nothing*, *CMI* contains no asylum-seeking characters and completely eschews their embodiment. Instead, version 1.0 whips up a discursive whirlwind amongst its performers, putting on display a process that stuffs the filter so full of empty language as to obscure the truth of vessel-cells that *Tampa* and *Nothing But Nothing* bring to the fore. In the end, however, the truth remains in the form of the computerised SIEV X testimonies and the audience is left to reckon with the atrocities they permit to be effaced.

Though less confrontational in their approach, the UK-based vessel plays nevertheless also exhibit a marked impasse that permits the audience to situate themselves within western regimes of pre-emptive caging. My reading of Clare Bayley’s *The Container* focused on the immersive aspect of the play as a physical manifestation of the UK’s bordering discourse and filtering technologies, with audiences merging into the walls of the container rather than influencing the action. *Pericles* offered an immersive experience, as well, but instead of spatial confinement the very enormity of the warehouse through which movement and participation were strictly directed conveyed the hidden but powerful limits that necrocivilisation places on interaction in western liberal democracies. The play itself mirrored this relationship validation with the canonical and princely hero protected by fate proving an uncomfortable representative of ungrievable lives. Though Lustgarten’s characters and stories may also veer towards the

schematic and stereotypical, *Lampedusa* aptly presents stories of civilising reciprocity. Amid a necrocivilisational filterscape, windows of Oliver's mutual witness and response-ability open up that have material impacts for both new migrant and citizen characters, while also explicitly dealing with the positionality of more privileged bodies. Vessel shelters, like vessel cells, depend upon the porosity of reciprocated channels of witness and whether or not negotiation is possible on the shore.

Part Two: Cells

While discourse and policy deny asylum seekers secure routes to host nations, on land impenetrable material and discursive filters are also at work through violence that poses as conduit for civilisation. In Part II, I examine representations of the concretely carceral stage of asylum: the suspension in which authorities hold asylum seekers while assessing their claim. Framing detention as administration permits necrocivilisational discourse to construe asylum seeker protest as resistance to civilisation itself. My examination of detention environments takes as its focus how weaving asylum seeker experience and action through discursively understood civilisation administration leads to material and epistemological confinement. A key violence of this administrative (as opposed to penal) detention is boundless time. Temporal violence surfaces in public discourse as either insignificant or as infinite leisure, which the asylum-seeking characters must find a way to filter differently, often making the point by using the theatre space to contextualise self-harm. The transition from vessel to detention cell (or cell-like space beyond detention) moves asylum seekers from mobile rooms, to a place of annihilating suspension in space and time. The processes weaving the filter-boundaries that define objects of emotion involve concealment implicated in what Ahmed calls 'stickiness', that is the propensity of an object of emotion to accumulate affects associated with particular histories and arrangements of causality. In this formulation, plays addressing asylum within a discursive system made physical by confining walls (or their radical absence) attempt to intervene in the assignment of histories and the attribution of causality. These plays provide a 'look inside' at a source of violence that authority conceals by making brutality invisible and attributing asylum seeker reactions to a foreign and violent nature.

Once on land, the asylum seeker officially enters Agamben's state of exception, as the host state creates a suspended place for *homines sacri*, those who are at once subject to the law but not protected by it. Their rights are deferred ostensibly for the protection of citizens: 'the very natural life that, inaugurating the biopolitics of modernity, is placed at the foundation of the order vanishes into the figure of the citizen, in whom rights are "preserved"' (Agamben 127). The asylum detention space is the Scarrian room's quintessential perversion: the physical cell. This is a place designed for the body enclosed within to be so isolated and engrossed in its own protection that it has little opportunity to create beyond its bounds and participate in civilisation. Detention as the perversion of Scarry's room corresponds to what Agamben has defined as a camp, which opens up as the original political relationship of the ban, in which living beings are held by a law that simultaneously abandons them. The camp Agamben defines differs from the prison cell within the carceral complex that Foucault addresses in that prisoners, while caged and isolated, still maintain protections and

rights. While Isin and Rygiel's 'abject spaces' offer a more nuanced underpinning for claiming a place in civilisation from within detention and detention-like arrangement, Part II arguably presents a more overt experience of Agamben's camp. This emphasis is in line with David Farrier's argument for employing the Foucauldian 'camp *dispositif*' to retain the sense of it being '*in the camp* (wherever and however it materializes) that the *experience* of the ban in the asylum system is most forceful' (Farrier *Postcolonial Asylum* 64).

While I employ Isin and Rygiel's term to draw attention to differing terrains of exception and their spatial elements through Scarry's room, my use of filters to analyse interventions into understandings of these spaces highlights the machinery of Farrier's camp *dispositif* working in the cells represented. Agambenian camps proliferate in modern liberal democracies, whether they be large-scale refugee camps, black sites like Guantánamo Bay, immigration detention centres or airport holding areas. Rooms as shelters protect the body so that 'the body can act less like a wall' and enable 'the self to move out into the world and [allow] that world to enter' (Scarry 38). Under these circumstances, however, Scarrian rooms function principally as architectures of division, preventing this worldly exchange either through dissolution of the unprotected body or impenetrability. The protest in these plays, with a marked emphasis on making visible the conditions of bare life with and on the body, alludes to Farrier's distinction. They highlight the filtering mechanisms that (through discursive means as well as policy and infrastructure) mediate and stifle exchange through encounter and Oliverian response-ability.

Chapter Three: Australian Cells

The Australian public was largely sympathetic to the first Indochinese arrivals fleeing post-Vietnam war South East Asia. Relatively few and their refugee status undisputed, the Government processed them quickly, along with other refugees and humanitarian arrivals, in the Westbridge Migrant Centre (later Villawood) in Sydney, the only suitable facility available. A second wave of mainly Cambodian asylum seekers marked a turning point in Australia's policy and discourse concerning asylum seekers arriving by boat, which only intensified with subsequent waves of maritime asylum-seeking arrivals (McMasters). This second wave, which immigration authorities began detaining as a matter of course and processing markedly more slowly, led to the 1991 establishment of Port Hedland Immigration Reception and Processing Centre in a remote former mining camp in North West Australia, followed by similarly isolated detention centres like Curtin and Woomera. Fears that asylum seekers (far less numerous than British and American visa overstayers) are besieging Australia indicate that the racism and insecurity that underlie Australia's asylum system in the 21st century are a rekindling of the 'yellow peril' fears against Chinese and other non-white labourers that led to the establishment of the White Australia policy at the beginning of the 20th century (Ang 259; McMaster; Marr and Wilkinson 44). Public discussion of rising unemployment and descriptions of maritime arrivals as unfairly 'jumping the queue' began to accompany new arrivals. Perceived as having money to pay smugglers and, thus, choosing to bypass legitimate routes, asylum seekers in the early 2000s encountered years-long detention stays and high levels of suspicion and disbelief both from authorities and much of the Australian public (Marr and Wilkinson 38). The White Australia policy had been effectively replaced by what John Howard summed up in his October launch speech for the 2001 federal election campaign as 'we will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come' (Marr and Wilkinson 323). The Howard Government presented the narrowness of this approach as the only way to protect the civilizational soundness of Australia.

In 1999, asylum seekers predominantly from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan began arriving on Australian shores. In response, the Howard Government began to enact measures that would come to cement Australia's detention policy as built upon criminalisation. The September 11th attacks on the United States permitted the additional threat of 'terrorist' to stick readily to these new asylum seekers. Despite the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation informing him that chances were extremely remote, a November 2001 *Courier-Mail* interview begins with John Howard remarking that 'Australia had no way to be certain terrorists, or people with terrorist links, were not among the asylum seekers trying to enter the country by boat from Indonesia' (Marr and Wilkinson 370). Stoked by such fears, anything

short of the harshest deterrents and most rigorous screening processes would pose an intolerable threat to national security (Johnston 602). The Pacific Solution, begun in 2001, excised Christmas, Ashmore, Cartier and Cocos (Keeling) Islands from Australia's migration zone, so asylum seekers arriving there would be sent to Manus Island or Nauru for processing without access to legal assistance or appeal. Though the Rudd Government abolished the Pacific Solution in 2007, detention centres on both Manus and Nauru reopened within five years, and in May 2013 the Government extended the excision policy to the Australian mainland. The Pacific Solution renegotiated borders in such a way that, though they were on land in detention, asylum seekers were arguably as deep in limbo as they had been on water.

In October 2002, a UN report on arbitrary detention in Australia expressed grave concern over Australian detention's 'automatic and indiscriminate character, its potentially indefinite duration and the absence of juridical control of the legality of detention, the psychological impact of detention on asylum seekers, who suffer "collective depression syndrome"; the denial of family unity in several cases; children in detention; and the recent amendments to the Migration Act 1958 that restrict judicial review' (*Report of the Working Group*). These poor conditions and interminable waiting have provoked large-scale and persistent protest since the early 2000s. In 2000, Curtin and Woomera detention centres experienced prolonged unrest with asylum seekers going on hunger strike and sewing their lips closed. Further riots, hunger strike and self-harm accompanied the government's freezing of Afghan applications for asylum in early 2002. Protesting detainees set fire to buildings in Baxter Detention centre on several occasions, and 40 asylum seekers escaped from Villawood in Sydney in 2001. In addition to pushing back boats, the Abbott Government's policy changes in the form of Operation Sovereign Borders in 2013 focused detention efforts for maritime asylum seeking arrivals on offshore locations like Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus Island, closing a number of mainland detention facilities (though Woomera and Port Hedland had already closed in 2003).

In a media environment preoccupied with asylum seekers but unable to bring detainee voices into the public sphere (Hazou 'Staging'), reality theatre takes on a crucial contextualising role particularly when the government had gone to such lengths to make rioting and self-harm seem inexplicable. The plays I discuss in this chapter portray the carceral environment into which asylum seekers have been placed in Australia while the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection assesses their claim. Shahin Shafaei's *Refugitive*, Richard Lagarto's *The Waiting Room*, and Ros Horin's *Through the Wire* bring to Australian audiences representations of the state of exception's isolation and seemingly endless suspension in time. These plays unpick white Australia's legacy of racist fear that binds detainees with militarised

containment measures. A necrocivilisational system emerges through illustrations of racially enabled torture and staging that positions audience-members in relation to brutal detention policies. Exploring filtering metaphors and how they are expressed in reality theatre sheds light on different approaches to traversing detention's hard filter.

Refugitive

When Iranian theatre-maker and asylum seeker Shahin Shafaei debuted *Refugitive* in Sydney's Old Fitzroy Theatre in January 2003, the Australian public had been embroiled in debates over seafaring asylum seekers and their detention for well over a year. The Howard Government's hard line inaugurated with the 2001 Tampa affair had already sparked a string of activist productions that had begun highlighting asylum conditions. During this time, after arriving in Australia by boat in June 2000, Shafaei spent 22 months in Curtin Detention Centre before being released on a temporary visa. The ban on journalists interviewing detained asylum seekers meant that the Australian public lacked understanding of the experience of detainees like Shafaei who had spent 10 months in isolation, or what motivated those who chose to go on hunger strike. This poverty of context inspired Shafaei to write the play (Harper 19). Organisations like Refugee Action Collective and Rural Australians for Refugees sponsored *Refugitive* to tour and Shafaei performed over 200 shows with question and answer sessions across Eastern Australia. *Refugitive* is remarkable both for this exposure and its creator who, like Towfiq Al-Qady, possessed first-hand experience of the Australian asylum system in addition to being a professional theatre-maker.

In *Refugitive*, a single actor represents a detained asylum seeker addressing his pained belly during the final stages of a hunger strike as well as occasionally taking on the roles of detention authorities. My analysis uses the concept of room as filter and foundational protector of the body to understand Shafaei's performance of hunger strike as a radical hardening of the body produced when the walls of the room have become the walls of a cell. Shafaei locates the provocation for the hunger striker's refusal of nutrients in a discourse that prevents negotiation for civilisational survival and flourishing. Shafaei's set would ideally have included a caged surveillance camera and blue fluorescent lighting. These elements were cut for budgetary reasons, though the blue light remains a feature of the published script. Nevertheless, the sparse and squalid set conveys the fundamental clash with the discursively constructed cause and effect produced by filters strategically reading the racialised hunger striker as perversely ungrateful. I elaborate Shafaei's concept of refugitivity using discussions of fugitivity among black communities in white supremacist societies. Black fugitivity scholars illuminate Shafaei's representation by articulating how resistance to necrocivilisational systems registers in

western liberal discourses as inherent criminality rather than rejection of a system predicated on racialised and gendered caging.

Cell Filters Body, Body Resists as Filter

Shafaei's single mise-en-scene, representing the hunger striker's cell, contains only a mattress covered in a dirty bed sheet in a corner. The mattress with bedsheet is significant in Scarry's sense as object that normally bears the weight of the body at rest and regulates its temperature. In *Refugitive*, the mattress continues to appear as site of rest: '*He tries to rest a little bit on the mattress*' (11). However, finding only pain in the originally comforting surface recalls Scarry's civilisation-obliteration via once-nurturing objects: 'the domestic act of protecting becomes an act of hurting' (41). While the mattress does not actively become a bludgeon, its failure to perform its civilising office (to take the weight of the body) turns it into an instrument of necrocivilisation. Shafaei's mattress distils the appearance of civilisation as instrument of the same civilisation's removal that *CMI* presents as inquiry conference table and mortuary slab for the white actor as lifeless revenant. For the living, the bed is for resting and dreaming. For Shafaei's detained asylum seeker in the last painful throes of hunger strike, it becomes a mortuary slab and shroud framing the excruciating transition from living body to corpse.

Though not included in the performance, the cage surrounding the surveillance camera is significant. Shafaei explains: 'The light that is described behind/inside the cage, is actually the red spot from a surveillance camera on the corner of the ceiling. When you were isolated due to hunger strike, you'd put under 24hr surveillance to see when you pass out. Then a nurse/guard would run in to give you injections and to feed you' ('Re: Quick question'). An overt filtering image, the cage forms a lens through which the authorities see the hunger striker, modelling the discursive technology that Ahmed theorises as the creation of objects of emotion. The lens is inescapable; no matter how he moves, the criminalising warp to the weft of the hunger striker's body remains. The slats that the audience must imagine falling across the image intimate that this authority apprehends the asylum-seeking body through a filter that presupposes criminality. It is also a picture of maintaining bare life: the authority only intervenes to keep the hunger striker from physical death but prevents response to the causes of the hunger strike. I argued in the Introduction and Chapter One that the Australian state cages pre-emptively through its policy of mandatory detention. Here again, Foucault's heterotopias of deviance are linked to identity rather than behaviour. The caging is racialised, a continuation of the nominally dismantled White Australia policy.

The central image of the play, the figure of the hunger striking asylum seeker, presents the audience with another instance of the filter. Though less overt than Shafaei's other filtering images, the body refusing food and water most emphatically links the filtered and filtering body to Scarry's room and cell. The function of the room is to shelter the body that dwells within it so that body need not act like a wall and is thus free 'to move out into the world' and allow that world to enter (Scarry 38). Confined rather than sheltered, Shafaei's protagonist presents a body forced to act like an impermeable wall rather than a living human entity that interacts with the world. In this way, *Refugitive* places a hunger striking character before an audience to make 'explicit and visible the workings of state violence on refugees' bodies that are invisible when contained in institutional camps' (Pfeiffer 468). These workings, understood according to Scarrian rooms and filters, constitute a violent solidifying, a making-impermeable of asylum-seeking bodies through mandatory and indefinite detention.

Theorising *Refugitive's* intervention, Rand Hazou employs Thomas Fuchs's concepts of 'corporealisation', resembling a corpse in passivity and painful heaviness, and 'disembodiment', the hollowing out that occurs when one no longer feels in control of the body ('Refugitive and the Theatre' 183). Hazou posits that *Refugitive* contextualises hunger strike in Australian detention centres as resistance to disembodiment and corporealisation via spectacles of pain and final agency over the body respectively. I wish to bring this assessment into the fold of my own analytical framework which highlights the racial dimension of Shafaei's performance. To Hazou's identification of corporealisation being countered by agency, I add that the agency of ultimately deciding to escape one's own body through death is productively considered through Ahmed's lens of 'moving away' from that which makes the skin crawl (*The Cultural Politics* 54). In the context of some bodies moving by caging others as objects of hate, *Refugitive's* hunger striker, cell secured by the bars over the camera, shows that he can only move by shedding his body. The disembodiment of the hollowed-out automaton, which Hazou says Shafaei resists with the attention to the body that pain demands, I read as the return to the body that Ahmed shows pain delineates as an individual, finite body requiring relief. Moreover, a show of this pain when the body is unable to escape itself reveals the bind of those branded as hated object of emotion. Pain and death as they appear in *Refugitive's* hunger strike make visible the exceedingly narrow ways that necrocivilisation permits the racialized body to at once occupy the body as a person and move away from intolerable anguish.

Shafaei takes care to make clear that, because the authorities took no notice when hunger strikers refused food, the protesting asylum seekers refused water as well. One function of a filter is separating away liquid to reveal desirable solid substances. The dissolution of asylum

seeker identities, the dissipation of their bodies in the sea as detailed in Part I, is one way Australian necrocivilisation produces land as legitimacy, solid ground for discursively virtuous Australian citizens to stand on. The protagonist's refusal to let food and, particularly, water pass into his body becomes a display of wasted, corporealised bodies. In *Refugitive*, Shafaei deftly conveys that the ground on which white Australia builds its prosperity is rather composed of the solidity of bodies bearing all the weight of violence, sunk like stones to form the bedrock of white Australian sovereignty.

Discursive Filters

At the time Shafaei wrote and performed *Refugitive*, journalists were not permitted to interview, photograph or film immigration detainees 'in a way that they may be identifiable' (Hazou 'Refugitive and the Theatre' 181). Consequently, the Australian public sphere was largely devoid of context provided by asylum seekers themselves. In such a vacuum, the media and government could saturate the public with narratives that located the origins of the brutality of hunger strike in detained asylum seekers, concealing the violence of detention conditions. Bringing together publics across the country to watch the play and participate in question and answer sessions, Shafaei picks apart the methods of hegemonic discourse as well as the picture it weaves of asylum seekers. He permitted audiences to witness the otherwise invisible violence motivating hunger striking asylum seekers. Though the physical and institutional walls that hold the hunger striker are always in evidence, Shafaei emphasizes throughout the play that discourses are responsible for the protagonist's compulsion to make his body visible through starvation. Shafaei's declaration that he did not participate in hunger strike or lip-sewing himself while in detention because he could communicate with his captors fluently in English further underscores his understanding that discourse is at the heart of the detained hunger strikers' unshelter (Cox *Performing Noncitizenship* 135).

Central to Shafaei's representation is the power to define words and labels according to histories and imaginaries that charge the object of emotion 'asylum seeker' with fear and threat. When the protagonist presents himself as a refugee, the immigration official responds with a list of synonyms out of what Shafaei satirically calls the 'Howard University' edition of the Oxford English Dictionary: 'From now on don't forget that you are queue jumpers, illegal immigrants... would you please pass me my Australian Oxford dictionary edited by Howard University, oh thanks... there we are, you are boat people' (4). The asylum seeker responds with the rights guaranteed by the UN Convention to which Australia is a signatory, but the official is unmoved: 'Unfortunately, we don't have that dictionary, that convention one here' (4). The official, whom Shafaei calls the 'Australian Colonisation Manager' wryly echoing Hage's white national spatial manager, perceives asylum seekers as some sort of horde from

the movies: 'with helmets on our heads, swords in our hands, riding on horses: like gladiators' (5). *Refugitive's* dictionaries and tropes of mainstream cinema and television are humorous points of recognition for audience members. They are also manifestly reductive filters that keep out of sight understandings of asylum seekers as rights-bearing individuals. When Shafaei's protagonist is refused protection without interview or trial, he identifies the discursive bedrock of foregone conclusions: 'So isn't it pre-judgement? Of course, before anything you were calling us queue jumpers and now screened out, it's good you have a lot of names in your political dictionary for justifying your system' (7). The refusal is categorical but, like Astore's discursive harvest in Chapter One's discussion of *Tampa*, the political dictionary provides an affective mechanism to neutralise the asylum seeker's claim to civilisation and the citizen's complicity in its denial.

Perhaps the most concrete of *Refugitive's* images of discursive filters occurs in a letter the protagonist writes to the UN. The hunger striker says outright that 'The DIMIA Manager has the authority to work as a filter for any correspondence' (16). Immigration authorities effectively censor by choosing what to call 'lies', but the protagonist identifies the filtering mechanism as a site of resistance, as well, shouting 'Someone will hear it! There are still ears for listening to reality you just need to find a way to get it to them without any filters' (16). The Manager omits the politically damaging parts of the letter which must look like a piece of blackout poetry, like a filter that creates a different meaning in the same way discourse that filters away the elements that turn rooms into cells imagines these as civilised spaces. The protagonist responds by explaining how resistance works against apparently impenetrable filters: 'You can write the letter however you like and I will sign it ... the filters can't last for a long time... they fill with dirt' (17). Here Shafaei subverts the intention of the filter to keep out dangerous individuals by implying that the dirt that is kept from the public is, in reality, the brutal behaviour and policies of the Department of Immigration.

Refugitivity

Refugitive's combination of 'refugee' and 'fugitive' highlights the ambiguity of the asylum seeker's category, as well as the nature of his resistance to the filters that interpret him and his actions. Both 'refugee' and 'fugitive' have the Latin *fugere*, 'to flee', at their root, but the Latin origin of refuge, *refugium*, contains 're' meaning 'back' in addition to the suffix -ium 'place for'. *Refugium* is 'a taking of refuge; a place to flee back to'. 'Fugitive', however, denotes an outlaw fleeing justice, an expelled Agambenian abomination of the 'bandit', '*neither man nor beast, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither*' (Agamben 63). Agamben notes that this figure, often characterised as a werewolf, is an outcast abandoned by the law but also continually on the run from it (63). Refugees have a place, fugitives do not.

Refugitive's emphasis on 'pre-judgement' and the illegibility of liminality aligns Shafaei's work with theorisations of fugitivity used to understand Black resistance in white supremacist societies.

Necrocivilisation creates a context of illegibility for racialised bodies; its filters interpret behaviours of resistance as criminal and brutally perverse. Shafaei demonstrates and subverts this illegibility in an exchange with an immigration official who says: "We are trying to make the best of everything for you ... room, bed, and ... bed and room and everything. But you have showed that you don't deserve it, none of it. What is wrong with you people, we live in the same condition and the same rooms as yours, just with a few extras. beers..." (5). The asylum seeker unsuccessfully proposes that the official change rooms with him. The equivalence that the official discursively sets up between the rooms of citizens and those of detained non-citizens represents a necrocivilisational strategy involving heavy-handed foreclosure. Foreclosure comes into discussions of Black fugitivity as the pre-emptive obscuring of other possible meanings and significance. The concept is very similar to the filtering that Scarry ascribes to the protective qualities of the room in that it is a characteristic of discourse but also prone to the hegemonic manipulation that turns room to cell.

Theorisations of Black Fugitivity involve identifying resistance that liberal white society does not register as resistance. In a discussion of W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* and Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, Barnor Hesse notes a similar exposition of

the colonial-racial structure of foreclosure in white hegemonic figurations of universal liberty. But it also reveals more sharply how foreclosure is governmental, invested in subsuming black populations within a racially ascribed incapacity to assume the responsibilities of liberty, hence the caricatures. In addition, it shows how the foreclosures of white historiography racially divested the liberty question of *Reconstruction* from any critique of its deeper, continued associations with slavery and race; hence the "Negro" is barred from testifying. (300)

With Hesse's observations in mind, Shafaei's official ascribes a like incapacity to the asylum seeker. If the rooms are equal ('we live in the same condition and the same rooms as yours'), the official implies that the perversity lies in the hunger striker ('What is wrong with you people'). This authority figure frames protest of purportedly 'civilised' detention accommodation ('bed and room and everything') as a sign of not deserving civilisation ('you have showed that you don't deserve it'). In the face of this orchestrated illegibility, the hunger strike is an act of refusal that characterises fugitivity. Tina Campt theorises fugitivity as highlighting 'the tension between acts or flights of escape and creative practices of refusal' ('Black Feminist Futures'). Shafaei's hunger striker embodies both components in the

performance of the escape from body and by the refusal to accept the food and water authorities provide to keep the asylum seeker alive bodily. Western liberal discourse in Australia filters or reads this refusal as criminal ingratitude that goes largely unchallenged in the public discourse outside activist spaces. With *Refugitive*, Shafaei weaves into the warp of the signifier 'room' a different weft, experiences that go on behind the hegemonic filters until 'room', in this case, cannot be understood as civilizational any longer. 'Room' here must be acknowledged as 'cell' pointedly misconstrued as 'shelter'. Shafaei at once challenges the application of civilised language to the brutality of detention and reveals the filter to be deliberately and strategically woven.

Refugitive ends with a version of W.H. Auden's poem 'Refugee Blues' in which Shafaei replaces specific references to German Jews with the more general 'refugees'. The filtering images of the poem's last lines are striking: 'Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors a thousand windows and a thousand doors. Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours' (18). These lines unite the image of Scarry's civilisation composed of a multitude of sheltering rooms with the image of the filter made of openings (the thousand windows and thousand doors). Aside from the well-worn parallels between the plight of German Jews fleeing Nazism and contemporary refugees seeking shelter in the west, Shafaei's use of Auden's poem highlights the nature of his situation. In accordance also with Arendt's assessment of the plight of refugees, they encounter a problem of politics rather than space (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* 294). The in-betweenness of asylum seekers as 'refugitives' traps them behind the wall of a discursive filter that appears to have openings, its foreclosure obscured. As a result of this mechanism, asylum seekers have no place, no solid ground on which to stand, build shelter and negotiate civilisation. They have not arrived. That none of these spaces will shelter the asylum seeker protests this epistemological impoverishment. The last passage from Auden's poem delivers the world as necrocivilisation presents it in discourse (rooms, floors, windows, doors) and then ends with the statement that these signifiers of civilisation deny access to asylum seekers and will continue to do so as long as necrocivilisational logics permeate discourse. This liberal western necrocivilisational filter of apparent civilisation is, in fact, what authorises detention to continue.

In an environment that Shafaei depicts as woven from and into concepts as they are defined in the Howard Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, the hunger striker's censored letter to the UN presents a discursive version of the body that the audience sees onstage. *Refugitive's* asylum seeker refuses food and water in protest of both intolerable conditions and the enforced inability to convey the material difference between room and cell. The dirty mattress and the camera and light within the cage indicate not just carceral but abject space. I have

drawn on Ahmed's descriptions of privileged bodies that move by caging racialised bodies along with Hazou's hunger strike as corporealization to describe Shafaei's framing of asylum seeker bodies as composing the 'solid ground' or bedrock upon which necrocivilisational white Australia moves and builds. This corporealization reappears in my analysis of *The Waiting Room*, which presents the hardening bodies of necrocivilisation as robotic and empty. Shafaei's re-contextualisation recasts societal (non)sense-making filters as collectors of necrocivilisational filth, what I will show *The Waiting Room* to achieve through allegorical, hyperbolic and absurdist de-realisation. The concept of fugitivity suggested by *Refugitive's* title brings into relief forms of resistance against the placeless and eternal non-arrival that produces detention's corporealization. The hunger strike that mainstream liberal discourse apprehends as a perverse and ungrateful refusal of the room, Shafaei re-contextualises as the ultimate rejection of Australian necrocivilisation's bare life. To resist the limitlessness of abject space (a key element of asylum seeker torture expressed in *The Waiting Room's* title), Shafaei's asylum seeker reclaims time from detention's eternity with his body's ultimately mortal and finite frame.

The Waiting Room

In May 2002, the year before *Refugitive's* premiere, Richard Lagarto's collaborative production *The Waiting Room* debuted in Melbourne's Trades Hall. Staged by the Melbourne Workers Theatre and Sydney-based theatre company Platform 27, *The Waiting Room* is one of the first post-Tampa theatre productions to examine the treatment of asylum seekers in Australia. It inaugurated, along with others like Niz Jabour's *No Answer Yet, Club Refuge* by Actors for Refugees, and Mike Parr's *Close the Concentration Camps*, Australian theatre's remarkable dedication to the issue of asylum. Like *Refugitive*, *The Waiting Room* addresses the torturous spatial and temporal limbo of non-arrival, and the discursive surface-weaving that smothers asylum seeker agency. It employs an allegorical storyline, agitprop-style satire, performed detainee testimony and audience participation within the play itself to suggest how audience-members might consider their own positionality in relation to the experience of asylum seekers. In the Introduction, I noted that a helpful image to appreciate audience positionality in reality theatre about asylum is Vivian Patraka's understanding of Leeny Sack's '[sitting] inside the memory of where I was not' (105–106). Sack speaks about her grandparents' memory of the Holocaust, the legacy of an event she did not experience but which still informs the present. *The Waiting Room* presents not a memory but a system of oppression that, the citizen in the world finds it difficult to locate herself within given the hegemonic discourse I have discussed that affirms citizen virtue at the expense of those it others. Given the play's emphasis on audience participation, I organise my observations here

around the physical space the audience takes up in the action by employing a modified version of Sack's phrase: sitting inside a system of oppression normally hidden.

Sitting Inside

'Sitting inside' in Sack's context is part of a strategy to 'better understand how that [Holocaust] history has shaped us in the current historical moment (Patraka 105). Applied to *The Waiting Room*, it is productive to understand the play's audience involvement and allegorical elements as an attempt to better understand how systems of oppression or necrocivilisation shape us in the world we move through. To encourage a 'sitting inside', actors oblige audience members to take on the roles of victims, witnesses, liberators, and oppressors, sometimes simultaneously. Sitting inside is a useful critical lens, because it eschews the problematic pretention of appropriating another's experience. Sack uses this technique precisely because she does not share the experience of her grandparents but does navigate its legacy. Audience members, I argue, are encouraged to contemplate and feel how they are positioned and how they conceive of their agency within Australian necrocivilisation.

Before the audience take their seats, two initiation scenes oblige them to undergo an ordeal before and as part of their entry into the theatre space. It is an ordeal similar to the *Pericles* audience's positioning at first glance as asylum seekers, but key details again suggest a more nuanced approach: to initiate viewers into a space where they gain a clearer sense of their own place within necrocivilisation. Actors randomly and brusquely sort theatregoers into three groups separated by occupation, health, and at random. This illustration of the arbitrary elements that decide on the rights each person will enjoy (in contrast to living rights by claiming what they need in civilisation) sets up a process continued in scene inside the theatre proper. After a brief interrogation, each person receives a number. This appears to represent the process by which Australian authorities strip asylum seekers of their identities and context. However, the questions asked in the sorting, such as whether the person receives welfare benefits, point to the ways in which necropolitics operates to appraise and establish a value for citizen bodies, as well. In order to enter the theatre space, the audience members must chant 'we are not criminals, we are refugees', a cry echoed at the end of the scene 'Masked stories' in which asylum seekers testify to the horrors of detention. The demand that accompanied the audience's arrival in Australia at the beginning of the play persists, suggesting a continuity of borderscapes between the vessel and detention, but also tacitly shaping citizen populations.

At times the actors knock on the glass of the fourth wall, turning the theatre into a space to question the conventions of borderscapes. In the Kafka-inspired framing narrative of *Hhada*,

who is searching for refuge in *The Fortress*, actors call explicitly on the audience to bear witness. In response to the character Adolf's insistence and lack of civility, for instance, Hhada appeals to the landlord of the 'Almost Inn' where he is staying and directly to the audience as witnesses to inhumanity. In a similar moment, Hhada, referring to the audience, asks the agent Bruce 'Why are they not allowed to come near?' (25). By addressing the spectators and talking about them, the characters intimate that the audience members play a part in the unfolding stories. Yet, despite their initiation into the theatre space, the audience is unprepared to intervene, principally because it conceives of itself as spectators watching a play. The suggestion that audience members be 'allowed to come near', that they may fundamentally become involved in the play's action, brings into question the role viewers play as citizens who also watch politics unfold before them on the other side of a television, radio or computer screen. *The Waiting Room* emphasises this point with television screens placed about the stage. These details announce, as I argued in response to Judith Butler's discussion of theatrical de-realization, that this is *not* just a play ('Performative Acts' 527). Making visible this fourth wall begs a comparison between the performance in the theatre space and performance according to discourse-informed social scripts in the wider world.

The Waiting Room further implicates the audience in one of the play's several calls to muster. This scene acts both as an emblem of the complicated agency and impotence of citizens in necrocivilisation, and as an interrogation of their purpose within this theatre space. The audience members singled out at the beginning of the play as a 'special group of detainees' and any other volunteers line up as part of and at points are asked to progress a scene in which a woman wearing hijab is forced to strip and sit naked in a tub of water. At one point an audience member is ordered to pour water over the struggling woman as the guard holds her head down. Drenched and sobbing, the woman retrieves her clothes from the audience member-detainees and uses the line of people to shield herself as she dresses. Throughout the scene, another actor takes close-up footage of the faces of the audience-detainees and the rest of the audience, pointedly implicating all in the action.

Spectators can no longer perceive themselves as separate from the action's unfolding as they follow the orders of an authority to aid in the humiliation of a fellow detainee and watch this humiliation. Because of theatre's 'unreal' nature, an audience's choice not to participate would arguably have no real-world consequences, but perhaps it is precisely this unreal aspect that encourages them to go through these motions. That said, if we read this production as an opportunity to interrogate the discursive scripts of the real world beyond the theatre, the play, then, actively asks the audience what they gain by viewing and participating in this spectacle of pain and domination. The tense image of the privileged citizen required to aid in traumatising

an asylum seeker, as oppressor and oppressed, locates the difference between those two groups in a hegemonically informed script that absolves the privileged body of violence. *The Waiting Room* brings these privileged bodies back into the fold.

In the final scene, the actors present the audience with a path to resolving this tension. Hhada stands imprisoned in a cage after a 'powerful voice' passes sentence for an unspecified crime. There is no law to prevent Hhada from appealing but the bodiless sovereign puts conditions upon this appeal. In a scene reminiscent of Augusto Boal's forum theatre, the audience has an opportunity to choose how the play ends: the judge decides that two audience members must take Hhada's place if he is to be released. Here spectators, who previously had been treated in turn as *homines sacri*, authors of oppression, and helpless onlookers can free Hhada, who is played by the same actor in whose on-stage humiliation audience members were complicit. The final scene in which actors put the cage's key within reach of the audience symbolically models the action necessary to address civilizational unshelter. 'Sitting inside' a representation of the dynamics that produce necrocivilisational caging, *The Waiting Room* asks audience members to encounter the violence that their positionality systemically filters away.

A System of Oppression

The oppressive system that is normally hidden to privileged citizen audience members is usefully understood as produced via acts of discursive and physical repetition that seek to bind pain to opposing signifiers. Scarry theorises this dynamic as the linguistic misattribution used in torture: 'The domestic act of protecting becomes an act of hurting and in hurting, the object becomes what it is not, an expression of individual contraction, ... when it is the very essence of these objects to express the most expansive potential of the human being, his ability to project himself out of his private, isolating needs into a concrete, objectified, and therefore shareable world' (41). Crucially the 'circle of negation'³ this domination produces provokes 'the negation of the torturer's recognition of what is happening The torturer's idiom not only indicates but helps bring about the process of perception in which all human reality is made, no matter how screamingly present, invisible, inaudible' (44). *The Waiting Room* aligns Australian practices and processes of detention as well as the hegemonic discourse that justifies them with the role of torturer that Scarry elaborates. The play,

³ Scarry's 'circle of negation' is a spiralling chain of slipping signifiers that, via the originally civilisational object (e.g. telephone) as bludgeon, unshackles perpetrator from violence by means of a circuit of misattribution that cycles away from the fact of the torturer inflicting excruciating pain on another human being: 'there is no human being in excruciating pain; that's only a telephone; there is no telephone; that is merely a means of destroying a human being who is not a human being, who is only a telephone, who is not a telephone but merely a means of destroying a telephone' (*The Body* 44).

moreover, addresses the privileged citizen's role as oppressor, as torturer, held sway by a discourse that renders 'invisible, inaudible' the torture that destroys civilisation.

Key to these torture dynamics in the maintenance of necrocivilisation is the binding effects of repetition. A modified understanding of Ahmed's 'sticky surfaces' makes apparent the repetitive hegemonic mechanisms that bind signifiers to detained bodies in *The Waiting Room*. Ahmed explicitly connects what she has theorised as 'stickiness' to the binding effect of repetition:

We could argue signs become sticky through repetition; if a word is used in a certain way, again and again, then that 'use' *becomes* intrinsic; it becomes a form of signing. It is hard then to hear words like 'Pakis' without hearing that word as insulting. The resistance to the word acquiring new meaning is not about the referent; rather the resistance is an effect of these histories of repetition of the word 'Paki'. ... The 'binding' effect of the word is also a 'blockage': it stops the word moving or acquiring new value. The sign is a 'sticky sign' as an effect of a history of articulation, which allows the sign to accumulate value (*The Cultural Politics* 91 – 2).

I specified in the Introduction that instead of stickiness, I understand this binding in terms of weaving filtering surfaces. *Refugitive* represented the blockage involved in binding as dirt that would overpower the filter. *The Waiting Room*, likewise, uses the theatre space to explore repetitive filter weaving and its interruption. In my analysis below, I examine how the play presents a vision and the effects of filtered and filtering surface and discourse weaving within an oppressive necrocivilisational system.

A salient image of incongruous discursive binding appears in the scene 'The Love Boat'. Here, *The Waiting Room* parodies the discursive binding of 'asylum seeker' to entitled and predatory queue-jumping. In towels, sandals and handcuffs, the cast performs a hula and debates where they would like to go, finally settling on Australia. They discuss the type of benefit they will go on and chat jovially about how many days it has been since they last ate or had water to drink. As the boat starts taking on water, the cast sings a modified version of Jack Jones' 'The Love Boat', with lines such as 'set a course for detention / Forced separation' (32). The asylum seekers' absurdly carefree tone contrasts with visible handcuffs and a sinking vessel. The scene, which appears towards the end of the play, is patently ridiculous, but its predecessors depict a process that enables oppressive discourse to foreclose the possibility of asylum seekers surfacing otherwise.

In one of the first scenes, 'Hard Lesson', *The Waiting Room* models how detention creates violent disjunction between public discourse and detention experience. Three actors represent detention guards with their backs to the audience twitching with agitation under a screen

showing images of violence. Once the video finishes, the guards act out exercises of brutalisation ('At ease, Baton, Ramming Down, Hold him down, At ease' (14). As the actors repeat these violent paces, a disembodied voice enumerates prerequisites for the role of detention guard such as 'appreciation of the anxiety and stress detainees may experience'. The contrast between civilised qualities and the violence the guards act out with automaton-like regularity dramatises the weft of violent experience that necrocivilisation insinuates forcibly and mechanically through a warp that declares itself civilisation. What surfaces in public discourse is illegible brutality, incomprehensible self-harm, the cries perhaps, but not the torture, which hegemony obscures under these warp-strands. Ahmed notes that in the process of binding affect to a body to create an object of emotion '[i]t is not so much emotions that are erased, as if they were already there, but the processes of production or the "making" of emotions (*The Cultural Politics* 11). *The Waiting Room* shows the systemic, mechanical production of the asylum seeker as intrinsically fearful object of emotion to be caged and expelled. It makes visible the brutality, but also the mechanism of its erasure.

These weaving mechanisms make asylum seekers appear, as Barnor Hesse notes about black bodies under white supremacy, '[incapable of assuming] the responsibility of liberty' (Hesse 300). Moreover, this strategic concealment forecloses examination of the semantic shackling parodied in 'The Love Boat'. To the repetitive brutalising movement of the guards, *The Waiting Room* adds another inflection in scenes involving the sing-song repetition of nursery rhymes. In one scene, the guards act as children skipping rope and singing

Black may be beautiful
Tan may be grand
But white is the colour
of the big boss man! (15)

In 'Suitcase Follies', actors swing suitcases increasingly faster and more chaotically until stopped by a whistle. One by one each actor declares an identity ('One Algerian male...', 'Second wife of Iraqi man, four children', 'Afghani man with mother, father and two children. The son can stay' (11) before slapping their case and shouting 'Deny', 'Detain', or 'Next!'. The rhythmic repetition of 'deny, detain, next' repeats and intensifies, snowballing into a chant that coalesces into a child's nursery rhyme:

Two Afghanis
Four Iraqis
Six Pakistanis
Deter and deny!
I'm a good guy!
They'll probably die
In a meat pie! Next! (12).

Anglophone children's nursery rhymes often have sinister historical origins that rhyme, tune and surface imagery keep from registering as disturbing. Ahmed observes that '[w]e move, stick and slide with [words for feeling and objects of feeling]' (*The Cultural Politics* 14). The mesmerising rhythm that automatically constructs the cause and effect around the object of feeling illuminates a surface that privileged white bodies slide across, but that asylum seekers get stuck under, woven into and bound by. The burgeoningly visible identities presented at the beginning of 'Suitcase Follies' contract with repetition to nationalities and numbers. Stripped of all individual human detail, asylum seekers lose the ability to negotiate shelter with the foreclosure of context.

The Waiting Room presents detainee testimony, as well, but the image that most saliently encompasses the repercussions of this necrocivilisational oppression, like the rhymes, also harkens to childhood. A child and her teddy markedly depart from the jovial if sinister tone of the previous childhood-themed scenes and indeed 'The Love Boat' which it immediately follows. The child, played by the same actor as embodies the woman in the washtub scene, sits amid scaffolding, stares vacantly and rocks back and forth as she sews her teddy bear's bloodied lips together. When she is finished, the girl holds the bear up for the audience to see, slowly moving it from side to side as another actor videos the bear's face. The toy bear, an emphatic image of civilisation that delivers feelings of safety and security to children, is unmade in the manner of Scarry's unmaking of civilisation through torture. The child's sewing the bear's lips closed recalls the separation of body and self that Shafaei calls attention to when speaking to his belly in *Refugitive*. *The Waiting Room* here dramatizes the effects of impermeable discourse, which systemically unmakes the civilising aspects of the room to such a degree that it divorces the child's self from body in a way that Thomas Fuchs describes as 'disembodiment of the self [...] a split between their mind and their body, of feeling hollowed out, like a machine or a robot' (100 – 102). The mechanical weaving in and binding of asylum seeker experience to improbable warps produces an unbinding, a split, that *The Waiting Room* represents in this emblem. The mouth, doorway of communication, Oliver's response-ability, and nourishment, being sewn up by the traumatised child self emphasises necrocivilisational weaving as unmaking.

