

**EXILE AND DESIRE:
REFUGEES, AESTHETICS AND THE TERRITORIAL
BORDERS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The thesis begins by exploring state-centric conceptualisation of refugees in international relations and the incapacity of territorialised notions of identity and responsibility to give a properly historical account of and response to displacement in the modern world. The onus is rather on defining refugees as a 'lack' or 'aberration' before the citizen. I suggest that this renders refugees effectively invisible and 'voiceless' 'others' whose personalities and experiences are appropriated to bolster the fundamental 'territorial' grounds of IR thinking on identity, ethics and responsibility. I explore this perception of refugees in an 'international refugee regime', focusing specifically on international refugee law and on humanitarian discourses on refugees. Two case studies are involved. One the marginalisation of child refugees by the terms of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and, two, a study of Oxfam's *Listening to the Displaced* project in Sri Lanka.

I argue that a consideration of refugees as subjects marginalised in international relations theory and practice opens up new theoretical spaces, throwing into stark relief the violence and Euro-centrism of prevalent 'territorialised' notions of identity, security, 'home' and 'culture' and, consequently, ethics and politics. Such a consideration of refugees questions the ascendancy of territorialised ethics and politics. The thesis critiques post-modern or post-structural attempts to widen the parameters of ethics and politics by noting that their methodology tends to fail to problematise the position of the critic, essentially making the geographical and historical 'locatedness' of the critic unimportant (thereby calling the non-western 'other' to definition in terms of yet another vein of the European canon). The thesis then argues that Theodor Adorno's aesthetic understanding with its emphasis on contingency, unceasing critique and the instability of all rational summations of the meaning of an object, both calls into question the subjective desire of the critic that influences what one sees and what one does not and provides a means for beginning with the marginalised experience of the other (rather than with the European canon).

Acknowledgements

Writing a PhD thesis is by definition a lonely business. I have developed an attachment to this tiny, dusty room where I have confined myself for the better part of the last year and a half, with its overflowing, coffee-stained desk and my antique computer that has managed (just) to grind out what is required of it without collapsing. Researching it has been more fulfilling. Or rather, slowly and somewhat less than surely, the process of learning has been enjoyable. As have been the people I've learnt from along the way. Those who know me well will know that that I have struggled for the best part of the last ten years to describe my sense of what it is to be ethical, this thesis is not the culmination of this but I hope it represents a stepping stone to further learning and inter-action.

It would be wrong of me to say that what I've learnt and whom I've learnt from may be confined to the time spent officially doing the PhD work. I would think that the journey stretches back to Port Moresby, and then to a solitary time in Ankara, to Hull and then to Budapest, on to Canberra, and then back to Budapest and then to Pécs and Nagyatád, then Kuala Lumpur, London and finally Bolton. There was no steady progression, more like different, eclectic and sudden moments of inspiration (and defeat) in each of these places.

In Port Moresby a number of people left their impression on me in ways that continue to resound in my thought and how I choose to think. They – of all people – know who they are. One who may not is John Smith who was important in getting me interested in political theory. In Hull, Noel O'Sullivan, Subratra Mitra and Bhikhu Parekh taught me important lessons on critical thinking. Nicholas Wheeler's

unbounded enthusiasm for IR rubbed off. In Canberra, Roland Bleiker and Christine Sylvester introduced me to post-structural thought, feminism, post-colonialism and aesthetics. Greg Fry's intellectual honesty and commitment to the everyday ethical implications of academic life remain an example. In a remarkable MA group, Michael Thomas, Martin Birkner, Pru Gordon, Miyume Tanji, Yang Jian, Gavin Mount and Kong Leong provided criticism, collaboration and friendship. In Budapest and Pécs, Ella Álmos gave me the opportunity to teach what I wanted and my students at the International Studies Centre of Janus Pannonius University and later at the Budapest University of Economics helped me hone my thinking. Haleh Golmohammadi and László Endrei came with me to refugee camps in Nagyatád, Bicske and Debrecen and their experiences there and thoughts helped me to refine mine. Lida Salihovic and her family were welcoming hosts, and often my strongest critics, at Nagyatád camp.

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And Gian. He tolerated (more or less) his Papa's disappearance for hours – if not days – on end. I'll make them up to him. I hope he'll read this one day, the simple fact of his being spurred me to finish, and reminded me of a world outside.

More than anyone else, Éva has made this possible. I continue to be astounded by the example she sets. This, as everything else, is for her – and for Gian.

Exile and Desire: Refugees, Aesthetics and the Territorial Borders of International Relations

*The consul banged on the table and said;
'If you've got no passport you're officially dead.*

- W. H. Auden, "Refugee Blues"¹

PREFACE

Over recent years interest in refugees has increased both in the discipline International Relations (IR) and in the international political arena itself.. A central concern of recent academic work has been to look at refugees as paradigmatically marginalised as a result of the 'territorialisation' of political and ethical life. They have emphasised that the *territorial* international political and ethical imagination reduces the figure of the refugee, as well as 'refugee events', to a state-centric logic thereby enacting processes of understanding and assistance that begin by considering the refugee in terms of loss or lack before the normal focal point of this imagination – which is the citizen (Soguk, 1999a; Hyndman, 2000, Warner, 1999a; Dillon, 1999a; Xenos, 1996; Doty, 1999; Myers, 1999).

Put another way, certain of these scholars have argued that the refugee is paradigmatic of the exclusions of difference enacted by a 'politics of modernity'.² Nevzat Soguk argues that contemporary discourse on refugees reinforces and is derived from a 'territorial imagination'. For Soguk the term 'refugee' only makes sense when juxtaposed against the citizen: in the modern territorial imagination the citizen is taken as the normal focal point of politics; hence the refugee is construed in

terms of a lack and aberrance before the gauge of political normality, the sedentary citizen secured within a state.

Modern politics – Soguk argues and Michael Dillon concurs – occurs at the locus of notions of state, territory and nation. That is, it reconciles questions of identity, allegiance and kinship to the secure borders of a political community enveloped by a state. There is then, argues, a condition of “estrangement” (Dillon, 1999a: 113) in international politics; an estrangement manufactured by the legal and policy imperatives deriving from this resolution. This condition of estrangement, of being outside the confines of political normality, is (the argument goes) characteristic of refugees. This discourse, or thematically coherent argument, then reinforces the sense that the state is the normal focal point of politics, and within the state it is the individual as citizen that is the ultimate fulcrum of politics. It is in this sense then that one may argue that not only is estrangement manufactured by state-centric legal and policy imperatives, but also that estrangement is *constitutive* of these. They may be seen as reactions designed to shore up the state-centric arrangement of international politics in the face of the threat posed by refugees haphazardly moving (or trying to move) across state borders. However, I qualify this abstract conception of ‘estrangement’ in the thesis by emphasising that there are numerous different sorts of refugee experience and, hence, numerous different sorts of ‘estrangement’. If one is to avoid continuing with the abjection of refugees, I argue, one must concentrate on the difference here. One must investigate, that is, historical, social and political contexts that lead to different sorts of experience of ‘estrangement’. Indeed, the usefulness of the term ‘estrangement’ is questioned by perspectives that show that refugee life can be productive (e.g. Turner, 2001; Malkki,

1995a), that an experience of 'estrangement' is not always the telling (and denigrating) aspect of their lives.