Normally Hidden

As the above discussions make evident, much of the oppression dramatised in *The Waiting Room* is produced through its concealment. The title itself indicates the spatial and temporal erasure central to torture: 'In torture, the world is reduced to a single room or set of rooms. Called "guest rooms" in Greece and "safe houses" in the Philippines, the torture rooms are

often given names that acknowledge and call attention to the generous, civilizing impulse normally present in human shelter' (Scarry 40). Likewise, the ordinarily benign 'waiting room', ostensibly a temporary shelter, fills with humiliation and extends indefinitely. *Refugitive's* immigration official produces a similar erasure when he says to the detained man that 'we live in the same condition and same rooms as yours' (5). The crushing sense of waiting without end differentiates Agamben's camp-like refugee detention centre from the temporally circumscribed criminal containment of the prison let alone civilian rooms. Scenes of boredom and frustration culminating in madness and self-harm punctuate *The Waiting Room*, depicting the process that is hidden so that politicians like Philip Ruddock could pronounce self-harming in detention to be "a practice unknown in our culture ... that offends the sensitivities of Australians" (qtd in West). I turn now to how *The Waiting Room* conceives of this spatial and temporal concealment as producing Ahmed's 'stickiness' through story of Hhada (*The Cultural Politics* 14). This allegorical and episodic framing narrative appears like a refrain linking the dilemma of contemporary asylum seekers to Kafka's canonical tales of injustice and opaque authoritarian dictates, specifically *The Trial*, *The Hunger Artist* and *The Castle*.

Hhada's narrative sets the detention scenes within a wider necrocivilisational logic of Fortress Australia and its accompanying discursive tradition. *The Waiting Room's* 'Fortress on the hill' is, like Kafka's Castle, 'hidden, veiled in the dust and darkness' so Hhada cannot see the structure and gazes into 'illusory emptiness' from a bridge 'that spanned neither water, road, or drop' (5). The darkness that creates illusory emptiness where, in fact, a fortress sits, models Agamben's ban, specifically the way discourse gives the appearance of freedom while concealing the caging that limits both the people who are ostensibly sheltered by the city and those who seek its sanctuary. The figure of The Fortress as confinement (cell) masquerading as protection (shelter), and the bewildering incidents that befall Hhada convey Agamben's observation that the city is not based upon social contract but upon the ban: in modern western arrangements of sovereignty, the potentiality of *homo sacer* rests in every individual.

Hhada finds refuge for the night in the 'Almost Inn', a provisional shelter with a name that implies trajectory as well as the non-place of asylum suspension. The character Adolf explains that the Fortress (the existence of which Hhada has been ignorant) holds dominion over this satellite town: 'whoever lies here, or passes the night here does so in a manner of speaking in the Fortress itself' (6). This description is suggestive of spaces of detention like Nauru and Manus Island that do not furnish asylum seekers with the protection of the Australian mainland. In a turn of events referencing Kafka's *The Trial*, Hhada is arrested for an unspecified crime. Representing Agamben's inclusive exclusion, the Fortress holds Hhada and, at the same time, excludes him, stripping him of his social consequence within civilisation.

Detention, at once administrative and criminalising, appears in Hhada's tale as unfounded yet boldly carried out. The context that the detention scenes in *The Waiting Room* described above, however, locate Hhada's exclusion in racist contextualisation.

This decontextualized allegory effectively removes the discourse machine that weaves asylum seeking bodies like Hhada's into stickiness. Meanwhile, unquestioning citizen agents, bodies that slide over those that stick like Hhada's, maintain the authority of the hidden, illusory, remote and inaccessible fortress. The baffling events that take place without the trappings of the discourse machine highlight that necrocivilisational law's legitimacy lies not in justice but in power. Hhada pinpoints 'the real question' as being what authority has brought him to this state. Neither he nor the citizen agents understand why Hhada is imprisoned. The agents, however, have confidence in the system that they profit from, while Hhada, punished by the system though he knows he has done no wrong to any person, is unwilling to put his faith in it. The judge finally sentences Hhada to 'imprisonment for an undetermined time to be determined at a later date' (37), and, in a nod to private companies profiting from the detention system in Australia, Hhada's imprisonment is also explicitly due to the fact that the cage would go unused if Hhada were not in it (37). *The Waiting Room* makes clear that it is power undergirded by capital that fuels the discourse obscuring the Fortress' ban.

In contrast to Clare Bayley's pretensions in *The Container*, Lagarto does not set out to recreate asylum seeker experience. Rather, *The Waiting Room* examines not only the dynamics of necrocivilisation that trap asylum seekers, but also how a citizen audience conceives of and positions themselves and their own agency within Australian liberal democracy. Amidst *The Waiting Room's* episodes of Scarrian world contraction, performers call upon the audience to play a selection of roles from victim to witness to oppressor that together highlight this ambivalence of citizen placement, modelling agency as well as limitation within this necrocivilisational system. The eloquent Hhada's tale, stripped of discursive and affect-driven justification, makes clear the system's bewildering logic. The last scene, in which audience members are within reach of the key to Hhada's cage, models a structural understanding of Agamben's ban and hope for a new politics that repudiates the current asylum regime of discursive foreclosure. However, as I will argue in my reading of *Through the Wire's* representation of real-world Australian citizen/asylum seeker solidarity, reaching 'through the wire', even where politically expedient, does not necessarily lead to the radically recalibrated filters and understanding of how these operate that *The Waiting Room* allegorically models.

Through the Wire

When audience members asked what they should do after seeing *Refugitive*, Shafaei urged them to 'discuss their concerns with friends and with their political representatives, as well as make an effort to contact detainees themselves: actions that "will chip away the wall that the Government has made between society and Immigration centres"' (Farrier *Postcolonial Asylum* 190). In January 2004, the year following *Refugitive*'s run, Ros Horin's verbatim play *Through the Wire* appeared as a work-in-progress at the Sydney Festival and as a full production at the Sydney Opera House that October. The play is a verbatim representation of four detained asylum-seeking men (Farshid, Mohsen, Rami and Shahin Shafaei, who played himself) navigating relationships with three Australian women (Doreen, Gabby and Susan). This premise appears to model the citizen response Shafaei advocates as a way to engage with the realities of detainees 'without any filters' (Shafaei *Refugitive* 16).

Through the Wire employs minimalist staging with three long metal poles lying along the boundary of the stage, which the actors use to evoke objects like the prow of a ship or the fences of a detention compound. Similarly, chairs come together to represent a small boat, and a portable cage becomes the gates of a detention centre. The musical score, which asylum seeker Jamal Al Rekabi both wrote and performed on the kamancha, a traditional Kurdish instrument, alongside artworks and video footage of detention protests projected onto a backdrop provide aesthetic framing for the stories told onstage (Hazou *Acting* 88). Additionally, a video camera trained on the actors' faces and projects extreme closeups of their features as they recount events. This screen would be used at the end of the production, as well, to show the faces of the real asylum seekers who supplied the words voiced on stage, a moment when it is revealed that Shafaei has played himself.

Through the Wire was the first play to bring the issue of asylum to a mainstream stage, as well as being one of few asylum productions to extensively tour. Moreover, the furore that accompanied the federal government controversially pulling funding from this tour has led Caroline Wake to call the play the most important within verbatim theatre, which remains the largest subgenre of plays about asylum in Australia (102). While *Through the Wire* received wide acclaim, critics have called attention to the ethical implications of re-traumatisation involved in asylum seekers playing themselves (as Shafaei did) and the double silencing of those not chosen to play themselves (Wake 'To Witness' 103). While these ethical concerns have accompanied asylum and verbatim theatre since its pairing began in earnest in the 1990s, Wake has called for more investigation into the political dimensions of verbatim asylum theatre and analyses *Through the Wire* from this perspective ('To Witness' 103). She identifies

the play's political efficacy as rooted largely in Shafaei's playing himself as well as the ethnic (and, in some cases, identity) merging of the other non-white actors with the asylum seekers they embody. While I do not dispute this impact, focusing on how filters manifest in the play through casting, staging, and the testimonies themselves reveals that encountering asylum seekers and their stories does not automatically disrupt necrocivilisational filters in a radical way.

Filtering Through the Wire

Horin's strategy for moving through the wire is by means of relationships between the asylum seekers Fashid, Shahin, Mohsen and Rami and the Australian women Susan, Doreen and Gaby. In Horin's play, it is the detainees' ability to connect with the citizen characters that either ensures their release from detention or allows them to project in Scarry's sense beyond the bounds of their confinement. The citizen character Susan describes the material consequences of a confining discourse that had erupted in the wake of the Tampa affair: 'The great rolls of razor wire were like a symbol of everything barbaric suddenly sprung up in Australia ... And I wondered what had happened to this country in the short space of time that I'd been away – eight weeks' (7). Her strategy to reach through this discursive filter cum physical barrier was to offer pro bono services as a psychologist. Doreen finds motivation to visit detainees in her Jewish tradition, as well as a history of activism in her native South Africa. Trainee nurse Gaby signs up to work in the detention centres out of a desire to explore the world beyond her small, white, Christian town. In contrast to *The Waiting Room's* audience involvement, *Through the Wire* offers citizen characters - all white and white-passing women - to model what citizen intervention might look like where hard discursive filtering is at work.

While the titular filter in *Through the Wire* is the razor wire separating citizens from asylum seekers, the bodies of the performers delivering the play's testimony constitute a key filtering site that foregrounds the aesthetic frame as vital enabler of both encounter and distance. The difference between Shafaei as the 'Man' in *Refugitive* and Shafaei as himself in *Through the Wire* illustrates filtering as psychological imperative in accordance with Scarry's formulation of the room. Moreover, it makes evident the sacrifices and trade-offs that Horin and Shafaei made in the name of political impact. *Through the Wire's* mimetic quality meant that the distance the aesthetic filter provides was constantly threatened for Shafaei, who at the time was on a Temporary Protection Visa: 'there were performances when I could not distance myself from the reality of my story and my emotions would hit me hard and consequently would harm my performance ... The exactness of the words ... br[o]ke] the frame of the living image' (qtd in Farrier *Postcolonial Asylum* 192 – 193). *Refugitive's* vision did not require such a close reproduction of Shafaei's own experience. In that play, the performer controlled a creative

vision more amenable to his immediate wellbeing. He could step into the frames of other characters in *Refugitive* in a way that *Through the Wire*'s mimesis prevented. Trauma involves an affective overwhelming of the filters that perceive the self in time and space, filters that, akin to Scarry's benign room, facilitate agency in the world. Shafaei's verbatim confinement to the words of his own testimony serves what Wake has termed the 'traumatic reveal' (whereby an element of embodied traumatic reality, in this case Shafaei's acting as himself, intrudes upon the stage as representational world), which reinforces the play's reality claim ('To Witness' 111). Kristen Krauth notes that the first time she saw *Through the Wire*, she found Shafaei the least compelling, but the second time she realises that he 'tells his story with the distance and abstraction of a writer/actor through necessity'. While he was the centre of the reveal that constituted *Through the Wire*'s principle material encounter, to be able to perform his testimony at all, Shafaei exhibited a 'distance', a hardening of the body, while inhabiting the room-turned-cell of the stage and the part of detained Shahin.

In contrast, Wadih Dona reports a fundamentally different experience playing the asylum-seeking Farshid: 'Words are words...it does not matter to me what their origin is. I don't believe in psyching myself up in order to get into a certain emotional state to tell Farshid's story...it's like surfing to me. You go on the wave of the story and hope you can ride it to the end! Just commit to the ride and don't worry where you want to take it' (qtd in Krauth). As an actor not voicing his own testimony, Dona chooses and is able to ride the surface of the words, rather than grappling with their source on a personal level. He assumes total passivity in terms of Farshid's testimony (Farrier *Postcolonial Asylum* 191). Dona's affective non-engagement did not stop, and perhaps even contributed to, audience members reading authenticity into a compelling performance. He remarks that a 'little old lady' came up to him after the show clearly mistaking him for Farshid, and *The Canberra Times* described the actors playing detainees as Iraqi and Iranian when Shafaei was the only Iranian and none of the actors were Iraqi (Krauth; 'Brutal'). As Wake has argued, staging and casting strategies produce an embodied 'faceness', the 'vague and generalized humanity that an audience grants to asylum seekers when they see a face that looks – to them, at least – like what an asylum seeker's face might look like' ('To Witness' 113). The effect of this 'faceness' is to mobilise empathy at the same time as it risks eliding difference and diversity among racialised people ('To Witness' 113). Wake also registers an assumption of the actors' past co-presence with the people whose testimonies they voiced (with the obvious exception of Shafaei), though Dona later revealed in an interview that, at least in his case, this co-presence was unknowing and incidental (Wake 'To Witness' 113; Krauth). These misattributions and assumptions suggest that the play does not successfully, nor does it seek to, interrupt categorisation based on the narrow cultural filters of Hage's white managerial group.

Dona and Shafaei slide along the surface of the testimonies they present for different reasons and with arguably complimentary effects (the other actors' performances and Shafaei's centrality to the 'traumatic reveal' perhaps compensated for the harm his performance suffered in his hardening against re-traumatisation). Their sliding does not prevent them from sticking in Ahmed's sense, however, as audience-members slide, too, over slippages that see non-white people as interchangeable. The verbatim script that Horin describes fashioning like a sculptor, 'paring the dialogues back so new details are slowly revealed', produces a sameness in the people detained and their stories, a common arc of principled resistance leading to persecution and similar stories of flight (Krauth; Wake 'To Witness' 109). This uniformity along with casting that Dona characterises simply as 'exotic', create an affective binding akin to those of Fassin's volunteers and lawyers who also pare back the asylum seeker's story to make it fit through narrow filters that assign it meaning (Krauth; Fassin 285).

This effect is perhaps unsurprising given Horin's approach to interviewing her subjects: 'I didn't come in with a point of view. I came in with a healthy degree of scepticism. How do I know these people are genuine refugees? ... to convince an audience, I have to really convince myself. So I was rather forensic in my questioning. Why? What had happened? What got you into trouble? So what? Couldn't you have lived there with that?' (Anderson and Wilkinson 160–161). Horin's hard-nosed questioning, which she also talks about in other interviews, could read as calculated posturing to increase political efficacy by assuaging the fears of citizens concerned that they will be 'taken in' (Morgan; Simmonds). However, as Ahmed states, 'the reading of others as bogus is a reaction to the presence of others. *Hardness is not the absence of emotion, but a different emotional orientation towards others*' (*The Cultural Politics* 4). What might appear to mainstream Australia to be a necessarily rigorous establishment of 'the facts' is actually, in Oliver's terms, faith witness masquerading as historical eye-witness. The effect makes equitable encounter and negotiation impossible. Shafaei is forced to slide, to shore himself up, *because* he sticks; the then ongoing precarity of his immigration status is produced by the closed filters that Horin models and reproduces in her account of the production of the script.

In her assessment of *Through the Wire*, Wake rightly acknowledges the play's enormous political efficacy, in many ways precisely for the reasons that it is also problematic (Wake 'To Witness' 118). I agree with her observation that it is a beginning. However, thinking through the production in terms of filtering shows that the nature of this beginning will require its own undoing if white national spatial management's control within the ethics of recognition is to be approached let alone interrupted. Like *Pericles*, *Through the Wire's* continual representation

of “the good ethnic” precludes challenging foundational necrocivilisational filters (Kawash 178). It presents a frame that, like Australia’s white supremacist necrocivilisation, works by binding emotion to a closed and exclusive narrative.

Resisting Limitless Time

Through the Wire foregrounds a central preoccupation with annihilation via endless temporal extension with a contrasting prison sentence. Paradoxically, the asylum seekers charged as protest ringleaders receive protection during a three-month prison stay. Mohsen says that he preferred prison to immigration detention because among other rights afforded prisoners and denied asylum seeking detainees is the knowledge that their confinement has limits: ‘Officer more respectful than ACM. Better education, better everything. If you need a doctor – you get one. In Port Hedland. Only nurse. ... But the best thing about prison was knowing how long you there. You could plan the life’ (43). These conditions coincide with Agamben’s insistence that the camp is the paradigmatic site of modern sovereignty rather than Foucault’s prison:

The camp – and not the prison – is the space that corresponds to this originary structure of the *nomos*. This is shown, among other things, by the fact that while prison law only constitutes a particular sphere of penal law and is not outside the normal order, the juridical constellation that guides the camp is (as we shall see) martial law and the state of siege [...] As the absolute space of exception, the camp is topologically different from a simple space of confinement. (20)

A pivotal element of Agamben’s sovereign ban that Mohsen emphasises is boundless time that erases meaning and identity. Gaby also articulates this break-down: ‘To be head of the family, but have nothing to give. – There was so much time, just so much time – doing nothing’ (46). Of an Iraqi detainee, she says ‘He had lost himself. He had simply waited too long’ (46). In detention, time becomes an instrument of world-dissolution that, as administration, fails to register as torture in mainstream discourse.

A measure of agency in creativity, however, affords *Through the Wire*’s asylum seekers some little shelter in the face of infinite waiting. In Linda Javin’s *Halal-El-Mashakel*, the Guitarist and the Drummer discuss time and music:

Guitarist: Music is its own point.
Drummer: I suppose. Kills time.
Guitarist: No. Just the opposite. Music builds something out of time. (130)

Javin’s Guitarist describes here the rudiments of psychological shelter-building: sustaining the self by differentiating increments of time and building them into something that resonates through space. Relationships with citizens activate creativity in Horin’s asylum seekers. Mohsen began to write poetry in earnest when he gained access to visitors in Villawood and

when Susan 'started believing in Moshen and his story' (48). Rami rings up Doreen to play her music on his keyboard. Rami's music is also a symbol of his agency as he managed, through interpersonal negotiations, to obtain a keyboard. Horin intimates by its placement in the text that this is a result of a human connection with the guards who Rami says 'were quite nice really – especially after they live with the detainees for a while – they find out we are human beings' (37). The guards at first cited 'the rules' and rejected his request, but, when Rami persisted, they spoke to the manager on his behalf. Agamben might argue that his informal interaction in the face of stark officialdom merely represents the whim of individuals within a legal vacuum. However, in terms of discursive filters it highlights interpersonal relationships that intervene in discursive categorisation as an important site of resistance and a space where the absoluteness of the camp begins to blur.

These displays of agency are always dependent in *Through the Wire* on interactions with privileged citizen visitors and guards. As Rami states 'The visitors help me to feel that I'm a human being. I don't know my self that I'm human when I'm locked up' (47). Rami also explains that his connection with Doreen springs from her ability to imagine his personhood beyond the bounds of the condition of detained asylum seeker: 'The normal visitors always talk about our problems you know, lots of questions – about in Detention. But Doreen was talking to me about the life outside' (28). Doreen speaks of her demands that the 'real Rami', rather than the victimized detainee, show up (29). Horin adheres to a portrayal of resistance familiar to a tradition of prison writing from Boethius to Bobby Sands and, most importantly, to Scarry's formulation of world-making. This strategy entails connecting the imprisoned self to a wider community to gain and sustain legitimacy, and, in turn, delegitimizing the authorities that hold the writer. It dually functions to garner support on the outside and to maintain the writer's identity when filters severely limit their interaction with the world. While *Refugitive* demonstrates a will to this relationship via the protagonist's letter to the UN, *Through the Wire* models a potential community of citizens available to lend legitimacy to asylum seeker claims. Moreover, Doreen's demand that the 'real' Rami show up for instance, illustrates a place for the development of particular identities not admitted by the official asylum deliberation process.

The asylum-seeking protagonists' telling their stories to and with the citizen characters contrasts with their narrative explanation to immigration officials. The stories that flowed so freely in the first six scenes of the play suddenly become fragmented acts of remembering in scene seven 'The Interview Trap'. Farshid declares 'But I couldn't tell my story like that to the Immigration. No not at all!' (24). Farshid, Mohsen and Rami present the circumstances of the telling as the inverse of Scarry's sheltering room:

I was in the small room at the airport.
(all) I was frightened. (Mohsen) I was cold (Rami and Fashid) I was hot..
(all) I was shivering...
(Fashid) my mind was in panic.
(all) I tried to answer his questions... (24)

The room does not allow the asylum seekers to control the temperature or the nearness of others, which, as Scarry stipulates, is necessary for the body to interact fruitfully with the world. Fashid further shows how Australian filters encourage asylum seekers to harden their bodies into barriers when he admits that his first mistake was telling immigration officials the truth. Australia's discursive filters are, in practice, so narrow that shelter demands a particular performance of a particular story, a point Wake observes in the sameness of the asylum seeker stories (108 - 109). However, Wake's point does not apply solely to narratives the asylum system demands. Though citizen characters provide some relief, there are significant limits to *Through the Wire's* civilizational potential.

Not Warps Remade

While they provide an opportunity for the asylum-seeking characters to project the self out into the world as Scarry has it, the interpersonal relationships the three women maintain with the male asylum seekers are also decidedly conventional. Horin manages to extend the identities of asylum seekers to 'son' and 'romantic partner'. However, *Through the Wire* does not push audiences to imagine the need for more diverse categories or that these categories be amenable to shaping and interpreting on asylum seekers' terms. The play's relationships all have heteronormative templates, from Susan's explicitly interpreted mother/son relationship with Mohsen to Shahin's eventual romantic relationship with Gaby. The citizen characters also represent other detainees by drawing on hegemonic relationship types that permeate and saturate mainstream Australian discourse. Gaby says: 'It was painful to see people without their roles in life. A mother who can't make breakfast and get the kids to school. A father who can't provide for his family' (46). This technique can be useful in finding common ground, reassuring the dominant group that asylum seekers need not upset heteronormative categories and may even share a similarly gendered outlook. However, mainstream Australian discourse has also employed the role of parent, for example, to vilify asylum seekers. The 'children overboard' affair is a salient example, when Howard Government ministers falsely claimed that asylum seekers had thrown children into the water to manipulate the Australian Navy into rescuing them. Similarly, in Catherine Simmonds' 2010 Asylum Seeker Resource Centre play *Journey of Asylum – Waiting* an immigration official says to an asylum seeker at interview 'what sort of a mother leaves her children behind?' (181). As a filtering discourse that produces unshelter, conventional roles and the moral duties that accrue to them are also

discursively charged objects of emotion that do not admit circumstantial deviation from the norm and readily become another tool to exclude asylum seekers from civilisation.

The range of categories presented in *Through the Wire* is also markedly binary. While male citizen characters mentioned, such as other guards, are humanized, all citizen characters on stage are white or white-passing women who take on the conventional roles of nurturing mother or potential romantic partner. Though limited to a degree by the real-life sources of the verbatim play, Horin's choice of all asylum-seeking characters as men and citizens as women illustrates the dynamic Ahmed recognises as the need for hard borders (gendered as masculine) precisely because of the feminized, compassionate, soft body of the feminised nation. Horin subverts 'flooding of the nation' rhetoric through loving and conventional relationships that the male asylum seekers share with the citizen women and by extending the experience, as Al-Qady does in *Nothing But Nothing*, to include all others seeking asylum. Gaby speaks in her concluding monologue about all asylum seekers who have sought asylum in Australia: 'I just think about what's happened to them. And what their life would be, what would the difference be if they were released here' (55). Horin draws on the nation's discursive feminisation. She shows that asylum seekers need not be a threat, but the play does not introduce the notion that those who do not so apparently slot into these 'safe' categories are also entitled to civilisation.

While the relationships *Through the Wire* cultivates on stage permit asylum seekers to find a degree of shelter to project their selves out into a world beyond the razor wire, Horin's play does not intervene in or trouble to any major extent the categorical filters of hegemonic discourse. The political efficacy that Wake registers in the face of the production's ethical dubiousness must be acknowledged: inspiring action and empathy for asylum seekers on a mainstream platform is no small achievement. That said, reaching through discursive filters that categorise asylum seekers as threatening by showing them in loving, discursively palatable roles does not so much trouble citizen filters as apply established, positively regarded ones. While this may be a successful technique in terms of immediate support because it does not challenge citizen audiences to question their own legitimacy in upholding Hage's white national spatial management, it is politically problematic and ultimately conservative for this same reason.

I opened my discussion of *Through the Wire* lining the play up with Shafaei's recommendation that *Refugitive* audiences find ways to encounter asylum seeking detainees. *Refugitive* pointedly and explicitly stays with the issue of detention filters that actively attempt to prevent this encounter. It is important to note, however, that *Refugitive*'s post-show discussions are

an instance of encounter in the world beyond *Through the Wire*'s verbatim representation. Shafaei negotiates relationship with the audience from a different position to the mimesis Horin shapes in *Through the Wire*: of Refugitive's post-show discussion, Shafaei says "I wasn't anymore the character on the stage, I had used my agency to re-claim myself as a human" (qtd in Farrier *Postcolonial Asylum* 189). *Through the Wire* does not afford him this agency in negotiation. *The Waiting Room*, in contrast, uses its power over the theatre space to cast citizens in a number of conflicting roles (as oppressor, oppressed, accessory to torture, and witness), though these are self-consciously schematic renderings that parse discursive dynamics rather than represent or enter into relationships between individuals. *Through the Wire*'s focus on material barriers at the expense of acknowledging discursive filters, however, plays into the disconnect that Hage attempts to bridge in his discussion of the invisible pervasiveness of ethnic caging (*White Nation* 90). While arguably the more successful because mainstream production, *Through the Wire* does not attempt to unsettle the white Anglo Australian citizen as arbiter of the 'civilised'.

Chapter Four: UK Cells

The plays I examine in Chapter Four develop themes from the previous chapter of diminishing and resistance within environments of suspended time. Carceral settings in these UK works sometimes include but also move beyond the detention centre. The UK setting of the second play, Frances Poet's 2017 production *Adam* (also set in Egypt), is almost entirely based in asylum-seeking Adam's Glasgow flat where the Home Office sends him to await a decision on his asylum claim. Chapter Four focuses on these two plays rather than the usual three of the other chapters because I wish to tarry longer here. The plays' significant representations of gender and Scarrian projection as integral to shelter, as well as, in *Adam's* case, internet technology require extended consideration. This chapter explores how these factors succumb to and challenge necrocivilisational asylum in the UK.

As regards the liminal period while authorities process an asylum claim, UK policy diverges from Australia's approach in important respects. In the UK, detention has never been mandatory as it is for sea-borne asylum seekers arriving in Australia. Of relevance to *Adam* and *The Bogus Woman*, however, is increasingly restrictive asylum legislation beginning in the early 1990s with the 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act, which reduced entitlements and permitted detention until a claim was decided. The 1996 Immigration and Asylum Act sought a decrease in asylum claims with even fewer welfare entitlements. To prevent an asylum-seeking population from congregating in London and the South East, the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 established the policy that disperses asylum claimants across the UK as well as providing basic support and accommodation for those waiting on asylum claims and appeals. Hence Adam Kashmiry's prison-like Glasgow flat and basic allowance dispensed on a card in *Adam*.

This is not to say that asylum seekers are not frequently detained in the UK currently and over the periods covered by the two plays: the mid- to late-1990s through the present time in the case of *The Bogus Woman* and the early 2010s for *Adam*. The 2005 Amnesty International report *Seeking Asylum is Not a Crime: Detention of People Who Have Sought Asylum* points out that, while instructions on who and why to detain are set out in the Operation Enforcement Manual, 'there are no statutory criteria for detention' and authorities, who may judge on a case-by-case basis, do not require a court's sanction in order to place asylum seekers in detention (38). This remains the case and reasons to detain are wide ranging, including likelihood of absconding, insufficient reliable information to grant immigration bail, imminent deportation, alternative care arrangements in process, or release 'is not considered conducive to the public good' ('Chapter 55'). These policies have permitted actions taken against asylum seekers

such as dawn raids on in-community accommodation, which Cora Bisset and David Greig famously highlighted in the acclaimed 2012 production *Glasgow Girls*. While detention proper does not feature in *Adam* and the protagonist of *The Bogus Woman* is eventually released for a time under Temporary Admission, a prevailing sense of UK detention and deportation policies enabling state of exception powers in asylum cases is manifest in the carceral environments both plays present.

As I have mentioned, these policies and legislation are informed by a discourse that has justified increasing immigration and asylum controls through both Labour and Conservative administrations. Kay Adshead wrote *The Bogus Woman* at a time when the New Labour government under Tony Blair was passing new controls on people seeking asylum in the UK. She writes in *The Bogus Woman's* Author's Note (15) 'I could not believe that the violation of human rights of vulnerable people was happening in England in 1997 (outside Oxford no less) and more shocking still in the first year under a Labour government for which I had waited 18 years!' The Government's 1998 White Paper *Fairer, Faster and Firmer: A Modern Approach to Asylum and Immigration* captures the rationale for increasing controls. In it, then Home Secretary Jack Straw declares that the impetus to 'modernise procedures and deliver faster decisions' stems from a need to protect 'the taxpayer' and 'genuine' asylum seekers:

[W]e rightly expect our immigration controls to deal quickly and firmly with those who have no right to enter or remain here. ... Perversely, it is often the genuine applicants who have suffered, whilst abusive claimants and racketeers have profited. The cost to the taxpayer has been substantial and is increasing. ... [T]he [1951 Geneva] Convention never anticipated the dramatic changes in the speed, relatively low cost and easy availability of international travel and telecommunications. ... The Government is committed to protecting genuine refugees. ... But there is no doubt that large numbers of economic migrants are abusing the system by claiming asylum. ... New arrangements are needed to ensure that genuine asylum seekers are not left destitute, but which minimise the attractions of the UK to economic migrants.

Here Straw elaborates a similar reasoning undergirding Australia's 'firm but fair' justification for strict asylum measures. The emphasis on 'rightly' expecting that those deemed to have 'no right to enter or remain' are dealt with in order to provide for 'genuine applicants' finds echoes in Australian Prime Minister John Howard's 2001 characterisation of the 'generous nation' deciding 'who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come' (Marr and Wilkinson 323). Significantly, however, Straw does not admit doubt that 'large numbers of economic migrants are abusing the system', implying that numbers are the focus, that if only authorities could discourage and swiftly dispatch these 'large numbers' of trespassers the *real* asylum seekers might avoid destitution. *The Bogus Woman* and *Adam* explore human resistance as well as succumbing to the UK's carceral filtering mechanisms meant to construct

and separate the genuine and the bogus, and the erasure and diminishment that accompany both states.

Though Straw's rationale continues to apply in *Adam* (an immigration officer, for instance, attempts to claim Adam is an economic migrant), a key change in UK policy highlights how necrocivilisation exploits seeming hospitality to work as hostility. The 2010 cases of HJ (Iran) and HT (Cameroon) v The Secretary of State for the Home Department meant that UK authorities could no longer use a claimant's ability to 'pass' as cis and heteronormative to refuse asylum seekers requesting refuge on the grounds of gender or sexual orientation. Adam is patently unable to safely present as a man in Egypt, nor would he be guaranteed access to bodily modifications he may require. Non-intersex gender confirmation surgery only became legal in Egypt in 2005 (Mazen 371), though approval for operations continues to be routinely withheld and the Egyptian LGBT community remains heavily stigmatised (Mahmoud). Adam hopes to be able to live his gender in the UK but finds that the passing that he adopted to survive in Egypt threatens his prospects of asylum. Poet uses the room as physical and virtual space to explore the interconnections between discourse, brain and materiality, to chart the conditions of Adam's journey from one prison to another, and his struggle to free himself from both.

Adam and *The Bogus Woman* present a carceral space for asylum seekers in the UK that includes but typically extends beyond detention. This space of suspension, like the spaces of detention I examined in Chapter Three, holds the asylum seeker in indeterminacy between 'genuine' and 'bogus'. While *The Bogus Woman* dramatizes hegemony's discursive filter-weaving and the protagonist's resistance to criminalisation, *Adam* presents a transgender asylum seeker struggling to bind himself discursively and bodily to the identity he has had to hide, fighting to pass through the UK Home Office filter as transgender. The shelter these characters seek cannot be achieved through their stories alone but requires a negotiation with a hegemonic and necrocivilisational discourse bent on showing them to be abusing the system. In *The Bogus Woman* the protagonist perishes bodily, in *Adam* he survives but at great cost. My analysis will examine the surfaces and contexts each attempts to unpick and weave themselves into and the diminishing necrocivilisation requires in this transaction.

The Bogus Woman

Kay Adshead's one-woman play *The Bogus Woman* presents a minimalist set on which a single actor with few props acts out the story of an unnamed black journalist fleeing an unidentified African country after soldiers murdered her family. Though the play premiered in

the year 2000, first at Waterman's Art Centre as a work in progress and then at the Traverse Theatre, *The Bogus Woman* continues to tour and has been staged as recently as 2019, highlighting its continued relevance nearly two decades later amid fresh 'Hostile Environment' policy. The play takes the form of an extended performance poem presenting a series of detainee acts of resistance followed by repercussions from the authorities. Though the action centres around the asylum experiences of the unnamed protagonist, the actor, who matches the protagonist's physical description, takes on the roles of other characters from fellow detainees to nurses, lawyers and detention guards. Adshead sets most of the action in the Campsfield House Detention Centre in Oxfordshire around the time of the 1997 Campsfield riots, with other scenes unfolding in Tinsley House Detention Centre, airport customs and immigration, John Radcliffe Hospital in Headington, and in wider London where the protagonist lives in a flat and then on the streets for a time when she is granted Temporary Admission. The woman's personal plotline, which weaves through the events at Campsfield and beyond, tells of the circumstances of her arrival in the UK, detention, Temporary Admission and her eventual deportation to her death. In the published edition's 'Author's Note', Adshead bears witness to the mounting testimonial evidence of UK events similar and even more brutal than those portrayed in the play. She also underscores the evenhandedness of her depiction, stating that the material she selected to inform *The Bogus Woman* is more 'shocking' than some testimonial accounts she had read, but less so than others (15).

In a UK context, *The Bogus Woman* presents instances of violence and suffering, what Shahin Shafaei has characterized as dirt overwhelming the filter. By unveiling of the violence of Agamben's ban functioning in the UK even under a Labour government, Adshead works toward 'breaking the filter', but also presents instances that illustrate the importance of narratives surrounding acts of protest. In the man with the 'prisoners of conscience' sign, Adshead identifies resistance in attempting to weave asylum-seeking bodies into a different history, modifying their surfaces as objects of emotion. That Adshead presents the main character's protracted unravelling and ends her struggle in death (indicated with the sound of gunfire and the lights snapping off as swiftly as they snapped up to begin the play) does not presuppose a story of abjection, however. Rather, the play draws continuous attention to the discursive battle that the woman's protest unleashes against necrocivilisation's attempts to refuse her claims to civilisation. As I have explained in the introduction to Part II, a key element of necrocivilisational violence in detention settings is the limitlessness of time. In *The Bogus Woman*, grief defines this battle for time and links it to morbid heterotopias of eternal time. The final incident in the play explicitly takes place on the day after the performance, merging this eternal suspension with the audience's reality. In this way, the audience understands that

whenever the play is performed, circumstances akin to those of the protagonist continue. The span of *The Bogus Woman's* relevance is testament to the trenchant and enduring nature of the tapestry of discourse justifying brutal treatment of asylum seekers.

The Violence of Administration

The world of the living is chronologically bounded. One of *The Bogus Woman's* most salient examples of resisting a discursive filter draws attention to the violent administrative heterochrony that opens out in the detention centre and uses this understanding to realign the criminalised detainee with the prisoner of conscience. When guards respond violently to a young man demanding food that does not cause pain and vomiting, a protest breaks out. The guards seal the building and smash the phones, but the detainees break the doors down and emerge into the courtyard to be seen: 'fifty brothers and sisters spill suddenly dangerous into the mean sunshine, the air smelling like freedom, some will lose their voice at the injustice of it. An old man, kicks down a wooden door, finding pots and planks, and paints "prisoners of conscience" pointing his placard at the cameras' (68). The protest eventuates because the 'food and shelter' detainees receive causes them illness and pain. Food, in normal contexts a staple of life and civilisation, when rejected bodily becomes its opposite and a force of necrocivilisation as it actively harms under the guise of nourishment. The authorities address the complaint by removing the young man who spoke up:

on some
trumped up
charge,
ill discipline
or
lack of co-operation
or
simply
usually
"too much fat lip"
If proved
these accusations
bring
instant
deportation (63 - 64).

Before his transfer, the guards assault the young man, strangling him (64). In these moments, *The Bogus Woman* presents the language of rational power deliberately not registering its own violence, exemplified by a guard's perversely measured response of 'Temper. / Temper.' to the panicked lashing out of the young man being strangled (65). The racial element frames the attack as the guards reduce the man to racialised bare life: 'Don't piss about / or we'll make burgers / out of you, / black meat' (65). This scene depicts how necrocivilisational power

controls discourse, but it is the old man's discursive protest that I would like to examine more closely, particularly in the context of detention as administrative caging that European necrocivilisation binds to its values of freedom, security and justice.

In her examination of the bordering legislation required of European Union member states, Enrica Rigo notes that in the process of 'Europeanisation', administrative forms of caging overtake outright penal ones: 'in a comparative perspective with Romanian and Bulgarian legislation on immigration, the Polish law is undoubtedly the one where the process of "Europeanization" has been the most far reaching (which was also the case prior to its entry into the EU in 2004). Administrative remedies prevail, while penal instruments mostly serve a symbolic role' (14). Administrative forms of caging, as Rigo also points out, involve time as an important and invisible form of violence (15). As 'Europeanisation' has been held to create 'a common space of "freedom, security and justice"' (Rigo 8), this shift from the penal to the administrative produces a violence that is made invisible through opaque walls, indefinite waiting and the justification of detention and its trappings as requisite administration in the preservation of 'a common space of "freedom, security and justice"' (Rigo 8). Detention violence going largely unregistered in western liberal discourse, as in the cases of fugitivity that I discussed in the previous chapter, permits authorities to construe resistance as criminal activity.

In terms of the discursive weaving I have been using to conceptualise subversive interventions, we can understand administrative detention as a warp legitimised by the liberal values of freedom, security and justice. The asylum-seeking detainees are weft woven through this stationary warp, their experiences of violence threaded under the stationary strands and their acts of violent resistance visibly woven over, registering and justifying detention's administrative methods as protecting civilizational values. The administrative as condition of the preservation of Europe's 'freedom, security and justice' directs detainee protests to surface as a narrative of unreasonable opposition to these values allegedly protected and actualized through administration. Discussing how sovereignty utilises Foucault's 'governmentality' (the administration of populations) to assert itself outside the law, Judith Butler notes that 'one way of "managing" a population is to constitute them as less than human without entitlement to rights, as the humanly unrecognizable' (*Precarious Life* 98). When violent action surfaces without apparent cause, the administrative warp of the state of exception that characterises detention permits sovereignty to continue the violence that remains unseen under the auspices of freedom, security and justice. Administrative warps 'manage' this racialized population of non-citizens by rendering their lives ungrievable via an inexplicable 'lack of co-operation' with the liberal western instruments for administering civilisation.

The old man's 'Prisoners of Conscience' placard flips over this smoothly woven surface to reveal a disintegrating underside. He brings meaning to the fraying tumult by interpreting asylum seeker non-cooperation as the resistance of prisoners of conscience. Defence of the prisoner of conscience is an established tradition and source of nation-building pride in the UK. This long-standing hallmark of UK civilization is notably visible in the founding and ongoing work of Amnesty International and PEN International, both prestigious and globally respected human rights organizations founded in London in the 20th century. Bringing this history into the room not only casts the detention of asylum seekers as oppressive and violent, but also forces the narrative to register those detained as grievable. Amnesty International defines a prisoner of conscience as 'someone [who] has not used or advocated violence but is imprisoned because of who they are (sexual orientation, ethnic, national or social origin, language, birth, colour, sex or economic status) or what they believe (religious, political or other conscientiously held beliefs)' ('Key facts'). The old man replaces the potential criminality of 'detainees' with 'prisoners' caged because of who they are.

Those imprisoned for crimes receive a degree of protection from a criminal justice system that, at least in principle, evaluates the criminal act and there is a time limit on imprisonment in the case of conviction. Prisoners of conscience like detainees, however, as people confined because of who they are, find themselves inhabiting a Foucauldian heterotopia of both crisis (instability/liminality of identity) and deviance (aberrant behaviour). The asylum seeker has committed no crime (the fact of their seeking asylum does not render them officially deviant), but their very identity and claims to civilisation bring UK sovereignty into crisis. Resisting necrocivilisational mechanisms in discourse and policy that weave a civilizational language over violent suppression, the old man's placard strikes at the strands that bind freedom, security and justice to the administration of racist violence and detention. The old man's status as prisoner of conscience rather than detainee forces the UK to surface as necrocivilisation.

In kicking down the door and forcibly taking materials not meant for his use, the old man actively seizes tools of discourse and contextualisation for his own protection. Understanding this action as a Scarrian 'act of making' allows us to apprehend the man's placard-making and the riot that enabled this act more broadly as a claiming of civilizational furniture to bear his body's weight. In the Introduction, I noted that Scarry identifies furniture as vital to the sheltering nature of a room in its 'permitting the body's weight to become invisible so the individual may project herself into wider iterations of civilisation' (39). Scarry observes that 'moving forward' forms the root of 'furniture' and 'frame', and Ahmed likewise points out in her discussions of the emotional formation of surfaces that 'movement' forms the etymological

origins of 'emotion'. 'Emotion' comes from *emovere* 'to move out'. With these links, I propose that 'prisoners of conscience' as object of emotion is a constellation of discursive furniture that registers powerfully in liberal western discourse because its connotations of resisting corruption represent a tenet of western liberal values. Weaving his actions through the givens of the object of emotion 'prisoner of conscience' (i.e. one who 'has not used or advocated violence'), the old man contextualises and interprets the asylum seekers' role in the riots not as acts of violence but as repudiation of detention's administrative violence and mistreatment.

The old man's placard prompts the question if asylum seekers in UK detention centres are prisoners of conscience, what does that make those who detain them? In his act of making, the man exposes a set of relations, and Ahmed's invisible 'processes of production' made invisible in necrocivilisation but implicated in the registering of the asylum seeker as fearsome body. The authorities interpret the riots as justification for detention's protection of civilizational values against violent people. Adshead represents the aftermath of the riot as a battle of definitions that attribute cause and effect. The detainee protagonist must insist that 'frightened people running away' does not amount to 'participating' (70). Authorities contradict accusations with claims of misunderstandings: detainees were not 'locked up' but 'confined', spoiled food is due to isolated incidents of staff cruelty that have been addressed and there was never any 'verbal, racist abuse' (84). While Agamben theorises the camp as a place where people are circumscribed and abandoned (in this case, held in an administrative limbo), Adshead identifies resistance in illuminating where authorities overbearingly use language as a filtering blackout poem, as in *Refugitive*, to change the meaning of events. If asylum seekers are prisoners of conscience, then the white bodies that filter them out of sight and out of mind surface as persecutors rather than administrators of freedom, security and justice.