Refugees are conceived of in 'refugee discourse' in a way that bolsters the state system. They are hence neither 'outside' the system nor entirely 'inside'. They are represented as having been displaced from the norm, yet in this representation one finds a reassertion of the primacy of the territorial narrative on political life. Refugee phenomena, refugees and those events that culminate in people called 'refugees', are understood as problematic aberrations before the norm of a territorially-confined political and ethical life. In this conception refugees are understood in ways that reinforce the taken-for-grantedness of the international system of sovereign states and the constraint of the constitution and boundaries of the 'political' and the 'ethical'. There is, as I will try to show later, a sense that a productive and fulfilling life must necessarily occur within the bounds of one's 'home' state. This is a confinement of those factors that are said to bestow a fulfilling life, culture for example, within the borders of a territorial state.

Soguk's and Jennifer Hyndman's concern about this state of affairs focus on the argument that refugees have their identities appropriated and simplified in terminology relevant to the logic of the "national order of things" (Malkki, 1996: 378). They both argue that refugee identity is seen as an aberrance, in contrast to the regular condition of citizenship, refugees are those displaced from the norm and are hence a 'problem' to be remedied. This perspective on refugees is itself an appropriation of refugee identity that serves to eulogise and regularise the "national order of things" where neat parcels of distinct territories monopolistically mark out the arena for the operation of politics and ethics. The "*ascribed* identity" (Soguk: 17) of refugees starts, Soguk suggests, with the idea that the political community

exists in exclusive symbiosis with a community of citizens. The argument is that the political community or state derives its validity and its vindication through acting as the “representative agent” of a body of citizens (Soguk, 1999: 10). In the thesis I connect depictions (Soguk’s and others) of the refugee’s ascribed identity to the narrative supremacy of Western ruminations on the matter as evidenced especially in international refugee law.³

Both Soguk and, particularly, Hyndman, focus on ways of considering refugee voices in their own right. Dillon’s focus is different. He emphasises that the argument that the refugee is paradigmatic of the modern condition addresses not only the state-centric resolution of human identity, but also the very onus in some Western political theory to reducing the inherently mobile and multiply-constituted human being to a violently reductive politico-legal persona.

Dillon thus moves the issue back, focusing his critique on the “onto-theological underpinnings of Western thought as a whole” (Dillon, 1999a: 96). By this Dillon means the yearning for a foundation from which ideas of what it is to be human may be resolved. Dillon links this yearning with the “life-inimical violence” of “the onto-theological yearnings of Western thought” (Dillon, 1999a: 96). Against this, Dillon suggests that the human being is far from singular, far from autonomous; he or she is rather intertwined with other beings: human being is a form of relation to itself that propels a relation to other beings. There is thus a condition of otherness at the core of human being; the human being is always in a position of articulating itself in terms of a “relation matrix that some call a world” (Dillon, 1999a: 95). The figure of the refugee, argues Dillon, is the concrete site upon which this challenge to the resolutions of “onto-theological” thought are starkly evident. The refugee is figurative of the abjection of human being by political modernity insofar as its

condition of expulsion and homelessness speak to the drive for a coherently homogenous political body distinguishing an 'inside' from an 'outside'. Dillon's exegesis is thus a rumination on the 'political' and the 'ethical', seeking to problematise (primarily) those ontological boundaries which have effected a taken-for-granted meaning of the political and the ethical. More specifically, I think Dillon intends to lay waste to the assumption underlying "Western thought" that the problem of how to be human has been, if not completely resolved, then contained within certain parameters.

The refugee is in Dillon's argument figurative of the inherent incompleteness of the human being. The refugee is understood by Dillon "as a figure of the 'inter' – or the *in-between* – of the human way of being", neither wholly 'inside' nor completely 'outside' (Dillon, 1999a: 95). Because the refugee exists on a plane that is simultaneously a site of "political abjection" conducive to the "political subjectification of political modernity" (Dillon, 1999a: 95) and outside of the authority of the state that sets a particular trajectory for human being, it thus presents a "scandal" for epistemology and, consequently, politics (Dillon, 1999a: 95). As a scandal for epistemology it presents a challenge to the possibility of securing meaning, to a resolution of the meaning of the human being. The refugee questions the presupposition that the meaning of human being may be coherently, unitarily or unilaterally reconciled. As a scandal for politics it challenges the "politics of identity that presupposes that the goal of politics is the realization of sovereign identity, and for any politics that presupposes that the goal of politics requires epistemology's promise of secure political knowing" (Dillon, 1999a: 95).

The refugee is thus, in Daniel Warner's interpretation of Dillon's argument, to be "celebrated" as the motivation for questioning limits imposed on the human

being which could, in turn, lead to an extension of the borders of political and ethical community (Warner, 1999a: 259). More fundamentally, the advent of the refugee mounts a critique of the violent categories of edification that distinguish and create borders between belonging and non-belonging, kin and stranger. The advent of the refugee points to the fundamental strangeness at the core of human being. Dillon's refugee is emblematic of the estrangement arguably circulating contemporary political life insofar as this refugee's advent motivates a fundamental and (arguably) devastating "deconstruction" (Dillon, 1999a: 95) of how we live our lives and understand ourselves. There is thus the implication that once the "onto-theological yearnings" have been discredited, then a conception of human being which is more open to expanding political and ethical borders to welcome the stranger will follow.

The thesis operates at the nexus of the arguments advanced by Soguk and Hyndman on the one hand and Dillon on the other. Cognisant of the ontological and epistemological disruption suggested once the refugee at the margins is no longer recoiled from, my argument in this thesis initially focuses on the role that *desire* plays in the recognition and representation of the refugee at the margins and then, more generally, the 'subaltern' by the centre. This then is to do with emphasising the importance of the everyday, contextual relations of citizen to refugee. This is to suggest that in order to understand the basis of the recoil from otherness one must place the relation of citizen to refugee, repressed to repressor, self to other, within a context. The problem with Dillon's scandalous refugee is that he or she is precisely without sex, colour, age or class: we do not have an inkling of the difference inherent within the block categories 'refugee'. More to the point, we are not offered an idea of how this difference reflects back on the notion of estrangement: do different types of refugee experience estrangement differently? For that matter, do they all

experience estrangement or life-sapping dislocation?⁴ I will suggest in the thesis, and explain why below, that I think that focusing on how desire influences or modulates the representation and treatment of the refugee or subaltern immediately draws us into the need to particularise, it calls on us to colour in the generalised picture of 'the subaltern' or 'the refugee'. I would suggest that this focus on 'desire', the way that I claim it is played out in the thesis and the consequences that I argue it suggests for the critique of the borders of the political and ethical (as well as the critical approach that I advocate), is collectively one original contribution that the thesis makes to the existing approaches in International Relations ethical and political theory.

This is, therefore, to do with illuminating further what factors influence how the repressed is recognised and represented by the repressor. It is also to tack onto this study the important aspect of how the repressor conceives of the repressed. Further, it is also to emphasise the importance of how repressor and repressed view themselves and to emphasise the linkages between this and the two former points.