It is important to note that the man paints his sign for a civilizational audience beyond the detention centre's walls. That there are press cameras recording the riot, a visibly violent eruption, indicates that they are there to capture the violence of detainees rioting rather than the sustained violence of the state. The press photograph people in a carceral context and the western liberal media will provide the words, the discursive context that filters meaning. The words on the placard, however, defy the western discursive framing of the images captured through the camera's lens. While, unlike Mireille Astore in *Tampa*, the man does not hold the camera, the action of pointing the phrase 'prisoners of conscience' at the cameras as the cameras point at him shows the man seizing a degree of power to stage what the photograph can register. The act points to Ariella Azoulay's 'photographic event' in which photographic subjects challenge the passivity of their image by highlighting the infinite encounters of which

the image is only one small part. By aiming his written words at the lenses trained on the scene, the man ensures that if the cameras wish to capture the event at Campsfield, they must capture his discursive framing of it, as well.

In the introduction, I mentioned Patricia Owens' challenge to Agamben's bare life. Adhering to Arendt's formulation of the political, Owens foregrounds that in asylum seeker protest (and lip sewing in particular), it is not the act itself but its discursive context that determines its political meaning. By characterizing detention as a necessary administrative process for preserving civilization, UK authorities make detainee protests appear unjustified and unjustifiable, as attacks on civilisation itself. When the old man points the name of a different object of emotion (the 'prisoner of conscience') at the cameras, he displaces what Shahin Shafaei described in *Refugitive* as the 'dirt'. That is to say that the brutality or negative emotional causation, which the detention filter has been woven to capture and hold detainees, instead binds itself to the authorities. As Ahmed demonstrates, emotion, through its deployment and attribution, produces the very borders as filtering and filtered surfaces that distinguish objects in the first place. The man with the placard fashions a new border with a new filtering warp, one that UK detention practices violate at the expense of the state's own claims to civilization.

'Words too long locked up': The Unresponsive Hunger Striker and Detention Fantasies

The resistance evident in the riots (particularly in the old man's strategy of reweaving detainees through a warp that casts UK authorities as oppressors) strikes at the discursive heart of necrocivilisation. However, at the time of writing, more than 20 years since the riots at Campsfield and 18 years since the premier of *The Bogus Woman*, detention persists in the UK. Ahmed writes 'Why are relations of power so intractable and enduring, even in the face of collective forms of resistance?' (12). This is a question that she attempts to answer by attending to emotions 'to address the question of how subjects become *invested* in particular structures such that their demise is felt as a kind of living death' (12). The hunger strike episode that directly precedes the protagonist's account of the riot offers an opportunity to consider the depth of what Kehinde Andrews has theorised as the psychosis of whiteness alongside the necrocivilisational dynamics that again employ understandings of time to render the protesting detainee asylum seeker as unreasonable, ungrateful and violent within western discursive frameworks of civilisation.

When *The Bogus Woman's* protagonist is hospitalised during a 28-day-long hunger strike for Exceptional Leave to Remain that left her weighing six and a half stone, the nurses who attend her paint a picture of the detention centre at odds with the 'body of evidence' they see before them. In the scene, two nurses chat over the supine patient who they think is

unconscious, one of them describing her understanding of the detention situation as containing:

A multi gym,
With step treads
And overheads
A pool
A library
cafeteria
And a snooker room,
Ping pong!
It's all wrong if you ask me.
I mean
They run these detention centres
Like 18 – 30 clubs. (55)

In accordance with Andrews' theory of white psychosis, the nurse maintains this fantasy of the detention centre despite the embodied evidence to the contrary lying prone before her. As evidence of not only the veracity of the above description but also the protesting asylum seekers' perversity, the nurse forecloses the repudiation of bare life as grounds for protest:

What I don't understand
if it's so bad
they want to die...

Why don't they
just go back
to their own country? (56)

The nurse's commentary presents a re-inscription of prevailing discourses onto the silent body of the hunger striking asylum seeker.

Adshead identifies the investment in perceiving the asylum seeker as object of hate as one that stems from an uneven distribution of resources, particularly time. After having described the detention centre as a place of leisure, the nurse compares this space to a holiday for which she and her colleagues must work and save: 'Then there's you and me Elaine / saving up our coppers / for a couple of weeks / backend in Spain' (56). The comparison shows how necrocivilisational discourse makes ambiguous what Foucault has termed heterochronies of festival or holiday time and eternal time (26). The limitlessness of time within detention evident in the descriptor 'detainee', someone kept from moving forward, and that Adshead highlights in the 'prisoners of consciousness' placard the nurse interprets here in the mode of the eternal time of the holiday village: she and her colleague must 'save up our coppers', arduously discipline their bodies, to receive the circumscribed timelessness of a two-week holiday. These heterochronies form a Lampedusa-like simultaneity of understanding a space as a place of

leisure or feeling it as eternal space of dissolution, like a cemetery. The chief difference, limitlessness, is the one that the nurse identifies as marking the inferiority of the time she enjoys in spaces of leisure, but that asylum seekers recognise as a key violence. Reinforced later in the dialogue by the other nurse who chides the hunger striker for taking up her work time 'when there's / real sick people / to see to' (57), the nurses conjure the protesting asylum seeker's surface as hateful because, even though the state 'gives' the asylum seeker infinite 'leisure', she still chooses to impinge on the finite time of the citizen nurses.

The protagonist's silent refusal compels the nurses to fill the silence with prevailing discursive fantasies similar to the remarks of some onlookers in Astore's *Tampa*. The protagonist's protest registers as ingratitude for the nurses, though audience members witness the reverse of the surface, a different contextualisation of cause and effect that renders the nurses' conversation irrational and cruel. The unresponsive hunger striker is unable to intervene in the discursive text woven around her and filling in the hollows of her diminishing, hardening body. Adshead elaborates this citizen/asylum seeker relationship in the protagonist's complaint to the hospital about the nurses' commentary after her imposed silence:

the words;
so long
locked up
are
dry and hard,
like
shrivelled nuts.
I roll
them between
thumb and forefinger
in the warm damp
palms of my hand. (61)

This passage appears after the protagonist is back in the detention centre eating her first solid food: 'I eat / A perfect yellow plum / it would bruise / to my thumb' (61). The 'dry and hard' and shrivelled words mirror the hunger striker's body starved of the 'miraculous juice' of nourishment.

Maud Ellmann (92), discussing the hunger strikers of Long Kesh prison, observes that 'to be caged is to be robbed of food, bereft of voice'. This dynamic is one that I have observed in the necessity of negotiation and exchange through filters: the body as vehicle for the self requires the room to mediate an overwhelming reality, but for life to grow it must also be in contact with that world outside in a process of continual change and exchange. Ellmann (112) writes: 'food is the prototype of all exchanges with the other, be they verbal, financial, or erotic. Digestion is a kind of fleshly poetry, for metaphor beings in the body's transubstantiations of itself ...

encompassing the whole compendium of living substance: food is the symbol of the passage, the totem of sociality, the epitome of all creative and destructive labor.’ This contrast between the shrivelled nut and the plum with skin that yields (‘it would bruise’) is a metaphor for the starving of exchange that detention creates. Such a protracted detention (‘so long locked up’) produces a corporealised body, hardened and hollowed out. Likewise, the protagonist’s words become starved of the exchange they require to be conductors of energy in a living system. The dry hardness of the words, as the body, is akin to Shafaei’s food and water-starved body of the hunger striker in *Refugitive*. Both come to understand, however, that the corporealised body, without the ability to input into the narrative by uncovering what the official filter conceals, risks appropriation by the filter that ascribes perversity to asylum seekers. Without words to convey a context for her hunger strike, the nurses can conserve, and even add to, the accumulation of negative emotion surrounding the asylum seeker.

The Sword, the Shield and Grief’s Undoing

The hunger strike scene in the hospital highlights the importance of weaving a context around an act of protest. While plays like *Tampa* and *Refugitive* challenge pre-emptive caging and one-way filtering that results from acts incapsulated in the nurses’ talk, *The Bogus Woman* elaborates how necrocivilisation also filters the shelter of the asylum seeker in order to unmake it. The character Mary who is removed from her 9-month-old child reassures the protagonist:

You just tell
the truth darling,

see
that’s
God’s shield

that blunts
their poisoned spears. (99)

The judge responsible for the protagonist’s deportation, however, says of the protagonist’s truth that ‘it seems to me / there’s more holes / in the young woman’s story / than in a doily’ (139). In the chain of events that follow this pronouncement, Adshead shows that the authorities’ failure to legitimate the correct context of the protagonist’s claim is the direct cause of the woman’s deportation and, after a period in hiding, her violent murder. Mary is also deported. Here Adshead alludes to the persistence of detention in the impoverishment of asylum seeker context: within UK asylum discourses the protagonist’s truth merely creates a surface for authority to puncture.

Adshead's manipulation of biblical references suggests that what ultimately defeats the asylum seeker is thwarted projection, a largely invisible but vital component of shelter. Mary's exhortation that the protagonist take up the truth as God's shield closely follows Ephesians 6:14-16, which states 'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness / And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace / Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (*The King James Bible*). Ephesians 6:14-17 speaks of the armour of God with which the faithful may defend themselves, the bedrock of their shelter. The verse continues: 'And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Eph. 6:17). It is significant that Mary stops short of the helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit, as it is arguably these that the protagonist lacks and that the UK authorities use to puncture her metaphorical shield until it has more holes than a doily. Mary's lines come after the re-enactment of the protagonist's official asylum interview. The interrogator solicits an account of the murder of the young woman's family and her own rape, doubting her experience on the grounds that the account does not make logical sense to the interrogator and finally suggesting that, on this basis, it has been completely fabricated. The judge who likens the woman's story to a doily, puts out a search order after she was granted Temporary Admission and recommends immediate deportation does so on the grounds that 'there's absolutely / no evidence / put before me / to suggest / her life is at risk' (139). Having the shield, her story, but not the sword, the word to make 'logical' her experience, the weft without access to the warp, means the young woman stands unprotected.

The vital role of the negotiation of significance out into the world, of possessing the word as well as the shield, appears in Elaine Scarry's formulation of shelter and civilisation. The Oxford English Dictionary traces the obscure origins of 'shelter' to *sheld*, shield as a verb nominalised with the suffix '-ure', denoting the result of an action or process. This connection brings to the fore Scarry's understanding of shelter as a building block of civilisation, but, in particular, Mary's incomplete paraphrasing of Ephesians 6:17 highlights the role of projection as not only enabled by Scarrian shelter but imperative to it. Scarry observes that the walls of a shelter are 'independent objects, objects which stand apart from and free of the body, objects which realize the human being's impulse to project himself out into a space beyond the boundaries of the body in acts of making, either physical or verbal, that once multiplied, collected, and shared are called civilization' (39). If we understand shelter as the result of acts of shielding, the walls as shields, then the projection out into the world that this enables aligns itself with the sword as the Word.

In the western colonial symbolic, the word-sword registers as phallus, which works actively to penetrate the opaque, passive and feminised land to bring forth fruit understood as significance, meaning. In *The Bogus Woman*, the protagonist, Mary and their fellow detainees possess the shield that is their story, their truth, but not the sword that facilitates its registering to protect them within the hegemonic western discourse. Even the prisoners of conscience placard is delegitimised when the authorities frame the riots as the product of misunderstandings. Without the ability to project and negotiate space for themselves beyond the bounds of the shield, the UK authorities' meaning-monopolising sword leaves the detainee's shield in tatters, a doily. Like *Refugitive's* censored letter to the UN, the meaning of the story changes with the contexts (the warps) that the Word admits and conceals: the lack of evidence which the judge equates to holes or lies comes of mistaken sources, witnesses that the authority decides are unreliable and events that interviewers find illogical. Taken together, the truth-shield without the tools to negotiate meaningfully does not so much form a shelter as a site to rupture that the asylum seeker cannot survive.

The gendered nature of this representation encompasses mirroring symbols of the violence from which the protagonist fled and the violence she encounters in the UK, connecting the second violation to the first with a line that acknowledges her suspension in time: 'time / it's actually moving forward / when it's really moving back' (136). The protagonist was not killed by the shower of bullets when her family was murdered because her husband shielded her, his body riddled with bullet holes like a doily with no weapon to intervene at the source of the shots. Her mother and sister were also shot and her father who launched himself at the soldiers died of multiple punctures delivered in 'swift jabs / and light steps' (50) from a bayonet. The soldiers then killed the baby, Anele, with a machete. The protagonist was gang raped before she could escape, fell pregnant but miscarried. Sleeping rough in the UK when her temporary accommodation is removed, the second violation echoes the scene of her destroyed motherhood: When the soldiers kill her baby she '*drops her arm, as if the baby has been snatched from her*' (53). In the UK she relives the death of Anele, arms again dropping to her side: '*YOUNG WOMAN moans and rocks herself, she undoes her dress and bares a breast as if to feed a baby. / African drumming stops. / She looks up, as if into the face of someone, her hands fall to her side, her dress still open*' (136–137). The UK scene ends with a man (presumably white and British, with 'a wife and kids') negotiating for sex with the woman, calling her 'black meat', which recalls the detention guards' characterisation of the young detainee asking for food (137). The baring of the protagonist's breast echoes the dream of her feeling herself 'drain slowly away' as she suckles the soldier who killed her baby, in the dream transformed into an old grey bull (36-37). The man abandons the sexual encounter unsatisfied, remarking that 'it's like fucking a corpse' (138). The resonances of her first violation in the

second set up a correlation between the necrocivilisational power dynamics that shattered her former life and those that progressively plunge her further into a state of gendered and racialized bare life, suspended grief in the UK.

To understand *The Bogus Woman's* detention as maintaining a suspension in grief and how hunger strike might reinforce or interrupt this, Maud Ellmann investigates an instructive symbolic landscape in her discussions of the progressive diminishing of self in autophagy. Ellmann describes a psychiatrist's interpretation of an anorectic patient's nightmare in which the dreamer stands in front of a temple in a cemetery as her skin becomes sieve-like and her innards pour out through the holes until only shadowy 'loneliness' remains (15). This image, according to Ellmann, is 'a reversal of the process of gestation. The image of the temple in the cemetery suggests that the dream is setting up a counterfaith, a dark idolatry, founded on the symbol of the *discarnation*, where instead of being impregnated by the word, the dreamer is invaded by the "loneliness," or raped by silence' (15). If we understand the protagonist in *The Bogus Woman* to also be inhabiting a heterotopia akin to the cemetery deathscape that Foucault characterises as a space of dissolution and eternal time, then Ellmann's metaphor connects the *discarnation* of the protagonist's hunger strike and self harm (a kind of autophagy) to the UK authorities' judgement that in the space of the word, her story surfaces as shot-through doily, as insubstantial sieve. The doily that was the protagonist's family's skin and her own when she is returned to her country of origin and shot expresses a continuity between extreme unshelter in the protagonist's origin and the UK. In phallogocentric UK necrocivilisation, Mary's armour of God might appear to be enough, but in that appearance without the sword as word to negotiate shelter, it operates as shelter's opposite.

If *The Bogus Woman* defines the struggle as whether the woman's diminishing will feed or challenge the system that attacks her, the trappings of grief illustrate the terms of this battle. Trauma and grief immobilise in time and space via a rupture in the habitual fabric of interwoven subjectivity. Judith Butler conceives of grief as revelation through removal of 'the ties or bonds that compose us': 'Who "am" I, without you? When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do' (*Precarious Lives* 22). Given the understanding that Kelly Oliver's theory of witnessing subjectivity emphasises that all subjectivity is intersubjective, the trauma and grief that accompany loss are inextricable from human existence. What necrocivilisation accomplishes on a systemic level is to instrumentalise the painful undoing that is trauma and grief. It achieves this by naming the source of pain in what then becomes an un-grievable life, the life that must be eliminated for grievable lives to go on. In *Precarious Life*, Butler examines how what I have termed necrocivilisation produces un-grievable lives to bear the violence that grievable lives shore

themselves up against. In these societies, ungrievables inhabit abject spaces and a positionality that, as Oliver argues, attacks their subjectivity through tactics that keep them from the address and response of witnessing. The protagonist is undone by grief and violence, but she also fights for the survival that witness and response-ability facilitate by seeking asylum, making formal complaint, surviving bodily and finally revealing the play as an act of remembrance for Anele. But acts of violence on the part of citizens and authorities continually thwart her calls for civilisational witness and response. Repeatedly framing the child's absence with the arms that cradle then drop and with the shawl that once swaddled the baby, the protagonist is forced to exist in conditions that incessantly suspend her in the traumatic reliving of rupture and where fresh trauma compounds and is compounded by the old.

Butler asks those of us who are formulated in discourse as grievable lives to tarry in our grief for the sake of understanding that we are composed of and dependent upon other lives, that the identity that surfaces as discursively discrete from (and even opposed to) the hidden others it relies on is connected to them regardless. This insight is evident in the old man with the 'prisoners of conscience' placard's flipping over of detention's smoothly woven administrative surface to reveal an underside that negates the values of which that administration is discursively in the service. Adshead, likewise, highlights the disparity in distributions of grief's undoing with an account of the otherwise sympathetic solicitor Mr Pennington's loss of his wife to cancer running alongside the protagonist's losses. The protagonist's remarks on Mr Pennington's appearance go from noting a missing button when his wife is ill to a crumpled Hawai'ian shirt the week she died ('It's the last / clean something / in the drawer' (58), his employment of a Filipina woman (another person marginalised by class, race and gender) to keep his clothes presentable and finally his reinvention as he marries a glamorous young woman and goes on a tropical honeymoon. As the dead woman who, in life, maintained the woven surfaces that permitted her husband to move through the world fails to register, the protagonist acknowledges the life that Mr Pennington appears to move so lightly on from: When Mr Pennington tells her to be positive and not cry, the protagonist says 'I think if I was to cry / Some of the tears / would be / for the fat English lady / in the pretty hat / who weeded his garden' (106). Though Mr Pennington is a sympathetic character, acting pro bono for the protagonist, Adshead's portrayal of him indicates a systemic refusal to shoulder the weight of grief even among citizens who wish to help asylum seekers.

Grief, from the Latin *gravis*, means heaviness. The weight that Ahmed shows hateful bodies bear discursively Adshead represents in terms of grief, which also encompasses a temporal suspension. When citizens are not undone by grief and open to its insights as integral practice to civilisation, the corporeality of the union of feminine-coded shield (the shelter woven in

everyday acts of making) and masculine-coded sword registers as impossible, deviant, perverse, bogus. The protagonist as a detained asylum seeker is suspended in a place of eternal grief. Denied the material and discursive tools and shelter to reconstitute herself and signify meaningfully within the episteme, she conceives the play as a candle she lights for Anele. Her hot wax words form a memorial for the black girl child, giving political significance to the suffocating grief that ungrievable lives are forced to bear.

Adam

This two-person show, directed by Cora Bisset, filters the story of Adam Kashmiry through two figures: Egyptian Adam and Glasgow Adam. The play tells his story of growing up in Egypt, comprehending his transgender identity and seeking asylum in the UK. As well as myriad other characters, in the productions staged at the time of writing, Neshla Caplan plays the female-coded Egyptian Adam while Glasgow Adam is embodied by Kashmiry himself. *Adam* is presented as the story of Adam Kashmiry, but also provides a significant aesthetic distance placing Kashmiry's role somewhere between Shahin Shafaei's performance in *Refugitive* and the strictly verbatim and realist *Through the Wire*. The National Theatre of Scotland premiered Cora Bisset and Frances Poet's play *Adam* as part of the Made in Scotland Showcase at the Traverse Theatre during the 2017 Edinburgh Fringe. The play is unique among those analysed in this project for its equal concern with challenges faced by transgender communities, and the process of asylum. While the story follows Adam's journey from Egypt to Glasgow, it focuses on his particular trans identity as well as presenting international trans and non-binary voices in the form of The Adam World Choir, a group that *Adam's* theatre makers assembled over the internet. The internet and theme of the physical and digital space as brain present a mechanism for filtering that is an alternative to mainstream cultural channels. This trans and non-binary filter creates community beyond the bounds of the room, but also allows selection of those who may enter. Safe digital spaces provide a measure of shelter where safe geographical space is not found. The rooms of the internet allow Adam to project himself beyond the confines of his room and, indeed, his body. In the end, these two things are also the deciding factor in his asylum claim.

While *The Bogus Woman* filtered its cast of characters through the body of the single, unnamed protagonist, the named protagonist in *Adam* is central but also presents a numerous cast through, and Adam himself as, two people. This visible split and the final disappearance of Egyptian Adam highlights a discursive division that Adam's successful asylum application elides. In her pioneering 'Posttranssexual Manifesto', Sandy Stone observes that

Given this circumstance in which a minority discourse comes to ground in the physical, a counterdiscourse is critical. But it is difficult to generate a counterdiscourse if one is programmed to disappear. The highest purpose of the transsexual is to erase h/erself, to fade into the "normal" population as soon as possible. Part of this process is known as constructing a plausible history-- learning to lie effectively about one's past. What is gained is acceptability in society. What is lost is the ability to authentically represent the complexities and ambiguities of lived experience (164).

This emphasis on lived experience and circumstance has endured in Trans Studies. More recently, Saoirse Caitlin O'Shea has critiqued Judith Butler's allegorical use of transgender, and commentators like Juliet Jacques continuing to challenge through life writing the 'wrong body' trope of trans representation which proliferated as an understood requirement for trans people to access treatments, surgeries and official identification. Poet also highlights this negotiation with formalities designed to trap rather than shelter and the dilemmas this situation produces: 'I lied on the forms so I could stop being a liar', Adam says to the Home Office interviewer (31). While the play's ending may seem neat, its filtering metaphors point to, in Stone's words, what is gained and what is lost.

Brain, Screen, Room

Adam's staging underscores a recurrent three-part motif that Poet uses to illustrate the interpenetrating relationship a body must navigate amongst filters in discourse and the world. In the first place focusing on elements of *Adam's* set design, I will examine the significance of the proscenium raked stage concealing props under its surface that the actors pull out and return, as well as the substrata of mannequin parts clearly visible beneath the stage. This visual metaphor undergirds Poet's central tripartite motif recurring as brain, screen and room. I end this section with an analysis of the internet as space of projection for Adam's gender identity, encompassing, again, the elements of brain, screen and room. My analysis of *Adam's* tripartite set and motif serves as a foundation for the following section 'Language and the Soul', in which I elaborate on this arrangement showing how the inter-nourishing of the three elements is nominally reflected but stifled in the necrocivilisational environments of both the UK and Egypt. *Adam's* stage at both the Traverse and The Citizens Theatres where the play was first performed rests atop the naked 'bodies' of dismembered and blank, white mannequins, their tangled chaos of limbs and torsos forming a layer through which blue light filters. The raked stage tilts down towards the audience and is full of trap doors and props that the actors take out of hidden boxes and indentations within the contours of the stage: actors pull up a frame that acts as a clothes rack or lift a panel to reveal a toilet or bed. This staging, along with the ever-present, light-filtering mannequin bodies, create a constant

awareness of layers, and malleable surfaces that are also porous and, as such, full of unknown potential.

The stage arrangement reflects an intermingling trinity that the production explores. The substrata of tangled mannequin body parts presents a site of dismemberment and dissolution, but also possibility of other configurations of relationality. The grief I charted in *The Bogus Woman* produces a similar death-like suspension and dissolution of self. However, the civilisational morbidity of this state in *The Bogus Woman* sprang from white citizens' refusal to be undone rather than an inherent quality of the space. Privileged bodies' failure to accept the insights and weight of grief became a violent disavowal of vulnerability and dependence, human conditions that nonetheless remain but whose effects are born by those Judith Butler has termed ungrievable lives. Seen through this lens, we can understand the body parts under the stage suffused with light as a visual representation of pre-discursive relational possibility. Like the sea, it is a place where human life dissolves, but it is nevertheless vital to shelter and civilisation. The bodies under the stage are indeed suspended lifeless pieces, but they are also the indispensably jumbled, ever-present raw material precursor of what Patricia Owens (576), as I mentioned in the Introduction, highlights in Arendt's thought as the relational creation of a public, political space. The mannequin parts do not serve as solid ground on which to build a story. Their role is rather as a pervasive source and reminder of potentiality upon which to set the unfolding events on the porous but solid surface of the stage.

Acts of making that bodies negotiate between one another, in their most benign form, foster sheltering space and the projection shelter enables and requires. For negotiation to take place, bodies must be able to communicate; they must be able to signify. This is where the word comes in, and, symbolically and materially, the surface of the stage. The stage, with its trap doors and props the actors pull from its contours, acts as a filtering surface. It permits the actors to make some things visible and obscure others in order to make sense, to weave a narrative that signifies. As a filtering piece of solid ground upon which to negotiate an identity, the stage is also a surface in Ahmed's sense. That is, the stage is a place of evolving form and meaning upon which impressions press as individuals form and identify themselves in and through others, negotiating for their survival and thriving within civilisation. Like Scarry's sheltering room, the stage forms a semi-porous barrier that mediates between bodies and world. In the theatre space, it represents the buoyancy the theatre as container lends to the protagonist in a representation that approximates the actor's lived experience.

In turn, the space atop and beyond the stage as well as the stage itself as a mediating surface are political (because relational) space. What goes on in this space is informed and made

comprehensible or shareable by discourse, and this discourse sets the terms of negotiation. On stage, the actors conjure the discourses that circulate and delineate entities in the world by taking on different characters and interacting with stage effects, video and props. If the stage acts as surface for Adam as the object of emotion 'asylum seeker' among his other politicised identities (the stage's incline ensuring that audience-members take in the stage as surface), then the world-forming discourses that Adam navigates are ostensibly derived from the surface in the form of the concealed props emerging from it. This is, however and in accordance with Ahmed's discussion of emotions and surfaces, the effect of surface being the apparent originator of emotions that are, rather, the result of histories that stick to or slide over bodies (*The Cultural Politics* 10-11). I have altered this formulation by describing discourses as woven and weaving over and under, concealing and revealing, to form surfaces that 'read' a certain way by making some histories systemically more visible than others. For instance, Poet shows Adam acting as himself and his co-worker and love interest Amira, played by Neshla Caplan, navigating binary cis and heteronormative notions of gender in the clothing shop where the two of them work. They dress two assembled mannequins in accordance with the binary discursive codes masculine and feminine respectively based on how the discourse reads their bodily characteristics. In the shop, Adam also learns from his customers how to act the part of a woman to keep himself safe among mainstream discursive surfaces. The embodied Adam and Amira alongside the narrowly gendered mannequins they dress highlight discursive objects that lack the life spark of myriad bodies that do not conform like the lesbian Amira and transgender Adam. The room or cell of the theatre space shows a continual exchange and projection between discourse and body negotiated on the surface of the stage: Adam is threatened and attacked when other social actors discover his deviance from mainstream binary discursive understandings of gender and sexuality.

The tripartite stage structure and the recurring motifs of brain, screen and room intermingle and feed into one another materially as well as symbolically, a trinity representing the elements that interact to produce shelter and protection, or confinement and dissolution. Their interlinking is apparent when Adam realises that fleeing Egypt for the UK had landed him in yet another prison. Adam's Glasgow flat where he is sent to await the result of his asylum claim is the primary prison-scape of the play and conveys a sense of entrapment brought on by the UK asylum system:

The stage becomes the claustrophobic Glasgow room which is also ADAM's brain. Things will start to distort from here. Time passes in a fluid blur. The passing of days may be charted 1, 9, 78, 113... The ADAMS are prowling, pacing the space, trapped. CCTV footage, lots of different angles, of ADAM living in the flat, eating, sleeping, watching TV.

*The soundscape is of bad daytime TV and taps turning on and off, the microwave pinging.
It is oppressive (32)*

Major elements from this prison-scape frame the beginning of the play, as well: the first image audience members see on stage is repeated in the climax of the play in which Egyptian Adam disappears following Glasgow Adam administering a testosterone injection and cutting off his breasts with a knife. The stage directions read, '*A room. A screen. A sense of a cramped Glasgow flat but also the inside of a brain*' (5). An attribute of Scarrian shelter is removing the body's consciousness of its weight to a degree that it can project itself out into the world in acts of making, to permit the body to continue to sustain and build its own shelter. In *Adam*, brain, screen and room become visible when the protagonist must struggle to configure them in a manner that protects his life.

Poet presents the relationship between brain and room as a complex but discursively stifled interprojection. Adam's struggle is an attempt to reconcile elements that appear to conflict within a single entity. This struggle appears in several iterations: Adam's trans identity is in tension with hegemonic discourse and currently mainstream readings of history; material and virtual realities clash; Adam's body as he conceives of it and as it is constructed in discourse are in painful and distressing dissonance. These conflicts are often elaborated in arguments between Glasgow Adam and Egyptian Adam:

GLASGOW ADAM: This room is my brain. I will find the answers in this room.
EGYPTIAN ADAM: I am tired of being always in my brain. These "friends" who help me on the internet? Can I touch them? At home, people are holding each other by the hand in solidarity. The internet did not start the revolution. Bouazizi did'
GLASGOW ADAM: The street vendor?
EGYPTIAN ADAM: His wheelbarrow of produce is confiscated again by corrupt police officials who he has no money to bribe. He appeals to them. He is hungry, desperate.
GLASGOW ADAM: My appeal! Months I've waited to hear and nothing. And now? Have they granted me asylum?
EGYPTIAN ADAM: They are deaf to him. He is trapped.
GLASGOW ADAM: I have been rejected. Again.
EGYPTIAN ADAM: They hold all the power.
GLASGOW ADAM: I am trapped. (36)

This scene comes as Adam waits in a Glasgow flat for his appeal when the Home Office rejects his claim for asylum on the grounds that he has not proven his transgender identity. Arriving at the understanding that the UK is merely another carceral context, Adam's flat becomes the prison whence he attempts to free himself by trying to find a way for his physicality to register in UK mainstream discourse as his gender identity. Adam's GP will not provide hormone treatment until he is granted asylum. He will not be granted asylum until he satisfies UK authorities that he is transgender via such things as hormone treatment. In the

absence of state support manifest in the confining flat, Adam turns to the 'brain' of the internet for a way to satisfy that discourse such that his body ceases to imprison him.

The above exchange between Egyptian Adam and Glasgow Adam illustrates a conflict over whether the virtual or the materially proximate have more weight in the world. For Glasgow Adam, the virtual space that he describes as a brain holds the key to his liberation: 'this room is my brain. I will find the answers in this room' (36). Egyptian Adam emphasises physical presence: 'These "friends" who help me on the internet? Can I touch them? At home, people are holding each other by the hand in solidarity. The internet did not start the revolution. Bouazizi did' (36). However, the virtual and material are not, in fact, opposed. Egyptian Adam places responsibility for change squarely in Mouhamed Bouazizi, the street vendor whose self-immolation in December 2010 in response to state bullying was a spark for the Tunisian Revolution and wider Arab Spring. However, Egyptian Adam conspicuously does not mention the famously prominent role the internet played in spreading the revolt. Likewise, Glasgow Adam reminds Egyptian Adam that virtual interactions also lead to material action: 'People are daring to ask things online that they wouldn't ask aloud. They are meeting people who are changing them, helping each other to act. Just like I did' (35). Both refer to a grounding of this 'brain' (the virtual world) in an active, material resistance to necrocivilisation.

Both Glasgow Adam and Egyptian Adam understand that the material body is inextricable from histories of power and their accompanying discourses, that resistance must involve local, material action, and yet Adam is still trapped. When Glasgow Adam again tries to understand his situation in terms of the narrative of another film he has seen, Egyptian Adam, referring to Bouazizi's revolution, urges him to 'Forget films. Start a fire' (37). But when Glasgow Adam asked how, Egyptian Adam '*can't answer this*' (37). Like *The Bogus Woman's* cycling relationship of phantasmagoric discursive enlargement and bodily diminishing, *Adam's* representation of the bodily effects of discourse in the inseparability of brain and room reveals the epistemological impasse that thwarts his claim to civilisation: until his body registers in discourse, he will not achieve asylum, but the discourse refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of his body because UK authorities do not acknowledge the virtual environments where Adam finds this legitimacy. Poet constructs her protagonist and his places of shelter as a virtual and material intertwining. 'This room' is physical space, body, mind and internet: 'This room is my brain. I kick the bed and my head throbs here. ... I punch the wall and, here, I feel the ache of it. ... I smash the mirror and feel a sharp pain behind my eye' (37 - 38). The particulars of how Adam handles this projection merit closer analysis here, a discussion that I will begin with an examination of the screen as mediating surface.

The concept of filters and surfaces that I have developed thus far appears in *Adam* in the form of the stage separating radical potentiality from the comprehensible world, but also as the computer screen as filter for the unknown and infinite relational possibilities latent in the brain: 'The woman who leant me this laptop described the internet as a brain. To type a question is just to have a thought, an electric spark in a global brain of ideas' (27). In an internet search, we ask a question or search for a term and are presented with information related to our search. An internet filter obscures what is deemed not relevant so that a manageable amount of information can yield meaning on the screen. When Adam gains access to the internet and types the question 'CAN THE SOUL OF A MAN BE TRAPPED IN A WOMAN?' (27), myriad trans and non-binary voices and images of the The Adam World Choir emerge in slightly discordant song with testimonials of trans people from all over the world projected onto the screen behind the stage. With the words 'I. Am. Real' (27) ending the scene, Adam expresses the confirmation of a legitimate, identity that this online community has rendered comprehensible, shared. In this scene, the screen is the surface, a boundary, upon which Adam conjures traces of material experiences that challenge and modify definitions, categories and, consequently, the way Adam understands himself and the world. Adam's flat as Scarran room or cell depends upon Adam's ability to convey this 'realness' through societal filters. Both Glasgow Adam and Egyptian Adam intimately understand that sheltering projection beyond the bounds of the body in specialised virtual space is worlds away from registering safely in a localised, material one.

A primary point I developed in my discussion of *The Bogus Woman* was the essential role projection into the world plays in securing situations of shelter. There, I observed how Mary's 'shield of truth', for example, becomes a fatally porous doily when not paired with a projecting element that permits negotiation for shelter in the world. What is comprehensible as a projection on a screen or on stage in *Adam* is, in turn, a product of the negotiation between accepted, known and shareable discourse, and the potentiality that audiences are constantly reminded of with the suspended mannequin element beneath the stage. Adam's deployment of the limited binary concepts available to him in mainstream discourse (man's soul in the body of a woman) nevertheless opens out onto a world of different bodies defining themselves and negotiating their identities in relation to each other and their innumerable discursive environments and histories. Jack Halberstam notes that the increasingly common term 'Trans*' borrows from internet search protocols where an asterisk functions as a wildcard or a place holder for any and all unknown terms associated with the word in question' (368). This is a key contrast that *Adam* highlights between online virtual worlds and discursive ones that work on a localised, physical, interpersonal level. The discourses that inform Adam's proximate relationships denied his existence as a trans man. The internet, however, offered

him a way of understanding his experience in his body that affirmed an identity he had been grasping for but had been unable to safely articulate. Though Adam has access to this vast network of possibility and acceptance via the internet, he must reconcile this legitimacy with his physical and discursive reality and history both in Egypt and later in the UK. The central struggle in *Adam* is not simply the failure of mainstream discourse to shelter him epistemologically and materially, but necrocivilisation's active pursuit of his foreclosure via discursive filters.

Language and the Soul

Poet characterises Adam's predicament as one of sheltering negotiation in one virtual world (online), but confinement in another (epistemological and, consequently, physical). While the online world must figure as a vital force, it is the local material world ordered by epistemologies, institutions and histories of power that will materially shelter Adam or end his life. In the previous section, I outlined how *Adam* sets up a structure of meaning production: the solid but permeable ground of stage and computer screen mediating between relational potentiality and discourses that filter and make sense of the world. Having established this framework of potentiality, projection and significance, I explore in this section how Poet conceives of the discursive worlds through which Adam moves in his journey as a transgender man in Egypt and asylum seeker in the UK. The first part will focus on Adam's opening explanation of the potential to find his place in the English and Arabic languages. This will lead into a discussion of Adam's biblical framing and themes, which will, then, turn to the Ancient Egyptian and Arabic histories and concepts that Poet uses to explore Adam's understanding of the soul's relationship to language.

Beginning *Adam* with a discussion of the gendering practices of Arabic and English illustrates a dynamic that echoes through the play as the female-coded Egyptian Adam and masculine-coded Glasgow Adam spar for legitimacy. After a brief tableau of the play's climax in which Egyptian Adam takes knife to chest, Glasgow Adam talks to the audience about the gender of words:

In Arabic, our words are either masculine or feminine. It's a language which likes things to be one thing or another. ... In Arabic, the word changes – it matters whether my "friend" is a woman or a man. In English, when a person says "I hear you", "I understand you", "I love you". They're not speaking to a woman or a man as they would in Arabic. They are speaking to the soul of the person they are addressing (5-6).

The ensuing exchange between Egyptian Adam and Glasgow Adam introduces Adam's struggle to find room for himself, to build a shelter, in language and the histories that have informed its development. Egyptian Adam counters Glasgow Adam's preference for English: 'English isn't so special. It's still "she" and "he". One or the other. Right or wrong.

Truth or lie. English words don't speak to the soul of a person. Who here even knows what a soul is?' (6). Poet presents Adam's challenge to language here as a battle for the 'soul'. It is not necessary or possible to debate here the nature of the soul. However, what is relevant to this discussion is the need of a person's bodily experience and understanding to be accepted, validated and, to an extent, shared.

Language has limits. It is imperative, however, that the individual have the narrative power to make sense of their own experience. This requires a language and episteme that they can shape and register within, so their experiences signify, so they matter. Glasgow Adam points out that a source of pain for him is that remaining in strict gender confines '*matters*' in Arabic. Since he knows he is not the gender he was assigned at birth, the language makes him invisible. In Butler's terms, it renders him ungrievable as a trans man. In Arabic as Glasgow Adam describes it, he cannot exist. Egyptian Adam, however, reminds Glasgow Adam that English is not so gender neutral as he portrays it to be ('It's still "she" and "he" (6). More profoundly, however, Egyptian Adam takes issue with Glasgow Adam's suggestion that the English non-gendered 'you' speaks 'to the soul of a person' by default (6). Egyptian Adam presents the Ancient Egyptian understanding of the soul necessarily containing two parts, Ka and Ba: 'Without the body and its shadow which protects it. Without the name given to a person at their birth, the soul becomes lost' (6). The body and its protective shadow, which Egyptian Adam associates with the 'name', that is, the body's 'mattering' in language, is, like the shield and sword in *The Bogus Woman*, representative of a Scarrian relationship of protected body and projection (signification in discourse) that these plays acknowledge as requisite for shelter.

Another important foothold that Glasgow Adam finds for himself in English are the contronyms available to express elements of his experience that appear contradictory, but that nevertheless exist simultaneously: 'There's a term – I've forgotten it – for words that have more than one meaning. But the meanings are opposite. "Sanction" is one. It means "to permit" but also "to penalise". Opposites that live together within this one little word. And "screen". "To show" but also "to conceal"' (6). The screen returns here to alert the audience to the process of meaning-making that *Adam* dramatizes. A screen as a filter works to 'show' (that is, to allow something to make sense), but to do this it must also conceal – it filters away or hides and diminishes certain characteristics or histories in order to reveal others. Again, Egyptian Adam fights the diminishing of Adam's Egyptian heritage with a significant Arabic example of a contronym ('Saleem "One who has been bitten by a snake". But also "one who is cured"' (6). In these contronyms, Adam finds the seed of resistance, the possibility that there might be a place in language that serves his experience.

Contranymy act as heterotopias in language: multiple meanings, multiple experiences juxtaposing within the confines of one term. As such, they contain the emancipating but also the confining and dissolving potential of heterotopias. As I have observed previously and in reference to Sara Ahmed's discussion of privileged bodies that move precisely because they cage other bodies as objects of hate (*The Cultural Politics* 57), this mobility comes through cutting ties to other and othered histories. The second scene in the play ends with Glasgow Adam attempting to remove himself from his past in Egypt:

EGYPTAN ADAM: Mama gave me a name. ...
GLASGOW ADAM: It was the wrong name.
EGYPTAN ADAM: Have you forgotten it?
GLASGOW ADAM: No.
EGYPTAN ADAM: I can't be explained away with a cute English word. All this begins with Egypt. Where I was born.
GLASGOW ADAM: I was born in Glasgow.
This wounds EGYPTAN ADAM. (7)

Glasgow Adam identifies his Egyptian origins with violence and pain and wishes to cleanly disassociate himself from them. From the beginning, however, Egyptian Adam makes clear that finding himself in discourse is a great deal more complicated and painful than the simple decision to live in a different place and a different language: 'I can't be explained away with a cute English word' (7).

Along with the biblical genesis of Adam Kashmiry, Poet presents Adam navigating sources of personhood (referred to as the soul) of his Egyptian lineage. In the opening quarrel about gender in language, Egyptian Adam points to the crux of the question:

English words don't speak to the soul of a person. Who here even knows what a soul is? There are two parts to a soul. Ka and –
GLASGOW ADAM Ba, What has this got to do with –
EGYPTIAN ADAM: Without the body and its shadow which protects it. Without the name given to a person at their birth, the soul becomes lost. (6)

Despite Egyptian Adam seeming to be at odds with Glasgow Adam, there are marked similarities and moments of synthesis in the Ancient Egyptian and Ancient Arabic understandings that Egyptian Adam presents and the Biblical and English language overtones that Glasgow Adam champions. In the passage above 'the body and its shadow which protects it' aligns with the idea of the body and the word or sword that I have outlined above. That this sword is 'the word', that is discursive, corroborates with the 'name given to a person at their birth' that prevents the soul from becoming lost. Like the Holy Spirit as discourse, the Egyptian name connects the soul to a community. Likewise, the Ancient Arabic example of a contranym

that Egyptian Adam offers recalls the Biblical serpent in the Garden: 'Saleem "One who has been bitten by a snake". But also "One who is cured"' (6). And like the Biblical Fall, Egyptian Adam notes that punishment for sins against Ancient Egyptian gods was 'Banishment. Cut off from the protection and resources of your own people, forced to seek kindness from people who are not your own' (28). Poet's emphasis on protection for the soul, which Egyptian Adam emphasises and Glasgow Adam acknowledges, stems from the name, the word that permits the person to surface in discourse and all the protection that is bound up with its connotations, origin and history. While Glasgow Adam insists that he was born in Glasgow and therefore the name he took there was his birth name, Egyptian Adam's insistence on the relationship between body, history and language ('Born in Glasgow? With no mama?' (8) requires a more nuanced understanding of Adam's transgender and asylum journey.