The perception that the critique of objective understanding may isolate a general factor which explains the brutal behaviour of the repressor and therefore overcomes this presumes that that repressor may be, in the first place, extricated from a minute relation with the repressed. I argue that the identities of repressor and repressed are intimately intertwined. This is not to argue that they are not on some fundamental level distinct (it is not to suggest that there is no distinction between repressor and repressed, wealthy and poor).⁵ I emphasise rather that there is a deeply intimate relation between the identities of repressor and repressed and that examination of this must refrain from positing extraneous factors to account for the brutality or other feature of the relation. I suggest that the relation of repressor to

repressed (and vice-versa) cannot be understood solely in terms of abstract factors. That is, one cannot hope to overcome or transcend brutal behaviour through an analytical critique of ontological or epistemological yearnings. Brutality is sustained and made to appear necessary not just because of theory. Brutality is sustained and developed because of everyday social, economic and political relations between the intimate bodies of repressor and repressed. I will argue in this thesis that the desire of the repressor to maintain his place is met with the desire of the repressed to take over that place (or one may see a desire to vanquish the other). What occurs as a result of these desires is at times a fantastical, fearful or loathsome depiction of the other which gets in the way and remains tangible after the analytical critique of ontology and epistemology. By remaining, it discredits the argument that an adequate critique of political and ethical borders has been mounted. It may be argued, thus, that brutality is underlined by these depictions, unsavoury and irrational.

If one tries to understand 'desire', one is immediately pulled into particularity. In order to understand how 'desire' works in the relation of self to other, and how it multiplies itself to include loathsome, fantastical or fearful representations of the other that get in the way of reconciliation, one must examine different political, economic and social contexts that have helped develop a particular matrix of fear and desire in particular areas.⁶ One must therefore seek out the particular and in so doing a stronger understanding of politics, of the differences of its manifestations in different contexts, may ensue. Events of the closing months of 2001 emphasise this. Against the protestations of innocence and against the all too easy dismissal of the attacks in New York and Washington D C as coming from an uncivilised world, a stronger understanding of the extent of the anger permeating

the non-Western world may come from a willingness to seek out reasons for this anger which can take the extreme forms of a desire for the vanquishment of the West or the appropriation of the wealth of the West. Such a willingness to understand may find links between political anger and economics, it may find that that such events do not occur in isolation but stem from long years of economic, social and political repression. This is not to suggest that the repressive relation is necessarily overcome by this strategy. Instead, this is to suggest that a wider and more illuminating understanding of the bases of repression may help in attempts to focus on the resistance to repression.

I am able to identify three consequences for attempts to broaden ethical and political borders. First of all, one may argue the idea that the abstract critique of ontology and epistemology may effect a more ethical relation to otherness actually ends up ironically furthering the process of abjection to which the subaltern is subject. This is a critique which works only if the repressed and repressor are abstracted from the social plane. Little is said about the other in this sort of critique. He or she is an abstracted generality without colour, sex, class or desire. Second, it may also be argued that, therefore, rather than being motivated by the attempt to create space to allow the other to think for himself or herself, the concerned critic must begin by considering how the complexity of subaltern identity and of the relation of self to other may be approached. How, that is, may one (especially one coming from a relatively stronger position) approach or speak to the subaltern without demanding that that subaltern define himself or herself in terms important to one? How, that is, may one obviate the demand that the other define himself or herself in yet another vein of the European canon? I suggest that this demand is evident in claims to having expanded the borders of political and ethical by an

abstract critique of European theory by other European theory, a critique that does not read particularity into the subaltern. Indeed a generalised representation of the subaltern is at times utilised as a catalyst for the critique and expansion. The danger with this is that the subaltern becomes a stereotyped and degraded figure without particularity and perhaps Dillon's scandalous refugee is a type of this representation. Third, how we approach someone and while using what sort of language influences the meaning of that person. I will argue that standard methods of representation pass over the fragment, the particular, in favour of a generalised classification. In the thesis I look at the strengths of aesthetic understanding and aesthetic representation in providing a means of highlighting the particular which is passed over. This then is an attempt at approaching the subaltern non-reductively and in doing so seeks to begin not with calling the subaltern to definition in terms of yet another vein of the European canon, but to actually begin from marginalised experience. The thesis will look at the usefulness of disruptive writing styles to highlight the particularity of the subaltern and couple that with a methodology of approach, aesthetic understanding, which is designed to maintain a ceaseless critique of the borders of one's own thought. It is designed, that is, to prevent a final summation on the condition or identity of the subaltern.

The Argument

Given the above, I ask three groups of questions in this thesis.

1. To what extent can a 'deconstruction' of the reductive politics stemming from centripetal Western thought outline a subjectivity that is conducive to otherness, to other epistemologies and ways of being? What role does desire play in the relation of self to other, repressor to repressed? How does this effect the adequacy of the critique of a European theory to understanding the life-condition of 'the subaltern' and of creating conditions conducive to an ethical relation to 'otherness'?

2. To what extent can an explication of the expanded borders of the political and the ethical prevent an unintended premature closure of these borders? Attempts at outlining a more inclusive subjectivity derived from the sense of the inherent multiplicity or strangeness within the human being must take note that fundamental multiplicity is not necessarily preserved when a subjective politics outlines this. That is, even if meaning and subjectivity are 'always already' multiply constituted, the necessity of its 'interpretation' when articulated (re-presented) means that the possibility of a violent reductionism is still there. Feminist and post-colonial scholarship have taken note of the inadvertently patriarchal or euro-centric slant in the critical works of Foucault and Levinas for example (Irigaray, 1986; Irigaray, 1991; Spivak, 1994). What then are the conditions likely to generate a self-reflexivity and self-critique preventing the closure of the borders of politics and community? Are these conditions, in all likelihood, possible when the focus is on outlining a different conception of subjectivity?
3. To what extent does a "celebration" of the dissenting and subversive figure of 'the refugee' – as paradigmatic 'other' – elide from consideration of the detail in refugee lives? To what extent does an outlining of a paradigmatic 'refugee' as paradigmatic 'other' subsume the differences, inequalities and manifold identities in 'refugee experience'? The same point is put in terms of a general figure of 'the other' or 'the subaltern'.

Refugees, and the contrived "refugee experience", are of interest to me in this thesis because of their "liminal" position, existing on the borders of the ethical frontiers of international relations and political community (Malkki, 1995a: 1). A consideration of the way refugees are consigned to the margins, and the reasons for this, throws into stark relief notions of home, culture, identity, space and time that, in one way or another, are the raw material for outlining and reinforcing the theory and praxis of ethics and politics in international relations. In this sense my argument is in broad agreement with Dillon's point that the refugee is a site or condition of paradigmatic abjection as a result of the way modern politics carries out its business. I must emphasise though that I do not wish to resort to a simplistic reductionism in my argument on the reductive moves of 'political modernity'. The argument is not that

there is an unsubstantiated drive in a elephantine and generalised 'modernity' for deriving coherence from chaos. The argument is that the securitising of territorialised political borders produces coherence as a by-effect. The drive to securitise, to make secure (beyond military, legal or moral chastisement) those territorial political borders, produces those coherent subjects and logics ("to which its discourses refer", as Dillon puts it; Dillon, 1999a: 103), and provides a vision of its antithesis in the 'outside' it draws upon to distinguish coherence from chaos. 'The refugee', refugee experience made coherent, becomes then a paradigmatic site of exclusion and re-appropriation to bolster the grounds of the "national order of things."

Moreover, 'the refugee' as an abject figure made so by the way we do things and think things in international relations is – *must* be I think – a focus of scholarship that rails against the abjection that is an effluence of modern politics. In the same way that feminist and post-colonial scholarship have taken note of the violent abjection of women and people of colour as subalterns before the ascendant figure of purportedly objective but actually white and patriarchal 'Rational Man', so too is the condition of 'refugees' worthy of concerted regard in this light. What this involves, inevitably, is in part a focus on those epistemological processes of filtering that come up with the definition of 'the refugee'. This involves then a focus on 'the refugee' as a contrived identity bearing within it the prejudices and desires of an ascendant territorial way of thinking, seeing and doing.

De-limitation

I am concerned, then, here to resist the construction and deployment of a homogenised figure of 'the refugee' which – in 'critical' works or not – reinforces

the strategies of abjection. This concern takes the form of analyses, in chapters one, two and three following, of how ‘the refugee’ is an effect of disciplinary practices entrenched after the war of 1939-1945. These practices create micro exclusions and abjections in the constitution of the macro homogenised (and abject) ‘refugee’. A perspective that focuses on the refugee as the site of a paradigmatic condition of estrangement without considering the sheer physicality of the refugee experience and the inequalities therein is in danger of diminishing these.

In a related vein, Soguk’s suggestion that “there is ... no commonality to the refugee experiences, save the experience of displacement” while apt on many levels – it is probably true that refugee “meanings and identities are negotiated in the processes of displacement in time and place” (Soguk, 1999: 4) and are not pre-given – nevertheless sets the investigation of refugees within particular parameters that rather than aiding the cognisance of the polymorphous condition of ‘refugeeness’ performs an a priori de-limitation of the enquiry. By beginning not with a consideration of what it means to be displaced – what it means to have left ‘home’ – but with a fact of displacement, Soguk’s attempt to “take these people seriously” presumes on a certain level that ‘home’ and ‘identity’ have been left behind or fundamentally distorted in some way. Thus Soguk suggests that refugees can “*re-make* their lives even in displacement” or in their “*re-placement* in new places” (Soguk, 1999: 5). In order to re-make them refugees would have had to have lost them, in their re-placement they would have had to have lost their sense of ‘place’. How is to have been ‘displaced’ also to have lost their sense of ‘place’, their notions of home, identity and culture? If this is not to be a reassertion of territorialised notions of home and identity (and this is certainly not Soguk’s intention) then a concerted examination of what it means to have left ‘home’ (and, concomitantly, to

have remained at home) entails as well as what 'home' means in the first place to different sorts of refugees (Ahmed, 1999: 330). That is, this dissection of the meaning of 'home' and how it is related to and in what ways by different types of refugees is important if we are to successfully evade an uncritical reference to a colourless home. This is a reference that in couching the importance of unequal relations therein may effect not only the possibility of a microscopic understanding of refugee experiences but may also lead to a blinkered perspective when it comes to restoring that home. This is one intention of chapter seven where the second problematisation of 'refugee experience' will occur with an investigation of the narratives of home and exile in fictional works by Naiyer Masud, Tadeusz Borowski and Árpád Göncz (Masoud, 1998; Borowski, 1976; Göncz, 1991). The argument is not that refugees are somehow not displaced, rather that the concept of 'displacement' loses its critical and analytical force if it is not problematised, if it is not tied to particular historical and social contexts that determine the recognition of different types of 'displacement'. It is in danger of becoming a generalised and empty signifier of a generalised – unproblematised, undetailed – condition. The intention of chapter six is thus to emphasise the importance of a dissection of notions of 'home' and 'displacement'.

Similarly, Michael Dillon's argument that the refugee as a figure estranged by the workings of territorial politics acts as an analogy of estrangement "as a condition of human existence" is in danger of abstracting estrangement from particular historical, political and social conditions (Dillon 1999a: 95). In her critique of Dillon's position, Sara Ahmed incisively writes:

Estrangement is always an estrangement from a particular place and time: to universalize estrangement as that which brings us together is to conceal how estrangement marks out particular selves and communities. Estrangement needs to be theorized as beyond that which we simply have in common (Ahmed, 1999: 344).

Dillon's utilisation of "estrangement" as a deconstructive force fails to ask literal questions of the refugee's condition of estrangement: who is it that is most likely to be able to travel? (Tuitt, 1999). Who benefits most from conditions of estrangement? The central difficulty is an elision of individual context. Refugees become paradigmatically "estranged", a condition that is perhaps likely to make more difficult the consideration of the tangible or physical – as opposed to metaphorical – aspects of movement and estrangement. As Ahmed notes, a consideration of the tangible aspects of movement introduces "questions of contexts (postcoloniality/globality), historicity, temporality and space" (Ahmed, 1999: 333) and, thereby makes 'the refugee' more complicated. It is to focus on the particular thereby subverting the general.

Dillon's primary intention is to theorise "the advent of the refugee" as that which enacts a critique of the nature of human being. This is a critique geared towards the thinking of human being not as an autonomous figure reconciled to live out his or her life within securitised borders and consequently estranged from others, but rather always in a mutually-constitutive relationship with others. "The advent of the stranger in the form of the refugee emphasizes, by amplifying and intensifying, that human being is always in the position of articulating this 'we' without the authorization of any God, Leader, Party, Nation or State" (Dillon, 1999a: 95). The questioning of human being is thus geared, in turn, towards the expansion of the borders of political and ethical community. A number of questions arise. Who constitutes this 'we'? If 'the refugee' is removed from particular historical and political contexts then is there not a danger of creating a falsely homogenised body of 'the refugee' in order to bolster the 'European subject'? Is it not to reinforce the

positional leverage of the 'European subject' as that body with the freedom and agency able to draw on different experiences to constitute itself? The central point I wish to draw out here is that conceptions of 'de-territorialisation' (expanding the borders of the political and the ethical) involve problematising the position of the critic. If at stake is the attempt to vindicate a particular notion of ontology – if one begins the de-territorialisation with ontology – then the possibility of an instrumentally reductive gaze directed at 'the other', a gaze that restricts the problematisation and differentiation of 'the other' within certain parameters, remains. I agree with Dillon that an examination of 'the refugee' holds within it the possibility of an expansion of what we mean by 'home', 'culture' and 'identity', and (consequently) the borders of the 'political' and the 'ethical'. However I clarify this by saying that an expansion is possible only to the extent that an attempt to contextualise 'refugee experience' within particular historical and political contexts is forthcoming. That is, if one begins not with the question of the effect on the human being of the advent of 'the refugee' but with attention to the detail of refugee lives, and, in my case, with attention to epistemological procedures and languages that may call the position or context of the critique into ceaseless questioning.

In responding to state-centric resolutions of time, place and identity and, subsequently, politics and ethics by moving towards a construction of the self and a consequent subjectivity implicated with otherness, the central point remains how well are the contradictions of Euro-centrism negotiated? At least this is the question that will be directed at the post-positivist works examined in this thesis, other standpoints may ask how are the contradictions of patriarchy resolved? Certainly though given similarities in their interests or desires, alliances between critiques of

CONCEPTUAL EXAMINATION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE TERRITORY (LAND, CONTINENTALITY, TO

Gayatri Spivak suggests that, given the manifold experiences, allegiances and senses of identity making up the world, rather than trying to speak for the other (she says subaltern woman) or create the conditions that would allow the other to speak for him or herself, concerned western critics should begin by asking how one should speak to the subaltern (Spivak, 1994: 91). This involves reflection on the conditions and structures of power in danger of being reinforced by Euro-centric critique. In Jacques Derrida's terms, this involves cognisance of the implication of the critic in the discourse of subjectification and abjection that he or she investigates. Cognisance of this leads to "a vigilance precisely against too great a claim for transparency" amounting to the critique being "not just a critique of presence but an awareness of the itinerary of the discourse of presence in one's *own* critique" (Spivak, 1994: 84; Spivak's emphasis). This call for extreme self-reflexivity is simultaneously a call to cognisance of the specificity of critique, of the specific implications of the specific cultural, historic and epistemic milieu of the critic and a warning against the claim that one's position has been made suitably transparent so as to present specific political pathways conducive to the celebration of difference.