A closer look at the scenes containing the human-headed bird and the Ancient Egyptian understanding of the soul as Ka and Ba will clarify Adam's perception of his bodily transformation and the role the room and projection play in this experience. While the soul is independent of its shadow, just as Scarry's walls of the room are explicitly independent of the body they envelop, the soul must have meaning in the episteme in order to persist in the world. The second time Adam mentions Ba comes during the scene 'Cursed is the Ground' when Adam goes out in Alexandria dressed as a man. He says 'I need a name', and takes the masculine name 'Harvey' after Harvey Dent, the sane identity of the supervillain Two-Face in the Batman comic book series (20). Moving through the world socially coded as male, Adam's 'heart is soaring like Ba, the human-headed bird' (20). Presenting publicly as a man we see Adam projecting himself bodily into the physical world, an act that he feels as a lightness, a sense of freedom of movement (soaring). Adam's physical and spiritual response to his worldly projection suggests that what he described in the first dialogue as his soul is being permitted to surface in hegemonic discourse, to be addressed in a shared social understanding. This state does not last, however, as fellow revellers soon perceive parts of Adam's bodily appearance that hegemonic discourse renders female: '*People don't like that they can't place Egyptian Adam's gender. ... Egyptian Adam stumbles to the floor is dragged to a dark corner. 'I found a pussy', 'It's a woman', 'Let me see', 'Is it wet?'*' (21). This second sexual assault, his subsequent expulsion from his family home, the death threats he receives and his mother's refusal to hear him ('No! I don't want those words ... Just lie!' (26) confirm to Adam that he must flee to avoid mental and physical destruction.

Adam's description of Ba soaring as Adam registers socially as male indicates that surfacings of the body in discourse having the power to trap in a cell or protect in a room. The room, in

turn, enables projection, movement. In Adam's most extensive speech on the Ancient Egyptian idea of the soul, the Scarrian cell is a central image, particularly its role in dissolution:

GLASGOW ADAM: The last American film I saw in Egypt was called Sunshine. Space in this film feels very real. When the astronauts throw themselves from one spaceship to another, it's fast and physical and within seconds they are back in gravity, the weight of the spacesuit, the pain of the body.

One of them doesn't make the jump. With no cord to anchor him, he floats away into the endless blackness. I envy that guy. The others have to keep their eyes on the sun, keep fighting for life but he is free.

I am a human-headed bird watching from a dark corner of the room.

My green-feathered wings are beating against the grey walls, against the painted shut window. I watch my woman's body try to cut away flesh. Is that me? With testosterone coursing through it, the body I was born with has... died. The name I was born with has died. I am half a soul. I have no anchor. Without Ka – the spark the life force - Ba is lost.

My ancestors feared this above all else. To be adrift. But a lost bird is better than a caged one. I have no need of that body and I can feel myself turning away from the sun, towards endless blackness...

We are back in the room. EGYPTIAN ADAM is gone. (43–44)

In this passage, which sees the disappearance of Egyptian Adam, Glasgow Adam voices a Ba detached from the human body. The flesh Egyptian Adam is cutting away are breasts, a trait that leads to his misgendering in discourse. Along with the testosterone injections he has been administering, this act severs Adam from the bodily characteristics as he also disavows the corresponding gendered name that simultaneously traps him and provides an anchor for his being. Unable to achieve safety in Glasgow after the Home Office disbelieves his transness, Adam cannot face the 'gravity' of another prison of weight and pain. Here, body, soul and the discourse that connects the soul/body to others cannot sustain human life or the intact soul.

In my analysis of *The Bogus Woman*, I observed that in this play the disproportionate weight detained asylum seekers were forced to bear appeared in the form of never-ending grief. Resistance, in that play, takes the form of appropriating 'discursive furniture', which are descriptive identities that permit the body's weight to become invisible so the individual may project herself into wider iterations of Scarrian civilisation. A key concept here is movement. The shared root of 'furniture' and 'frame' is 'moving forward'. *Emovere*, which Ahmed notes produced 'emotion', means 'to move out' (*The Cultural Politics* 11). The way hegemonic discourse genders Adam's body traps him: in Egypt he must hide, in Glasgow he is imprisoned in his asylum accommodation without resources. Adam is unable to project himself into the

local physical world safely, to take up the legitimacy that would permit his heart and soul to soar as it did when he went out as Harvey, because the discourse forecloses his existence as a trans man. Forced to bear an extreme weight of violence and pain, Adam attempts to sever those parts (his breasts, oestrogen-produced bodily features, and name) that bind him to a discourse that denies his personhood. The weightlessness that results is not of actualisation or acts of making but of morbid dissolution, not 'soaring' but 'adrift'.

Again we return to the question of lightness and weight. Death here is final severing from earthly context framed and delivered by discourses bound up in history and relationship. The internet as Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil presents the merismus for a totality that provides Adam with reality in identity but which he is prevented from translating into the physical and discursive environments of both Egypt and the UK. Hegemonic discourse refuses to bear the weight of Adam's body and the lightness he felt as Harvey is short lived. Discovering that the UK is yet another prison where he is unable to register in official discourse, he chooses, like Bouazizi, to remove the body in which the discourse cages him. Adam makes this decision when he can no longer bear the weight of matter that is the body, and finds he fundamentally lacks the resources to go about the task of mattering, if we understand mattering as a weaving for significance, a negotiation for meaning in the world. Adam's quest to find the soul in language brings into sharp relief the centrality of the human body as a discursive anchor. In the perichoresis of the Christian trinity, Poet finds a figure to describe the in-nesting of the discursive with the bodily and the infinite that, in the context of necrocivilisation, denies the foreclosed ungrievable the bodily legitimacy to project themselves (here as 'soul') into the world (language). Egyptian Adam provides an Egyptian rendering of the soul's relation to language and the world in the components of Ka and Ba that however virtual and ethereal, both convene in the material body that must surface and negotiate in language or die.

Foreclosure and Survival

But Adam does not die. Unlike the protagonist in *The Bogus Woman* deported to her death, the UK authorities eventually accept Adam's claim, his mother comes to terms with his trans identity, and he makes his home in Glasgow. The 2017 Edinburgh and Glasgow shows even end with a photo of Adam and his now wife Toni at their wedding. Despite this triumphant finale, Adam does not represent a breakthrough in alternative filtering principles in the UK, or even acceptance of trans asylum seekers. Rather it is the feats Adam accomplishes to fit through the UK's definition of what it means to be a transgender man that secure his survival via credibility in the UK's necrocivilisational episteme. In this final section, I will examine key scenes of Adam's adjudication and the prison-scape in which he lives as he waits for his

asylum claim to be assessed. Though the role of the internet in Adam's physical transformation and bid for safety is nuanced and complex, ultimately *Adam* presents the ongoing failure of the asylum system and UK mainstream discourse to admit trans identities. The play itself is an uncomfortable contranym, a representation of the asylum seeker's simultaneous success, which is celebrated, and failure, which goes unremarked like the disappearance of Egyptian Adam.

The presentation of the asylum adjudication scenes in *Adam* is emblematic of the overbearing impermeability of UK borders. The set design for these scenes includes a filtering image in the form of what appears to be small, white but opaque, glass brick windows overlaid with a wire mesh. The Home Office Representative stands in front of this sieve-like backdrop centre-stage, misgendering Adam and asking him questions that disregard the context of his situation such as whether he lived as a man in Egypt, whether his family and friends knew he was transgender or why he did not inform the police when he was attacked (30-33). In line with discussion of filters in other plays analysed in this thesis, the filter backdrop in the adjudication scenes is a visual metaphor of the wall of questions Adam is presented with. It appears to have openings but in fact contains a transparent surface that, like the plastic coverings in Victoria Carless's *The Rainbow Dark*, shrouds the ban, invisibly denying entry to people like Adam by stripping them of their context. It is at this point that Adam realises the material consequences of an apparently open discourse that discursively conceals its narrowness: "To sanction – to permit but also to penalise." / I've escaped Egypt for another prison' (32). Adam standing before the Home Office Representative and the screen is a representation of the body left to account for itself without the admission of context, or as Stones has it 'lived experience', on its own terms.

The contranym 'sanction' here takes its place alongside other contranym in the play that reveal how language works, but more pointedly, how the liberal democracy of the UK uses language to shroud its necrocivilisational nature. Earlier Glasgow Adam had defined Sanction alongside 'screen' "to show" but also "to conceal" (6), a word that also reappears to describe his confession to Amira who conceals Adam's identity when she misunderstands his confession. Adam's discursive resistance lies in the acknowledgement that language must conceal to make meaning, and, in this concealment exists endless possibilities for new meanings, for different bodies to negotiate space for themselves and others. But discursive filters in the UK as well as in Egypt are narrow, inflexible, and oriented away from the asylum seeker and the transgender individual. Until the 2010 cases of HJ (Iran) and HT (Cameroon) v The Secretary of State for the Home Department, asylum seekers claiming refuge based on their gender or sexual orientation were refused asylum in the UK based on the argument that

they could hide their gender and sexuality and 'pass' as cis and heteronormative in their home countries. It is the inability to use 'passing' as grounds for refusal that permitted Adam to be considered for asylum in the UK in 2010, a point Glasgow Adam references in the play: 'When I sold all that I had and bought the plane ticket to Britain, I did not know it but the highest court in this land was making a decision. That nobody can be forced to return to a place where the only way they can be safe is to hide who they are' (29). However, Adam finds that this simultaneity of meanings in liberal democratic necrocivilisation works against him. The UK authorities disbelieve Adam's transness, and at the same time refuse him the treatment that may confirm it to them: '[The GP] will not prescribe the hormone therapy until I am granted asylum. They will not grant me asylum because I have not begun the hormone therapy' (33). The screening process for transgender asylum seekers actively demands Adam present as transgender in a way that he is actively denied.

Heterotopic contronyms delineate the conditions of a suspension in time as well as space. Adam understood his flight to the UK as emancipatory. Instead, he is effectively detained, suspended in what he describes as a prison ('I've escaped Egypt for another prison' (32). Prevented from presenting as a man in Egypt and not fitting into the narrative and presentation that UK authorities demand, Adam enters a state of liminal suspension made morbid rather than life-giving by the foreclosure of legitimacy. Like the protagonist in *The Bogus Woman*, Adam possesses the shield of his truth, the experiences that compose him, but is denied the sword that affords that truth credible visibility in the episteme. I have previously conceptualised this suspension in terms of the weight it relieves or places on the body. As Scarry observes, physical and epistemological shelter supports the body's weight, which, in turn, allows the individual to project themselves out into and move through the world (39). However, necrocivilisation is premised upon the production of ungrivable lives by shifting the weight of violence and pain onto gendered and racialised bodies. Ungrievable lives are detained indefinitely in a prison-like space bereft of the material and epistemological resources to build a shelter that sufficiently lightens their load.

Though not kept in a detention centre, Adam describes his situation in his Glasgow flat as having the confining characteristics of imprisonment: 'I have been placed in this room. I live, eat and sleep here. The single window is painted shut and the dirty sky I see through it matches the colour of the walls' (28). The window indicates the opposite of the Scarran room's windows which, rather than appearing to be windows while acting as an extension of the wall, enable 'the self to move out into the world and [allow] that world to enter' (38). Adam's windows present necrocivilisational impermeability masked as civilisational filter. The feeling of a prison-scape intensifies when the Home Office rejects the basis for Adam's asylum claim (that

he is transgender), with stage directions emphasising the space becoming 'claustrophobic' (32). Notable in these stage directions is the link between time and physical entrapment: *Time passes in a fluid blur. The passing of days may be charted 1, 9, 78, 113... The ADAMS are prowling, pacing the space, trapped. CCTV footage, lots of different angles, of ADAM living in the flat, eating, sleeping, watching TV. ... It is oppressive'* (32). After another re-enactment of an encounter with the Home Office, again Poet has the stage direction emphasising time and entrapment: *'Days pass. We're into the 300s. The ADAMS pace and prow'* (35). The stage direction *'Days pass. The ADAMS pace and prow'* appears once again after Adam's second Home Office rejection and again after an imagined exchange with a Home Office interpreter in which Adam fruitlessly presents more evidence (37, 40). The constant CCTV-style projections at the back of the stage that also chart the passage of days and create a boundless 'fluid blur' of time that transforms a supposedly sheltering space into one of detention. The animal-like pacing and prowling that Poet links to boundless time illustrates the dissolution of civilisation that accompanies what I have highlighted in my analysis of *The Bogus Woman* as Foucauldian heterochronies of eternal time. Starved of meaningful negotiation and acts of making out in the world, Adam is reduced to prowling beast.

Like *The Bogus Woman*, *Adam* charts the diminishing of the protagonist in the service of the discourse. Adam's physical diminishing takes the form of starvation that he undergoes as he uses the meagre allowance he is given for food to pay for the testosterone he acquires over the internet ('the testosterone will be our meal' (41)). The hormone injections also lead to the sickness and disappearance of Egyptian Adam who, once Adam begins injecting testosterone, *'begins to deteriorate from this moment on. It is a slow death'* (39). The final blow, foreshadowed in the first image of the play, occurs when Egyptian Adam takes blade to breast. As in *The Bogus Woman*, Adam also starves himself to achieve shelter. In his case, however, starvation does not take the form of hunger strike, but rather as a necessity to obtain the testosterone that would prove Adam to be a transgender man to Home Office officials. Indeed, when Egyptian Adam understands that the price of the hormone is more than Adam has to live on in a week, Glasgow Adam reveals that his need to register as a man is more urgent than his need for food ('I don't need food' (35)). Maud Ellmann (14) provides a useful commentary on self-inflicted hunger: 'It is true that hunger depends upon its context for its meaning, but it is also true that *self-inflicted* hunger is a struggle to release the body from all contexts, even from the context of embodiment. It de-historicizes, de-socializes and even de-genders the body'. While Adam does not go on hunger strike, we can read Adam's bodily wasting in order to acquire testosterone as a bid to decontextualize himself by removing the bodily traits that have him surface as a woman. Like *Refugitive's* hunger striker, the context woven by hegemonic discourse traps Adam. Shafaei's 'Man' performs the bodily removal

required for movement. Adam removes himself by decontextualizing and recontextualising himself through taking testosterone.

It is crucial to note that the legitimacy (which led him to flee and seek asylum) and, later, even the physical hormones to achieve material safety in the UK Adam accesses via the virtual space of the internet. This fact consolidates the inextricable indwelling relationship of the virtual and the material, but also reiterates the essential role projection plays in shelter as an enabler of negotiation for shelter on both physical and virtual levels. I have discussed Egyptian Adam and Glasgow Adam's sparring over the material world impact the internet can have. In confirming that Adam's transgender identity is 'real', the internet sets in motion Glasgow Adam's rebirth. Egyptian Adam disputes this at the time ('Born in Glasgow? With no mama?' (8), but the internet does provide a birth via the mother in the Skype conversation Adam has with his mother in Egypt. After some difficulty seeing Adam present as a man, Adam's mother 'virtually' recognises him, referring to him as 'ana bahibbak' (my son) rather than 'ana bahibbik' (my daughter). In the same scene, Adam goes on stage to talk about his journey to Glasgow: 'I am alive. Eyes are meeting mine and these eyes tell me they don't hate me, they understand. They remind me of the people who helped me when I first typed my question into the computer ... When I finish people come up to me, shake my hand, hi-fives and hugs' (49). Adam's material surroundings, his mother in Egypt as well as his story, have become virtual (light and sound transmitted over Skype), and the people Adam found on the internet have become his material reality. This ending to the play appears to finally reconcile Adam's past and future.

There is a loss here, however, that the play minimises with this triumphant ending. In order for Glasgow Adam to be born, Egyptian Adam must die: '*EGYPTIAN ADAM is gone. GLASGOW ADAM, lifeless, is where EGYPTIAN ADAM held the knife moments before. Suddenly, movement – GLASGOW ADAM stabs the needle of testosterone into thigh. It's like a shot of adrenaline and GLASGOW ADAM gasps. Alive. A door is opened. Light floods into the room*' (43-44). Released from the room-as-cell ('A door is opened'), Poet characterises this moment as one of birth. With the shot of testosterone and his breasts severed, from a radically weightless non-existence, Adam surfaces ('gasps. Alive. '), is finally able to project and negotiate shelter, as a man. In the next scene, Adam describes having his claim accepted and the medical procedures he requires for his transition: 'I can exist in the world at last. Leave this room behind' (45). Poet frames the severing of Adam's breasts as a final act of diminishing. In the terms Ellmann (14) gives for self-inflicted hunger as 'a struggle to release the body from all contexts', we might productively understand Adam's act as one of ultimate decontextualization, severing the breasts that weave him into and bind him to a discourse that forecloses his identity. If birth means death, Adam's time in his Glasgow 'prison' correlates to

a 'reverse gestation' akin to the one I identified in *The Bogus Woman*. In my analysis of that work, I observed that the protagonist uses the play to make sure her death subverts the discourse that kills her. In *Adam*, the undoing of the feminised body is required for detention to cease, for Adam to move out of suspended time and into a world where he can negotiate what he needs for shelter. Within this framework, the question becomes whether Adam's survival is subversive or conservative. In the prevailing theme of cononyms, as I will discuss presently, Poet suggests that it is necessarily both.

Egyptian Adam diminishes with the aim of passing through a narrow necrocivilisational filter that simultaneously, like; heterotopias and cononyms, can appear to be the opposite, expansive and open. Prevented from officially using a perceived ability to 'pass' as a cis woman to deny Adam asylum, authorities demand that Adam 'pass' as a transgender man according to their own notions but deny him the tools to do this. As a piece of reality theatre in which Adam Kashmiry acts out events based on his own experience traversing gender as well as geographical boundaries, *Adam* shares a concern with Stone's 'circumstance in which a minority discourse comes to ground in the physical' (Stone 230). And yet, the play is, in many ways, also a neat *Pericles*-like comedy, complete with marriage and happily-ever-after ending⁴. In this framing, it is important to remember what was forced to diminish. While Adam certainly centres a binary, the protests and person of Egyptian Adam form a 'body of evidence' that complicates the idea that moving from Egypt to the UK represents a movement from a place of oppression to a place of protection. Egyptian Adam reminds Glasgow Adam that Egypt has a trans identity and history: 'Egypt is trans. Transcontinental. It is Asia and Africa. Egypt was home to the first trans man. A pharaoh – Hatshepsut. Born a woman but ruled with a beard and the headdress of a king. I see no pharaohs here. Why am I?' (29). This observation alongside Egyptian Adam's other protests that are finally silenced unpicks Egyptian Adam's discursive binding to both Adam's Egyptian origins and female-coded presentation, and UK-based counterpart associated with Adam's male identity. That Egyptian Adam's protests must be silenced highlights the hegemonic discursive foreclosure of trans materialisation.

⁴ This is underscored by Frances Poet's 'Writer's Note' in the show's Fringe programme: 'When Adam came along to an early script development and heard actors read a scene from the play, I was nervous, scanning his face for a reaction. Afterwards he said, without a trace of irony and with characteristic generosity, "It's funny, something very like that actually happened to me." Close enough. I'll take that.' Perhaps through not insisting on a strictly verbatim text and realist casting as *Through the Wire* did, Bisset and Poet give Kashmiry the aesthetic distance to act what is 'very like' his lived experience without the 'exactness of the words' that threatened to overwhelm Shafaei in his performance as himself.

The last contronym of the play, 'transparent', sums up the complexity in simultaneity of filters, especially as they are applied to marginalized communities like asylum seekers and trans individuals who, when filtered through the discourse, become at once invisible and hypervisible:

TONI: [...] I just thought of another one. Transparent –

GLASGOW ADAM: Like invisible or - .

TONI (*said almost like a confession of her crush*). Or obvious. (50)

Etymologically, transparent means 'to appear through', which correlates with Toni's definition 'obvious', the thing that appears through the filter. The connotation of invisibility, however, attaches to the filter itself: objects appear through a filter making the filter invisible as it mediates our understanding of the object. My analysis of *Adam* highlighted how Adam is both filter and filtered as he negotiates his own surfacing in discourse: filtered in the sense that he must work his way through hegemonic discursive filters, but, through the play, he also exerts a degree of control over how the audience perceives events. This degree of control is subverted to an extent, however, via the authorial attribution of the play itself. The National Theatre of Scotland and Nick Hern Books published script list Frances Poet as the sole author rather than co-creator or collaborator in the presentation of Kashmiry's story. This unexamined convention erases Kashmiry's role in the production of the *Adam* narrative, at its most pernicious indicating that it is the white citizen theatremaker who bestows meaning rather than a two-way negotiation between agents filtered and filtering. The tripartite stage and brain, screen, room motif highlights the in-dwelling or perichoretic nature of signification that Adam must negotiate to resist erasure. 'Language and the Soul' fleshed out the relationship between projection and shelter, exploring the discourses that confine Adam in opposition to virtual worlds on the internet in which his identity finds purchase. Finally, an examination of the end of Adam's adjudication and the final scenes of the play saw how necrocivilisation forecloses contronyms as merismus into a binary rather than exploring and legitimising the space in-between. Adam's journey on stage is not one of the Word becoming flesh (as in the arrival of Christ). Rather it is of flesh becoming and informing the Word, a return to and a centring of the mortal and earthly body of Adam who must live and matter within history and context.

Adam presents a fuller middle ground of lived experience than the more abstract *Refugitive*, though with *Through the Wire*'s risk of individual circumstances and victories (however small) effacing a system that remains necrocivilisational. The major themes of bodies making violence visible through self-harm and boundless time as key invisible administrative violence take centre stage in *Adam* and *The Bogus Woman*. Indeed, they are themes that reoccur throughout Part II. *Refugitive* established their thematic interconnection through a hunger

strike that reclaimed time via the urgency of a finite, wasting body. Crucially, Shafaei contextualises this protest by explicitly drawing attention to the discursive filters that force detainees to surface as brutally perverse when authorities censor the detention context. Where *Refugitive* separated the play proper from audience engagement via question and answer sessions, *The Waiting Room* incorporated various different citizen-audience-member positionalities via active but directed audience participation. In an attempt to get beyond the filters that *Refugitive's* protagonist rails against, the Hhada storyline linking the tableau of asylum images strips away the discourse to reveal a bewildering and supremely unjustified state of affairs. Though *Through the Wire's* title and premise indicates a traversing of these filters, the play demonstrates that encounters between citizens and asylum seekers might constitute a beginning, but that this encounter does not necessarily radically dismantle or critique the discursive filters that continue to cage asylum seekers within and beyond detention.

The UK Cells plays illustrate how filters also operate outside the detention centre, producing a detention-like environment beyond “the wire”. In an extended discussion of *The Bogus Woman*, I noted that the play’s emphasis on grief as a filtering principle extended trauma beyond ostensible detention, invisibly dividing grievable from ungrievable lives. Adshead echoes Butler’s understanding of the relationality that grief reveals (“who am I without you?” (Precarious 22) in the protagonist’s last lines, “Am I still me?” (141). Like Towfiq Al-Qady in *Nothing But Nothing*, the single actor in *The Bogus Woman* presents the radical relationality of grief as she surfaces as not only the lead character but as all of those who have informed the weaving of her asylum-seeking surface. However, to a critical extent, the characters that the woman collapses into do not permit her to reconstitute herself after her loss. Adam used the internet to access a filter or virtuality that admitted him as a transgender person. However, the play again conveys that it is the interaction between virtual and material filters that fosters life and civilisation. While Adam survives, he does so at great cost. The administrative violence that characterised the Australian plays in Part II, continues beyond the wire of the detention centre as a persistent fugitivity produced via filters that frame asylum seekers into impossible binds and eternal dissolution. Where Part I focused on the vessel-rooms that trap people seeking asylum, Part II turned towards the body as finite site unable to withstand the infinite importuning of a discourse invested in non-response.

Part III: Civilisation

From asylum seeker journeys and the suspension of arrival, I turn now to productions that feature the world outside the detention space known nominally as civilization. Part III will investigate plays that foreground what and who occupy the land where asylum seekers come ashore. It will look at how the presence of asylum seekers intervenes in foundational metaphors, processes, organising principles and pervading objects conceived as keepers and defining elements of western civilization such as the garden, the nuclear family, and democracy itself. The sheltering walls of the Scarrian room that enable the circulation and interpenetration of the self and the world while maintaining a sense of integrity gave rise to the central metaphor in my analysis: the filter. In the previous chapters, I have charted iterations of the filter from forming territorial boundaries to boats to human skin. Where Ahmed theorized how bodies stick and slide based on how emotions circulate, I worked through how bodies move or are held based on how they are woven into and out of discursive and material filters. Foucault's heterotopias and heterochronies showed how filtering permits two radically different experiences of the same space to exist simultaneously. Crucially, Kelly Oliver's theorisation of subjectivity as based upon witnessing provided a framework illustrating that what is lost when these filters become uni-directional is the address-ability and response-ability that undergirds human subjectivity. Necrocivilisation grows these lethal heterotopias via filters that do not facilitate a Scarrian civilization formed of multiplied 'acts of making'.

I have spoken about filtering (particularly in discussions of *CMI* and *Refugitive*) as producing the solid ground of legitimacy for Hage's white spatial manager at the expense of the hardened and hollowed out bodies of those forced to bear the weight of this necrocivilisational violence. Land-building through filtering discourse operates at every stage of the asylum journey, hence the overlap between Parts I, II and III is no accident. It is a facet of necrocivilisation that one state resembles another, and their divisions are not clear-cut. I included *CMI* in the 'Vessels' section, for example, but this play, with its focus on citizen characters, is also perfectly suited to Part III. This final section zooms in on quotidian citizen environments and processes that ostensibly exist beyond but are intimately connected to the asylum systems of the UK and Australia. The safety and stability of this ground, the plays illustrate, erodes as necrocivilisation proliferates.

These plays continue to provide 'a look inside', but rather than simply representing the stories of asylum seekers, they turn the spotlight onto civilizational processes (like truth and reconciliation commissions in *Tribunal* and democracy in *The Suppliant Women*), the citizen's household (*These People* and *The Rainbow Dark*) and local community projects (*I have*

something to show you and *Souvenirs*). The morbid hollowing out and solidification of bodies that produce the land white Australia stands on, which plays like *Refugitive* addressed in previous chapters, traps the privileged citizen population as well in *These People* and *The Rainbow Dark*. The theatrical staging of a truth and reconciliation process presided over by an Aboriginal Elder in *Tribunal* presents an alternative filtering principle in operation in Australia, but that settler colonial structures actively suppress. Though without an indigenous 'first law', the UK plays in Chapter Six also harken back to foundational principles and images that they deploy but also re-interrogate. The garden and the relic in *Souvenirs* and the founding of democracy in response to asylum seeking arrivals in *The Suppliant Women* depict asylum seekers and refugees as fundamental to civilisation itself. Likewise, *I have something to show you* positions the absence of a person who sought asylum and his death in a foundational civilisational frame as memorial to loss and indictment of the system and community who filter him away. Kelly Oliver stipulates that subjectivity requires the active cultivation of response-ability in witnessing. As I will illustrate in my analysis of these plays, the civilisation formed of acts of making that the filtering room facilitates likewise requires the examination of purportedly civilisational processes and emblems. The present discussion looks at how these symbols and processes enable civilisational acts of making and how they may, conversely, be enlisted to hamper the two-way filtering of response-ability.

Chapter Five: Australian Civilisation

The Australian plays that I analyse in Part III address how the asylum-seeking figure manifests in quotidian spaces for white citizens as well as for much more ancient but currently marginalised indigenous lifeways. As I have elaborated elsewhere, white settler society has maintained a legacy of colonisation through necrocivilisational discourse informed by racism and neo-imperial agendas. In this thinly veiled white supremacist environment, the people who have been on the continent the longest and those newly arrived in boats seeking asylum experience the most extreme violence for their challenges to what Hage theorises as white spatial management. *The Rainbow Dark* and *These People* approach this violence through the lens of the white suburban family home shaped by economic forces that, in turn, condition affect. The more recent play *Tribunal* departs from this domestic lens to present a truth and reconciliation process presided over by Aboriginal authority and driven by asylum seeker grievance. Central to all of these plays, however, is an increasingly pressing concern with how to live on and belong to the land.

Australia's indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who have continuously inhabited the continent for tens of thousands of years included over 500 language groups at the time of colonisation (Moreton-Robinson 'I Still'). Diverse indigenous nations co-exist and maintain traditions of law established among human and non-human entities and the land through the Dreaming. The First Fleet's arrival in 1788 began waves of largely British-controlled migration that dispossessed these populations and attempted to annihilate their civilisations via the legal principle of *terra nullius*. I have noted in previous chapter introductions the drivers and impacts of the White Australia policy, which ensured a white settler majority by codifying the racism that marginalised non-white migrants. Though they resisted, colonisation devastated Aboriginal populations with disease, criminalisation and outright killing. Aboriginal Protection Acts beginning in the late 19th century sought to assimilate what settlers perceived as a dying population into white society by taking mixed race Aboriginal children to be raised by white Australians. Indigenous marginalisation continues as a direct result of this history including this Stolen Generation along with the more recent Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007 and Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Act 2012, ostensibly interventions to curb child sexual abuse that failed to respect land and sovereignty of Aboriginal communities. Notwithstanding this history of violence that continues in evolved form in the present despite the 1992 Mabo decision rejecting *terra nullius*, mainstream Australia maintains a salient narrative of the white bearer of civilisation: 'Through their achievement, usually understood as being individual in nature, singular and independent,

these British migrants brought us “civilization”; they “gave” us democracy and the market economy’ (Moreton-Robinson ‘I Still’ 25).

Emma Cox charts the links between Aboriginal and refugee activism as a solidarity between peoples linked by dispossession and forced displacement (*Performing Noncitizenship* 148). Aboriginal protestors have even requested the UN officially register them as Internally Displaced Persons under the Refugee Convention⁵ and have distributed passports to asylum seekers in protest of the state’s refusal to help them. Tony Birch understands indigenous authority as based on hospitality and protection of others: ‘our legitimacy does not lie within the legal system and is not dependent on state recognition. It lies within ourselves. ... And we need to claim and legitimate our authority by speaking out for, and protecting the rights of others, who live in and visit *our* country’ (20–21). Lowitja O’Donoghue expresses a fundamental sense of duty towards those who arrive in Australia, a duty established by the fact of co-presence: ‘I have welcomed them. They are here. They are part of us. They are grafted into my ancestry and my country’ (‘Return’). O’Donoghue’s ‘grafting’ recalls Ahmed’s characterisation of one interviewee’s testimony from the *Bringing them Home* report by the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (1996) that I referred to in Chapter One: ‘You don’t forget the hurt. But they do not become the other against which you define yourself. They become part of the body you now inhabit’ (*The Cultural Politics* 37–38). Irene Watson details a more expansive indigenous understanding of law whence this duty originates: ‘All peoples come into the laws of place as they come into ruwi [the land], even krinkris [white people], ... Laws of ruwi and the first peoples are its carriers as they are the caretakers of both ruwi and law. Law is in all things. It has no inner or outer, for one is all, all is one. Law is what holds this world together’ (‘Aboriginal Laws’). This fundamental difference between settler and indigenous relationality manifests, for example, in current interest in Aboriginal igniculture as a solution to the risk to life posed by the bushfires at the end of *These People*. Christine Hansen argues that this interest seeks to employ indigenous methods without confronting colonial history and the impact this has had on sites traditionally managed by indigenous peoples where cities now stand (‘Deep Time’ 227). Indigenous understandings, however, take account of this history and live connections to Country that cannot be readily appropriated by the white settler state.

Links forged between asylum seekers and refugees in Australia and indigenous communities are more profound and complex than strategic political positioning. Central to understandings

⁵ After abandoning their homes in response to the Northern Territory Emergency Response legislation, the people of Ampilatwatja of the Alyawarra nation addressed a letter via their spokesperson Richard Downs to the then UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya requesting that the Alyawarra nation be officially registered as Internally Displaced Persons under the International Refugee Convention (Downs).

of indigenous welcome of asylum seekers, which become particularly relevant in my discussion of *Tribunal* but also shed light on un-belonging in *These People* and *The Rainbow Dark*, is the reality of Country. Deborah Rose Bird defines Aboriginal Countries as territories 'small enough to accommodate face-to-face groups of people, and large enough to sustain their lives' ('Gendered' 37). Ambelin Kwaymullina describes Indigenous Australians as a 'living, breathing, thinking physical manifestation of our land - a thread in the pattern of creation' (9). Aileen Moreton-Robinson explains that this 'ontological relationship occurs through the inter-substantiation of ancestral beings, humans and land; it is a form of embodiment. As the descendants and reincarnation of these ancestral beings, Indigenous people derive their sense of belonging to country through and from them' ('I Still' 32). As Birch and O'Donoghue emphasise, presence upon Country implies a duty of care and relationship. As the history I have presented and the plays I now examine bear out, settler anxiety produces a system that, in contrast, emphasises a categorical removal from the land which white settlers simultaneously manage for extractive purposes.

The Rainbow Dark

In a domestic interior, two 60-something sisters, Gloria and Babs, chat as they wait for Gloria's suitor Donald to arrive. They talk about Babs' dog, Sylvia, what Gloria is wearing and if they are giving the asylum seekers locked in the cupboard under the stairs too much to eat. This last detail forms the nucleus of *The Rainbow Dark's* satirical but chilling representation of white Australian citizens. In Victoria Carless's play, which premiered in October 2006 on the Metro Arts Theatre's proscenium stage in Brisbane, the audience never sees the people living in the cupboard under the stairs; these asylum seekers' voices are occasionally heard, but not understood. Like version 1.0's *CMI*, neither do the characters (all citizens plus the dog, Sylvia) interact on stage with the asylum seekers who are the object of almost the totality of the play's conversation. *The Rainbow Dark* opens in darkness with the muffled cries of these people behind the heavy cupboard door. Encounter with asylum seekers is minimal to non-existent, a feature referring to Australian practice of keeping asylum seekers out of sight in detention centres built in places remote to mainstream Australia, but very much occupying the consciousness of the Australian public. As the play's partitioning of time, space and even identities communicates, the necrocivilisational discourse of western liberal democracies divides citizens not only from people seeking safety but from themselves, as well.

'Temporarily housed in an appropriate vestibule': *The cupboard under the stairs*

In the mould of plays like *These People* (2003) and *The Pacific Solution* (2006) in Australia or the UK's *My Name Is...* (2017) that use the domestic sphere as a lens through which to

comprehend civilization-wide issues, *The Rainbow Dark* presents Australian civilization in the form of the house, the ornate set presenting a fussy interior replete with floral designs and lacy tatting. In Scarry's sense, the room as protection becomes something more insular and unsettling in *The Rainbow Dark*. Rather than a filter through which bodies can encounter the world and allow it to enter, Carless' domestic spaces, along with their furniture and fixtures, conceal bodies that the discourse refuses to encounter and be changed by. Asylum seekers remain unseen and largely unencountered in the cupboard under the stairs. Gaston Bachelard takes the house as a phenomenological tool that chimes with my application of Scarry's room: 'Not only our memories, but the things we have forgotten are "housed." Our soul is an abode. And by remembering "houses" and "rooms," we learn to "abide" within ourselves. Now everything becomes clear, the house images move in both directions: they are in us as much as we are in them' (xxxvii). Like the interpenetration of soul, body and physical space in *Adam*, the domestic realm of *The Rainbow Dark* offers a distillation of being in the world made manifest in the form of the house. Where Scarry's room offers a model of two-way filtering that bridges the metaphorical and the material, the Bachelardian house in *The Rainbow Dark* conveys the idea that what Hage's white national spatial manager refuses to encounter cannot, in fact, be filtered away. Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, which Emma Cox also cites in her introduction to the play's published script ("Intro to The Rainbow Dark" 46), describes a space comparable to the cupboard where asylum seekers are caged as the subterranean cellar. The cellar is 'the *dark entity* of the house' (Bachelard 18). The cupboard under the stairs as Bachelardian cellar space associates the asylum seekers with amorphous fear: 'In the attic, fears are easily "rationalized". Whereas in the cellar ... rationalization is less rapid and less clear; also it is never definitive. ... In the cellar, darkness prevails both day and night and even when we are carrying a lighted candle, we see shadows dancing on the dark walls' (Bachelard 19). In *The Rainbow Dark*, then, Carless creates a multiplication of spaces but not ones conducive to acts of making. As Cox points out, the resulting mood is one 'of suffocation, of something being very wrong' ('Intro to The Rainbow Dark' 45). Carless' *Lampedusa*-like heterotopic partitioning of space represents the caging that Australian necrocivilisation employs to produce an 'unstable moral high ground to which the sisters cling' (Cox 'Intro to The Rainbow Dark' 45).

The enclosure of asylum seekers in a cupboard under the stairs is significant both in terms of its liminal location between one floor and the next and its affective content. The cupboard explicitly contains fear, indicated in stage directions that note whenever the door to the cupboard containing the asylum seekers is opened: '*The sound of "fear" rushes out*' (49, 64). Fear belongs to both asylum seekers and citizens, but, as Ahmed makes clear in her analysis

of an encounter documented by Franz Fanon, fear in a racist society works to affect racialised bodies differently:

The white child's apparent fear does not lead to his refusal to inhabit the world, but to his embrace of the world through the apparently safe enclosure formed by the loved other (being-at-home). Rather, in this case, it is the black subject, the one who fears the white child's fear, who is crushed by that fear, by being sealed into a body that tightens up, and takes up less space. In other words, *fear works to restrict some bodies through the movement or expansion of others.* (*The Cultural Politics* 69)

While the tightening up represented in *The Rainbow Dark* is firstly a physical squeezing in response to forced enclosure rather than compulsive auto response out in the world, the necrocivilisational mechanism is a similar one. The cupboard as place to contain fear also delineates the crushed bodies of racialised asylum seekers who have, as objects of emotion, become repositories for fear. As I will examine in the following section, however, the fear locked in the cupboard has a curious and pivotal *unheimlich* continuation through the rooms of the house inhabited by citizen characters.

The location of the holding area of fear in a cupboard under the stairs suggests an arrangement that underscores fearsome bodies as grounds upon which to build, a manifestation of the inclusive exclusion. While Carless' cupboard under the stairs likened to Bachelard's cellar is not located underground, its situation below a built ground of transition positions it as a terrain produced within an area that is at once sacrificed and made surplus to living space. Gloria echoes this designation (and reinforces the asylum-seeking body as coterminous the walls of their enclosure) referring to those kept in civilian 'storage' as 'Surplus Peoples' (57). I have elaborated elsewhere (most pointedly in my analyses of *Refugitive* and *The Bogus Woman*) the process of what Paul Dwyer has called a 'discourse machine' producing the corporealised bodies of detained asylum seekers simultaneously and interconnectedly as 'grounds' for continuing detention and expulsion and as ground for white Australia to build a sense of self upon and in opposition to (Dwyer 133). While Bachelard's (20) buried cellar walls exaggerate fear because of the understanding that they 'have the entire earth behind them', the door of the necrocivilisational cupboard under the stairs conceives of the contents it conceals as the entire earth which the confined space keeps from, in Shafaei's words, 'overwhelming the filters'. With the caging practices of *The Rainbow Dark*, stairs as liminal place of journey and threshold between storeys produce not Bachelard's wardrobes, desks and chests as 'organs of secret psychological life' (78), but the cellar's 'walled-in tragedy' (20).

The Rainbow Dark foregrounds how this necrocivilisational partitioning of space necessarily occurs in language as well. The people crammed inside Gloria and Babs' cupboard under the stairs find themselves languishing there because the Australian state and mainstream public

defines them primarily not as people in search of safety (the technical definition of 'asylum seeker'), but as 'Peoples From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders', their official label in the play. This othering designation resonates with Ahmed's theorisation of the affective production of surfaces or boundaries between collectives: 'How we feel about others is what aligns us with a collective, which paradoxically "takes shape" only as an effect of such alignments. It is through how others impress on us that the skin of the collective begins to take shape' (54). Understanding asylum seekers as 'Peoples from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders' emphasizes not only the recontextualization (and thus re-assignment of meaning) of the originally sheltering emphasis in 'asylum seeker', but also highlights the bearing that hegemonic discourse has on apparently objective legal terms and legislation. The defining feature of these 'Peoples from Elsewhere' is their refusal to abide by white Australia's partitioning of space, its separation of the mobile privileged from the abject caged. The definition of Australia's borders as 'perfectly good' further illustrates hegemonic rejection of the mutual affective and material changes and impressions that encounter generates. 'Emotions are both about objects, which they hence shape, and are also shaped by contact with objects' (Ahmed *The Cultural Politics* 7). By keeping asylum seeking bodies locked away, hegemonic discourse attempts to cultivate and maintain its citizens' affective orientation towards asylum seekers.

In addition to semantic divisions of space that manifest materially in the play, Carless draws special attention to how discursive understandings define the properties of time, as well. Babs' and Gloria's discussion of the passage of time articulates a differing perception of time applied to the heterotopic space of the cupboard:

BABS: How long has it been exactly?

GLORIA: I'd say, at a guess, about twelve months.

BABS: About a year.

GLORIA: That's right, about twelve months.

BABS: We've had people living under our staircase for a year.

GLORIA: We've had Peoples From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders, *temporarily* housed in an appropriate vestibule for approximately twelve months. Give or take a week.

BABS: We've had people living in the cupboard under our stairs for *one year*. Without even the window open. (52)

In these rival characterisations, time combines with identity and space. What Babs renders in terms that acknowledge the cruel absurdity of the situation ('We've had people living under our staircase for a year' (52) Gloria translates into the value-laden necrocivilisation-speak that produced it, facilitating the divisions and caging that Ahmed theorises. Evoking hegemonic

contextualisation, Gloria employs the official designation 'Peoples From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders' to emphasise threat, the necessity of hard borders and strict containment (52). Her characterisation of the time spent in a cupboard under the staircase as '*temporarily* housed in an appropriate vestibule' suggests a frame of progression or movement of which the holding place is a brief administrative stop (52): 'vestibule' indicates an antechamber, a place to mill about or prepare before entering the house proper, a threshold of welcome. A cupboard under the stairs is not an entranceway, nor an 'appropriate' place for human beings to be 'housed' but a permanent place of storage whence its contents, if removed, may be returned or discarded. In her last line of this excerpt, Gloria farcically doubts over the matter of a week in a liminal place where time is effectively limitless. Babs, however, counters this feint with the brutal impermeability of the space: 'Without even a window open'. Similar to the nurses in *The Bogus Woman* who mistakenly conflate the experience of bounded holiday timelessness with the eternal and destructive timelessness of the detention centre and cemetery, *The Rainbow Dark* demonstrates the work of necrocivilisational discourse to bind people seeking asylum to their detained situation in such a way as to justify and perpetuate their caging, negating the timelessness and orientation of the spaces that confine them.