Aesthetics, Disruptive Writing and the Processual Critique of Borders

It is in this sense then that the thesis will speak not in terms of the 'deconstructive' capacity of the advent of 'the refugee' but of the complexities and inconsistencies involved in a Euro-centric critique of the Euro-centric abjection of 'others'. The thesis asks with Roland Bleiker, "how can one start not with canonical knowledge but, as standpoint feminists suggest, with the improbable, the subjugated elements of society, the margins of discursive practices?" (Bleiker, 1997: 66) Beginning at the margins, suggests Bleiker, involves a composite process of "forgetting" the

orthodoxy, moving beyond the substance or content of traditional theory to an analysis of the form, the ordering element that gives us a style of thinking and consequently a particular style of philosophy and politics. Bleiker focuses on language, on the inequalities, suppressions and possibilities of language as a medium of interaction with the external world and the necessary implication of the critic with these. The control of language forces phenomena into categories and classifications relevant to those with relative strength (it is not simply a neutral conduit of an inner intention). The thesis examines Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory and his consequent notion of 'aesthetic understanding' which is premised on a notion of the inherent indeterminacy of all estimations of meaning and a subsequent propulsion to a *processual* – ceaseless – critique resisting finite determinations of any given thing.

I take Adorno's aesthetic understanding as a methodology of processual critique that both brings into question the position of the critic while refusing to countenance both a deconstruction of the lived experience of 'others' (a consequence of the notion that ontology has been reconciled) nor the non-differentiation and non-problematisation of the specificity of 'the other' or 'the stranger' (or, here, 'the refugee') that eases this deconstruction.

I take Adorno's critique to be fundamentally a statement on the inadequacy of "rational" explication to account for manifold experiences in many worlds. I use then the short stories of Naiyer Masud, Tadeusz Borowski and Árpád Göncz not only to demonstrate 'another' knowledge of exile within the bounds set by the ascendant rationality, but also to indicate what Adorno calls "the unsayable" (Adorno, 1999). Literary devices that acknowledge that the way something is expressed have an effect on that which is being expressed offer an opportunity to stretch the bounds of language, to bring in the repressed emotions, ideas, epistemologies, ontologies and

politics into a dialogic realm (Bleiker, 2000a: 17-21, 244-272; and generally, Bleiker, 2000b; Shapiro, 1997).

“Disruptive writing” (Shapiro, 1997: 38, Bleiker, 2000a: 17) tears into the structures of intelligibility that remove from contention primary organising elements that give us a particular ‘International Relations’ and tell us where this occurs. As Michael Shapiro notes, insofar as the ethical imagination is concerned, a particular spatial story directs the understanding of what is and is not ethical and what may or may not be recommended as ethical. Underlying this spatial arrangement of International Relations is a reconciliation of notions of space, time and identity that give it a sense of naturalness or inevitability. Writing disruptive to this then seeks to present images that tell of a different relation between space, time and identity: images that seek to highlight the repression that goes into the presenting of the logical or the necessary.

OUTLINE

The thesis, then, is divided into two parts. The first part will investigate the abjection of refugees before the overriding territorial imperative of international relations and as a consequence of the way the political and ethical is construed in mainstream International Relations theory. The second part will investigate means of transgressing (or at least putting under sustained challenge) those imperatives that make the territorialisation of identity, community and, hence, politics and ethics appear logically consequential.

The introductory chapter which follows will provide a rough sketch of the general argument. It will assert that the territorialisation of international relations stems from reconciliations of notions of identity, time and space. The Introduction

will also briefly outline the critique of the central role of language in enabling certain forms of meaning and disabling others which will be a central theme of the thesis.

The first part of the thesis, comprising chapters one to three, looks in detail at those disciplinary practices that effect the refugee as a site of exclusion and abjection before the territorial imperatives of IR. Chapter one is an introductory chapter to this section and will cover the development of an 'international refugee regime' to deal with the refugee problem. Indeed it will be essayed that this regime effects an appropriative definition of an aberrant condition of 'refugeeness'. That is, the casting of the refugee as a problem to be remedied is, in fact, a solution that reinforces the position of territorialised international relations.

The second chapter will look in detail at what is probably the primary aspect of the international refugee regime: international refugee law. I argue that international refugee law is a means of reconciling the refugee with the territorial form of doing and thinking international relations. The situation of child refugees will be examined and, more generally, the limited capacity of international refugee law to address that sort of 'political' persecution faced by children will be examined. That is, international refugee law has difficulty in understanding the nature of the 'political' and of 'persecution' expansively enough to allow certain persecutory experiences to be considered worthy of refugee status. It will be suggested that underlying the premises of international refugee law is a notion of adult male subjectivity. This is a notion that arises as a consequence of international refugee law's tendency to accept without problematisation the notion that states are the primary actors of the international realm. Hence those exclusions and differentiations that constitute a particular form of politics within the state are left unregarded. As refugees, generally speaking, are paradigmatically excluded as a

consequence of the territorial imagination structuring international politics, then so too may it be argued that the political and persecutory experience of children is paradigmatically excluded from or inadequately re-presented in terms comprehensible to a political structure whose assumptions on human rights reveal its bias towards adult male subjectivity.

The third chapter will examine the complicity of humanitarian discourse in this state of affairs. It will suggest that humanitarian discourses construe the refugee as helpless and voiceless arguably in large part because refugees are deprived of the legal protection of the state. It will be suggested that this leads to a practice of humanitarianism which construes the refugee as a depersonalised, depoliticised and dehistoricised victim, without capacity for politically-consequential narration. The refugee in this construction is without, that is, the capacity to present an opposing discourse to that discourse which a priori problematises the refugee as a particular sort of victim in need of particular sorts of assistance. Through detailed examination of a project by Oxfam GB in Sri Lanka, called 'Listening to the Displaced', I will argue that the objectification and abjection of refugees perpetrated by humanitarian discourse is a consequence of that discourse's position within a disciplinary framework which construes refugees as helpless and without agency because of their position outside (ostensibly at least) the framework of sovereign states.

The second part of the thesis comprises chapters four to seven and will constitute a critique of post-positivist attempts in International Relations theory to transgress the territorial borders of identity, community, politics and ethics. This part of the thesis will also put forward a study of the capacity of "disruptive writing" to challenge these bounds. Chapter four will look at David Campbell's recent critique of humanitarianism (Campbell, 1998). Specifically it will suggest that

Campbell's attempt to construe an alternative "humanism of the Other" (Campbell, 1998: 508), a notion of 'being human' that eschews the territorial boundedness of human identity, reinforces the positional leverage of Euro-centric critique because it precisely fails to problematise or theorise the 'otherness' upon which this humanism of otherness would be based. I suggest that the root of Campbell's difficulty lies in his critique of Cartesian subjectivity which is construed in terms of its desire for univocity without simultaneously considering that that tradition is always already, at its very inception, contaminated by 'an otherness'. There are no pure sites, no singularly important watersheds which would, when mounted with the 'right' sort of critique enable a more open relation to otherness. I suggest, rather, that the experience of otherness is always inherent in meaning and identity and that the critic's responsibility is to consider not how otherness may be given space to articulate itself, but rather to consider how the subjectivity that effects how we see and what we see may be problematised.

Chapter five looks at Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory, and the conception of 'aesthetic understanding' that stems from it, and its capacity to highlight the 'sensuous' otherness impinging on rational modernity's claim to have exhausted the meaning of any given object (Adorno, 1970/1997). I find in Adorno's 'aesthetic understanding' an attempt to draw the critic into the critique, to challenge the subjectivity the critic and to make it likely that the meaning of an object would undergo a *processual* or unceasing critique. Moreover, Adorno's aesthetic understanding is premised on a notion of irreducible and indeterminate subjectivity leading to an ethical flavour which refuses those practices that would generalise a universal subjectivity and instead strives towards the individual or the "fragment". I find, however, that Adorno's aesthetic theory is inadequate in itself to ensure this

processual critique that would prevent otherness being reduced to a component of the ascendant subjectivity's universe. A recourse to Jacques Derrida's idea that meaning is always already imbued with the experience of otherness serves to focus 'aesthetic understanding' away from the attempt to uncover a repressed subjectivity (a goal towards which Adorno sometimes strives) and seeks to emphasise the contingency of all foundations of political thought.

The final chapter suggests that aesthetic challenges to the bounds of identity and community and – hence – politics and ethics must not focus on a deepening of self-understanding through aesthetic practices, but rather must involve a form of understanding and acting that highlights the irreducible in all discourse. In highlighting this, a challenge to the impression of natural inevitability of the territorial mode of International Relations may be effected and a focus on irreducible individuality and specificity may ensue. In this regard I study the short stories and poetry of three authors – Naiyer Masud, Árpád Göncz and Tadeusz Borowski (Masud, 1998; Göncz, 1991; Borowski, 1976).⁷ These are intended to effect a problematisation of generalised theories of estrangement by examining in detail different notions of what it means to be 'at home' and what it means to have 'left home' as well as calling to mind the conceptually irreducible through practices of "disruptive writing".

In the conclusion I will emphasise ethical aspects of the strategies of understanding and representing that I am putting forward in the thesis. I will put forward suggestions on where one might go with all this. I will emphasise the gains that may be had for the approach to ethical quandaries in the international political arena of focusing on the strange and the unusual. I will suggest that this attempt at trying to think beyond the conventional, to emphasise the undermined perspectives,

may allow one to refrain from abstract and abstracted theory and begin, at some level, with the subaltern experience. It is also to emphasise the inter-linkages in the world, it is to emphasise the intimacy of events and it is to propose that scholarship and statesmanship begin by focusing on the global nature of ethical events and quandaries.

NOTES

¹ Cited by Malkki, 1999: 495

² In the thesis I take the term 'modernity' to indicate a method of thought in which the distance of the external world from the human mind has been eradicated or downplayed. It is one in which the possibility of a correct and contemporary interpretation of experience is available and upon which political praxis may be based. (see for example, O'Connor, 2000: 54).

³ The argument that international refugee law has a "Western"-centric basis will be defended in chapters one and two following.

⁴ In his anthropological study, Simon Turner suggests that the refugee experience of young Burundian men who are refugees in Tanzania is startlingly productive (Turner, 2001: 1-4). 'Estrangement' can be over-rated, it can be a theoretical concept imposed upon refugees the world over with serious consequences for adequately understanding the politics and sociology of refugee lives.

⁵ Although I do explore Tadeusz Borowski's arguments on the essential sameness of repressor and repressed in a later chapter, I do emphasise that this is a literary device to take note of the inter-twining and extreme dependency and intimacy of the concentration camp that Borowski describes.

⁶ It is important to note, therefore, that I do not argue that desire develops in isolation, the desires of the repressed and repressor are developed in social, economic and political intercourse. 'Desire' is not formed in isolation, neither is it derived from a repressed psychoanalytic self, desire is formed in the social milieu, it is influenced by political and economic factors among others.

⁷ Naiyer Masud is a writer of Urdu short stories. I have chosen him because his stories seek to distort notions of identity, time and space by calling into question those stylistic norms that underlie our representations of things and give them a particular meaning while simultaneously preventing certain other meanings from rising. Árpád Göncz was elected President of Hungary after the events of 1989. He was previously an essayist and novelist. His stories on the transnational character of Hungarian identity and the Hungarian nation, of how 'home' stretches beyond oneself to encompass the Hungarian who has fled the physical territory of Hungary, offer a perspective on home and exile that disrupts the givenness of a perspective that reconciles allegiance, kinship and identity generally within the confines of a state. It is also an attempt to colour in the concept of displacement. Finally, Tadeusz Borowski was a Polish Auschwitz survivor whose short stories on life in the camp proved a scandal for proponents of an unambiguous moral position, calling to mind – in the extreme – the inter-contamination of sites of self and other, of the tethering of each to the other. Not only is the sense of a secure division between 'good' and 'evil' difficult, but Borowski (in calling to mind the intimacy of sites of self and other) disrupts the comfort of an autonomous subjectivity.

Introduction:

Ethical and Political Borders of International Relations

In this Introduction I try to show that the thought of ethics and politics in international relations is constrained within physical and phantasmal borders constraining the object of ethical attention and the range of the ethical imagination. I argue that, ultimately, the justifications for the inviolability of these borders, indeed the argument that they represent a logical consequence of the way things are, arises from the exclusion or repression of dissonance. There is a *de-limitation* of the field of enquiry. I argue that this has important consequences for notions of identity, time and place in both the practice and theory of international relations. I argue that there is an outlining of parameters within which the thought of ethics and politics is constrained. This is a confinement that owes much to inadequate examinations of assumptions of time and space and how this impacts on notions of identity. One intention of this chapter is to present a theoretical background to the apparent incorrigibility of the state-centric territorial imagination and its perception of 'refugees' as antithetical and aberrant before the settled norm. A second intention of this chapter is to highlight those assumptions to do with space and time that are in the background of the territorial imagination. This is done in order to set some of the background for the examination of disruptive writing styles as a means to call into question routine assumptions on the nature of space and time thereby possibly encouraging an expansion of ethical and political borders. Thus a third intention of this chapter is to briefly introduce the basis of the critique of language that is integral to the development of disruptive writing styles illumining of subaltern experience.

In the traditional perspective on international relations, ethical and political life is situated within the secure borders of a political community; it is *territorialised* (see generally, Campbell, 1999; Shapiro, 1999a; Soguk, 1999). Within this ‘territorialisation’ is resolved at least two levels of questions that end up demarcating ‘ethical frontiers’, where “the remit of justice ends.”(Dillon, 1999b: 156). The first level regards questions of identity, time and place; the second the concomitant alignment and signification of a particular type of ethical agency with a particular object of responsibility as well as a positing of the nature of the correlation between imputation and judgement (on the latter point see Warner, 1999b: 12).

In unpacking this account of ethics, we may begin by asking, with Ana María Alonso, what is the relationship of dominant accounts of conceptual and edifying categories of understanding to the processes they seek to understand? (Alonso, 1994: 379). What, in other words, is the relation of foundational postulations of international relations, of the nature of time and space especially insofar as I am concerned here, that generate a *territorialisation* of ethical and political life to the processes of international relations which are subject to comprehension in terms of these foundations? How do the foundational postulations modulate the recognition, evaluation and classification of the processes of international relations? And then, how, in turn, do the processes – once they are made determinate – make secure (or even taken for granted) the foundations?

What may be called the typical resolution of identity in ‘modern’ European political theory, whose methodology and epistemology premised on fixed points of departure ‘traditional’ international relations theory mimics (Walker, 1993: 125-140), posits the viability and logical consequentiality of the link between human

being and the territorially-bound state. Identity is thought in terms of the state; impulses of religion, kinship or lingual or cultural alliance are secondary to the rational collectivisation of human beings under the umbrella of the modern state.