'Ridding ourselves of the dirt of the world': plastic couch-covers and carpet runners

I have discussed how necrocivilisational discourse in *The Rainbow Dark* works to bind people to a carceral asylum process. However, this discourse of separation and restriction also reverberates through the civilised environment that the play's speaking characters inhabit. The simultaneous and juxtaposed divisions upon which western necrocivilisation and modernity rest, and which I highlighted in my discussion of the invisible ubiquity of hidden confinement in *The Container* and *Lampedusa* for instance, presuppose the proliferation of citizen limitation, as well. *The Rainbow Dark's* stuffy insularity is typified in the abundance of plastic sheets draping the furniture and running along the floor. Heather Davis observes that '[p]lastic represents the promises of modernity: the promise of sealed, perfected, clean, smooth abundance. It encapsulates the fantasy of ridding ourselves of the dirt of the world, of decay, of malfeasance' (349). Plastic, the bordering membrane covering all surfaces, prevents the room from getting dirty, but also stifles the characters' ability to become part of the space, to belong. It keeps them out as much as it keeps others out. In this way, the plastic coverings exist in *The Rainbow Dark* as the opaque vessel conceals necrocivilisation in *The Container*: as an impermeable border preventing the nation from encountering the world and encountering itself, from negotiating, changing and being changed.

But plastic is also light, seemingly immaterial. Transparent, plastic almost invisibly suffocates the surface it is 'protecting', the surface it permits us to view but not touch. How these words for feeling, the discursive furniture that makes rooms for some and cells for others, involves what I will discuss in terms of Ahmed's theory of emotions and bodies sticking and sliding, sticking for those trapped in marginalised bodies, sliding and movement for the privileged whom the discourse pardons. However, *The Rainbow Dark* illustrates that all this sliding over dirt, decay and malfeasance creates a sticking of a different kind represented here in the sterile and suffocating fussiness of the characters and their setting as intimation that something is 'very wrong' (Cox 'Intro to The Rainbow Dark' 46). In the play's miniaturisation of necrocivilisation, plastic protects the fixtures and furniture, but it also keeps the protagonists in a state of suspension. Preserved in plastic, the sisters attempt to seal themselves from Davis' dirt, decay and malfeasance, from the messy exchange of a living system. The people under the stairs represent a porous liminality that necrocivilisation shuts away rather than encounters.

Though in many ways modern tools of connection from telephones to the internet would not exist in their present form without plastics, in *The Rainbow Dark*, plastic is an emblem of insularity: Floral couches and carpets that are covered in protective plastic reveal a horror of wearing away, of contamination, decay and messy impurities transferring from the living to the furniture and ground they rest on. Plastic coverings as a measure of protection, along with the sisters' outmoded language and ideas, come to mean asphyxia via impenetrability. Emma Cox notes in her introduction to the play's published script 'a creeping mood of suffocation, of something being very wrong. Although it is set in the present, quaint references to being a "Modern Woman", to suburban sewing rooms and men who come courting, give the world of the play more than a tinge of insularity, or of being stuck' (45–46). As an impermeable boundary designed to maintain the integrity of surfaces, the protective layers of plastic rather indicate an orientation of isolation from others and from one's very environment, precluding the nurturing exchange characteristic of a living, evolving and growing system. Though divided from the living spaces in the house, the detainees are nevertheless present every time Sylvia barks in response to their cries or Gloria and Babs receive visitors and must hush the caged people with food. This one-way hushing of people who demand response in Kelly Oliver's sense of witnessing subjectivity reinforces a sense of violent and oppressive division. It is an arrangement that sees Gloria compelled to reiterate discursive justifications from what Shafaei terms in *Refugitive* 'the Howard University edition of the Oxford English Dictionary' (12).

Scarrian furniture is a necessary facet of shelter because it permits projection and encounter with more expansive iterations of the world beyond the body: 'Both in the details of its outer structure and in its furniture (from "furnir" meaning "to further" or "to forward," to project oneself

outward) the room accommodates and thereby eliminates from human attention the human body' (Scarry 39). In my analysis of *The Bogus Woman*, I elaborated the metaphorical role of what I have termed discursive furniture, that is established descriptive identities ('people' or 'prisoners of conscience', for example, in contrast to 'Persons from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders') that permit the body's weight to become invisible because worthiness of civilisation is automatically (even compulsively) accrued to the named identity. The play's furniture supports the bodies of the citizen characters, but its crackling and slick surface hardly 'eliminates from human attention the human body' (Scarry 39). Rather, if we understand furniture as discursive givens, the plastic membrane prevents living entities from fully resting within and moulding the discursive supports ostensibly meant for their care. Ahmed's privileged white bodies may slip and slide over and away from those who stick to and accumulate affectively charged associations, but they cannot rest. The plastic carpet runner not only prescribes a trajectory but also divides the individual from the welcome and belonging of the lived-in home.

Carless constructs a necrocivilisational atmosphere of creature comforts shot through with suggestions of the *unheimlich*. When Babs brings up the reasons their neighbours have not been able to keep asylum seekers ('the thumps under the stairs. The cries in the night. [Pause.] The voices in the dark' (51), Gloria tells her to put it out of her mind, to which Babs responds 'Yes, yes don't dwell. It's for the greater good' (51). If, as Heidegger puts it, the aim of building is dwelling, then the force of Babs' pun is that the sisters cannot dwell in their own house (*Building, Thinking, Dwelling*). To dwell on the sounds of pain and fear emanating from the cupboard under the stairs when the foundation of western liberal discourse espouses civilisation is to cease to dwell. If we consider necrocivilisational filtering as a process that corporealizes the bodies of the marginalised to enshrine superiority in privileged citizens, then privileged Australian bodies do exist upon a haunted ground heaving with the thumps, cries and voices of ungrievable bodies. *Tribunal* opens a space of encounter for these voices and cries, but in *The Rainbow Dark* it is the refusal to dwell upon these demands, to acknowledge how citizens produce this shaky but endlessly reified high ground through brutalisation, that permits the hegemonic populace to exert oppressive control. Gloria's ability to dwell lies in her defining of her hard orientation as necessary: 'soft heart, soft head' (55), she says, reflecting the binary that Ahmed identifies as driving hard emotional orientations to asylum seekers. The plastic illustrating a compulsive sealing off from 'malfeasance' becomes an extension of the malady integral to western democratic necrocivilisation that requires alienation and discursive barriers that foreclose contact with the self and the world.

'Another World is Possible': the Prism of the Open Window

If the plastic festooning the house is one sort of filter, the play's title, *The Rainbow Dark*, conveys the idea of another, more open filtering possibility. Rainbows are produced through reflection and refraction, a filtering that occurs as light enters a prism, usually a water droplet, at a specific angle between the viewer's eye and the light source. The water separates and refracts the white light into a visible spectrum of colour. The white light contains all colour but that colour can only be seen under certain conditions. The white light obscures the potentiality it contains, while appearing transparent. Like the apparent transparency and straightforwardness of one's own culture made hegemonic and monolithic, only an open orientation, a particular angle, can reveal the possibility and complexity of the light. Carless' structuring concept, in this way, can be read as a commentary on borders that form the surfaces of the objects of emotion that Ahmed discusses. The reflection and refraction describes the act of encounter, finding commonalities and differences in the other you negotiate with to build the world.

The Rainbow Dark's central prismatic image, the window, permeates the action. Babs refers to it when she emphatically describes the situation as "We've had people living in the cupboard under our stairs for *one year*. Without even the window open" (52), and she obliquely references windows again when describing "luxuries": "Things like meat. [*Pause.*] Or fresh air. [*Pause.*] Or sunlight on your face in the morning" (58). The image reappears shortly thereafter when Sylvia sits in the middle of the living room with a picture of a window around her neck. When Babs finally opens the window in the cupboard, the open window acts as a prism of open orientation through which the possibilities latent in the myriad identities of the asylum seekers, but also the citizens, spill out. Carless stages this alteration in orientation by flooding the rest of the stage with colourful light. When the asylum seekers escape through the window, the lights in the living room where Babs has left Donald and Gloria '*begin to flicker and change colour: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple and pink. The room is bathed in all the colours of the rainbow*' (64). In contrast to the plastic film, the window offers an orientation that accepts and celebrates difference. Carless' staging of the rainbow light filling the house but also 'shining' outside in the form of the escaping asylum seekers undergirds Scarry's understanding of the room's windows and doors not only facilitating movement out into the world, but also allowing that world to enter (38).

To approach this more open orientation through the prism of the window, Carless does not use the light so much as the dark. The title locates the thrust of the play in the darkness of the cupboard or, more specifically, in what the mind can imagine beyond or within the dark. The explanation of the play's title arises in a conversation between Sylvia and the only human character who hears her speech, Babs. When Babs says that waiting in the darkness of the cupboard is better because the asylum seekers 'can't see what they are missing out on', Sylvia

asks Babs to close her eyes and forget what she has been told about darkness in order to look beyond it. With her eyes squeezed shut, Babs slowly discerns a rainbow in the dark. Sylvia uses the rainbow to weave a different context for asylum seekers: 'That's why these people have come here, Babs. This is why they wait in the dark. Even under your stairs. This is why they have not recognised perfectly good borders. It is because they see colour beyond the darkness. They can see a rainbow in the dark' (63). Cox ('Intro to The Rainbow Dark' 45) interprets this rainbow as an allusion to the 'catch cry of contemporary global anti-capitalist movements, "another world is possible". When Sylvia implores Babs to 'forget what you have been told, or what you know to be true' (62), she is asking Babs to set aside what Ahmed calls object of emotion's 'slide of metonymy' (76): 'The work done by metonymy means that it can remake links – it can stick words like "terrorist" and "Islam" together – even when arguments are made that seem to unmake those links. ... Such associations stick precisely insofar as they resist literalisation'. When Babs forgets what she 'knows', her epistemological orientation, she releases the causal relations implied in terms like 'Peoples from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders', the phrase Carless employs to make visible the metonymic slides of the object of emotion 'asylum seeker'. Carless represents here the necessity of altering an affective orientation before material conditions can change, intimating also that those who arrive in Australia seeking asylum should be welcomed as seers and harbingers of this other possible world. The rainbow, after all, is also a symbol from Genesis of God's covenant with humanity that floods hereafter would not destroy the earth. It is an image Carless pointedly inserts into a discourse that prefigures asylum arrival as civilisation-obliterating flood.

If *The Rainbow Dark* advocates looking beyond the idea of the dark as abject nothingness and threat, the white light that marks off the non-cupboard space for most of the play can be productively understood as a pervasive hegemonic epistemology carried through an impenetrable necrocivilisational discourse. When Sylvia asks Babs to look beyond the dark, she asks her to look beyond the concept of dark as what white light, what we might understand here as the dominating discursive whiteness, defines itself in opposition to. White light, without the orientation or filtering lens of a prism, makes invisible the spectrum of colours light can produce. Understood as the discourse that the citizen characters voice (through commentary like Gloria's 'I refuse to allow Peoples from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders to benefit illegally from my land of plenty!' (59), white light forecloses sense-making according to other histories and understandings of relationship to this 'land of plenty'. It works to generate negative affect towards asylum seekers through an 'erasure of the history of [the emotion's] production and circulation' (Ahmed *The Cultural Politics* 11).

The implacability of hegemonic discourse on asylum, the white light like the transparent plastic that gives the appearance of openness while preventing exchange, crucially limits the citizen characters, as well. A salient example of this is the discovery of Gloria's having knitted slippers for the baby born in the cupboard. This act presents an instance of rupture highlighted by the screaming pressurised kettle that accompanied Babs' act of release, and reminiscent of *Refugitive's* forewarning that 'the dirt will overpower the filter' (17). Though her feelings were not given space in the discourse she outwardly perpetuated, Gloria acted otherwise:

GLORIA: I made him slippers.

GLORIA *retrieves the slipper from her pocket.*

BABS: But you didn't say.

GLORIA: It wasn't in the handbook, dear.

BABS: Lots of things aren't pet.

GLORIA: It's just another example of the fact that life will prevail. (65)

While we could read 'life will prevail' as referring to the baby, within the context of this discussion it makes more sense to think of this 'life' as interpersonal exchange and negotiation, the encounter that the closed hegemonic filters foreclose. *The Rainbow Dark's* theatre space as heterotopia presents the untenability of oppressive *Lampedusa*-like heterotopias that prevent the messiness and growth entailed in encounter, exchange and simultaneous heterotopic worlds co-existing and weaving shelter in concert. In Carless' vision, western necrocivilisation's discursive production and compulsive reiteration of grounds upon which to build deservedness of civilisation cannot hold. In *The Rainbow Dark*, civilisation demands truly porous filters, myriad heterotopias.

I want to conclude my discussion of *The Rainbow Dark* with the figure of the dog Sylvia, who usefully embodies a partition of personhood western democratic necrocivilisation necessitates. While I must acknowledge the problematic nature of Carless' use of a dog as advocate and spokesperson for people seeking asylum, to read Sylvia as vessel of aspects of the satirised citizen self in *The Rainbow Dark* opens up avenues of understanding a curious corporealization effect of necrocivilisational discourse on citizens. The play's script aligns Sylvia explicitly with conscience: 'She is almost like an echo or a conscience. Her voice should reflect this' (48). Accordingly, and as I have highlighted in previous examples, Sylvia spends the play attempting to get the citizen characters to respond to the asylum seekers. At the end of the play, she even acts as a guide for the arrivals across the new terrain. I suggest that the barking, farting, protesting Sylvia, performed by actor Dirk Hault, acts as a spatial mechanism for the 'unladylike' aspects of the sisters to surface, the parts of themselves foreclosed and denied them by the discourse. When Sylvia coughs up the baby slipper, it is not so much an

ectoplasmic materialisation of asylum seeker haunting that is taking place but the dog acting as a medium for the sisters' own repressed yearning for the exchange that necrocivilisational discourse denies them. While asylum seeker experience cannot be compared to citizens', Carless nevertheless stages a strange hollowing out taking place as the citizen characters are divorced from the imperatives embodied by Sylvia, who, fittingly, Babs named '[a]fter a poet or some such maudlin personage' (60). In the cupboard section, I cited Ahmed's (69) analysis that stipulates that the white child's fear of Fanon's black man 'does not lead to [the white child's] refusal to inhabit the world, but to his embrace of the world through the apparently safe enclosure formed by the loved other (being-at-home).' In the necrocivilisational partition of space and people, the dog voicing repressed affect, the plastic covering the furniture and floor, *The Rainbow Dark* depicts the impossibility of necrocivilisational 'being-at-home' as well.

These People

If *The Rainbow Dark* offered a house haunted by detainees locked in a cupboard, Ben Ellis' *These People* presents these heterotopic partitions within the characters themselves and the spaces they conjure. Produced by the Sydney Theatre Company, *These People* premiered at the Wharf 2 Theatre in Sydney on 16 September 2003. Desert and suburbs, detention and mundane family home, sinking asylum boat and minister's office surface from moment to moment through the four actors playing Mother, Father, Daughter and Son in a heteronormative, suburban, white, Australian family. The proscenium arrangement included a mirrored panel showing the audience their own image as they watched the performance. The set was composed of domestic props with Astroturf along the stage floor and props like fences and protest banners highlighting detention scenes. A structure of steel beams stage right indicates a building site where Father works, though, as with the four protagonists morphing into other characters, with the sound of crashing waves and dimmed blue lighting the structure becomes a sinking boat in open ocean. Bushfires threatening the family's suburban home haunt the action and the sound of flames getting louder and a booming crack coinciding with a sudden blackout end the show.

To present what the Currency Press edition describes as 'a wild ride through the imaginative world of Australia's border protection policies,' Ellis draws on his own interviews, as well as material 'from court and inquiry proceedings, media reports, newspaper articles, departmental factsheets and departmental websites. Many incidents referred to or re-enacted and re-imagined come particularly from testimony and submissions to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission inquiry into children in immigration detention' (Playwright's note). These truth claims filtered through the nuclear family unit, 'the most important unit in society' declares the Father (1), aligns these nameless but relational bodies with the Scarran room as

basic unit of shelter in civilisation, a filtering unit through which all other human encounter and imagining is conceived. Like Ahmed's 'reading texts that circulate in the public domain, which work by aligning subjects with collectives by attributing "others" as the "source" of our feelings' (*The Cultural Politics* 1), *These People* charts the affective processing of these texts through a suburban family. Crucially, this processing involves a discursive transferal of weight to asylum seekers, the ever-grieving ungrievables, in a doomed attempt to outrun the precarity caused by necrocivilisation's epistemic foreclosure.

Border Control and the Neo-colonial Body

According to Scarry's configuration of the room or the domestic space as shelter, Father, Mother, Daughter and Son's imaginings *should* represent a healthy ability to project themselves into society, to feel safe enough to encounter and negotiate with the world, to let it in as well as move out into it. Ahmed (69) refers to this as the being-at-home that protects bodies so they can inhabit the world. It is clear from the beginning, however, that this is not the case as Ellis' constant staging of transgressions of Australian mainstream taboo makes visible the taming of Australian citizen bodies (from diets to sex) that Ellis incorporates into the production of Australia's border regime. The play effectively presents a series of orientations driven by libido. Here, I will examine how Son, who lusts after a girl activist whose heart he understands to have been stolen and pierced 'with jagged, crooked, blunt, broken English' (17), and Mother, who spends her time in the laundry to keep her desire for 'Iranian' men at bay, project their libido onto asylum seekers they do not encounter. Ahmed states that '[e]motions are not "in" either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects' (10). In *These People*, the characters voice soundbites of the dominant discourse that they deploy to produce and reiterate the surfaces of asylum seekers as objects of emotion.

These People binds up attitudes towards asylum seekers with a wider neoliberal and necrocivilisational policing of bodies. 'MOTHER: The whole country needs its stomach stapled. Too many people. It's bursting with struggles and languages and obesity. That's what border protection is about. A national diet. We were unhappy ... – maybe we still are – but thanks to border protection we are more confident. Smaller' (22). For the Mother, the country is a body in need of a diet, specifically a woman's body, the diet industry's usual target. She correlates what she deems surplus weight (like *The Rainbow Dark's* 'Surplus Peoples' (57) with 'struggles and languages and obesity' (22), implying that if these things are restricted ('the whole country needs its stomach stapled' (22) it will lead to confidence. The confidence that comes with a smaller body, according to this logic, is a result of epistemological certitude. Maud Ellmann (3) connects associations of 'the fleshy procreative body as ecologically

unsound' to the devastation neoliberal capitalist economies strive to separate western citizens from: 'The fat woman, particularly if she is non-white and working-class, has come to embody everything the prosperous must disavow: imperialism, exploitation, surplus value, maternity, morality, abjection, and unloveliness. Heavier with projections than with flesh, she siphons off this guilt, desire and denial, leaving her idealised counterpart behind. ... For the thin, pubescent body, phallically firm, has assumed a kind of prophylactic value in contemporary culture, warding off the dangers of overproduction.' The discourse binding objects to emotions in *These People* advocates restricting intake of peoples from elsewhere by weaving struggle and uncertainty into understandings of them rather than perceiving it as also their own. *These People* construes the 'struggles' that asylum seekers bring with them as too much weight for a body to sustain. The uncertainty, in Butler's terms the undoing, unravelling and consequent vulnerability, that these others come to signify must be purged, according to the discourse, from the country that is to remain economically 'fit', agile and powerful in the world. To repeat Ahmed's refrain, '*Some bodies move precisely by sealing others as objects of hate*' (*The Cultural Politics* 57).

To affect what amounts in neoliberal western democracies as a constant purge, necrocivilisational discourse constructs the shore as a faulty boundary, as I observed in shield without sword of *The Bogus Woman*, a surface conjured in order to be shredded. Ahmed reminds us of the propensity to identify the nation's borders as skin made vulnerable by 'soft touch' border policies: 'the soft national body is a feminized body, which is "penetrated" or "invaded" by others ... Indeed, the metaphor of "soft touch" suggests that the nation's borders and defences are like skin; they are soft, weak, porous and easily shaped or even bruised by the proximity of others. It suggests that the nation is made vulnerable to abuse by its very openness to others' (*The Cultural Politics* 2). In *These People*, this manifests in abounding references to the passive feminised land and masculine protection as well as invasion and penetration. The scene 'What Iranians Do to the Washing' sees Mother characterise the permeable skin of nation as household when she speaks of the coast, the shore, as a welcome mat: 'Iranians knocking on the door of, on the welcome mat of our own coastline!' (15). Here she emphasizes a possession ('our own') presenting an open invitation (a welcome mat) to those who are not us (what Mother characterises as the 'Iranian' hoard (16). The implication is that those others will overrun *our* house, that it will cease to be a shelter for the values of our civilization ('They'll keep four wives at a time. Make them cover their faces. Never let them out of the house. Their children become Saddam Hussein' (16). Scarrian filtering requires porous boundaries in order to maintain the security of an identity, while at the same time permitting change as bodies encounter each other and negotiate for shelter in the world.

Australian hegemonic discursive logic, however, understands that any contact permitting agency in arrivals opens a breach from which Australian civilisation will not be able to recover.

Mother's description of coastline as welcome mat initiates a litany of racist and orientalist stereotypes about asylum seeking arrivals that takes on the associative stream-of-consciousness style that characterises much of the dialogue:

She backs away into a corner, folds clothes, sheets, etc.

She sees their slender bodies. Iranians are tall, slender, dark-eyed, with penises that are thirteen inches long.

She fears for her Daughter.

Daughter: Mummy, I'm in a nation full of Iranian men!

Mother: I'm in the laundry!

You should have to apply. Apply from your own country before you come here.

Apply. That would make sense.

Touches her face.

Apply... cream. Facial masque. Slender, big-cocked Iranians. Who move towards her, smell of her favourite spices, Arabesque, rub my lamp, my lamp, I'll spout out a genie.

No.

No!

They'll ruin this fragile land. The environment.

They'll keep four wives at a time. Make them cover their faces. Never let them out of the house. Their children become Saddam Hussein.

She decides not to leave the laundry. She's been in there all day

Knocking, knocking, knocking! (15–16)

The discourse that Mother voices works to produce and then curb unruly desires in non-white asylum seekers. However, this associative monologue also represents Mother as desiring subject requiring restraint. Mother hides from this overpowering desire in the laundry room, the domestic space where she washes the family's clothes clean of dirt, mess and stain. Like the plastic covering the furniture in *The Rainbow Dark*, this construction understands border control as the washing away of messy exchange and desire. In the 2003 production, actress Geraldine Turner climbs into the washing machine, and Currency Press used the image of Turner peering out from the inside of a top-loader, an echo of Nell and Nagg's ashbin homes in Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, on the cover of *These People's* published script. This image recalls the coast at Ephesus in Adrian Jackson's *Pericles*, a landscape formed of piles of washing and rows of working washing machines. This, I suggested, constructs land as

produced through removal of 'dirt'. The fear of dirt here, however, does not originate in asylum seekers with whom Mother has had no contact, but her own fear of being overpowered by a settler force that outstrips and overwhelms Hage's white spatial managerial group ('They'll ruin this fragile land' (16). Mother's stream-of-consciousness underscores a bursting of discursive bounds but also a violence that necrocivilisation purges through the inclusive exclusion of caging asylum-seeking bodies.

The Son's storyline reiterates patriarchal channelling of libido as a facet of white male Australian desire, explicitly presenting the Son's relationship with a girl activist as characterised by invasion and conquest: 'Son: The son sits with the girl of his dreams, wondering how her borders are protected' (16). Ellis' descriptions of the Son's view of the girl recall's Ahmed's discussion of the gendered metaphor of the border as skin. Key to the way this metaphor operates is its deployment of a patriarchal symbolic field: 'the soft national body is a feminised body, which is "penetrated" or "invaded" by others' (Ahmed *The Cultural Politics* 2). The Son equates the girl to the nation by invoking the language of border protection. Like the nation Gloria in *The Rainbow Dark* describes as 'my land of plenty', the girl becomes the feminised object to be penetrated. The Son characterises the asylum-seeking detainees as violating the girl, penetrating her heart, which gets in the way of his own penetrative urges: 'The Son wants to lay next to this Bleeding Heart and kiss her breasts. Grab them till he comes in her. But these people get in the way, with their being locked up, and their taking the heart of the beautiful girl. They pierce it with jagged, crooked, blunt, broken English' (17). The Son sets up the two penetrations as opposed: the life-producing cis and heteronormative sex act against the life-taking heart piercing and bleeding. My reading of *The Bogus Woman*, however, shows this patriarchal symbolic ordering to perpetuate oppressive violence. The Son describes the girl as merely an object to be penetrated, not dissimilar metaphorically to the body in *The Bogus Woman* set up as a surface to be punctured. The Son's rejection of 'these people' is reminiscent of the Mother's white settler fear of invasion and colonisation of their own civilisation, which came about through predatory domination.

The suburban nuclear family as normative Australian civilization presents an image that should encompass the protective container 'being-at-home' that enables projection in the world (Ahmed *The Cultural Politics* 69). Like *The Rainbow Dark's* living spaces, asylum-seeking bodies are filtered away, and yet citizen characters are constantly preoccupied with imagining and projecting onto these arrivals. In this way, Ellis represents the hypervisibility and simultaneous invisibility of asylum seekers in Australian discourse, absent bodily but constantly and compulsively 'framed'. Without the openness or opportunity to encounter asylum seeking people, citizens rely on and reiterate a discourse that frames, filters and thus gives meaning to those fleeing to Australian shores through the desires, fears and fantasies

that the relational and economic unit of the nuclear family binds to the bodies of these new and potential arrivals. Ellis represents asylum seekers as vessels for the unheimlich that necrocivilisation produces in the lives of citizens.

'Robbed of food, bereft of voice': Hunger Strike, Self-Harm and Attention

The epistemological certainty of a country on a diet manifests in a constant rationalising and aligning asylum seeking with 'attention-seeking'. In previous chapters, I have looked at representations of asylum seeker resistance generally and hunger strike and self-harm specifically in terms of the work plays do to weave context around these actions. Contextual framing creates meaning and permits the act to register discursively in a certain way. Shahin Shafaei wrote *Refugitive* to weave a context around detained hunger strikers that Australian authorities did not permit, via media bans, to enter public discourse. *The Bogus Woman* depicted a power struggle between the protagonist and the nurses in which what was at stake was the asylum seeker's suitability for civilisation. As a play that employs almost exclusively citizen characters, imaginings and testimony, *These People* represents reception of acts of protest contextualised by Ellis's archetypal citizenry saturated in neoliberal discourse and attempting to stay above water in the democratic necrocivilisation of Australian modernity.

Within the frame of border regime as national diet, hunger strike would seem to be a symbolic capitulation to the demands of this filter. I have pointed out previously, however, that the hunger strike as protest acts as symbolic representation of the social and discursive starvation inherent in the necrocivilisational asylum process. Acts of desperation like cutting and ingesting shampoo along with hunger strike are forms of communication in environments where asylum seekers are prevented from projecting themselves beyond their bodies out into the world in balanced negotiation for mutual shelter. However, as Ellmann stipulates in her discussion of starvation as an act of speech, 'speech is necessarily a dialogue whose meanings do not end with the intentions of the speaker but depend upon the understanding of the interlocutor' (3) As asylum seekers suffer from the foreclosure of their contexts, the inability to register that provoked the protest in the first place interprets their acts of desperation through a necrocivilisational filter a second time. The mutilation and starvation of the body represents asylum seekers seizing control by intervening in their own bodies as a surfaces and filters through cutting, closing the body to nutrients (hunger strike) or actively replacing these with poison (drinking shampoo, for instance). The way Australian citizens in necrocivilisation both produce and reproduce via epistemological foreclosure the conditions for acts of self-harm like those depicted in *The Waiting Room*, and compulsively contextualise them is the subject of *These People*.

To illustrate the emphasis Ellis places on the concepts of weight and attention-seeking in citizen framing and filtering of asylum seekers, I will focus here on citizen information from two sides of detention's barbed wire: Mother's character (specifically interactions with her son) and the testimony of ex-Woomera psychologist Lyn Bender, both voiced by the same actor. In the opening scene, Mother presents how the middle-class suburban psyche wrestles with surfacing news of brutality in the Australian heterotopia of desert detention. Metonymic sliding abounds as Mother tries to filter and frame the news of asylum seeker self-harm:

Mother: She caught him... self-abusing.

Son: Shit!

Mother: Daily acts of self-harm?

By adults and children?

Son: You could learn to knock, Mum.

Mother: including cutting, ingesting shampoo and hunger strikes.

Son: Fucking knock next time, Mum.

Mother: Don't speak to me like that.

Isn't there television? They've got television. (2)

After interruptions by market researchers, the scene ends with 'Mother: Daily acts. Pah. / Anything to erase yesterday. / *She scratches the scratch Lotto card furiously*' (4). Mother's conflation of masturbation with self-abuse and her son's complaint about lack of privacy inverts the way authority conceals self-harm as detainee protest. The merging of the two also underscores a datedness reminiscent of *The Rainbow Dark*, an association that inflects acts of self-harm with the self-pleasuring of attention. This datedness in *The Rainbow Dark* indicated a sense of stagnation, of being stuck by an impenetrable boundary filter represented in the play by the plastic furniture and floor coverings. The discourse citizen characters voice in *These People* forms a similar boundary that not only divides them from those seeking safety in Australia but also from each other (In response to Son's drug-taking, Mother tells Father to 'Take some notice of what's happening under your own roof', alluding, again, to the nation (42). Throughout scenes involving Mother and Son, the meanings of masturbation, detention, self-harm, suicide, and the knocking of market researchers at the door interpenetrate and tangle, surfacing as and merging into one another.

In the passage quoted above, Mother paradoxically links to erasure this furious repetition of activities associated with gaining attention ('Anything to erase yesterday' (4). Asylum seeker hyper(in)visibility examined in asylum plays focusing on citizen characters like *CMI*, *The Rainbow Dark* and *These People* links acts of erasure to attention (seeking). As I highlighted in my analysis of Adam Kashmiry's fasting for testosterone and cutting away his breasts in

Adam, erasure or diminishing involved in attempts to register as worthy of attention in the discourse, comes of an effort to alleviate overwhelming weight. The weight of material embodiment becomes intolerable excess weight when framed as burden on the state. In the Mother's remarks on stomach stapling the country, we have seen border control understood as an attempt to remove excess weight. All these actions of repetition and erasure (Mother's furious Lotto ticket scratching, the market researchers' knocking and phoning, Son's masturbating and drug-taking, and the detainees' daily acts of self-harm) can be understood as efforts to 'become wholly forgetful of [the body's] weight' either through economic prosperity or more immediate relief (Scarry 39). But while Scarry's understanding refers to a safe and supported (and thus invisible) integrity whence to encounter the world, Ellmann (14) notes that self-inflicted hunger, and I extend this to any self-inflicted diminishing from hypermobility to suicide, 'is a struggle to release the body from all contexts, even from the context of embodiment' (Ellmann 14). The Son's fixation on reportage of detainee self-harm and suicide (he sneeringly refers to a self-harmer as 'Attention-seeking selfish slasher' (20) reflects a sense of immobility, of being stuck: 'In the scrapbook, he envies the way some of them die. Borrow the family car, drive off a highway; but there's better. In Italy, in Florida, in Scotland, troubled teens fly solo into skyscrapers. Ha. Like it was Osama's idea – he pinched it from them. From kids on the wrong anti-depressants. Acne treatments. Or both. In ultra-light aeroplanes. Lightness. Ha' (18). Son experiences the return to 'reality' from a drug-induced high as being dragged 'into a wet concrete world that sets around him' (20). The characters' constant flight from weight intimates that the filters neoliberal necrocivilisation constructs and maintains through discourse produce unstable ground.

Mother's overlooking of Son while he envies the attention given to suicides, develops in the figure of ex-Woomera psychologist Lyn Bender, pointedly also voiced by Mother who appears to be morph into Bender and then recover herself at the end of the scene. Bender, whom Ellis acknowledges in his 'Playwright's Note' as an 'actual psychologist' whose lines are taken from interviews with the playwright, laments her inability to attend to many of her referrals: 'You feel really guilty because you've picked some. Almost randomly. The ones who were more insistent. Or the ones you could talk more readily to' (32). The Bender sequence provides a sympathetic citizen character in a context that contrasts with that of the Australian family, and yet it also reiterates their situation. The key image in Ellis' staging of Bender's testimony is the line of graves the detainees dug to frame their hunger strike alongside banners reading 'FREE US' and 'GIVE US DEATH OR GIVE US FREEDOM' (25). Bender notes that everyone just walks by and ignores the protest and that she merely nods, a gesture reiterating her inability to treat the detainees in her care ('If you're still in a brutalising environment you can't push people's defences down ... You can't do much treating. You can only validate' (27).

Significantly, citizen characters like the Manager emerge from and return to the graves. The Manager even makes oblique references to them when he tells Bender in the neoliberal-speak that characterises the establishment's surreal discourse 'I'm not going to throw you straight in right away ... I want you to feel comfortable, because we look after our staff' (25). The graves, emphasising the hunger strike and self-harm like lip-sewing that Bender also mentions, are symbolic representations of the starving that detention causes: 'To be caged is to be robbed of food, bereft of voice' (Ellmann 92). That staff ignore the graves reiterates the detainee's status as ungreivable and yet Ellis' paralleling of citizen characters melding with the detainee characters communicates a sense of caging that, like *The Rainbow Dark*, functions in a different sense among citizens, as well.

'Some bodies move', but For How Long?: The Spun Lightness of White Australia

Ahmed's statement '[s]ome bodies move precisely by sealing others as objects of hate' has surfaced like a refrain throughout this thesis (*The Cultural Politics* 57). *CMI* introduced the 'discourse machine' of the expiating government inquiry, *Refugitive* had the Howard University edition of the Oxford English Dictionary to cage those produced as unworthy of civilisation. Unlike the most plays I examine in this project with the possible exception of *Lampedusa*, Ellis does not leave to the imagination the end of the necrocivilisational road for its citizen mouthpieces. Ominous references to bush fires appear throughout the play, with the final image seeing raging flames whip around the family who huddle together, strikingly, like asylum seekers on a boat: 'Son: Until none of them are sure -- / Mother: Exactly where it is they are - - / Father: Or where they will arrive' (54). The compulsive preoccupation with shedding weight construed as economic burden is revealed in the end to be a mechanism to not just as veil for the Agambanian ban, but as acquiring the fuel for this machine in the production of the fearful asylum-seeking body. This hegemonic discourse, dividing through unilateral weaving of context and meaning, prevents the intimate exchanges with people and environment of a living system.

Daughter's storyline unites ideas of weight, land, environment and neoliberal capitalism into a tangled binding of signifiers that, again, reveals an ultimately doomed quest for lightness. Writing an essay and trying to choose an outfit for Casual Clothes Day, Daughter slides the idea of weight surplus through her own body, the country's land and power, and her understanding. Her infatuation with financial markets and shareholdings blurs into understanding of border control, conflating land with money: 'She will have to protect every inch of currency possible. The war of attrition is coming. Global populations will explode. Cultures will need protecting' (5). This horror of scarcity surfaces again in her frustration at weighing evidence for her essay on government policy: 'An essay. To weigh. How heavy is an

Arab? Their weight will force her down – when there’s clothes to wear and money to cherish’ (10). Daughter is driven by the accumulation of wealth: ‘She likes economics – its ultimate objective is not balance, but a rush for the opposite. Wealth’ (6). Like Mother’s understanding of the filter of border control as weight-loss surgery (which Daughter reproduces in her dislike for her belly (10), Daughter binds non-white detainees to weight she is compelled to escape through wealth.

In Daughter, *These People* not only aligns the shedding of body weight with economic agility and power, but also with an epistemology of ecological disconnection. Daughter’s repeatedly voiced distaste for weight which she binds to ‘Arabs’ leads her to search for lightness in the delivery of her argument on Australian border control: ‘She wants fluffiness, not weight; how to bear this essay’s weight?’ (19). Penguins, then, escaping the ecological disaster that accompanies Antarctic drilling become the objects of her analysis. According to the play’s practice of sliding identifications and ties, asylum seeking penguins soon map onto citizen characters, Mother and Daughter playing mother and daughter penguins searching for food, water and safety. The final scene, ‘To Home’ brings these interpenetrating significations together in an image of hollowed out body. Daughter begins the scene with ‘The Daughter doesn’t feel well. She does not want to feel well. Casual Clothes Day tomorrow. She will bare her stomach’ (53). Her final speaking line sees her in her burning house telling her father ‘I can make dinner, Daddy. / *The Daughter starts retching like the penguin chick*’ (53). The unwellness she desires indicates that ‘dinner’ is bulimic retching to reduce the belly that she hates. This final image of Daughter as at once compulsive slimmer and penguin without food supply brings us back to Ellmann’s comments on autophagy: the daughter slims to appease a discourse that demands a female body and body politic (the country as feminised body) that disavows ‘the dangers of overproduction’ (Ellmann 3). This economic agility based on a ‘rush for the opposite [of balance]’ demands that lives the discourse constructs as ungrievable (here ‘Arabs’ and penguins) bear the weight of the violence denied by the slimming (6), ‘phallically firm’ country (Ellmann 3). The neoimperialism that marks bodies in *These People* (drilling and waging wars for oil) ultimately coalesces into a body beholden to necrocivilisational discourse, a body ‘robbed of food, bereft of voice’ (Ellmann 92).

The fire closing in on Daughter and her family as she retches in preparation for an increasingly precarious tomorrow, is an element that *These People* elaborates in depth with Father’s story, which, crucially, also emphasises asylum seekers as weight. Father, the ex-working-class builder, appears associated with the building of the family house itself, an interpenetrating image with the asylum-seeking vessel. Water and fire work here as forces of dissolution, overwhelming the porous boat and the house built where ‘the fires weren’t meant to happen’ (54). Christine Hansen observes Australian settler society’s failure to grasp how a shallow

history of colonial endeavour destroyed the 'cohesive geography' of igniculture managed by Aboriginal peoples over millennia and how Australia's most populous centres came to occupy 'one of the most dangerous fire zones on the planet' (238 – 239). Stephen Turner, in the Aotearoa New Zealand settler context, describes 'the need to "get on" in order to improve the place that is the forward movement of unfolding settlement, and momentum of colonisation' (119). Those who cannot 'get on' are abandoned as weight. Hansen notes a similar discursive phenomenon in settler Australia's appropriation of victim affect to proliferate a narrative of cliched trauma-recovery from the 2009 Black Saturday fires as a 'movement forward' (235): those directly affected by the fires would continue to struggle well after mainstream Australia and even the property market of the south east had ceased to recall the Black Saturday fires.

Though *These People* premiered six years before the 2009 bushfires, two major bushfires occurred only months prior to the play's performance. Ellis brings this constant threat to life and property to bear, by interlacing lines about families trying to survive a sinking boat and the Australian family beset by fire. While Father satirically recognises his apparently parallel financial precarity ('If the Reserve Bank puts rates up a quarter of a percent, he's screwed. ... A quarter of a percent will kill his way of life' (11), he subsequently frames asylum seekers as destructive infrastructural burden ('English classes, learning to use public transport in ways which slow us down-- ... It's more P-plates on the road. And the road is blocked because of the fires some demented teen starts for attention' (12). Ultimately Father sees people seeking asylum as blocking the road over which he moves to save his family, to flee the fire. Ellis represents this perceived infrastructural overwhelming as Father walking along a high beam of a house frame that Detainees begin to shake, a house ultimately engulfed in flames of confused origin (Father attributes them to a 'demented teen' (12), the teenaged Son to a detainee (21). The movement (and requisite lightness) that undergirds the characters' responses to the 'refugee crisis' news permeating their household announces itself again in Father's response to a problem on a building site he is working on: 'Drive away' (12). Compelled to constantly outstrip neoliberalism's manufactured precarity, the family discursively generate ground for themselves by depositing the weight of neoliberal threat in 'others' that they circumscribe as burden and filter away from the nation. Winning, as Daughter conceives of it, a 'war of attrition', thus becomes the mobilising force of Australian necrocivilisation. *These People* shows that the movement enabled by caging others as Ahmed's objects of hate, however, creates another sort of immobilisation staged as the fire that consumes the house where the family huddles at the end of the play. It is a fire that engulfs the protagonists precisely because hegemonic discourse's relentless demands for blithe movement have shielded them from the weight of confronting their colonial structure.

Deborah Rose Bird observes that the antithesis of the 'life-giving and life-supporting' Aboriginal concept of 'water business' is the 'unmaking' of water, part of which includes 'killing the human capacity to understand water in its living complexity. ... mystified often by being performed under banners that seem to signal life: production, ... economic advantage, national security, etc., etc' (12). *These People's* emblem of white Australia's floundering in colonial legacy, the image printed on the published play, recalls such an unmaking: it is the image of the Mother finally unable to purify herself in the washing machine because no water comes through anymore. She understands her apology as a cleansing that will free her of the weight of guilt from having 'made it a mess' (42):

The Mother said she was sorry.

Now it's their turn...

You say you're sorry, too.

She waits for an answer.

None forthcoming.

It's only guilt she's feeling. Nothing real.

Nothing to do with her. She didn't lock them up personally.

Just needs a holiday.

A wash is as good as a holiday.

She grabs washing powder and pours it into the machine.

A cleanse. A purge. A baptism.

Clean me.

Forgive me.

A wash for whites. Whiter than white, please. (47–48)

Reading the washing machine as Dwyer's 'discourse machine', represented in *CMI* with a spinning table, reveals the Mother as being trapped in the spinning whirlwind of necrocivilisational discourse that performs its 'death-work' of hard borders under the guise of civilisation. The disassociation permeating *These People*, from third-person speech to sliding signifiers to constant flight from 'weight', constitutes a spinning of ostensibly sheltering filtering language that, like *The Rainbow Dark's* plastic, functions to reveal necrocivilisational discourse as ultimately disconnected from and fatal to those it instrumentalises through purported protection. The heterotopias that Ellis maps over each other in interpenetrating stories and dialogues produce the effect that the 'invasion' is perhaps more accurately described as a catching up or surfacing of what this hegemonic discourse has always

generated: besieged and corporealised bodies that, in their efforts to gain ground 'by sealing others as objects of hate', citizens have made their own (Ahmed *The Cultural Politics* 57).

Tribunal

The bushfires that close in on the family at the end of *These People* point to the disavowal of Oliver's response-ability in settler society towards indigenous Australians in continuous relationship with Country, a disavowal that Karen Therese's *Tribunal* attempts to address. While its title may suggest a similar focus on the banality of evil in mainstream Australians complicit in the brutalisation of asylum seekers, *Tribunal* introduces a much more nuanced approach to Australian necrocivilisational mechanisms. Creating a ritual boundary around the performance, an Aboriginal Elder leads a smoking ceremony on the opening and closing nights of *Tribunal's* run. The Yuin/Darug Elder Aunty Rhonda Dixon Grovenor presides over the space wearing her consecrated possum-skin cloak, which plays a fundamental role in proceedings dedicated to bearing witness to the experience of asylum seekers in Australia as well as related indigenous, migrant and settler accounts. *Tribunal's* set consists of a large Persian rug with two screens behind it and chairs occupied by the performers on either side. Performers take turns standing in the middle of the rug facing the audience to present their monologues, though they also act out scenes with each other, with the screens and recorded audio occasionally illustrating their stories.

The play premiered at Sydney's Griffin Theatre in August 2016 and more recently ran at the 2018 Sydney Festival. I have previously spoken about the categories of 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' as ostensibly functioning as sources of temporary protection: the asylum seeker or refugee is termed thus to facilitate a transition from a civilization that does not shelter them to one that can. *Tribunal's* foregrounding of both the testimony of asylum seekers and citizens delivered via various dramatic strategies, formats and languages seemingly chosen according to the will of the performer communicates the play's resistance to homogenised filters of experience and identity. While Aboriginal Elder Aunty Rhonda points out that the theatrical framing means that *Tribunal* is 'for play', the relationships that the production foregrounds - grief's unravelling and possibility of reweaving that it suggests - encourage audiences to imagine a different kind of filtering. *Tribunal* provides the space to consider filters predicated on the room as a given rather than the cell.

Part II foregrounded asylum seekers' non-arrival when Australian and UK authorities detain them physically and discursively. *Tribunal*, I will argue, disrupts necrocivilisational processes through a joint grieving process for lives necrocivilisation renders ungrievable and for the discursive identities of citizen accessories to dehumanisation. This disruption, however,

consists not only in acknowledging loss and the necrocivilisational nature of hegemonic filters. *Tribunal* also offers a fundamental rethinking of heterotopic filter formation in the context of globalisation, 'a phenomenon often understood as the imposition or the emergence of a homogeneous experience across the world through the expansion of a neoliberal economic vision' (*The Globalisation of Space* 5). Within a globalised context, international conventions and treaties set out the rights of those who are forced to flee to another nation. At the same time, Agamben shows that in the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man 'the very natural life that, inaugurating the biopolitics of modernity, is placed at the foundation of the order vanishes into the figure of the citizen, in whom rights are "preserved"' (127). It becomes the responsibility of the nation to preserve the rights of its nationals. Hence, when asylum seekers and refugees arrive, their internationally endowed rights come second. In Australia, national policy on asylum seekers contradicts the UN Convention on Refugees of which it remains a signatory. These national policies tap into and are born of the discursive and affective hostility surrounding the terms 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee'.

Sitting inside a civilizational healing process that hegemonic settler society prevents from taking place

To adapt Leeny Sack's phrase again, *Tribunal's* audience finds itself sitting inside a civilisational healing process that hegemonic settler society prevents from officially taking place. I will argue that *Trubunal's* framing device, a truth and reconciliation process that explicitly includes the perpetrator-centred element of the tribunal, makes space not only for asylum seekers to tell their stories, but also for citizen audience-members to consider their own limitations and complicity. Both elements entail the acknowledgement of loss, of grief and mourning in which, as Judith Butler notes, 'something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that these ties constitute who we are, ties or bonds that compose us' (Butler *Precarious* 22). *Tribunal's* dual process of victimhood and culpability, however, encourages mourning not just for the victim, but also for the humanity that mainstream Australians thought was theirs. Hegemonic settler society actively prevents the process that *Tribunal* stages from taking place, because this society is necrocivilisational, founded upon the production of un-grievable lives. *Tribunal's* civilisational re-taking of place for the asylum seeker Khodayar Amini sets the stage for the play's episodes of unravelling and reweaving of asylum seeker as well as citizen and aboriginal discursive identities.

To spark reflection on complicity, *Tribunal's* framing device involves a peculiar pairing of testimonial drama and the culpability usually foregrounded in the tribunal theatre form. Presenting what it calls a truth and reconciliation tribunal, the play unites two transitional

justice mechanisms: the truth and reconciliation commission and the war crimes tribunal. Emphasising the tribunal's focus on culpability in the play's title underscores accountability though *Tribunal* is not, strictly speaking, a piece of tribunal theatre. As a theatrical form, Chris Megson notes that tribunal theatre, pioneered by the UK's Tricycle Theatre Company, 'consists of the meticulous re-enactment of edited transcripts of state-sanctioned enquiries that address perceived miscarriages of justice and flaws in the operations and accountability of public institutions. Typically, tribunal productions take the form of a forensic simulation of the inquiry's disputations and setting' (195). Tribunal theatre is relentlessly perpetrator oriented. Rather more like version 1.0's *CMI*, it dramatises records from official proceedings to expose 'the obfuscations of established parties engaged in various forms of (officially mandated) wrongdoing' (Feldman 11). In contrast, *Tribunal*'s presiding Elder Auntie Rhonda describes this 'People's Tribunal' as 'a place where we gather to bear witness to the stories of asylum-seekers and refugees, to acknowledge the hurt and damage that they are suffering. We also acknowledge their strength, their resourcefulness, their joy and creativity' (1). Despite its name, *Tribunal*'s emphasis seems rather to lie in recuperating the humanity of victims through testimony. Former South African Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Richard Lyster notes the nature of this acknowledgement within the official frame of a truth and reconciliation process 'is an affirmation that a person's pain is real and worthy of attention. It is thus central to the restoration of the dignity of victims' (119). In tribunal theatre the voices of victims are pointedly either largely absent, as in *CMI*, or overshadowed by those on trial. The balance between victim and perpetrator that distinguishes *Tribunal*, however, presents a different approach, creating a framework of encounter that privileges the witnessing of Mahdi Mohammadi and Jawad Jaqoubi's experiences as asylum seekers in the context of Auntie Rhonda's story as an Aboriginal Elder.

Explicitly, this encounter takes as its aim 'to interrogate and explore notions of truth and lies around the politically contentious labels of "refugee" and "asylum seeker"' ('About *Tribunal*'). *Tribunal* presents an interrogation of discourse. One of the first and most disturbing examples of discursive disjunction examined in the play concerns the suicide note attached to the self-immolation of asylum seeker Khodayar Amini. *Tribunal*'s handling of the records surrounding Amini's death, like those swirling around the empty chair in *I've got something to show you*, produce 'an attempt to create an encounter with its subject' (Jeffers 97). This encounter, as the perpetrator/victim frame announced in *Tribunal*'s premise suggests, involves testimony as well as an admission of guilt. Red Cross worker Katie Green tables Amini's suicide note, reading his words aloud and providing further context. Amini wrote, before dousing himself in petrol and setting himself alight, that the Australian Red Cross, immigration and police tortured and killed him 'with their slogans of humanity and cruel treatments' (6). Green admits to

upholding the system that destroys asylum seekers like Amini: 'I understand what he means when he lumps Red Cross in with the Immigration Department and the Police. We always tried to do our best but sometimes it felt like I was a cog in a system that was destroying people' (7). Fassin and D'Halluin have documented how aid workers and lawyers in France work to push asylum seekers through narrow filters of admission, which, while securing a place in the host nation for individual cases (like Adam Kashmiry discussed in Chapter Four), serves to maintain the filters themselves. My discussions in Part II noted a similar phenomenon to the one Amini refers to, of 'cruel treatment' made legitimate and invisible because it is woven through a warp that renders it inextricable from the administration of civilisation. Reacting angrily and experiencing deteriorating mental health as a result of Australia's 'administration of civilisation', Amini is nevertheless described by Green as 'difficult to work with'. As Ahmed notes 'A chain of effects (which are at once affects) are in circulation. ... bodies that are attributed as being hateful – as the origin of feelings of hate – are (temporarily) sealed in their skins. Such bodies assume the *character of the negative*' (*The Cultural Politics* 57). The system in which Green is a cog is necrocivilisational, erasing the victim's truth (Amini as distressed) in favour of the oppressor's (Amini as 'difficult'). *Tribunal* gives space to interrogate necrocivilisation's nature here through the document containing Amini's contextualising in his own words along with additional context woven around the event by the Red Cross worker as accessory on trial.

Western necrocivilisation's requisite condition of shrouding fundamental exclusion in 'slogans of humanity' categorically resists civilizational processes that threaten the legitimacy of the cells and hollowed out bodies upon which it builds. *Tribunal* as gesture at civilisational process restores Amini to discursive humanity by, after Green's statement, providing a space and conditions for mourning and for grief. After a moment of silence during which Amini's picture is displayed on two screens behind the actors, Aunty Rhonda sings the lullaby 'Mama Warranor', a song she chooses 'because all the little children, all the babies, all the Guthers and all the Jargems that are born, they are all special. Every human being is special and unique' (7). In this sentiment, Aunty Rhonda echoes Amini's admonishment that 'Humanity is not a slogan; every human being has the right to live. Living shouldn't be a crime anymore' (Script 6). In this temporary space of mourning, Aunty Rhonda restores Amini from 'difficult', but also from 'victim', to 'special', that is, to Olivarian subject for whom the wider community grieves. Aunty Rhonda's acknowledgement understands Amini as a subject with agency and value even where these are systemically suppressed. I contend that it is not only for Amini that citizen audience-members grieve here, however, or even for him principally. Butler's grieving question ('Who "am" I, without you') and understanding that 'when we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do', in the

context of *Tribunal*, presents another object of grief, as well (*Precarious* 22). After witnessing Green's statement alongside Amini's, a transformational witnessing that *Tribunal* facilitates entails mourning for the people (whom Amini designates 'so-called human beings') that citizens thought they were when Amini was 'difficult'. *Tribunal's* space of mourning functions to snap the ties that bind asylum seeker to (as source of) difficulty, unravelling the understanding that the procedures Amini experiences as torture are processes of civilisation. As such the truth and reconciliation commission works subtly as a tribunal, aligning citizens with Green as cogs that turn the gears of necrocivilisation.

As well as this undoing, *Tribunal* offers a process for re-weaving. The prerequisite of Australia's hegemonic settler society is the extermination of prior civilisations. This erasure includes certain acts of refugee advocacy like the We Are All Boat People protest that projected an image of a First Fleet ship labelled 'Boat People' onto the Sydney Opera House in 2001. Though Aboriginal activist Rebecca Wingfield first linked boat people to white Australians for We Are All Boat People artist Deborah Kelly at a conference, J. Olaf Kleist notes that the group's refugee advocacy in fact 'turned the original meaning "all boat people are foreign to this land" insinuated by indigenous advocates into the opposite but more convenient meaning "all boat people belong to this land"' (Kleist 672). I suggest that, in addition to the problematic linking of European colonial enterprise to people seeking asylum, the chief issue with this 'nation of immigrants' rhetoric, rather than Kleist's observation about belonging, is its suppression of indigenous authority. Gungalidda Elder Wadjularbinna Nullyarimma states:

Before Europeans came here, (illegally), in the Aboriginal world, we were all different, speaking different languages, but we all had the same kinship system for all human beings, in a spiritual way. Our religion and cultural beliefs teaches us that everyone is a part of us and we should care about them. We can't separate ourselves from other human beings - it's a duty. The first thing we have to stand by is our belief of caring for each other. People can come here, if they respect our land, and treat our land as it should be treated. And if they don't interfere with us, and if they respect our differences, because we've been interfered with enough! (*Borderlands*, 'A Gungalidda grassroots perspective on refugees and the recent events in the US').

Nullyarimma does not dwell on categories of foreignness, but a unity grounded in respect for land and difference. Based on this understanding, which echoes Aunty Rhonda's admonishment '[t]his is not our culture, to treat people this way', *Tribunal* conceives of healing through a civilisational process of re-weaving, of reconceiving relationship, rooted in the reinstated indigenous authority, custom and Elders embodied in Aunty Rhonda and the possum-skin cloak (2). I have used Thomas Fuchs' notion of hollowed out, corporealised bodies of *homo sacer* to conceptualise a necrocivilisational process of producing ground upon which to build domination. *Tribunal's* contextualising and mourning of Amini restored the

asylum seeker to grievable loss while beginning a process of unravelling and reconstitution for citizens upon different grounds.

Coexisting in Country: Aunty Rhonda and the Possum-skin Cloak

Tribunal's declared purpose is to scrutinise the way people categorized as 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees' are filtered away. Accordingly, the play brings 'artists, human rights activists, lawyers, young leaders and outlaws' to the conversation about the affects accruing to asylum seekers and refugees ('About Tribunal'). These characters (with most actors playing themselves) construct the investigation of the contentious and contending affects surrounding supposedly sheltering categories. With 'outlaw' we encounter again Agamben's 'bandit' and Shahin Shafaei's 'refugitive'. Significantly, however, *Tribunal* presents an alternative civilising structure grounded in indigenous authority. It is an authority legitimated in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connection to Country that I outlined in the introduction to this chapter. Aunty Rhonda's possum-skin cloak provides the country-based ordering principle for the truth and reconciliation theatre space. The ceremonial cloak acts as a material metaphor for relations in wider Australia emphasising coexistence with country and people rather than the imposition of legibility that produces outlaws and refugitives. Like the plays I have analysed in Parts I and II, *Tribunal* offers a protest of Australian necrocivilisation, but it also foregrounds alternative principles that resist the formation of foundations produced through subordination.

The possum-skin cloak is an alternative filtering device presented in opposition to immigration processes of Australian necrocivilisation that *Tribunal* also briefly dramatises. *Tribunal* holds space for a cosmology suppressed by hegemonic settler Australia and through which asylum seekers receive a different context and meaning, a welcome to Country starkly different to necrocivilisational caging on land. The cloak as symbolic object and the values that accompany it emphasise coexistence in Country, an idea that has a close affinity with the arguments I have elaborated and which I will advance here, on filters as (con)text. To coexist involves being 'in common', 'equally', 'jointly' rather than producing ground (that is significance, legitimacy) through abjection and hollowing out bodies ('coexist'). In this way, coexistence on land rather than land-making chimes with understandings of Country as preceding human life: 'We been borning [in] this country. We been grow up [in] this country. We been walkabout this country. We know all this country all over ... Blackfellow been born top of that ground, and blackfellow-blackfellow blood [in the ground] ... This ground is mother. This ground, she's my mother. She's mother for everybody. We born top of this ground. This [is] our mother. That's why we worry about this ground' (Riley Young qtd in Bird Rose *Dingo Makes Us Human* 220). While 'context' means the weaving around that gives meaning to text, I will look at how the coexistence that the cloak symbolically frames connotes weaving in

concert upon Country in the spirit of Elder and academic Lowitja O'Donoghue's remarks that opened this chapter, that asylum seekers fleeing to Australia are 'grafted' onto Country ('Return'). As an instrument of heterotopia, the cloak marks *Tribunal's* theatre space out as a place of at once personal and collective contextualising. It represents Aunty Rhonda's personal affiliations and authority as presiding Elder while also acknowledging contexts and understandings that lie outside her ken that others must elaborate for themselves. Without eliding the indigenous specificity of the cloak, this binding together in concert recalls the weaving of garments in *The Bogus Woman*. Particularly, the antithesis of the cloak's creation and maintenance manifests in Adshead's play as Mr. Pennington's replacing the washing and sewing labour of his late wife with that of a marginalised Filipina woman. In a globalised context, the cloak reinforces a particular type of weaving together in community that prioritises human relationship upon the land.

The ceremonial and communal process involved in the cloak's making reverberates in the place-making of theatre space: just as the theatre space and time of *Tribunal's* run were initiated and closed with a smoking ceremony, so a communal smoking ceremony also consecrated the cloak. Communal ceremony establishes *Tribunal's* space of truth and reconciliation as one of evolving coexistence rather than necrocivilisational rigidity and domination. The Griffin Theatre's web page for *Tribunal* includes a short video on how the cloak was made including part of the ceremony surrounding its creation and its use in ceremonies celebrating births, deaths and marriages, welcomes to Country and healing ('About *Tribunal*'). In the play, Aunty Rhonda describes the significance of this making process: 'When the cloak was being made there was a process. A smoking ceremony was performed by Yuin Senior Law man Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison to cleanse and bless the cloak. The artwork was discussed—what was to go on the cloak, what symbols of cultural and spiritual importance to strengthen and give power, peace and love for the truth-telling and the healing' (19). The emphasised acts of making that brought this filter into being express a logic of shelter that foregrounds relationships of interdependence with Country and between human and non-human beings present upon it. Aunty Rhonda describes the collective cloak-making process as 'grounding' ('About *Tribunal*'), implying an acknowledgement of the relationships that bind and compose her, to the land and possum totem, and to her community and others present on the land. As First Peoples, this bond with Country relates specifically to Aboriginal groups and Torres Strait Islanders. However, as O'Donoghue makes plain with the concept of grafting, country is by definition available to all beings. This principle of belonging regardless of difference is one that nationalist narratives (deployed even in good faith We Are All Boat People campaigns, for example) cannot appropriate.

While the possum cloak is a ceremonial instrument for the community, it is also crucially particular to Aunty Rhonda. The civilisational potential of the cloak lies in its representation of one elder's lineage and ties to peoples and the land, resisting the appropriation of other experience, while at the same time representing the qualities that preside over the space it consecrates. Aunty Rhonda explains:

Mahdi, I want you to help me with this cloak...

[He helps Aunty Rhonda turn the possum skin cloak inside out]

These are my totems. Umburra, the black duck, is my Yuin totem. And the possum is my Darug totem.

When the cloak was being made there was a process. A smoking ceremony was performed by Yuin Senior Law man Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison to cleanse and bless the cloak. The artwork was discussed—what was to go on the cloak, what symbols of cultural and spiritual importance to strengthen and give power, peace and love for the truth-telling and the healing.

So, I'm sharing some of my story with you now...' (19)

Aunty Rhonda shares her story, her own background, a contextualisation that does not present her as objective arbiter of truth but rather as an individual who must also navigate her own experience alongside others who, in *Tribunal*, 'are speaking their truth from their own personal experiences' (1). As Elder, Aunty Rhonda holds space for *Tribunal* participants to contextualise their own stories, and alongside them holds space for herself, as well. The possum-skin cloak's positioning of Aunty Rhonda creates the conditions for and understanding of truth as a function of context.

The possum skin cloak orients a heterotopia that contrasts markedly with Australian state law and practice. This juxtaposition is presented plainly in the person of Aunty Rhonda who, while holding the prestigious title of Durug/Yuin Elder, also reveals that she is homeless as a result of the state violence of settler colonialism that continues to actively expose Aboriginal people to unshelter. The order of laws and traditions in which Aunty Rhonda exists as an Elder, however, persists, supports and, where it is able to function openly, provides purpose and identity (this is evident in Aunty Rhonda's story about her father, Charles 'Chicka' Dixon, who stopped drinking when he became an activist for Aboriginal rights (19)). The cloak's discursive and material production is communal, but also involves Country-derived authority: Aunty Rhonda's cloak - discussed, made, cleansed and blessed in Country-derived community led by an Elder - represents a joining together to create shelter, a system of values and law that informs a discourse woven by and lived through the agency and experience of each entity present on the land. In the *Tribunal* theatre space, not only do Aboriginal practices of meaning-making preside before an audience of many non-indigenous Australians, but the

understandings and tools embodied in Aunty Rhonda and her possum-skin cloak actively work to contextualise asylum seeker, Aboriginal and privileged citizen experience of necrocivilisational filters. That said, *Tribunal* is performed in a western theatre that exists as entertainment within neo-imperial and capitalist frameworks. There is always, in this context, a danger and certainly a degree of appropriation that must be acknowledged and that will take place regardless of consultations with indigenous people however extensive.

Like *Tribunal's* juxtaposition of Aunty Rhonda's cultural prestige and homelessness, Barry Barclay draws out illuminating observations in a hypothetical account of James Cook's first encounter with Maori were he in possession of a film camera: 'The English establishment (and much of the New Zealand establishment as well) will inevitably place the images of the lieutenant and his men within the context of a glorious framework of navigator-explorer. ... Rongowhaka may context the images rather differently. These are the men who went through their homes uninvited' (*Mana Tuturu* 17). Barclay discusses his colleague Paolo Cherchi Usai's claim that film is 'not a true text, not a reliable text, not a text sufficiently complete in itself to be rightly called "text"' (16). The film or, even more so, the image, contains no narrative in itself and is only attached to a context by those who have the power to do so. Barclay foregrounds the power to filter, that is to contextualise, which, for asylum seekers and Aboriginal Australians equates to a hegemonic mandate to interpret whether and how they qualify for civilisation. Like Amini's observation of this filtering dynamic as being characterised as torture and murder under the guise of 'slogans of humanity', the examples I now turn to reveal the authorities and citizens who wield instruments like Codes of Behaviour as necrocivilisational. The civilisational alternative *Tribunal* offers opens out languages and custom as heterotopia: *Tribunal* introduces a filter that is habitually interrupted by opacity and illegibility, but, as Gungalidda Elder Wadjularbinna Nullyarimma stipulated, 'we were all different, speaking different languages, but we all had the same kinship system for all human beings, in a spiritual way' (*Borderlands*). The truth and reconciliation space presided over by the becloaked Aunty Rhonda acknowledges the opacity of difference in Aunty Rhonda's own particularity. This opens channels for unexpected affinities, but also ensures difference does not preclude shelter.

Act One had ended with Mahdi's recreation of the dance parties that, he tells the audience, were forbidden in Afghanistan. Act Two shows the filtering mechanisms hegemonic Australia employs to produce a similar necrocivilisational outcome. *Tribunal's* Act Two introduces the Code of Behaviour, a tool it represents as a necrocivilisational filter that effectively stifles language and cultural expression. Paul Dwyer in the role of immigration official reads out requirements from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's Code of Behaviour for Mahdi's temporary release into the community on a bridging visa, including such

stipulations as following Australian laws, not engaging in rape, harassment, intimidation or violence, nor taking part in 'anti-social or disruptive activities that are inconsiderate, disrespectful or interfere with the peaceful enjoyment of other members of the community' (18). Theorists of black fugitivity discussed in my analysis of *Refugitive* discern how legal and administrative measures to ostensibly maintain western civilisation, measures that liberal democratic discourse registers as reasonable (like detention), become an invisible tool of oppression. Indeed, Aunty Rhonda swiftly draws a parallel between hegemonic Australia's demands of asylum seekers and laws regulating behaviour to her own Aboriginal people, which has led to her homelessness: 'I know what a Code of Behaviour is. I grew up under the racist Aboriginal Protection Act. They stopped us from speaking our language, dancing our dances, accessing our spiritual areas. They took the fairer skinned children away and put them into institutions. A lot of grief and sadness came from that. It carries on to this day' (18). Within *Tribunals*' space of truth-telling, Aunty Rhonda's experience of the Code of Behaviour surfaces, revealing the instrument as one of the repressive control that characterises necrocivilisation.

Scarry observes that torture involves the obliteration of civilisation through the conversion of objects usually facilitating comfort and safety into instruments of pain (41). The aim is to reduce the world of the victim, to stifle the projection of physical and verbal acts of making. Mahdi intimates this aspect of the Code of Behaviour filter in an encounter with a woman on a bus: 'One time, I was on the train with my cousin, we were talking in Hazaragi and this lady—she leans over, taps me on the shoulder and says: "You're in Australia! Do you mind speaking English!" I was straight away thinking of the Code of Behaviour. I can't say anything' (Script 20). Mahdi worries that the citizen's protests would be grounds for deportation, for filtering away, thus preventing a satisfactory 'being in the world' lest that world interpret this form of being as engaging in 'disruptive activities that are inconsiderate, disrespectful or interfere with the peaceful enjoyment of other members of the community' (18). Here, we understand how the Code of Behaviour becomes a tool to enforce the orientations of the hegemonic group towards what it produces as otherness: the fact is erased that Mahdi is the person experiencing harassment, disrespect and interference in his peaceful enjoyment of a conversation with a friend. The unshelter that the Code of Behaviour produces for asylum seekers like Mahdi strips them of their ability to safely engage in acts of making, preventing the joint encounter and negotiation of co-existence.

In Part II, I examined plays that protested this stifling of the movement between room and world required for civilisational acts of making: in *The Bogus Woman*, *Refugitive* and *Adam* the asylum-seeking victim contextualises what the authorities filter away; *The Waiting Room* and *Through the Wire* emphasise how detention time and space disintegrates identity.

Tribunal protests, too. Its representation of the Code of Behaviour, for example, connects the disenfranchisement of Aboriginal people to those seeking asylum in Australia. They both experience the filtering away of their own context in mainstream Australian society and law and, consequently, forfeit material shelter: Aunty Rhonda is homeless, Mahdi threatened with detention and removal. Mahdi's and Aunty Rhonda's stories show that mainstream Australian filters gain authority not through negotiation in encounter, but rather as a result of violent filtering and the repetition of ostensibly 'fair' practices and categorisations. As I have begun to elaborate in my discussion of the possum-skin cloak, however, *Tribunal* also offers a civilisational form of filtering, one predicated on the room rather than the cell. The room, whose walls filter the world permitting the individual to project themselves in acts of making, enables encounter and negotiation. A condition of the proliferation of 'acts of making that once multiplied, collected and shared are called civilisation' that *Tribunal* underscores, however, is respect for opacity and illegibility (Scarry 39).

Though *Tribunal* provides the space for Mahdi to contextualise his story, to share his experience completely on his terms is not practicable given that the audience and other characters must understand what he is saying. So, Mahdi cannot give his testimony entirely in Hazaragi or Dari for instance, and if he does, others in the space require an interpreter. The host's hospitality, as emphasized by Levinas and Derrida, is limited by practical concerns. However, *Tribunal* sets up a space of encounter and coexistence, not assimilation, in which complete understanding is neither possible nor desirable. *Tribunal* uses diverse languages from Darug to Dari, sometimes translated sometimes not, to introduce an acknowledgement and a sense of worlds and lifeways too vast to apprehend even in the heterotopic space of the theatre over which marginalised groups have control. In terms of the metaphors I have been working in, the theatre space is a place of encounter where the sea of potentiality is filtered differently by each person, but also acknowledged and encouraged to exist in the open. *Tribunal's* format recognizes the limitations of hospitality, but through its intermittent language changing and explanations gives the audience an awareness of the nature of the Australian state's harsh filters, which change the meaning of people's attempts at negotiating shelter and making themselves understood. The Immigration Officer prevents Mahdi from explaining the difficulty of providing a date of birth, for instance, a fact which endangers his credibility for Australian authorities. The intermittent clarity and obscurity that shifting languages create for all members of the cast and audience (unlikely as it is that any one member of the audience understands all the languages spoken on stage and the impossibility of completely overlapping experience) represents a kind of linguistic filter. The effect is to create a consciousness of filtering. Audience-members only having a grasp of some of what is said unsticks the certainty

of categorization and encourages the idea that the hard filters of Australian colonialism produce brutality and the corporealised bodies of those who do not fit them.

Rethinking heterotopic filters in *Tribunal* involves a reorientation of the type of power authority wields. Aunty Rhonda and the possum-skin cloak as ordering principles in opposition to Immigration and the Code of Behaviour foreground an alternative heterotopic arrangement that permits a proliferation of heterotopias grounded by relationship to land and the entities that exist upon the land. This emphasis on coexistence again works to unpick the discursive machine weaving that binds civilisation to legibility. English is not the first language of Australia and *Tribunal* immediately links the administrative Code of Behaviour to the suppression of a nevertheless enduring multilingual and multicultural Australia. In the *Tribunal* space of truth and reconciliation, Aunty Rhonda presides by ceding powers to describe and contextualise others' experiences. 'Can I just say it in my own words?' Mahdi asks the Elder after enduring the beginnings of an asylum interview on stage (4). To this Aunty Rhonda replies 'Mahdi, this is a theatre—you can do what you like' (4). The theatre as heterotopic space provides the freedom for this form of coexistence.

'This is a theatre - you can do what you like': Tribunal's Reality Claims

I have mentioned that *Tribunal* does not constitute a piece of tribunal theatre, which takes for its reality claims the re-enactment of transcripts from official proceedings like the Hansard in *CMI*. This is not to say, however, that *Tribunal* does not have a relationship to these plays as highlighted in its title. The premise of *Tribunal's* reality claims, in relation to those of a traditional tribunal play, rest upon the fact that *Tribunal* presents most actors playing themselves and representing their real life experience in a civilisational proceeding for which, crucially, there exists no official transcript because it has never been permitted to take place. A civilisational processing that should occur officially but has not, *Tribunal* inhabits a liminal space of truth and reality existing in an unreal, insofar as it is local and unofficial, frame. To pick apart the implications of this premise, I will look at specifically what claims *Tribunal* has on the real and how its 'unreal' framing enables this content.

Tribunal's force, like *Souvenirs* or *Nothing But Nothing*, derives from the presence of real people on stage telling an audience about their experiences in their own words. In addition, *Tribunal* offers documents and some official interview scripts, photographs and cultural objects like songs, music and dances. Unlike the didactic verbatim theatre of pieces like Ice and Fire's *Asylum Monologues*, however, *Tribunal's* heterotopic frame involves an Aboriginal epistemological reality, a way of processing anchored in a lifeway that is also permitted to surface and operate on its own terms in this 'unreal' theatre space. *Tribunal's* ritual boundary, circumscribed by the smoking ceremony that opened and closed the run, marks out the space

over which Aunty Rhonda presides. In *Tribunal*, these real people and their suppressed stories encounter a likewise real and likewise suppressed filtering mechanism in the Aboriginal-led truth and reconciliation tribunal. Here, the bodies of evidence that enter the room are not only permitted to surface, but *Tribunal* also offers a filtering system that permits them a sheltered body in Scarry's terms of support for projection and acts of making rather than Fassin and D'Halluin's of prescribed narratives. In this sense, the stories audience's witness in *Tribunal* are shown to be more precise than the accounts recorded by the Department of Immigration and Border Security.

If this is the case, then *Tribunal's* theatrical frame, rather than providing a platform for other realities among many as Agnes Woolley observes, works to highlight the deliberate necrocivilisational nature of Australia's mainstream society and government's refusal to foster a process built on truthful accounts. Worthy of note, therefore, are the instances in which *Tribunal* draws attention to the theatre as space not of make believe or simple alternative account of events, but of agency in expressing one's own experiences and the ability of indigenous authority to achieve this. Mahdi protests that the immigration interview format and questions are not allowing him to communicate his story, to which Aunty Rhonda replies 'Mahdi, this is a theatre - you can do what you like' (4). *Tribunal* also contains references to necrocivilisational authority 'framing' theatre as immaterial, beneath 'real' jobs in medicine, engineering or construction. Mahdi, against the will of his parents, studies art and theatre, becomes a theatre maker, and while in detention in Australia meets a guard who likewise tells him that the theatre is not a good job in Australia. Doctors mend bodies (and, in Fassin and D'Halluin's sense, verify the probable physical origins of their scars), engineers and construction workers build rooms. However, these professions do not readily or routinely interrogate the immaterial discourse that informs their material work. *Tribunal* represents the vital role of the arts' interrogatory processes that tap into and examine discourse. At the end of the play, Aunty Rhonda picks up this framing of theatre as inconsequential: 'But, of course, at the end of the day, this Tribunal has been just for play... What will it take for we - the people - to bring our representatives to the point where they are willing to hear the truth and repair the damage they have done to so many? Let us just take a moment to think about this' (24). It has not been the content, of course, or even *Tribunal's* frame that is untrue, but rather the necrocivilisational system that strategically filters away and denies asylum seekers and First Australians the foundation to negotiate and build their own discursive shelter.

Isin and Rygiel's critique of Agamben notes that the space of subjugation, where a life is rendered inconsequential and ungrievable, can also become the site whence that subject claims their rights (189-190). *Tribunal* reveals necrocivilisation working to undermine indigenous authority in that the space where that authority appears to mainstream citizen

audiences comes in a purportedly inconsequential form that Aunty Rhonda recognises as 'just for play' (Script 24). Irene Watson observes that 'Terra nullius and its violence made Nungas and our laws invisible, while our ruwi [land] become (I use this tense because it is, as I know it, a continuum) enslaved, commodified and entrenched in their rules of property' (Watson 'Aboriginal Laws'). After the *Mabo* decision's official rejection of *Terra nullius*, Watson argues, colonialism simply acquires new forms (Watson 'Aboriginal Laws'). However, Karen Therese's part in *Tribunal* gestures towards the play's subversive power simultaneously undermined and resting in what Aunty Rhonda encapsulates in 'this is a theatre - you can do what you like'. Therese's characterisation of her evidence as the 'hearsay' not admitted in courts because it constitutes what the witness has heard rather than their direct experience, is nevertheless presented as relayed faithfully from a recording of a conversation that Therese and Paul Dwyer (who is also present to corroborate the story) were originally party to. Therese, appearing to listen to the recording through headphones while simultaneously voicing her part, underscores the faithful verbatim nature of her performance by having the first few sentences of the recording play for the audience and then taking over herself. Therese as embodied filter for the lawyer's testimony on an asylum case that could have bound the government to compensate detained asylum seekers compellingly gestures to a law of relation more expansive than what is admissible in the legal system and the power that steers it.

Watson explains that Aboriginal laws 'are lived as a way of life; they are not written down as the knowledge of the law comes through the living of it. Law is lived, sung, danced, painted, eaten, walked upon, and loved; law lives in all things' ('Aboriginal Laws'). Not an official court of state law or inquiry, *Tribunal's* theatre space is one of encounter and relationship that gestures towards these expansive indigenous laws of Country that continue to operate despite their enforced invisibility to the Australian state and much of the non-indigenous citizenry. Therese's performance as her friend who also knows Dwyer is one of many expressions of the performers already being in relationship outside the confines of the production. This fact and *Tribunal's* wider truth claim in the indigenous authority Aunty Rhonda embodies permits these relationships to have weight rather than be erased in official deliberations. Therese's embodiment of her friend, noting that his truth and his impressions on her are inadmissible 'hearsay', expresses how much what state law omits and *Tribunal* permits matters.

Grief, as Butler observes, 'shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties or bonds that compose us' (*Precarious Life* 22). Undoing and reweaving alongside, amongst and against each other, *Tribunal's* cast and their mixture of first-person experience and dramatisations of presenting, carrying, interpreting and making space for the voices and stories of others whom they stand not above but in relation to dramatizes Gungalidda Elder Wadjularbinna Nullyarimma's similar principle of coexistence: 'everyone is a part of us and we should care

about them. We can't separate ourselves from other human beings - it's a duty'. Kelly Oliver's witnessing subjectivity requires continual response-ability and address-ability. *Tribunal* elaborates the witnessing subjectivity Al-Qady began to model in *Nothing But Nothing's* address and response and that Shafaei broached with his question and answer sessions after *Refugitive*. *The Rainbow Dark* represented a will towards this exchange among citizens that necrocivilisational discourse stifles with hard and impermeable discursive and material filters. Where *The Rainbow Dark* highlights cracks in necrocivilisational discourse in the thoughts and actions of citizens, *These People* eliminates these from the understanding of its central citizen family leading, in the end, to environmental disaster that necrocivilisation's economically driven non-response did not permit citizens to foresee or escape. Within *Tribunal's* space where indigenous Country-given authority presides, however, the practice of filtering becomes civilisational rather than necrocivilisational. Each person and group is welcomed to filter, respond and be witnessed according to their own evolving and negotiated frames of meaning.

Chapter Six: UK Civilisation

The UK's understanding of itself as a 'civilising' force, the moral imperative that ostensibly drove its global colonial enterprise historically, still undergirds policy and discourse, particularly in relation to asylum and immigration. From asylum controls increasingly tightening through both Conservative and Labour governments to 'Hostile Environment' policies, Brexit and the Windrush scandal, the UK government and dominant public discourses in the 21st century circumscribe UK identity through programmes of racist exclusion and a generalized failure to address the colonial past and neo-imperialist present. Asylum seekers continue to arrive as Agamben's 'limit concept that radically calls into question the fundamental categories of the nation state' (Agamben 134). Where the Australian plays in Part III often draw on and alluded to encounter via the tenets of an older but also current civilization and the calamity of persistent white settler non-response-ability, the UK plays employ ancient civilisational iconography including the garden and the relic in *Souvenirs*, the fiery messenger and the empty chair in *I've got something to show you* and the suppliant branch in *The Suppliant Women*. These symbols frame Oliver's ethical or psychological witness truth claims that inhere in the everyday and current events present in the lives of audience-members and performers. The last three plays of Part III examine UK civilisation and necrocivilisation in both intensely local, and spatially and temporally vast frames that facilitate inter-projection and intervention in both.

The UK, a state that I have argued is dominated and structured by necrocivilisation, increasingly conflates racist and xenophobic orientations and policies with love of country and, by extension, love of civilisation. In 2011, David Cameron called for the UK and other liberal democratic nations of Europe to engage in a 'muscular liberalism', stating that '[w]hen a white person holds objectionable views, racist views for instance, we rightly condemn them. But when equally unacceptable views or practices come from someone who isn't white, we've been too cautious frankly – frankly too fearful to stand up to them' (Cameron 'PM's Speech at Munich'). Ahmed identifies Cameron's 'hard-nosed' approach to 'Islamic extremism' as 'a narrowing of the gap between mainstream and fascist uses of political love', that is it 'demands that others believe as we do' (*The Cultural Politics* 226). Priyamvada Gopal, likewise, observes that the 'post-9/11 liberal "dilemma" is routinely posed as one of tolerating difference while yet maintaining the values of the (European) Enlightenment' ('Speaking with Difficulty' 101). However, these values (Cameron lists '[f]reedom of speech, freedom of worship, democracy, the rule of law, equal rights regardless of race, sex, or sexuality' ('PM's Speech at Munich')) are continually invoked to present western nations as 'civilised' while simultaneously visiting necrocivilisational violence upon those whom liberal democratic discourse defines as other to

civilisation. This positioning continues with more recent events including the dominating xenophobic and racist elements of the Brexit campaign as well as ostensible resistance to this exclusion by lauding migrants for exemplifying 'British' values. It also surfaces in the omission of the *metic* (the ancient Athenian resident foreigner) from Greig's examination of Europe's civilisational underpinning in *The Suppliant Women*, which I examine here. Though Kipling's 'white man's burden' is a less palatable phrase than it once was, prominent UK discourses continue a colonial 'civilising' mission. This now manifests in part as moral imperative to say 'to its citizens, this is what defines us: to belong here is to believe in these things' while positioning the originators and arbiters of these values as white (Cameron 'PM's Speech at Munich').

In terms of self-definition via hospitality towards forced migrants, the paradigm of UK refugee reception continues to be that of Jewish people fleeing Hitler's Germany. This refugee intake registers alongside other commemorations of wartime acts of heroism as iconic evidence of the UK's welcoming and compassionate national character. The UK Government's 2014 Holocaust Commission's mission statement reads: 'Ensuring that the memory and the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten lies at the heart of Britain's values as a nation. In commemorating the Holocaust, Britain remembers the way it proudly stood up to Hitler and provided a home to tens of thousands of survivors and refugees, including almost 10,000 children who came on the Kindertransports' (Cabinet Office 9). In recent years, few initiatives have provoked this exaltation of 'British values' like nostalgia for the Kindertransport. Current refugee movements have kept the Kindertransport narrative fresh in the minds of the UK public most prominently with House of Lords peer Alf Dubs, a former Kindertransportee, attempting to organise similar arrangements for asylum seeking children.

However, with very few exceptions, the UK has historically been reluctant to welcome people seeking refuge, even and especially the refugees of the Second World War (Cesarani; Kushner; London). Jennifer Craig-Norton notes that the 2016 'Dubs Amendment' is almost as vague and non-committal as the government's support of volunteer agencies' Kindertransport mission had been in 1938 (Craig-Norton 10). In 2015, the then United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein compared Europe's response to refugees to the outcomes of the 1938 Evian Conference 'when countries including the US, the UK and Australia refused to take in substantial numbers of Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler's annexation of Austria on the grounds that they would destabilise their societies and strain their economies' (Jones). The sentimentalism that fills national memory with a highly selective retelling of the Kindertransport story encourages both arguments to admit asylum seeking children (though burdensome administration means very few of these children have arrived)

and arguments disassociating a simplistic representation of 'deserving' *Kinder* from current child refugees, who may not all fit the teddy bear-clutching image of the innocent child (Kushner 188, Craig-Norton 11). Tony Kushner argues that it is this sentimental and self-congratulatory reinvention of the past that has kept the UK and other European countries (with the notable exception of Angela Merkel's Germany) from adopting a non-exclusionary response to refugee and asylum-seeker admission (192).

Sentimentality is an affective filter that operates in the above example through the *Kindertransport* as symbol of definitive UK generosity. The central images in the plays I analyse in this chapter (most saliently the garden and the souvenir, the empty chair, and the suppliant branch within a story of democracy) have, likewise, come to symbolise the values that Cameron attaches to white Britishness. These symbols come to stand in for affects that pose as values, affects that Cameron's 'muscular liberalism' must defend because 'At stake are not just lives, it is our way of life' ('PM's Speech at Munich'). The way these plays deploy these emblems, however, presents a more complicated picture of working through past and present violence. Rather than holding these value-laden cultural objects as proving civilisation, each play examines instances of how civilisation might come about or be undermined through each.