The 'modern' thought of a 'centre' has a tendency to deny the possibility of its own fallibility. This is a denial that that centre is the consequence of subjective experience located within particular historical and socio-cultural contexts. Indeed, as I have noted in the Introduction, modernity may (in part) be understood as that attitude which understands that a correct and contemporary understanding of experience may be understood and serve as the basis for political praxis and for the outlining of purposeful political theory. This is done, I argue in the thesis, chiefly by running roughshod over the spectre of other types of experience that suggest the relativity of thought. The centre acts centripetally, pulling dissonance into itself, forcing it into categories of the centre's own logic. The centre is reinforced by this reductionism, indeed it serves to further distance the centre from the thought of relativity or contingency. What is ultimately reinforced is not a specific tangible 'centre' but the very logic that ensures the possibility of a centripetal force. As dissonant images and experiences are subsumed into its logic an impression of the rational "capacity to act instrumentally in the world to obliterate its opposition and to control the consequences of that obliteration" (Butler, 1992: 10) is perpetuated. What occurs is a *de-limitation* of the field of enquiry¹: the corralling of thought and, consequently, of the ethical and political imagination through a process of suppression, exclusion and differentiation. The centripetal logic is productive of the processes, events and subjectivities it encounters. That is, it names them thereby bestowing on them a particular meaning which appropriates the sense of these events, processes and subjectivities, casting them in a light that secures the style of

politics that derives from the thought. In short, in its reduction of the dissonant processes and experience it encounters, the centripetal logic is strengthened to propel itself towards a position where its fundamental postulations are taken for granted as a result of a tautological relation: the semblance of a capacity to control the events, processes and subjectivities it encounters is due to the meaning it bestows on these. It thus presents a finite or de-limited horizon within which processes, events and subjectivities appear to feed back upon and vindicate the logic, making it appear 'natural' that things are this way and not another.

As Roland Bleiker suggests, it is perhaps control of language that is vital here. That is, it is control of the way in which we encounter and relate to the reality around us that is vital and Bleiker makes an argument for the centrality of language in this process. This control, Bleiker suggests, occurs through a process of "doorkeeping" that shuns as obscure, irrational or idealistic those ways of approaching reality that threaten the ascendant approach (Bleiker, 1997: 63). In overcoming the "doorkeepers", there appears to be two strategies: one addresses primarily the tangible centre; the other the wider centripetal logic that gives us one particular style or form of politics and not another. The first strategy takes issue with how the doorkeepers ostensibly defend the logic and inevitability of their way of doing things. That is, it notes that the impression of inevitability depends on a suppression of other perspectives, that there may indeed be another way of doing politics that is not premised on the resolutions of identity, home and culture animating state-centric politics. This strategy may not, however, adequately address the argument that I make that a critique of the ostensibly unitary and coherent ground of 'modernity' may reinforce the right of (another) European perspective to call various unproblematised 'others' (defined only in terms of their having been

repressed by ‘modernity’) to definition in alien terms. Moreover, the sense that a European critique of a European repression is adequate to open up value-free thinking and speaking space for ‘others’ appears to render the position of the European critic transparent or unimportant.

The second strategy of overcoming ‘doorkeepers’ focuses on language and the contingency of representations of meaning. Representations of the valuable necessarily reflect particular epistemic and cultural milieus, they necessarily reflect the subjective position of the critic, a judgement is made. Hence, emphasis is placed on problematising the station of the critic. Rather than beginning with a reworking of identities that casts away (or at least attempts to cast away) the old identities of both ‘self’ and ‘other’, a perspective aware of the contingency of all representations and the possibility of another form of ethnocentrism in their dismissal may strive to begin with marginalised experience instead of canonical knowledge. Such a perspective may avoid inadvertently calling the marginalised ‘other’ to characterisations of yet another vein of the European canon (Bleiker, 1997: 66; and generally, Trinh, 1989; Chow, 1992; Spivak, 1994). There is a caveat though. I do not hold that the critique or innovation of language is sufficient in itself to expand the ethical and political borders of international relations theory and practice. And this, therefore, is one reason for my in-depth focus on Adorno in Chapter 5 following. Adorno is used to conjoin ‘disruptive writing’ to a rigorous methodological approach. Adorno’s is an approach that, in theory, would call into question the argument that disruptive writing *in itself* is adequate to highlight the repressed voices and subjectivities. Adorno’s method of understanding, ‘aesthetic understanding’, takes into account the need for a rigorous self-critique in the process of understanding to prevent aesthetic approaches to the subaltern reflecting

unreflexively the subjectivity of the ‘disruptive writer’. While I agree with Bleiker that language as the means of articulating a position holds within its assumptions that render some perspectives correct and others irrational, and that a challenge to the primacy of a descriptive language is central to the critique of modernity as that attitude which presumes that a correct interpretation of experience is feasible, it is inadequate to suggest that an abstracted critique of language is sufficient to bring about the expansion of ethical and political borders. This argument is primarily developed in Chapters 5 and 6 but a brief introduction will be offered here.

This chapter begins by arguing that ‘modern’ ethical and political theory is constrained by a tendency to make recourse to ‘sovereign’ grounds directing the play and possibility of theory. It then moves on to examine the consequences of this for the thought of identity, time and place and, consequently, the nature of ‘ethics’ in international relations. I end by taking note of the importance of language in articulating reality. In doing so, I briefly introduce the argument for a focus on disruptive writing as a means of engaging the particular and setting this against the violence of the universal norm. This argument is central to what I am trying to do here and a brief indication of its nature at the onset of the thesis is useful for backgrounding the rest of the thesis.

The Critique of Sovereign Grounds

There is, arguably, a “sovereign point of departure” (Dillon, 1999b: 157) that acts as a regulating force in ‘modern’ European political theory. There is a unitary origin that orders and makes whole and complete the postulations of particular categories of

understanding and the concomitant regularisation of processes of international politics to fit into the structure emanating from the sovereign point of departure. This sovereign point in ‘modern’ secularist European and North American International Relations theory is the notion of the sovereign autonomous subject, emanating from a Cartesian or Cartesian-like resolution of being that equates consciousness with rational enquiry and underlining the distinctions and chasms between notions of subject and object, knower and known of an autonomous subjectivity (Dillon, 1999b: 159; Walker, 1993: 9). This is not to argue however, as will be made clear in the second part of the thesis, that a distinctive body of Cartesian philosophy may be isolated as a root cause for the ‘modern’ condition characterised by a desire for univocity in the face of multiplicity.² I agree with Simon Critchley that any attempt to interpret “tradition and culture in terms of a desire for unity, univocity and purity must be rigorously undermined in order to show how this desire is always already contaminated by that which it attempts to resist and exclude” (Critchley, 1999: 133). The thinking of philosophical tradition in terms of hybrid inter-contamination will be central to the second part of the thesis. Now it must be emphasised that when I speak here of the power of the thought of sovereign subjectivity to enable or constrain the ethical gambit, I do not intend to suggest that that may be critiqued without considering the consequences of tradition as a hybrid ensemble.