I've got something to show you

As established in the Introduction, the difference between static voyeurism and transformational witnessing in the ability to encourage an unravelling of the viewer and subsequent co-creation of meaning. The collaborative production of *I've got something to show you* created a space to bear witness to the loss of local asylum seeker Esrafil Shiri Tajaroghi. Destitute after a rejected asylum appeal, Tajaroghi entered the Manchester office of Refugee Action on the 28th of August 2003, doused himself in gasoline, and set himself alight. He died of his injuries in hospital four days later. Alison Jeffers relates that, in response to the dearth of press coverage of Tajaroghi's death and that of nine other asylum seekers who self-immolated, the Manchester Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers approached the University of Manchester's In Place of War group (92). After advertising for the theatre project, a team coalesced, which included five asylum seekers among other interested individuals in addition to Jeffers herself who was, at the time, a PhD student. The group devised a partly verbatim documentary theatre production interrogating the circumstances around Tajaroghi's life and death as an asylum seeker fleeing persecution for his sexual orientation in Iran. *I've got something to show you* premiered in June 2005 at the University of Manchester. The performers emerge from amongst the audience and into chairs in the performance area to

begin the play. The stage set-up appears very similar to *Tribunals*, with performers taking the floor in front of a screen when it is their turn to present a scene. The screen behind the actors would display images such as the local Manchester cityscape, dates, titles, and, in the final scene, the image of an angel.

Self-immolation is not strictly related to fire but is a sacrificial suicide ('self-immolation'). Tajaroghi's self-immolation, if it registered like that of Mohammed Bouazizi mentioned in *Adam*, would by definition offer an alternative to *homo sacer*, one who can be killed with impunity but who forfeits the status of sacrificial victim (Agamben 72). The affinity of the two protests lies in their ability to signify as protest. Like Shafaei's contextualisation of hunger strike, *I've got something to show you* attempts to carry forward this challenge to *homo sacer* status. An act that Jeffers likens to Quang Duc's 1969 self-immolation which helped to topple the Diem government in Vietnam, the aim of *I've got something to tell you* as commemoration was to 'take up' Tajaroghi's story, to 'challenge this refusal to look' (Jeffers 91). Jeffers identifies the documentary and conceptual strategy of *I've got something to show you* as creating the weight-bearing tension Kelly Oliver formulates as eyewitness and faith witness. This tension, as I have noted in previous discussions, brings the historical subject position and its account of literal, verifiable events to bear along with 'what we might call psychoanalytic and phenomenological truths' that cannot be seen or proven empirically (Oliver 'Witnessing and Testimony' 80). A combination of both is present in the tapestry of the work that weaves together official Home Office communications and interview proceedings along with discourse and information from other quarters including the storyteller, a friend, witnesses and local police. The play interrogates, and literally delineates in the form of an empty chair, the asylum seeker-shaped holes in the media and public consciousness. I will examine here how the alternate heterotopic space of the theatre dramatizes these holes in the record and the mechanisms, according to the play, that create them. *I've got something to show you* works to provide a space for an audience to examine salvaged testimony and documents that constitute the concrete traces that Tajaroghi left behind, and to examine 'the circumstances in which Esrafil had been allowed to vanish' (Jeffers 93).

Chair Frames The Body That Enters the Room as Absence

I have discussed the theatre as a space where bodies that necrocivilisational discourse filters away may enter the room after the fashion of bell hooks' woman of colour entering a feminist theory meeting: '[the group of white feminist activists] may feel bonded on the basis of shared womanhood, but the atmosphere will noticeably change when a woman of color enters the room. The white women will become tense, no longer relaxed, no longer celebratory' (hooks 56). In white western liberal democracies, marginalised bodies speak of and are inscribed with

the weight of inclusive exclusion, the weight of carrying the projections of a white supremacist discourse machine that permits some bodies to move by binding others to the disavowed (Ahmed *The Cultural Politics* 57). Their ‘bodies of evidence’ in reality theatre interrupt their erasure, exposing the uncivilisation of their discursive binding and sometimes, as in *Refugitive* or *The Waiting Room*, the mechanisms that produce it, as well. Tajaroghi’s body, however, pointedly does *not* enter the room. Rather, a chair, unoccupied except for a rucksack, interrupts Tajaroghi’s status as unacknowledged, ungrieveable life. The epistemological poverty of asylum seekers who must prove their legitimacy to the authorities are denied the “given” of credibility and worthiness of civilisation that mainstream citizens of the dominant group are afforded. Asylum seekers must make their stories fit a frame that the hegemonic group determines. This narrative is the asylum seeker’s only option of a chair, what I have termed “discursive furniture”, to take the weight of their body. The heterotopic theatre space, however, affords a greater degree of buoyancy and latitude for asylum seekers to speak, to a much greater extent, on their own terms. *I’ve got something to show you* interrogates the necrocivilisational nature of this discursive furniture for asylum seekers.

Tजारoghi’s absence, framed by the chair as deliberate non-embodiment, maintains his death as disruption throughout the first part of the play. Jeffers notes that she and her co-creators took this decision in part out of respect for the deceased, but the effect is also one of maintaining the presence of the play’s ultimate truth claim: the fact of Tajaroghi’s invisibility, absence, and death (97). The empty chair has a tradition of embodying loss and those who should be present but are not. PEN International has a long-established practice of using the empty chair at its events to symbolise a specific writer ‘who cannot be present because they have been imprisoned, detained, disappeared, threatened or killed’ (‘Writers and Artists’). Liu Xiaobo’s 2010 Nobel Prize was famously presented to an empty chair, and in 2011 The British Library unveiled *Witness*, Anthony Gormley’s sculpture of an empty chair to commemorate 90 years of English PEN. Re-membling ‘chair work’ is also a common method in the psychodrama and gestalt schools of psychotherapy, as well as forming a part of many mourning practices from the ancient Samhain dumb supper to the US military’s fallen comrade chair. While the inflections in these uses of the empty chair vary, the significant length and breadth of its tradition in grief and political practice bring to light important contributions that *I’ve got something to show you* makes to my discussion of UK and Australian theatrical representations of hyper(in)visible asylum seekers.

In Chapter Five, *The Rainbow Dark* and *These People* presented themes of attention and how Australian necrocivilisation permits asylum seekers to surface in public consciousness as vessels for the weight of necrocivilisational violence, fear, disgust and pity. Though *I’ve got something to show you* likewise addresses how asylum seekers register or not in the UK public

domain, the empty chair approach is more productively viewed alongside plays that take on a frame of mourning such as *Tribunal* and *The Bogus Woman*. *Tribunal*'s honouring of Khodayar Amini, who self-immolated while video conferencing with aid workers, works in a similar way to contextualise the death as grievable loss. *The Bogus Woman* repeatedly frames the loss of the protagonist's child and characterises the play as a candle she lights for the dead baby, a candle abruptly snuffed out with her own death at the end of the play. *I've got something to show you*'s non-Farsi-speaking theatre makers chose the song 'Fire in the Fields' by Shahram Nazeri, Tajaroghi's favourite musician according to his former flatmate, to give atmosphere to the play's Epilogue that read as a commemoration. They learned later that the lyrics 'evoked the image of a bird that set itself alight, describing people as candles on graves' (Jeffers 102). In this context of producing a loss to be acknowledged, the empty chair comes to signify both lightness and weight: shorn from the weight of his body like the unconscious Adam Kashmiry, Tajaroghi achieves final, extreme lightness in death, but his absence made visible through the empty chair becomes a hole in necrocivilisation's filtering apparatus. Tajaroghi speaks through actors who bear witness to his story, but, as well as his invisibility in life and death, the empty chair marks his ultimate refusal to materialise when bidden.

Jeffers states that 'Esrafil's death and the motivation behind his actions were, and will remain, unknown despite the public nature of his action and the judicial attempts to fathom exactly what took place when he set fire to himself. The process of creating the play became then an attempt to create an encounter with its subject, "failed asylum seeker" Esrafil Tajaroghi' (97). I will examine in more detail in the following section the documents and modes of testimony that attempt to summon this absent subject, but first I must further establish the terms of the encounter that the chair sets up. I have noted in previous chapters the significance Scarry affords to furniture as well as walls, windows and doors in her exploration of shelter and unshelter: 'Both in the details of its outer structure and in its furniture (from "furnir" meaning "to further" or "to forward," to project oneself outward) the room accommodates and thereby eliminates from human attention the human body' (39). Moreover, as I have previously noted, in English the development of the word 'furnish' runs closely parallel with the development of the word 'frame', both verbs based on 'from', meaning 'forward movement, advancement, progress' (Ayto). Jeffers describes the chair as serving 'to emphasise Esrafil's invisibility, both in his life in the sense of failing to be individuated from a "tide" of refugees, and in his death in that it received limited media attention' (97). However, Jeffers also notes that this device 'forc[es] him back into the remembering of those who saw the play: reversing Feldman's words, the body vanished was *not* the body vanquished' (98). The chair as emblematic facilitator of the acts of making that form civilisation appears in *I've got something to show you*

as an image of weight, of grief, refusing the lightness necrocivilisation cultivates in the privileged through non-acknowledgement of Tajaroghi in life or death.

I have identified Butler's 'insights of grief' as a productive understanding that identifies the import of grief in terms of its work of undoing and recognising the ties that constitute us (*Precarious* 23). The filtered and filtering surface woven by discourse feeds into, creates and perpetuates the ties that constitute us socially and in time and space, but necrocivilisational discourse actively produces surfaces for, in Mbembe's words, 'those who must die' that foreclose their mutual negotiation for shelter in the world (11). The empty chair tears this necrocivilisational social fabric, holding open the hole where a member of the community has been removed. In Scarry's formulation of civilisation, the chair along with the bed and the floor, hold the weight of the body, so that the body itself, and by extension the mind, need not carry that burden and can, instead, dedicate itself to creating 'objects of consciousness', to build the social world in concert with other bodies. To frame in this way is to care for the body so that the body can act less like a wall. I have called the semantic dimension of this process 'discursive furniture', a designation that permits movement. It is the difference between detained 'asylum seekers' as 'queue jumpers' versus 'prisoners of conscience', which the old man in *The Bogus Woman* highlights with his placard. The hunger strikers of *Refugitive* and *The Bogus Woman* draw attention to the corporealised bodies that, in reality, form the hard ground upon which the dominant community stakes its claim. The chair in *I've got something to show you* presents the frame that was meant to hold Tajaroghi's weight in life along with the documentation and relationships meant to protect people like him. Ultimately, however, these forms of evidence proved to be cogs in a system that did not take the weight of the asylum seeker, but rather corporealised him.

I observed that the empty chair has a venerable history in the UK as acknowledgement of prisoners of conscience, those who are caged or killed. What is less common is its use to highlight the growing numbers of those the UK keeps from civilisational acts of making, numbers that include not just asylum seekers but those seeking visas to speak at conferences or to perform at arts festivals and events, and even the UK's own citizens in the case of the Windrush scandal and extraordinary rendition of UK citizens to 'black sites' in the wake of 9/11. Tajaroghi's chair as a site of commemoration and mourning represents a legitimacy upon which to rest his body that UK necrocivilisational filters denied him in life. The chair produces the loss that the Salford community did not know to grieve. The context that the chair represents recasts the narrative upon which the Home Office based their rejection of Tajaroghi's asylum claim. This recasting allows different aspects of Tajaroghi to emerge, but as the chair keeps visible, this public reframing comes too late.

'the circumstances in which Esrafil had been allowed to vanish'

If we interpret the chair in this instance as a 'prisoner of conscience' platform focused inward (that is, the chair standing in for one of the local community's own), it is productive to examine how *I've got something to show you* contextualises the chair as well as other opportunities it offers to reframe the asylum seeker in terms of mourning and witness. Like Mireille Astore's *Tampa*, *I've got something to show you* relentlessly remembers an immutable reality (the fact of Tajaroghi's absence). While *Tampa* relies on its audience to produce discursive meaning for scrutiny, however, in addition to challenging 'the refusal to look' with the chair and documentary evidence (Jeffers 91), *I've got something to show you* presents an alternative witness-bearing framework that accounts for how 'refugees can be conjured into appearance but how they can also be made to disappear when it is politically expedient' (Jeffers 92). Applying Kelly Oliver's understanding of subjectivity as composed of a witnessing structure that produces 'beings who mean' (that is, beings who are involved in meaning-making and signify within their context), I will move from the empty chair to how and what it is made to signify through both eyewitness accounts and faith/ethical witness (Oliver 'Witnessing and Testimony' 80). The play presents documentation and testimony that remain after Tajaroghi has gone in the same way that other plays examined in this project, like *CMI* or *Refugitive*, attempt to piece together the circumstances of an absent person or people that necrocivilisation has foreclosed from encounter. *I've got something to show you* examines and offers for affective processing the 'circumstances in which Esrafil had been allowed to vanish' (Jeffers 98).

While the production enabled official and eye-witness information about the event to be disseminated to the local community, equally important was a theatrical frame that enabled the audience and theatre-makers to process this information in a way that would encourage witnessing rather than the hegemonic discursive machine's weaving out of sight that Adshead depicted in the nurses account of hunger strike in *The Bogus Woman*. Jeffers notes that while the group's initial emphasis lay in producing authority with documentary sources and verbatim accounts pertaining to Tajaroghi and the UK asylum system, the process of bearing witness to the unseen presented itself as a crucial partner to the play's eye-witness accounts (104). Jeffers understands these two components of witnessing according to Kelly Oliver's framing of witness as existing and providing stability through the tension between historical eye-witness and psychological faith or ethical witness:

The urge throughout the project was to stage the story 'so that Esrafil's death *will have made a difference*' and this use of the future anterior sense here is significant. Oliver suggests that, while historians work in the past tense, the language of justice is a language of the future and we need to find 'the conditions of possibility for justice – for

the impossible to become possible in the future – in the past’ (p. 135). Even though the original statements about Esrafil’s act took place in a judicial context with the express aim of ‘getting at the truth’, the language of the eye-witness was historical. The actors’ act of witness in re-voicing those words was, on the other hand, not historical but ethical. (103)

It is revealing, in the context of my analysis, to consider the play and Jeffers’ application of Oliver alongside the linkages and comparisons I have developed between Fassin and D’Halluin’s ‘protected’ body and Scarry’s inhabitant of the room. Employing this theoretical constellation, I will consider how the actors frame Tajaroghi’s story to create a space in which his act of protest may be witnessed in a transformative sense.

The empty chair frames the person who did not pass through the UK’s narrow necrocivilisational filter. Try as they might, lawyers, doctors, translators and refugee support workers could not produce the empirical, epistemologically verifiable eye-witness evidence to prescribed narratives and characterisations that would preserve Tajaroghi’s physical life. Like Adam Kashmiry’s GP, Tajaroghi’s doctor did not provide evidence of his struggle (Tajaroghi’s flatmate testifies: ‘doctor says You can go. You are very OK. But he was sick. I saw every day’). The three actors that take turns to speak Tajaroghi’s lines in three respective iterations of asylum interviews make visible the poverty of eye-witness without faith witness. These three actors are markedly anti-verbatim both in their emphasis of non-embodiment through stark variations in their own physicality and speech (two of the actors were refugees from African countries, one of whom responded in French, and one was a white non-refugee woman (Jeffers 97), but also in their lines consisting of the short, translated answers to formulary Home Office questions. Esrafil One even ends their lines with: ‘Esrafil Shiri S1128411. 18th August 2001’ (7). The difference between Fassin and D’Halluin’s body and Scarry’s body is the element that Oliver describes as an addressability and response-ability, the structure of which she defines as the lynchpin of subjectivity: ‘oppression and victimisation undermine subjectivity by attacking the ability for address and response’ (‘Witnessing and Testimony’ 79). Scarry’s body provided with a benign room can project itself out into the world in acts of making and negotiation. In their refusal to embody Tajaroghi, the actors voicing his lines take historic eye-witness documents and interpret them (bear forward their meaning) in a way that shows their production as one of oppressive erasure.

The three actors that voice Tajaroghi alongside the chair represent the violence and erasure of the asylum system, but *I’ve got something to show you* also includes several parts that crucially frame the play as a witness-bearing exercise. These were the Storyteller, Tajaroghi’s friend and former flatmate, and the three refugees of Scene Four, two of whom presented their own stories and the other a verbatim account from a fellow refugee who did not wish to appear in the play. Along with the Epilogue’s poem, which I will examine more closely at the end of

my discussion, the Storyteller is the primary agent of this faith or ethical witnessing. This position is epitomised in their description of the rucksack sitting on the chair. Where the Police Officer's eye-witness account describes the bag as containing 'various items of clothing and a wallet which contained Home Office identification badge with the following details on: forename, Esrafil, surname of Shiritajaroghi, born 07/05/1979 of Iranian origin' (28) the Storyteller refers to Tajaroghi's bag as being, at least initially, a container of 'hopes'. While the Storyteller also serves to fill out Tajaroghi's story with concrete details as well as speculative possibilities, they also signal the lacunae where faith/ethical and eye witness intersect: 'Maybe Esrafil went in search of someone to break the news for him only to get the shock of his life. ... Maybe he moaned but there was no-one to lift him up to safety. We don't know. We do know that he was evicted from his house, had his benefits removed and had no further vouchers for food' (14). If we return to the filter, fabric or tissue woven of the interplay between warp and weft, it is illustrative to understand eyewitness as a weft to the warp of framing faith/ethical witness. While the part of Tajaroghi's friend acts as an intermediary between eye and faith witness, testifying to Tajaroghi's illness and physical life as well as the experience of asylum, the holes in the story that he fills as well as those that Tajaroghi would be able to account for were he alive remain open with the chair. The Home Office's rejection of eyewitness evidence that people like Tajaroghi's friend and Tajaroghi himself could have offered is not proof that the Home Office operates on strictly concrete eye-witness evidence. Rather, the epistemological impoverishment that narrow and one-sided frameworks of understanding offer allow the UK government to filter away large numbers of people. The presentation of lacunas that persist amid so much documentation and so many stories represents another rendering of a filter, of the grounds for how Tajaroghi was treated being full of holes.

Scene Four's verbatim testimonies from three other refugees link their own experiences of the UK asylum system to that system's witnessing framework being embedded in neoliberal capitalist economies. 'If I really really want to start a campaign,' says Sarah, 'I should now see myself as a commodity' (20). The testimonies in this scene portray asylum seeker suffering as a result of political and discursive mechanisms that produce asylum seekers as burdensome and hateful. Measures that provide a small amount but not enough assistance force people onto a benefit by limiting their ability to make ends meet, for example. Refugee quotas and racist treatment are also factors these speakers point to as ways UK asylum policy and execution discursively attributes insufficiency to asylum seekers rather than the system: 'man bakes his own life, the baker of his own life, and to us Great Britain is like a bakers shop but unfortunately, all the machinery, the items there don't work. And yet the government are asking us to make, to bake bread so that the population will be contented, will be satisfied' (20). The

speakers testify to the result of such policies being a stigmatisation of asylum seekers: 'that's why most people won't go telling everybody, showing, telling people they're asylum seekers because they are treating them like animals. Because once you tell someone you're refugee, that word refugee it portrays something other than a human being, something else' (20). In what amounts to the compounding of Foucault's heterotopias of crisis (identity) and deviation (behaviour), Sarah expresses that 'Sometimes they have to relate to you according to what you are in this country because asylum seeker is not a person. It's the situation which makes you become one. It's not the real you, you are different. You are a person like them' (21). These stories bear witness to the experience of UK asylum seekers, situating Tajaroghi within a framework of information lent legitimacy by corroborating bodies that carry his story forward into meaning: 'It's very easy to decide killing yourself will help, because coming here was the last hope' (23).

I've got something to show you's local context intensified the play's reality claims. Limited to the largely local audience in the regional centre of Greater Manchester where Tajaroghi lived, the play was not published, and its local run was the extent of its performance. Jeffers records feedback from the audience commenting on the historical record presented in the play as eye-witness testimony to a local event: 'it wasn't made up, it was a real story, real issues, real people were affected. People could say to themselves: *This happened where I live*' (Jeffers 103). After the fashion of *Lampedusa's* depiction of the Italian island and those struggling to make ends meet in Leeds, *I've got something to show you* presents a heterotopia of the order theorised by Joseph Pugliese (664): 'absolute difference within the space of simultaneity'. Like the Leeds of *Lampedusa* or the Oxfordshire and London of *The Bogus Woman*, *I've got something to show you* uncovers another facet of growing and multiplying bodies of evidence of an uncivilised UK asylum process. Unlike *Lampedusa* and *The Bogus Woman*, however, *I've got something to show you* preserves the local scope that Paul Markham stipulates must apply to verbatim plays if they are not to 'repress the voices of a particular socio-political formation' in the service of an appropriative universalist "'Art" culture' (qtd in Anderson and Wilkinson 36). Not only local but recent and ongoing (a temporality that *The Bogus Woman* also highlights with the date of the protagonist's murder adjusted to the day after the date of performance), *I've got something to show you* draws on the immediacy of the fact that the audience physically lived and worked alongside Tajaroghi, lives and works alongside asylum seekers subject to the same process that consumed him. Unlike plays set in more removed or abstracted communities from the events they depict, *I've got something to show you's* immediacy, the fact that audience members could feasibly have been eye-witnesses to his existence on the streets of Manchester and live in community with those who worked with him and witnessed his self-immolation makes the point that the events and processes depicted

are part of the fabric, history and current reality of the bounded, quotidian spaces the audience occupies beyond the theatre space. In the spirit of the challenge inspired by Leeny Sack's sitting 'inside the memory of where I was not' (qtd in Petraka 105), *I've got something to show you* demands audience members redefine themselves in direct response to an event that happened in their midst but that was kept from their collective meaning-making.

The final two scenes place back-to-back the concrete eye-witness accounts of Tajaroghi's self-immolation ('The day of the fire') and the faith/ethical witness bearing of a silent commemoration of the act ('Epilogue'). The official testimonies of a police officer, fire officers, a paramedic, the commissioner and Refugee Action workers presented in 'The day of the fire' reinforce the bounded, local nature of the incident, with almost every speaker identifying their role within the spatial specificity of the city of Manchester. 'Epilogue', in contrast, presented a simultaneous and mutual unmaking and remaking ceremony permitting signification to emerge by transcending and yet also being grounded within the time and space of the eye-witness accounts:

The actors moved from their seats carrying small bottles of water which had not had any attention drawn to them until this point, and which many of the audience members assumed they were carrying because of the hot weather. Slowly and deliberately the actors began to pour the water over themselves creating a definite frisson in the audience as they watched the actors use the water to wash their hands and arms, pouring the water over their faces and hair in slow gestures designed to suggest a ritual act of cleansing. This simultaneously echoed Esrafil's last gesture of pouring petrol on his body and the attempts to extinguish the flames' (Jeffers 102).

That the same actors read multiple parts (the actor who played Esrafil 1 also read out the testimony of Fire Officer 1, as did a verbatim refugee actor for Police Officer, for instance) produced a sense that both eye-witness and faith framing coexist in each agent. This tension between eye-witness and faith/ethical witness is the core thrust of Oliver's structure of witnessing on which to understand subjectivity as the interaction between history (eye-witness) and meaning (faith/ethical witness) (Oliver 'Witnessing and Testimony' 81). The UK asylum system forecloses the asylum seekers' subjectivity, a feature *I've got something to show you* expresses with the empty chair and scant information surrounding Tajaroghi's absent body. Fassin and D'Halluin's body is a disappeared body, an individual who must erase themselves in order to 'become a commodity' in a necrocivilisational machine calibrated by neoliberal agendas. The alternative, the Scarrian room, safeguards subjectivity by holding the weight of the body. In a system in which asylum seekers are framed to assume the weight of shrouded necrocivilisation, Oliver's witnessing frame of subjectivity also reveals the power of theatre as space for Butler's unravelling grief that exposes the ties that constitute us. The Storyteller ends the play with a poem calling Tajaroghi a 'sick man,' 'anguished seeker,' 'fiery messenger' and 'truth revealer' (31). By bearing witness to the historical facts and carrying

them into significance, *I've got something to show you* gave its theatre making team as well as their audience a space to examine how the asylum system produces 'failed asylum seekers', and to feel their production as weight.

Souvenirs

Where *I've got something to show you* attempted to recover and mourn the Scarrian body through by re-framing documentary and verbatim evidence, Freedom from Torture's *Souvenirs* focuses on filtering that body through foundational metaphors of civilisation and faith witness. This testimonial theatre piece, first staged at the Bath Literary Festival in March 2013 and then touring briefly with Tamasha Theatre Company's production *The Arrival*, uses the garden as a frame within which five asylum seekers tell their stories. The set is sparse with props consisting of chairs for each performer and a raised garden bed along with smaller objects like a cup with beans inside, a rucksack and high-heeled shoes used as visuals for particular monologues. Similar to Ice & Fire productions, the staging is straightforward and minimalist, with performers sitting before an audience presenting accounts of their lives. The stories, autobiographical renderings of the actors who play themselves, are interwoven fragments of journeys to the UK as well as their lives as asylum seekers. The participants, asylum seekers and refugees from Freedom from Torture's creative writing group Write to Life, collaborated with professional UK dramatists to produce the play that they performed as themselves. This is the first obvious departure from other works of verbatim theatre in which actors commonly play the parts of those whose voices are represented. While the content of these image fragments intermingles, the action roughly moves from places of origin and thoughts on presenting their story to initial asylum experiences in the UK (sleeping rough, begging, and spending time in the library and bookies for warmth) to reminiscences of the lives they left behind. These reminiscences eventually transition to accounts of the violence they endured in their countries of origin followed by the asylum seekers sitting in chairs in a line and informing the audience of the decisions they received from the Home Office. *Souvenirs'* use of the garden as frame, as well as the concept of using art to make a souvenir of pain underscores the theatre space as a place of negotiation, but also of care, in order to thrive.

Speaking in the Garden

Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o argues that literary texts reflect 'on the aesthetic plane, a community's wrestling with its environment to make it yield the means of life—food, clothes, shelter' and that, consequently, 'literature is in itself part of human self-realization as a result of his wrestling with nature and with one another' (4). Enlisting the garden as a primary framing device, *Souvenirs* refers directly to the fundamental link between language, art and the garden

as means and spaces of negotiation for the 'means of life'. The play begins with Jade '*sitting on an outdoor chair in front of a neat patch of earth in a raised garden bed. She holds a cup with beans inside*' (12). The final scene has all the characters gathered around the raised garden bed each asylum seeker noting the last contact they had with members of their family. They look at the garden as Jade makes her final observation that 'People say that beans and peas are boring and common – but they have beautiful flowers when they grow. And they smell really lovely. You see bees jumping from flower to flower and I say – that is life. / It takes about 57 days until they are ready to be eaten' (22). A multitude of garden-related metaphors and idioms still in wide use are testament to our language's continuing reliance on concepts born in gardens: to break new ground, to reap what you sow, to make a mountain out of a molehill, to put down roots, to plant a seed; words like flourish, flower, bloom, blossom. On this common ground, asylum seekers can reaffirm connection but also negotiate and speak about their own experiences. By bringing in the garden over which the asylum seekers have power when sharing their stories, *Souvenirs* questions the entrenched discourse that provides a warp unfit for the purposes of civilisation (i.e. shelter). With their stories told in a space that they negotiate largely on their terms, they prepare the soil for their own flourishing, working with the accepted symbolic foundations of the garden as liminal space between room and wilderness to forge the beginnings of their own shelter. But these conditions are precarious in necrocivilisation, and the very civilising conditions the actors model on stage are undermined by a system that is actively antagonistic of civilisational acts of making.

Souvenirs is an instructive addition to my analysis because it presents not the room, but the vernacular garden (that is, the garden cultivated by ordinary people rather than designed and maintained by landscaping professionals) as foundational locus of civilisation. This does not contest the room's importance. Rather, *Souvenirs* expands this idea, framing its stories with the liminal and porous mediating boundary of the vernacular garden space, like the shore, as site of making and negotiation between self and environment. An extensive body of research on vernacular gardening exists in cultural studies fields, notably anthropology, sociology and human geography (see Kimber). Where this research has investigated the human importance of engaging with landscape, the psychological drive to active engagement with place, in particular with living things, can summon a profoundly creative interaction (Brook 233, Brook and Brady 137, Ginn *Domestic Wild*). In migration studies, gardens emerge as places 'where one can learn to come to terms with a foreign environment' (Kimber 272). This foreign environment need not be spatial, but often bears witness to encountering a new world after loss, as attention to garden-based practices of commemoration attest (Ginn 'Death' 237). Several studies draw attention to gardens as sites of identity formation in childhood, as playgrounds and spaces where children 'learned how life was to be lived' (Kimber 267). Like

the container for filtering stimuli that the room provides throughout life, gardeners often incorporate plants from their childhoods into gardens as adults perhaps recalling the initial nurturing co-creation of 'being-at-home' (Brook 232, Ginn 'Death' 235-237, Ahmed *The Cultural* 68). Tim Ingold (198) writes 'human beings do not, in their movements, inscribe their life histories upon the surface of nature as do writers upon the page; rather, these histories are woven, along with the life-cycles of plants and animals, into the texture of the surface itself'. What writers and their texts do in the world, as I conceive of them here, has more to do with Ingold's weaving than the inscription he describes. *Souvenirs* makes clear that the discursive and metaphorical framework through which the actors weave their recounted experiences continually recalls Ngũgĩ's negotiation with place 'to make it yield the means of life' (4).

Souvenirs weaves together the fragmented narratives of childhood, forced migration, trauma and loss written by the protagonists who are all participants in Freedom from Torture's Write to Life creative writing group and assembled by playwright Christine Bacon. The practice of caring for a garden and coming to terms with traumatic experience is a well-established one for Freedom from Torture, which has been using gardening in its therapeutic programmes for over 20 years. Many similar projects attached to other charities and community organisations also exist across the UK. Psychologists and clients talk about being overcome with stimulus and emotion that the regular concentration and physical movement in gardening helps to calm (*BBC Inside Out*). Over time and with this repeated action, many clients arrive at a place whence they can begin to speak. In *Souvenirs*, Tracy picks up a pot that she fills with soil and talks about fighting off an attacker. Following the attack, she lost her ability to speak: 'When I woke up I couldn't even remember my own language. I couldn't make anything come out of my mouth' (15). Tracy frames the details of the event with reminiscences of the mango tree in the garden she left behind, and immediately follows up her account of the attack with commentary about mango seeds: 'Some people call the mango seed the foetus seed. Right at the top there, that's where the tip is and that's where it's going to grow from. See this seed, that is an example of a beautiful seed ready to be planted' (15). Tracy's benign memory of her garden, subsequent foray into an account of trauma, followed by a retreat into the safety of information about growing mangoes is a pattern readily discernible in Jade's performance, as well, which begins and ends the play. Such patterns of expression are commonplace in the garden. Loss that some aspect of the garden might recall, even among those who have not experienced extreme trauma, 'is usually approached obliquely, and glimpsed out of the corner of the eye while passing, touching or weeding' (Ginn 'Death' 241). For many asylum seekers who have suffered trauma, the garden provides the soothing physical structure that permits them to more safely and fruitfully navigate past and present loss.

The emphasis on speech in negotiating this rupture is key. In *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry examines how, in torture, pain is used to obliterate the consciousness and language of the sufferer. Everything that meant protection before has been removed so violently and completely that words formerly associated with comfort no longer connect so readily to feelings and situations of safety. Shelter and the words that evoke it must be forged anew. This is a long, difficult and incomplete process. Though torture and flight may leave an asylum seeker's original root system in tatters and this new ground is unlike the old, the garden's stabilising and reordering of the mind often very slowly yields fruit. This fruit is the language to remember and to negotiate a new place documented in asylum seeker community garden projects across the UK. For one man digging his allotment reminds him of burying the dead back home in Kosovo. "In one refugee the rotting potatoes brought out a feeling that he could not put down roots in this country until he had cleared through the memories of what had happened to him and his family" (Owen B10). Another "from North Africa wanted to plant mint to remind him of his origins. So we planted mint and as we did, his memories came back about his mother and the loss of members of his family" (Owen B10). This recovery of language is an explicit aim of asylum seeker and refugee gardening projects.

In my analysis of plays about asylum, I have begun from Scarry's premise of the room as most basic unit of shelter, the place that provides the conditions for the body to 'become forgetful of its weight' and project itself beyond its bounds in acts of making as negotiation and co-creation that form civilisation. The room acts, I have observed, as a filter for stimuli, a requisite for meaning-making and, thus, creative encounter. To conjure these qualities of the room, *Souvenirs* employs the seed, a symbol of potential but which requires watering, adequate earth, and warmth to thrive. This basic building-block is emphasised in the published play script's illustrations. The front and back covers display a drawing of images mentioned in the actors' stories (a fire engine, Castle beer, chicken and chips, high-heeled shoes, a sign for Elephant and Castle station, street lights, mangoes, a gun) emerging from the seeds at the base of the image. On the front cover, collaged images of four of the five actors heaped together like the seeds at the base of the drawing reinforce the connection between the actors and framing concept of growing seeds in a garden. Tracy's comment that the mango seed is also called the foetus seed undergirds the metaphorical link between garden and human life. Likewise, soon after Tracy advises placing the plants next to a radiator to feel at home in a cold climate, Conteh tells a story about going to the bookies to keep himself warm (17). The room '[stabilisees] the temperature so that the body spends less time in this act' (Scarry 39). The stories arise as acts of making from their origin in the seed, but also, crucially, from the conditions (the room) that made their telling possible.

Throughout this thesis, I have spoken about filters as discursively woven, but the origin of filter is felt, a material not woven as such but rolled, matted and pressed together to form a surface ('filter'). That 'felt' is also the past tense and adjectival form of 'to feel' fits aptly into discussions of movement by negotiation, reinforcement, impression, and feeling one's way. Unlike the discourse machine which systematically weaves people and experiences through a stationary warp of meaning, 'felting' is less contrived and begins in action rather than a particular logic or significance. The images on the cover of the published play, both of the illustration inspired by the stories and the collaged photographs of the actors, in their pressed intertwining communicate this sense of coherence born of impression and supportive relation rather than enforced regularity. *Souvenirs* represents this dynamic in its scripting, as well, with actors advancing the piece by contributing fragments of their own stories one after another, sometimes picking up a discernible thread like mangoes, warmth or a lofty vantage point, though in many instances the connection between anecdotes is less clear. This presentation echoes Bion's concept of the witnessing container that receives the telling without imposing a narrative or explanation (Boulanger). In Ghislaine Boulanger's words, which support Salverson's assertion of witness as transformative alternative to voyeurism in theatre, witnessing in psychoanalysis involves suspending the urge to 'explain away traumatic reactions' in favour of 'allowing our minds and our selves to be temporarily undone ... Meaning must emerge from the process, it cannot be imposed' (Boulanger 28). Vernacular gardening involves such a negotiation and mutual nurturing and impression, as well. The frame of gardening vessel for earth, chair for waiting and tending, seeds, water and warmth make visible the conditions that permit acts of making, like the stories presented on stage and the play itself, that 'when multiplied, collected and shared are called civilisation' (Scarry 39).

Just as *Souvenirs* models this collective witness-bearing to UK audiences, however, necrocivilisation removes the conditions for civilisational flourishing dramatised in the play. Sheila Hayman (9) writes: 'Within two days, one of our five players was under threat of deportation, and another was admitted to hospital with stress-related symptoms' (9). The tour was cancelled and though the situation improved with the group staging a final performance in London for Refugee Week, these events underscore the continued predominance of necrocivilisational logics referred to in the play (10). These references span from British colonialism and neoimperialism that destabilise the places whence asylum seekers flee (Jade states that her uncle was the former president to Uganda whom the British helped to overthrow because 'He wanted the natural resources of Uganda to benefit the people of Uganda' and Conteh refers to the 32 minerals in Sierra Leone being a curse rather than a blessing (12) to direct inditements of the asylum system ('Uganda: We all have had different experiences but for me, the worst, worst, worst thing that I have ever come across in life is to be an asylum

seeker in this country. ... The system, it leaves you without choices and well, you start to feel useless, like you are not worth anything' (21). Towards the end of the play, the actors reveal that Jade and Tracy have had their asylum applications approved, Uganda and Hasani have had theirs rejected and Conteh, after nearly two years, continues to wait. Necrocivilisational logics that operate under the auspices of civilisation surface in *Souvenirs* as well as the circumstances that prevented its continued staging, forces that actively undermine the civilisation represented by the vernacular garden.

Scars as Souvenirs

In addition to the garden, *Souvenirs* draws attention to scars, both physical and psychological that mark the actors on stage but also every human being in the audience in different ways. Scars as souvenirs or memories of pain where the weaving of life was violently interrupted are not limited to racialised asylum seekers. Vulnerability to loss is a condition everyone must negotiate, but necrocivilisation shores up its borders to vulnerability forming the discursive conditions that foreclose shelter's mutual negotiation. Vulnerability is transferred to Butler's ungrivable lives. *Souvenirs* starts from the garden with an emphasis on conditions that permit acts of making to come into the world. The scars that the play presents as souvenirs represent a sacred beginning of civilisation in negotiation for mutual shelter, a relic of which audience members felt compelled to bear into their daily lives in the form of autographs on Write to Life booklets. *Souvenirs* bears witness to a process of the creation of souvenirs of pain that connect as they divide. It is the diverging but intertwining bodies and narratives that witness, impress upon and react to one another in sympathy and conflict that demonstrate what Ahmed calls a collective politics: 'learning that we live with and beside each other, and yet we are not as one' (*The Cultural Politics* 39).

Tracy delivers the meaning of the play's title: 'What happened to me, the marks on my body, the memories, they are going to be my souvenirs' (17). The concept of the wound as souvenir likens it to other instances of a frame like an open curtain keeping pain visible and present. 'Souvenir', a memento or keepsake, is borrowed from French meaning an act of remembering (to recall or commit to memory), a narrative account of memory or something that serves as a reminder ('souvenir'). Tracy frames the traces of her physical and psychological trauma (fragments of which she presents in the play alongside those of her fellow actors) as evidence that attempts to resist pain's unshareability, its tendency to 'flicker before the mind, then disappear' (Scarry 4). The sign of past and present pain serves as a reminder. On stage, this strategy is akin to *Tampa's* asylum-seeker-bearing ship or *I have something to tell you's* empty chair that 'forc[ed] [Tajaroghi] back into the remembering of those who saw the play' (Jeffers 98). Remembering pain in the context of *Souvenirs* also brings to bear further histories of the

word 'souvenir' that resonate with discussions of asylum plays as weight-shifting platforms for necrocivilisation's eternally grieving ungrievable lives. 'Souvenir's Classical Latin etymon is *subvenīre*, 'to come to the support (of), to bring relief (to)' ('subvene'). *Souvenirs* actor Hasani expresses this root meaning when he writes of his experience developing and performing the play:

Heavy things become light when you can share them with each other. By the time we arrived in Bath, we were nervous but we knew each other and the play ... although it demanded great courage to share our stories with strangers on a public stage, what I felt afterwards was relief. Why act your bad experiences? Because of that therapeutic nature of art, which relieves pain by putting it into some other form. That, after all, is the purpose of Write to Life. ... We are asking society to hear our side of the story.

The play and theatre space where pain can take form outside and beyond the speaker assumes the meaning here of an object of memory, shared, pressed and intertwined with others in support and witness, the actors in *Souvenirs* hold these objects to the light.

To get a better sense of what work is being done by bringing scars to light, it is helpful to contextualise this act in terms of my discussions of creating social fabric through acts of making and the place of the scar within this. I have noted a key difference between the person subjected to the official asylum process and the asylum-seeking person in the theatre space resembles that which exists between Fassin and D'Halluin's protected but voiceless body and Scarry's body, protected and maintaining shelter through making. In *Souvenirs*, Tracy (19) points to this difference between the interrogatory space of Fassin and D'Halluin's body and the space of voice that the theatre enables. In a speech directed to those deciding her asylum application, she says: 'Some of your questions I can answer, but some I cannot. It is too much, Listen - please don't ask me questions like this. You are putting your finger into my bleeding wound. ... All the evidence is there, you can see the evidence on my face. Do I need to show you my scars?' In *I've got something to tell you*, one of the refugee actors makes a similar observation: 'Britain is a hospital... a first class hospital where a foreign wound never heals' (24). The environment that produces Fassin and D'Halluin's body keeps the wound open with prying fingers. What was connective and dividing about the sea and shore in previous chapters, *Souvenirs* highlights in terms of the body's skin. Ahmed recognises skin what separates us from but also connects us to others, as surface, 'as that which appears to contain us, but as where others *impress* upon us' (*The Cultural Politics* 25). Fibrous, connective scar tissue forms over skin that has been rent, over the place where there was a wound, a hole. The 'felted' stories as scar tissue over a wound cast the *Souvenirs* theatre space as one where tears in the social fabric may heal but remain in evidence. The space is one of impressions rather than violations. The conditions of civilisation that the play locates in the garden begin a weaving of shelter from witness rather than dissection.

In the introduction to the published script, which provides valuable background information to the play and stands in to a degree for the embodiment of the live performance, Write to Life organiser Sheila Hayman notes that 'immediately afterwards nobody had any questions for the actors – they couldn't speak ... But fifteen minutes later, the audience were queueing ten deep to talk to the actors and get signed copies of Write to Life booklets (7). This behaviour in audience members in response to the physical presence of the actors who voiced their own stories prompts, along with the play's title, a closer look into how the play frames its function in relation to the role of the souvenir scars as relics. Both the holiday of the souvenir and the pilgrimage of the relic involve a journey into heterotopic space that the object acts to substantiate in the return to the everyday: 'Whether tourists or pilgrims, we desire some material relic of the physical space that we temporarily inhabited to grasp some token of its spiritual or emotional atmosphere to sustain us when we leave and to remind us of that place by its presence in our daily lives' (Price 113). The embodied materiality of the handwritten act of making on the signed booklet echoes similar acts within in the play: Jade, for instance, repeatedly impresses upon the audience that the narratives and identities she presents belong to her, are part of the history of this body sitting in this space and time before the audience: 'The woman sitting in front of you is the niece of Dr Milton Obote' (12); 'The woman planting beans in front of you used to be a TV and radio sports reporter' (16); 'The woman you can see here was a rich woman' (16); 'On September 3 1993, the husband of the woman sitting in front of you was taken. She had to bribe them for his headless body to be released to her. [...] On January 3 2001, the three children of the woman sitting here, who walks with a limp, were taken' ... 'A few months later, the woman who is planting her peas, who lives in Clapham Junction in a small flat by herself, was taken' (16-17). These third person enunciations are often followed by the rest of the story in the first person, as though remembering to herself and the audience the frame before continuing her story in the first person. These memories understood as souvenirs implies that the creation of the play and its attendance constitute acts of dark tourism.

Though the concerns of voyeurism that accompany dark tourism are similar to those Salverson and others have expressed in the context of refugee theatre, it is important to note that, like *I've got something to show you*, *Souvenirs* is arguably as much an act of making for the actors as it is a performance for an audience. Tracy stipulates that her scars are *her* souvenirs, thus making clear that the framing of *Souvenirs* as theatrical performance represents an act to bring relief from the pain of the open wound. The audience may witness visible scars on a performer's body, the same scars witnessed in the judicial context examining medico-legal reports corroborating probable cause of injury as well as documents proving continuing threat. Subject to the continued vulnerability of lives rendered ungrievable, the five *Souvenirs*

performers have found their lives and their selves continually undone in their countries of origin as well as the UK. However, the frame that these performers elaborate to witness their way into meaning models a processing of vulnerability fundamental to Scarrian civilisation. Each person on stage bears witness to the experience of the others as they begin to co-create a space of mutual shelter. Historical eye-witness testimony of the wound alone is not sufficient to build shelter, as *The Bogus Woman* made clear. Vitally, *Souvenirs* elaborates Oliver's witness-bearing component, as well: creativity carries trauma into significance. Of reliquaries Jaś Elsner points out that although 'the iconography and writing may be seen as secondary – mere decoration on the container in which the holy relic is held – in fact they are primary, for it is through the decoration in image and epigraph that the worshipper may know the greater whole to which the relic belongs' (121). *Souvenirs* as container of the wound, as scar tissue created in necessity and to relieve pain, highlights the civilising nature of co-creating space.

In addition to moments of support and connection, *Souvenirs* includes controversial material, but the garden's significance in negotiation means that no one thing a person says disqualifies them or others from civilisation. Conteh talks about seeing mothers abandoning their children and running away (15), Jade admits to feeling more comfortable with white people over black and is at times frightened by her own reflection (18), Conteh and Uganda wear high-heeled shoes 'like a woman' to illustrate degradation (21). Such moments have not gone undiscussed within the group but their voicing within the bounds of the play, again, illustrates a place of witness first rather than the imposition of any one discursive logic. The circumstances of the actors meant that the play's performances were necessarily limited in number, though copies of the published script continue to raise funds for Freedom from Torture. Repeatedly recalling past trauma meant that 'each performance, however successful, was also stressful and disturbing for all the actors' (10). This was a circumstance held in tension with the drive to create the conditions of response-ability: Tracy says 'The way people responded – I said the world did not know, but now they do. We have delivered the message. When you see people crying, it sinks in. It's not nice, but it's necessary, so they can help' (7).

The ethics of this negotiation are necessarily problematic not least because individuals repeatedly presenting their trauma on a stage is upsetting and unsustainable. Nevertheless, the heightened sense of consequence that these circumstances conveyed led one audience member to express the wish that 'all theatres gave you twenty minutes to allow Jade, Conteh, Tracy, Uganda and Hasani, and others like them, to take the stage and share that part of their lives with us' (9). Salverson warns against 'succumbing to the pressures of response dictated by our culture's partiality for spectacle and the many voices who would tell us who are the proper victims, and what is the proper response to their suffering' (Salverson 'Taking' 253). The audience member's comment does not acknowledge *Souvenirs* as an act of sharing

among the participants as well as with the audience and does not touch on the nature of audience implication in the performance except to say that ‘it felt like a true human connection’ (9). Though the audience member expressed a wish for this theatre to proliferate, it is perhaps more useful to frame this as a desire for an encounter that necrocivilisation works to prevent. The signed souvenir booklets audience members took home with them importantly contained asylum seeker woven context for bodies trapped in the asylum system and beyond. Moreover, this heterotopic theatre space is different to the official places where the histories of scars are repeatedly demanded in exchange for consideration for shelter. As an instance of witnessing amongst the participants as well as for an audience, *Souvenirs* is not unlike *I’ve got something to show you*, cultivating what Oliver defines as ‘the ethical obligation to respond ... born out of that founding possibility’ (*Witnessing Beyond* 15). In the garden, asylum seekers sow the seeds of narrative negotiations to constitute themselves and their loss anew through new lands and amongst new people. The tasks of tending, planting and harvesting work to provide the practical conditions and conceptual tools to interact with a new place. Importantly, the humble garden furnishes citizens as well as asylum seekers with a metaphorical space to negotiate human vulnerability. Speaking in the garden, asylum seekers and refugees challenge how established citizens discursively arrange the world through one of the most iconic metaphors of civilisation.

The Suppliant Women

David Greig’s production of Aeschylus’ 2,500-year-old play *The Suppliant Women*, which premiered in Edinburgh’s Lyceum Theatre in October 2016, is a departure from Chapter Six’s previous two plays. While most of its actors are also non-professional, these are part of a local citizen chorus presenting in unison their case for asylum as North African refugees in Greece. Aeschylus’ original play, one of the oldest in existence, represents the situation of asylum as a founding element of democratic civilisation itself. Agamben states that the refugee is the limit concept of the nation, the agent whose demands for hospitality bring the nation and civilisation into crisis (134). The way the political body works through this crisis, the objects of emotion it deploys and circulates, form and reform the foundations upon which the citizens of this civilisation build their own shelter or confinement. *The Suppliant Women* tells the story of the encounter between the fifty young Danaid women fleeing forced marriage to their Aegyptid cousins in Egypt. The play’s programme gives plotlines of the Danaid trilogy’s remaining plays: the Aegyptids defeat the Argives and force the Danaids to marry them, but on their wedding night, 49 of the Danaids kill their Aegyptid husbands. The trilogy concludes with the trial of Hypermnestra, the Danaid who, impressed by his refusal to force himself on her, helps her husband escape. Aphrodite intervenes on Hypermnestra’s behalf, the Danaid is released and

her union with her Aegyptid husband begins the royal line of Argos. Greig's version, however, does not offer the closure of the trilogy, but pointedly begins and ends with conflict unresolved.

Importantly, democracy does not necessarily deliver civilisation here. Much is made in the programme and in Ramin Gray's 'Director's Note' to the published script that Aeschylus' play offers the first recorded use of the word 'Demo-cray' (13). What the programme and 'Note' do not include, however, is reference to the fact that this play also contains the first mention of the *metic*, the permanent resident foreigner who is not entitled to full rights of citizenship (Kennedy). In his production, which situates the play within a ritualised context of state offering to the gods, Greig presents the plight of the suppliants and the decision of the Argives to risk war by admitting them as foundational to the beginning and continuation of western civilisation. While the previous plays in this chapter open up new spaces of negotiation between asylum seekers and their citizen communities, *The Suppliant Women* offers a glimpse of the often-unsettling foundational forces and logics made civilisational emblems that undergird processes of asylum in the UK.

The Lyceum's proscenium theatre presented a minimalist staging for *The Suppliant Women* dominated by the suppliants' branches and tattered white wisps attached to them, which stood out against a black backdrop and grey stage. Additionally, the women's bright contemporary clothing marked them out on stage alongside the grey-suited King Pelasgos and Danaos dressed in black. The women not only chanting but often synchronising their movement as a group had a powerful effect visually, presenting them as a force. Music consisted of percussion and the aulos, a double-pipe wind instrument used in ancient Greek theatre. The vocals in this piece of musical theatre were chant-based in a variety of styles from plainchant to protest.

Theatre as Ritual

Actor Omar Ebrahim opens *The Suppliant Women* to communicate to the audience the importance of theatre in the civic life of ancient Athens. In this framing sequence prompting consideration of the role theatre plays in society, a government representative (in the Edinburgh production this was scripted as either a Councillor or Member of the Scottish Parliament) would then join Ebrahim onstage to carry out an ancient Athenian style libation, the ritual pouring of wine, in acknowledgement of the sponsors of the play. Like *Tribunal*, *The Suppliant Women* enlists overt ritual to highlight that what goes on in the theatre space has weight in a civilisational sense. By harkening back to the official and ritual functionality that theatre was developing in ancient Athens whence the play originated, Greig calls into question the space as one of pure entertainment, or perhaps questions the application of the term to designate and dismiss a process that, regardless, has profound civilisational impact as well as potential. In a similar vein, a refugee woman acting in the testimonial play *Queens of Syria*,

an adaptation of Euripides' *The Trojan Women* featuring refugee testimony that also toured in 2016, proclaims 'we are not here to entertain you'. The presence of the government representative embedding the performance in the debates and policy of the state acts as a reality claim. This framing device works against Judith Butler's observed derealisation of the theatre space as it normally functions ('Performative' 527), intimating that this is *not* just a play.

Along with the government official's act and presence is their listing people who 'supported this play', that is, those who gave their time and money to bear it into the world. All those present in the theatre space apart from the handful of paid artists, were formally recognised as patrons of the play's performance and the proportion of their financial contribution was noted down to the penny. These stakeholders included the chorus of volunteers who gave their time for free, the audience who bought tickets, the citizens of Scotland and England whose taxes supported the production, private donors and trusts, the citizens of Edinburgh through the financial support of the City of Edinburgh district council, and finally prospective bar patrons at the theatre. The 'body of evidence' revealed here but which is normally hidden is the state and commercial apparatus behind cultural production, which would be present but go largely unregistered if the actor and the official did not draw attention to them. This theatre space as heterotopic microcosm whence to appreciate the civilisation-defining moment of hospitality, it is important to note, is also a heterotopia in the sense that it is a bounded space, permeable but only to those with the civilisational resources to represent and be represented. The play's supporters are recognised with a dedication to the gods whose favour prominent citizens would curry in ancient Athens. With the ritual naming of these stakeholders, Greig also presents the question 'what do they hope to gain by it?' Whether the offering be to gods or some other collection of forces, *The Suppliant Women* is compelling because it locates the ongoing crisis of western civilisational values commonly termed the 'refugee' or 'migrant' crisis as central to the founding of democratic civilisation in the first place. If literature and, by extension, any cultural production is a 'wrestling with the environment to make it yield the means of life', then what these supporters of the play, from chorus to taxpayers to audience, are producing is an investigation into the founding of their political make-up that might reveal something about the opportunities and limitations of its formation (Ngũgĩ 4).

Though Greig was careful to remain faithful to the original script, allusions to current political crises of asylum are apparent throughout the play. The original references to Syria and anti-migrant sentiments are loaded, for example, in a country so recently embroiled in an ultimately successful campaign drawing on and fomenting anti-migrant sentiment, to extricate the UK from the European Union. Even more overtly, the marketing material and programme for *The Suppliant Women* feature a 2015 photograph taken by Thomas Campean in Lesbos, Greece of the back of a volunteer with a long, blonde ponytail and high-viz jacket standing waist-deep

in water. Their left hand holds upright a branch, the other signals a crowded refugee boat in the distance. In place of the traditional white wool at the end of what is echoed in the play as the suppliant branch, waves an orange life vest, the now ubiquitous symbol of the 'refugee crisis'. The cover of the published script underscores the connection: a dingy full of women appears sketched out in black on an orange background with life vests coloured white like the wool of the suppliant branches. But the bearer of the branch in the scene on the programme is ostensibly not the petitioner but the petitioned. A similar reversal occurs in the description of the play on the Lyceum Theatre's website: 'Part play, part ritual, part theatrical archaeology, it offers an electric connection to the deepest and most mysterious ideas of the humanity [sic] – who are we, where do we belong and if all goes wrong – who will take us in?' ('The Suppliant Women'). In an Agambenian turn, this framing of the play positions citizen audience member, indeed all of humanity, as asylum seeking petitioner, potential ungrivable *homo sacer*. The UK prides itself on fairness and compassion and yet actively creates a hostile environment for forced migrants. Greig's return to Aeschylus' Suppliants, whose admission did indeed bring war and founded a royal line of Argos with the union of the Danaid Hypermnestra and her Egyptian cousin, becomes an exploration of the UK's emblems of civilisation and to what extent they can be said to work in practice in the current liberal democratic political arrangement, the ground upon which citizens build their own shelter and confinement.

This suppliant branch is the central piece of discursive furniture around which civilisation both coalesces and is challenged in *The Suppliant Women*. Acting in a similar way to performances of diminishment like hunger strike, the branch is an instrument by which the weak may compel the strong to prevent annihilation. The provision of shelter as a founding principle of civilisation provokes crisis when shelter is requested but withheld. The women present the stakes when they threaten King Pelasgos, maintaining that if they are not granted asylum, they will profane the sanctuary of the temple by hanging themselves from the carvings of gods (26). This act would mean the destruction of the foundational sheltering promise of civilisation, which hunger strikers enact on their bodies proclaiming that 'to be caged is to be robbed of food, bereft of voice' (Ellmann 92). In response, Pelasgos' lines are reminiscent of Stefano's observation in *Lampedusa* of the rejected claim of the asylee making of the land and language of civilisation water beneath the feet: 'Horror, horror, now like a wave / Sweeps me away to a bottomless ocean' (26). In the 'Director's Note' to the published edition, Ramin Gray concludes that 'Given the current crisis of faith in our democratic institutions, in elections and referenda in particular, it is salutary to revisit the moment when these ideas were conceived and in the simplest of ways to start to renew our commitment to being together in a shared, civic space'. Gray suggests here that in order to restore the shelter and solid ground of civilisation, which in the prevailing necrocivilisation has crumbled 'away to a bottomless ocean', public theatre should

once again outwardly assume the civilisational weight of democracy itself. I share Gray's conviction that theatre has an important role to play in civilisation. However, there are elements of the present staging of *The Suppliant Women* that, like Scarry's four walls themselves and indeed any object of discursive furniture, are not so unambiguously civilisational.

Chorus

The chorus plays a role in Greig's production that is more revealing of the audience's demands of asylum seekers than it might first appear. The state official announces at the beginning of the play that the chorus of suppliant women are volunteers 'as they would have been in Ancient Greece' (1). This libation-giver stipulates, moreover, that the chorus performers are local, drawn from 'all over Edinburgh' (1). *The Suppliant Women* also toured to Belfast and Newcastle upon Tyne in 2016, and in each of these locations recruited a local Community Chorus. In a play dealing explicitly with foreignness indicated not just by clothing but by skin-colour, as well, Greig does not end up recruiting local people of colour (though this is probably not by design) nor does he employ masks. Rather, Edinburgh's suppliant chorus was overtly composed almost exclusively of white and white-passing volunteers. While its larger audiences will be more heterogeneous, the women on stage, however drawn from the locality of the audience, do not necessarily reflect the local population of which they habitually form a part. Like *I've got something to show you*, the pronounced local theatrical context (in its first staging, in an Edinburgh outside Fringe and International Festival time) adds exclusivity to the at once also penetrable heterotopic space. Though ostensibly a production for the community, tickets ranged in price from £10 to £30.50, and the Royal Lyceum Theatre is a decidedly high-brow venue in Scotland's capital. While technically anyone can pay to enter the space and a portion of the support for the play comes from the public purse, the idea that this theatre space is open to everyone in the Edinburgh community is an illusion.

In some respects, the whiteness of chorus-members could arguably highlight an aspect of the play's origins in an ancient Athens where skin colour was not such a developed marker for prejudice and oppression as it is today (Lape 39-40). However, as evidenced in the play's marketing material, the chorus is another instance among several that confound understandings of the asylum-seeker as other. Greig's production mirrors audience-members from the hegemonic group racially while at the same time representing a group of women defined primarily by their foreignness. Moreover, though King Pelasgos recognises the women's exoticism by their clothes (rather than the colour of their skin), in Greig's version the chorus dress in their street clothes: t-shirts, jeans or colourful trousers, and athletic shoes. Differences in ethnicity and dress emphasised in the script are conspicuously absent visually. This casting and staging emphasise the discursive nature of these markers of difference. This

is not to say that the play erases the meaning that the hegemonic discourse machine binds to aspects of the physical body, which plays like *Refugitive* and *Adam* go to such lengths to make visible. Nor do I think it is as simple as encouraging audience-members not to see difference. Rather, Greig's play highlights on the stage as well as in the audience attending the play in Edinburgh's Lyceum theatre the narrow group of people party to this ritual reflection on decisions about who will be admitted and on what terms.

To the modern liberal, western ear, the united voices of near 50 women on stage rejecting age-old convention by roundly refusing to marry feels liberating. This is reflected in reviews with many commentators describing the show as feminist. The Guardian's Mark Fisher hailed *The Suppliant Women* as an epic, feminist protest song'. In the liberal west that struggles to provide safe, legal and accessible abortion and where gender-based violence is a continual threat, Aeschylus' asylum seekers as feminist trailblazers forcefully articulating their struggle for a different kind of life without marriage or children is thrilling. Western audience-members are invited to identify, to feel attuned with these women defying their persecutors, prepared to risk war rather than abide an oppressive peace. Their vehement claim to shelter drives the affect of the play, shifting the focus, along with the other relationship-flipping devices I mentioned above, from the plight of Argos as civilisational stronghold to the Danaids as embodiment of civilisational values.

And yet the reality of the women's father Danaos as protector and mastermind of the affecting Danaid chorus unsettled Edinburgh audiences, with some asking in a panel session on the play as well as on Twitter if Greig's play could not have been made more progressive by removing the figure of the male guardian (Stenning). Greig and Gray chose not to do this, even going so far as to underscore a connection with the invading force by having actor Omar Ebrahim play both Danaos and the Egyptian Herald. The Danaids are made suspect, less worthy of civilisation, when seen to be united by a totalitarian force, that is, when they do not embody the audience's espoused values wholeheartedly. Ahmed observes that '[w]e need to think about the political effects of this hierarchy between open and closed cultures and show how the constitution of open cultures involves the projection of what is closed onto others, and hence the concealment of what is closed and contained "at home"' (*Affective Economies*' 134). The seductive declaration in unison is brought together in *The Suppliant Women* by a male commander. The production's otherwise largely homogeneous, modern western casting and setting make apparent that the otherness of the Danaids for Greig's audience, as well as the power of their united voices, lie in the women's unquestioning and unwavering allegiance to their father. However, the local cast emphasises that the audience projects onto the Danaids their own tendencies, underscoring Ahmed's call to examine how we create otherness by concealing 'what is closed and contained "at home"' (*Affective Economies*' 134). The united

voices, in contrast to the harmonious polyphony of the *Adam* Transgender World Choir for example, do not unambiguously represent the conditions whence new political relations may be felt out and negotiated among individuals and groups. Greig's univocal chorus reveals the seductive power of any discourse that shrouds Agamben's necrocivilisational ban. In identifying with Greig's suppliants and attempting to unshackle them from what is constructed as unsavoury foreignness, western audiences demonstrate a wish to separate a given rhetoric from the functioning of this totalitarian ban within liberal western society.

The single figure holding the branch on the programme cover represents the many suppliants sourced from the community, performing choreographies and chanting on stage as one. The suppliant branches that correspond in the two images signify the potential civilisation in both, civilisation that I have used Scarry to define as the conditions that produce acts of making between people as well as those acts themselves. The life vest keeps one buoyant so as not to be dissolved by the sea. Likewise, the wool at the end of a suppliant branch is the raw material of filtering and weaving, an invitation to co-creation rather than obliteration. The chorus is not a polyphony because it does not depict the negotiation and practicalities of shelter that *I've got something to show you* and *Souvenirs* do. I said earlier that *The Suppliant Women* encourages audiences to reflect upon what is a threat and to whom. In necrocivilisation, I argue, the real danger is necrocivilisation posing as civilisation, thus facilitating the obliteration of the latter. The suppliant branch, like any cornerstone of civilising action, as discursive furniture has the power to obliterate civilisation when it becomes a hegemonic discourse that ceases to facilitate mutual shelter.

The birth of democracy and the elaboration of the foreigner

In the 'Director's Note' to the published script where Ramin Gray advocates for a return to shared civic space (in this instance the theatre) as part of a rejuvenated democracy, he notes that 'The Athenians invented theatre and democracy in the same breath'. This observation, which also appears in the programme, gives weight to the framing of *The Suppliant Women*, a theatre piece undergirded by the state-connected ritual of the libation. However, these two framing mechanisms (the theatre or shared civic space and its overt state sponsorship) act as a platform for the negotiation of a third element: the production of the foreigner. Aeschylus' *The Suppliants* is also the first surviving mention of the term *metic*, which became an official sub-citizen status for resident foreigners in Athens (Bakewell 17-19, 49-57; Kennedy 28). While neither the present play nor its marketing material registers this alongside the simultaneous emergence of theatre and democracy in the western world, the premise of the play itself is the production of and negotiation between citizens and non-citizens. The Argives vote to protect the women, an act that, with Greig and Gray's emphasis on theatre and

democracy, conveys the founding of democracy as simultaneous with the provision of asylum. However, resonances in the play with current UK discourses along with unsettling and foreboding elements in the script and framing material mean that the production itself is less directly conducive to civilisation as society predicated on the room rather than the cell than might appear on the surface.

Democracy in *The Suppliant Women* arises in response to ambiguous and fearful aspects that King Pelasgos detects in the Danaids' claim. The Danaids' rejection of a convention (arranged marriage) accepted by both Argives and Egyptians poses the original threat in Aeschylus' play. However, Kennedy's attribution of citizen fear to Danaos as potential foreign tyrant rather than the Danaids' agency (as Bakewell, Seaford and Zeitlin argue) is more in keeping with the preoccupations of modern western audiences, especially considering Edinburgh audience-members' suggestion that Danaos be removed from the play. The Danaids' allegiance to patriarchy and, Kennedy notes (29 – 30), being at odds themselves with democratic principles as is evident in their definition of Pelasgos' kingship as absolute, mark them out to citizens as potentially destructive and unworthy of liberal western civilisation. King Pelasgos is, in any case, unwilling to shoulder the burden of responsibility for this decision and so puts a vote to the citizens of Argos:

KING: So, I've no choice, the city must vote.

Lest one day the citizens fill my hall.

Chanting in fury

Righteous with anger

'Letting in migrants caused Argos to fall.' (25)

The King's decision to put the suppliant question to a vote represents a democratic moment characterised by the transferral of the sovereign decision to the citizenry, with a view to abdicating not power but responsibility for the consequences. Democracy, as it is framed here, does not preclude necrocivilisation but, on the contrary, provides the legitimacy for necrocivilisation's flourishing. Though the King speaks to the citizens in favour of taking in the Danaids, this shift emphasises that the women must engage with the discourse that informs the Argive citizens in whose power their fate persists even after the vote to shelter them.

With the suppliant branch comes a requisite attitude of submission and assimilation that, like asylum seekers in the west, the Danaids perform but which they find ultimately insufficient to maintain their safety. The central tenet of the Danaids' argument rests on their descentance from Io, an Argive priestess whom Zeus desired and consequently Hera transformed into a cow and drove from Greece. The story of their ancestor alone, however, is insufficient to distinguish the Danaids from their Aegyptid cousins who are also descendants of Greek Io.

Though this common link between Danaids and Aegyptids is not explicitly noted in the play, it illustrates that delineation and filtering of outsiders and insiders is fundamentally discursive and performative. Accordingly, what does mark the Danaids as Greek is their apparent reverence for the custom of supplication and the gods of Greek lands, which the sons of Aegyptos explicitly reject. Says Pelasgos after noting the Danaids' foreign clothes and 'strange' hair: 'Held in their left hand, suppliant branches. / At least that's Greek. At least there's that' (18). The ritual of supplication is continued in a social 'script' that Danaos instructs his daughters to follow as 'land sense' before Pelasgos' arrival (16):

Our best defence is to stay in this temple.
So, quick, now pick up your suppliant branches,
Make sure they're properly wound with white wool.
Hold them left-handed, the way you're supposed to,
So they can see that you're seeking asylum.
If you are challenged then choose your words wisely;
We're foreign: we must be respectful and meek.
Tell them the story of why you're in exile,
Make clear you committed no murder or crime.
Be demure, keep your eyes low, always be modest,
Don't utter a word till you're spoken to first,
Greek people are touchy, they take offence quickly,
So give way, defer, and always remember
You're seeking asylum, you must not be bold.

CHORUS

Father you're careful, and we're careful listeners.

We'll make sure to carefully follow your *script*. (16, emphasis added)

This prescribed performance of mute powerlessness recalls the impossibly narrow expressions of humanity that the UK's filters require of asylum seekers. However, when this performance proves insufficient to convince Pelasgos to risk war, the Danaids step out of their 'scripted' subservient roles to remind him that he will bring shame to the city when they hang themselves in the temple. This dynamic repeats at the welcoming of the Danaids when Danaos advises his daughters to remain respectful because 'if you're a migrant, then people will talk' (44). He admonishes them to be careful not to 'act in a way that brings shame', that is not to yield to men attracted to their alluring sexuality (44 – 45). When the Argives attempt to persuade them that 'Marriage is always better than war', however, the Danaids again

shed their deference and vociferously resist, ending the play with a call for Zeus to 'Give equal power to women / And from this blessing let justice flow (46, 47). These moments when the Danaids break with the impossible discourse reveal the claim that the suppliant branch as discursive furniture attempts to subdue.

Bookended with a tension at the heart of hospitality's infinite claim on the finite, *The Suppliant Women* wrestles with and ultimately leaves open the question of integration into civilisation. That final line demanding equal power for women, which I expand to mean equal power to any person forced into subservience to preserve hegemonic unity, must reckon with the appeals of and to Aphrodite that appear alongside the suppliant demand at the beginning and end of *The Suppliant Women*. The final lines of the play respond to Argive attempts to persuade the Danaids not to bait Aphrodite by refusing marriage, and the following fragment, all that remains of the last two plays of the Danaid trilogy, is recited at the beginning of the present production and appears as an epigraph in the published script:

The wide sky aches for sex with earth
The dark earth yearns for penetration
Wetness falls from sky's wide fullness
Rain then impregnates the land.
The land gives birth to wheat, to barley
Fruit trees, grass to feed the beasts
This fecund marriage, moist, eternal
Brings to flower all things alive.
The maker of this match is me:
I'm sex. I'm love. I'm Aphrodite. (7)

In *The Suppliant Women*, a new Argive line is born with the marriage of the Danaid Hypermnestra and the Aegyptid Lynceus, a union made possible because Lynceus respected Hypermnestra's autonomy. The other Danaids integrated through marriage to Argive citizens. The ancient Athenians, in contrast, employed their newly minted democracy to pass the Citizenship Law in 451 BCE, which meant that the children of a *metic* woman and an Athenian man would no longer be entitled to Athenian citizenship (Kennedy 6). Greig's ending does not bring the closure (and, thus, the ultimate significance) of either beyond a brief reference in the programme to the plot of the second and third plays. *The Suppliant Women* presents two sides of a negotiation constantly taking place at all levels of existence. The Chorus visibly composed of members of the hegemonic citizen group along with the play's identification of 'us' with the

asylum seekers at the gate as well as the citizens of Argos, however, emphasise that civilisation is descended from both.

The Suppliant Women makes plain that civilisation materialises out of a request and response negotiation for mutual shelter. *Souvenirs* demonstrated this negotiation on an interpersonal level between people who permitted each other witnessing negotiation regardless of background or beliefs. With an emphasis on commemorating absence that necrocivilisation denies, *I've got something to show you* brings to the surface necrocivilisation's foundational refusal of witness and response-ability. These UK plays focus largely on civilisational elaborations that undercut the necrocivilisational discursive filters that figure so prominently in *The Rainbow Dark* and *These People*. *Tribunal*, in this sense, emphasises both, presenting a nuanced picture of privileged citizen complicity in necrocivilisation as well as the vital importance of civilisational duties of care central to Aboriginal law.

Conclusion

This project took root in Elaine Scarry's understanding of the benign room that enables the collective acts of making that constitute civilisation and explored how activist reality theatre about asylum might intervene in the systemic western proliferation of civilisation's opposite, necrocivilisation. Scarry's porous walls of windows and doors, which permit 'the self to move out into the world and allow[s] that world to enter' became the filter in discourse and materiality that, like the shift from shelter to cell, is at once vital to survival and vulnerable to abuse and obfuscation (Scarry 38). Agamben's camp and subsequent clarifications and modifications of its definition have shed light on the extent of necrocivilisation's establishment in the liberal western democracies of Australia and the UK. To this, Foucault's heterotopias and heterochronies provided a frame to understand the, again, vital but necrocivilisationalised spaces and temporalities that filtering produces. I applied to the filter Ahmed's circulating affect that sticks to some bodies while sliding off others to elucidate how this process is one of weaving filters that highlight and conceal to reinforce a particular narrative of cause and effect. '*Some bodies move precisely by sealing others as objects of hate*' observes Ahmed, capturing what it means for privileged predominantly white citizen populations' to disavow violence, endless grief and the 'uncivilised' by making these attributes of the other (*The Cultural Politics* 57). But it is Kelly Oliver's definition of subjectivity as structured by the address and responsibility of witnessing that offers a way to perceive whether a filter is working as a two-way instrument of exchange between self and world or a suffocating partition. The implications of theatre that chip away at the legitimacy of a necrocivilisational asylum system stretch far beyond the lives of those seeking refuge. Understanding how these plays intervene in understandings of rooms and filters uncovers not only how necrocivilisation functions under the guise of civilisation but also challenges and provides the space and framing for citizens to let go of the discursive conviction that civilisation is the preserve of white western society.

Part I addressed the asylum seekers' vessel as a Scarrian room on the move. These productions emphasise the vessel-room as simultaneous shelter and cell, with the precarity of the distinction resting on increasingly fortified border policing mechanisms. The asylum policies of Australia and the UK and the agreements they pursue with surrounding nations are geared firstly towards preventing asylum seekers from arriving. Scarrian civilisation (the collaborative acts of making that the room enables) or its morbid opposite necrocivilisation are discernible in the porous, impermeable or balanced surfaces of vessels that enable or prevent encounter and negotiation for mutual shelter. Discourses of host nations like the UK and Australia condition these surfaces through Ahmed's circulation of affect whereby the host nation disavows 'uncivilised' violence and binds its threat to the fleeing (and arriving) asylum

seeker. This discursive weaving of cause, effect and evidence of the same produces a Foucauldian heterotopia that I have described as necrocivilisational filterscape. The shore becomes a space of simultaneous presence but non-encounter between people seeking asylum and citizen communities. The asylum-seeking vessel acts as a metaphor for the charged category 'asylum seeker', the discursive instrument of necrocivilisation's heterotopic caging. Vessels offer a route to protection, but necrocivilisation shapes their surfaces to produce vessel-cells with the object of definitively immobilising those for whom bodily integrity necessitates this voyage.

The Australian plays work to jam and redirect affect that necrocivilisation accrues to asylum seekers arriving by boat. This circulating affect, stirring fears of invasion by non-white peoples and insecurity in white Australia's own legitimacy as what Hage terms national spatial managers, undergirds a one-way discursive and material filtering expressed in John Howard's 2001 declaration 'we will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come' (qtd in Marr and Wilkinson 323). Mireille Astore's site-specific *Tampa*, most emphatically disturbed the image of the Australian beach as idyllic space of leisure with its barred outline of the MV Tampa and occupant silently challenging passers-by to respond to the state of affairs that had come to a head with the Howard Government's Pacific Solution. I argued that *Nothing But Nothing* maintains this ultimate discursive impasse in the 'NO' structure on stage, but presents at the same time the possibility of an alternative filtering principle based in Olivarian response-ability. *CMI* continues Tampa's unyielding affective challenge but foregrounds the discursive element that Astore posted online. In the endless circular questioning of the Senators set off against the sobering testimony of SIEV X survivors, version 1.0 foregrounds what necrocivilisational service the discourse-machine of the inquiry does to prevent encounter with and response to asylum seekers. Through representations of bodies and vessels, the three plays in Chapter One illustrate the rigid discursive impenetrability that, rather than encountering people seeking asylum as rights-bearing individuals entitled to civilisation, works to thwart the possibility of arrival.

The UK vessel plays are decidedly less confrontational than their Australian counterparts in Chapter One, preferring rather to immerse the audience in arrangements that highlight veiled but enforced citizen passivity. My reading of Clare Bayley's *The Container* interprets the physical and textual elements of the play (passive positioning of the audience inside the shipping container, hardening asylum seeker attitudes, and discussion of bordering technologies) as interpenetrating metaphors. The play does not so much give access to the experience of people seeking asylum as it allows audiences to comprehend the position they occupy within a necrocivilisation system. *Pericles'* inverse spatial immersion (that of the

cavernous warehouse in contrast to the close confinement of a container) conveyed the strict direction that a policing necrocivilisational discourse nevertheless exercises over a space of possibility. The canonical hero himself proved a curiously narrow representative of those whom, unlike himself, discourse renders ungrievable. Similarly, the highly mediated image of Diana Princess of Wales to whom Thaisa is priestess conveys a sense of the discourse dictating a narrowing template through which to signify. *Lampedusa*, unusually, presents a vision of the necrocivilisational filterscape from the perspective of two citizens obliged to toil on its front line. Lustgarten's play identifies opportunities and parallels of solidarity between citizens abandoned to their poverty and new migrants, including asylum seekers. Crucially, this hospitality is two-way, a response-ability that *Nothing But Nothing* offered a taste of but that *Lampedusa* carries into developing relationships amongst citizens and non-citizens. In these plays, the Scarrian room in the form of the vessel becomes shelter or cell as reciprocal witness permits it. Spaces like Bayley's container and hardened canonical narratives like *Pericles* depict filters that produce vessel cells by enumerating requirements impossible to embody. While also presenting its own vessel cells in the form of rickety boats and UK debtors flats, *Lampedusa* places its focus in the possibility of relationship rather than pre-determined identity.

In Part II: Cells, I focused on plays that took as their subject the processing of asylum seekers in spaces of detention. The physical cell, in Scarry's terms, represents the quintessential space of unshelter. Both discursive and material filters fortify an architecture of division that prevents encounter with the world. Violence in these spaces or the idea of these spaces as largely violent does not register in the mainstream thanks to a discourse that justifies violence as administrative necessity. A key component of this administrative violence that permeates the plays in Part II is the limitlessness of time. Boundless time acts as an invisible but annihilating force. Perhaps due to the resulting immobilising time and space, many of the plays I look at in Part II focus on the body as site of protest rather than drawing attention to the form the container takes as in many of the plays in Part I. The body becomes a site of filtering with crucial contextualisation provided by the play itself. This intervening in filters by presenting the asylum seeker's body as site of necrocivilisational violence reveals a different causality than the reductive, racist discourse that the mainstream taps into and sustains.

Shahin Shafaei's *Refugitive* explicitly introduces the idea of the filter and the fugitivity its necrocivilisational manifestation produces along with preoccupations all of the Australian plays share with the endless passage of time and the body as site of protest. Shafaei recontextualises hunger strike as fugitivity by flipping the state's asylum system filter to reveal that what they filter from sight is the state's own brutality. Ultimately, *Refugitive's* hunger striker

harnesses otherwise limitless time with his body's finite frame refusing entry to food and water. *The Waiting Room* achieves a similar upturning of necrocivilisational administrative filters through allegorical, hyperbolic and absurdist de-realisation. Episodic tableaux present robotic, hollowed out bodies of guards and politicians along with brutalised asylum seekers suspended in endless grief and pain. *The Waiting Room* structures these scenes with the bewildering story of Hhada, whose Kafka-inspired encounter with the Fortress removes justifying discourse from Australia's necrocivilisational administration of asylum seekers. While Ros Horin's *Through the Wire* presents arguably more humanising and immediately effective connections between citizens and asylum seekers on stage, the production shies away from the moral complexity of citizen positionality as regards the asylum system that *The Waiting Room* interrogates so forcefully. Moreover, casting Shafaei as himself denied the actor the aesthetic distance to navigate representations of his own trauma. The role the audience plays in each (from taking to the stage in *The Waiting Room*, to participating in question and answer sessions in *Refugitive* and perceiving solidarity in citizenship modelled for them on stage in *Through the Wire*) challenged spectators to attempt to engage with asylum seekers beyond filtering public discourse.

Part II's UK plays continue to develop themes of diminishing bodies and resistance to limitless time, though the camp-like settings in *The Bogus Woman* and *Adam* move beyond detention. This is largely due to UK asylum policy not practicing mandatory detention but, as the plays show, the camp can extend beyond this official confinement into the midst of so-called civilisation, as well. The necrocivilisation that confines bodies to detention is not a place, but a conditioning of relationships and, as such, detention's lack of shelter is inescapable. Kay Adshead's *The Bogus Woman* focuses on the unravelling grief that the asylum-seeking protagonist must take on and is not permitted to work through as she remains suspended in an environment that compounds her trauma. The play sets up the filtering room as the life story but then presents a discourse that refuses the legitimacy of that story and, consequently, denies the protagonist the ability to negotiate her own shelter. In Frances Poet's play *Adam*, Adam Kashmiry faces a similarly impossible negotiation between the virtual environments that accept his identity and the others that hold sway over his physical environment in both Egypt and the UK that would render his life as a trans man precarious and ungrievable. Though Kashmiry lives and the protagonist of *The Bogus Woman* dies, the plays both highlight an asylum system and necrocivilisational discourse that continues to deny shelter to asylum seekers though appearing to offer it.

Moving from spaces of detention to the outside world beyond, Part III presented asylum seekers and citizens engaging with discursive 'objects' of civilisation like the empty chair

framing absence, the suppliant branch, the family, a tribunal or democratic process. Asylum seeker presence and intervention in ostensibly traditional civilisational processes and emblems of the west turns up alternative filtering principles that are arguably more faithful to the spirit of response-ability that Scarrian civilisation requires, I argue, in order to apply to all entities present on the land. The necrocivilisation that filters away asylum seekers has a detrimental effect on citizen characters, trapping them in a system of violence without redress that threatens them with precarity and indifference, as well. Though a source of continual anxiety for citizen characters in many of the Part III plays, asylum seekers and refugees are ultimately portrayed as foundational to civilisation itself. Critically, the way the plays present these traditional facets of civilisation illustrates how many of them are used in the service of necrocivilisation but also how those seeking asylum test and can shape discursive emblems for genuinely civilising ends.

The Australian plays in Part III emphasise a white Australian disconnection with land and history that drives asylum seeker exclusion and mounting unbelonging and precarity for even privileged white Australians. The asylum seekers that aging sisters Gloria and Babs keep in the cupboard under their stairs in Victoria Carless' *The Rainbow Dark* remain invisible throughout but are constantly a topic of conversation. This dramatization of the spatial relationships between asylum seekers and Australian citizens resonates with Scarry's definition of the room as protection that facilitates the body's projection beyond itself in 'acts of making' (39). That said, old-fashioned references and a stage festooned with plastic as an impermeable but transparent (non)filter give the play a feeling of suffocation; the partitions that necrocivilisational discourse erects against asylum seekers also keep white Australia from belonging. The bushfires that close in at the end of *These People* demonstrate that the Australian state's approach to border protection, more than just forestalling a sense of belonging, ultimately imperils the lives of all people present on the land. Like *The Rainbow Dark's* domestic spaces, *These People* present the suburban household away from which asylum seekers' bodies are filtered, and yet within which they are a constant topic of conversation. *These People* filters public discourse on asylum through the white suburban nuclear family driven by neoliberal agendas and weighed down by asylum seekers. *Tribunal* seeks to address the systemic disconnection from land and people evident in *The Rainbow Dark* and *These People* through indigenous authority over a truth and reconciliation process for asylum seekers and others present on Aboriginal Country, including white Australians. Aunty Rhonda's possum skin cloak introduces a different filtering principle based upon the duty to protect all beings present in Country. The theatre here becomes a space of encounter with a civilising process that the Australian state and mainstream discourse actively works to delegitimise and prevent. The space that *Tribunal* provides opens out a realm of encounter

only glimpsed in the other plays in Gloria's hidden generosity in *The Rainbow Dark* and Lyn Bender's concern in *These People*.

The UK plays place less emphasis on citizens themselves and focus instead on civilisational processes of mourning and encounter. *I've got something to tell you* presented a space of encounter with and remembrance of the irretrievable loss of a local man. The empty chair recalls a proud UK tradition of defending human rights but works here to highlight how the asylum system actively undermines Scarrian civilisation on UK soil. A similarly intimate space of grief and memory, *Souvenirs* saw its participants create a collaborative performance that modelled the support, space and negotiation, the pressings and weavings of filter-making after and during traumatic events. A much more abstracted piece of theatre than the personal and immediate stories of *I've got something to show you* and *Souvenirs*, *The Suppliant Women* offered one of the first surviving plays in existence but grounded in an amateur cast from the local community and local state official to frame the play with a libation. In its link to civilisational processes and return to origins, *The Suppliant Women* aligns with *Tribunal*. Strikingly, these two plays also look at the asylum seeker as integral part of the collective body though within very different histories and epistemologies. Taken as a whole, these three plays establish spaces of grief and also model a civilisational rebuilding or re-weaving by interrogating the foundations upon which grievable and un-grievable lives are differentiated.

In her recent study *Insurgent Empire*, Priyamvada Gopal presents a body of evidence in support of the position that the ideas, strategies and actions fuelling liberation struggles during the British Empire not only originated in oppressed communities but that these critically influenced British ideas of and struggles for freedom within the UK. Arguing against the pervasive assumption in western postcolonial scholarship and national discourse that Britain's enslaved and colonial subjects merely 'took up British ideas and turned them against empire', Gopal investigates the flow of ideas as an exchange rather than the one-way provision of "civilised" values and strategies (*Insurgent* 5). My project joins the spirit of this push to locate Scarrian civilisation not in one place, population or person, but in mutual struggle and negotiation for shelter and meaning in the world. The idea that civilisational values derive and fan out over the earth from western epicentres into their spheres of influence continues to act, I have argued, as a trenchant cover for necrocivilisation to thrive in the west. By defining civilisation as that which encourages human flourishing through what Scarry calls "acts of making" I add my contribution to opening up channels of Oliver's response-ability, negotiation and mutual aid.

As my analysis of the 17 plays that form the case studies for this project attest, the emergence and maintenance of civilisation is not clear-cut or even necessarily shackled to affects of compassion or democratic processes. As I have repeatedly demonstrated, rooms can be shelters and cells simultaneously. Many of the plays work to interrupt the discursive binding of particular affects, processes and establishments to civilisational development. Others opened up spaces to feel and process the weight of grief, both to mourn people lost that some did not know to grieve, but also, for some, to mourn the privileged citizen self once understood as virtuous. Still others attempt to re-establish a space of address and response encounter as part of the play itself or in post-show question and answer sessions. The degree to which these plays are successful is the degree to which they can encourage this response-ability and/or highlight its obstruction. Though acts of civilisation resist definition, Scarrian civilisation is forged in mutual encounter that enables filters to be pressed and woven in concert. The filters of the UK and Australian asylum systems might define themselves as agents of civilisation, but the one-way filters that these productions engage with encourage no mutuality or exchange and afford no shelter.

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