It may be said, then, that it is through the thought of sovereign subjectivity that ethical experience is circumscribed: it is where ethical frontiers are outlined and where the fecund gaze of ethical attention regularises identity (Bowden, 1998: 59-61). ‘Fecund’ that is in the sense of being ‘productive’ of the processes it pays attention to (insofar as ‘productive’ means imbuing with a particular meaning or identity thereby making recognisable while simultaneously indicating that there is no

eternal truth in posited identities and terminologies, these are rather the effect of particular historical contexts). There are two related senses in which this is so. First, the regularisation of processes in terms of the logic emanating from sovereign subjectivity; and, second, the concomitant limitation of the “play” of these processes thereby making sure that any variation remains predictable from the perspective of the sovereign ground (Derrida, 1978: 278). Thus identities and processes are given a meaning that reinforces the sovereign ground.

As a cohesive and de-limited structure of thought stemming from and logically arranged to reinforce and restate its grounds, the ‘modern’ political thought of ethics signifies an ethical frontier beyond which the remit of justice cannot be extended. The frontiers of thought mark the limit of justice (Dillon, 1999b: 156). It arguably stems from a particular resolution of ontology and is made dynamic by differences in different communities of applying and deciding on ethical rules. It is – in one sense – only proper that it is de-limited. The difficulty is not, thought, that thought finds itself limited: all experience is limited within particular historical, cultural and other contexts. The difficulty arises when that limitation of thought denies its own limits, its own contingency and uncertainty, and demarcates solid borders within which what stems from it (i.e. justice) must be contained (Dillon, 1999b: 156).

The limits of the thought mark the point where the other intrudes, it marks the excess of the horizon of a predictable structure. Yet the tendency of ‘modernity’ is to resist or “dogmatically recoil” (Dillon, 1999b:156) from the excess that inhabits its margins. The regularising gaze of a thought premised on sovereign subjectivity seeks to introduce its own epistemological categories on the intruding otherness. The onus on the universality of the homogenous rational subject coupled with a

sense that the world de-mythologised by Enlightenment reason is subject to a sequential arrangement eminently transparent to rational enquiry means that the sovereign ethical gaze finds in ‘the other’ fundamentals that reinforce itself. Derrida quotes Hegel writing of the objectivity of vision, of how it is abstracted from subjective intention because of its very dislocation from the object it seeks to understand. Vision in this view is the opposite of the sensuousness of touch, taste or smell as a way of comprehending. It is this drive for a dislocated and autonomous standpoint, and the sense that it is feasible, that is important in my understanding of modernity. After having spoken of taste, touch and smell, Hegel writes:

Sight, on the other hand, possesses a purely ideal relation to objects by means of light, a material which is at the same time immaterial, and which suffers on its part the objects to continue in their free self-subsistence, making them appear and re-appear, but which does not ... consume them. Everything then is an object of the appetiteless vision ... (Hegel, 1920: 3:15; cited in Derrida, 1978: 99).

The presumption that vision is objective is implicitly continued, Derrida suggests, by Emmanuel Levinas who argues that sight as a means of understanding does not respect the other for vision is without appetite, it has no concern, one way or another for the other (Derrida, 1978: 99). Yet the ‘modern’ ruse of objectivity to which its ostensible critics buy into downplays relations of desire in the approach of self to other (and vice-versa). This includes, as I will argue later, sight and image. How one sees another, and oneself, is intertwined with relations of fear and prejudice that are the result of a desire that emanates from particular economic and social pressures. It is worth adding that I do not suggest that my idea of desire is not theorised in terms of a latent yearning of a latent ‘true self’. In the thesis I theorise desire solely through the societal context. Indeed I suggest, specifically in my critique of Vivienne Jabri (Jabri, 1998) in Chapter 5, that any articulation of the ostensibly

‘metaphysical’ would render it in a societal context: it would reflect the epistemic location of the person articulating.

Dillon insightfully emphasises that underlying the ostensibly coldly calculating rational veneer of domination is a relation of *desire* between the dominant subject and his or her ‘other’.³ This is then a relation of domination that is underlined by fear and desire which breeds, justifies and makes banal the cruelty of the relation.

We are at the level of those fundamental desires and fears which confine the imagination and breed the cruelties upon which it relies in order to deflect whatever appears to threaten or disturb its various drives for metaphysical security (Dillon, 1999b: 159)

As I have indicated, for me the idea that the relation of ‘modern’ self to other is influenced not just by ontological or epistemological presumptions but also the minute and particular relations of desire means that an abstracted critique of ontology or epistemology is inadequate to opening up the borders of ethical and political thought. Relations of desire that foster fear, hatred and deep-seated prejudice get in the way.

Borders of International Relations

Associating the critique of sovereign grounds with my opening gambit which noted that ethical borders in international relations theory and practice involve, on the one hand, a resolution of identity, time and place and, on the other hand, a concomitant casting of the nature of relationships between an ethical agent and an object of responsibility and between imputation and judgement, three lines of argument may be identified and developed.

First, that the demarcation of borders of ethical thought involves a thinking of ‘identity politics’. This is a methodology that in establishing the conditions for

metaphysical security reduces dissonance to the imperatives of an overriding sameness. More concretely, 'identity politics' involves the contraction of the space for difference, where "new possibilities for openness" are denied (Warner, 1999b: 2). This is what I have identified as the 'sovereign point of departure': the thought of the sovereign subject as autonomous and rational being, justifiably defining politics and other ways of being in its terms. Against the idea that thought is embedded in cultural and historical contexts that give a direction to that thought is posited the objective and lofty language of a rational civilising burden.

Second, the sovereign subject as point of departure for political and ethical enquiry effects a reconciliation of space that is premised on a dual movement of rationalising and homogenising both space and its inhabitants, creating thereby a territorialised place (Alonso, 1994: 382). "Imagined political communities" are the outcome of an objective history transposing local identities and histories into a greater narrative structure enforcing the physical (and phantasmal) borders of the community (Anderson, 1991: 6). The commodification and acquisition of space marks a sharp distinction between outside and inside, it is the site where heritage, history and kinship are fused. The guarantor of this place is the office of the state, an embodiment of the 'general will'. This is a formulation that is dependent on a functional sense of homogeneous unity among inhabitants of a place that serves consequently as the fundamental level of analysis. This is, then, a sense that distracts from the multiple local contests and disciplinary practices that underlie homogeneous 'unity'; they are filtered out by a stance that is desirous of order.

The third point I want to make is that time is "spatialised" (Alonso, 1994: 383). That is, as a result of the territorialisation of identity, the flow or movement of time is directed by the priority accorded to the state and a particular temporal way of

making sense of existence is reified into a permanent condition which time or history has to deal with. The constriction of identity within a territorial horizon allows for – and is indeed simultaneously fostered by – a conception that time is played out within the territorialised domain. Predicated as it is on a reassertion of fundamental verities, the sovereign subject as origin of ethical thought forecloses on the range of time, and with that the insecure temporality that it brings. It is ‘the other’ who gives us time, Jacques Derrida has argued (Derrida, 1978: 120). Consequently, the recoil from the excess inhabiting experience that Dillon identifies in modern political theory gives an atemporal permanence to the homogenous constituents of a general will and the state that embodies it. The institution of the state is, then, given a sense of concrete objectified permanence borne from its separation from the messiness of historical and social processes of constitution and re-constitution. In the quest for metaphysical security the dramatic uncertainty of the relation of the present to the future is ameliorated. The onus on a politics of security premised on making the future predictable is itself secured by the spatialisation of time that commits identity to territoriality.

The central motifs of modern politics remain above history. Indeed, Judith Butler has noted how modern politics is centred around and made feasible by a resolution of the unimpeachable status of a sovereign ground (Butler, 1992: 8). It is in this sense then that forays against the sovereign subject, as the grounding for a particular style of politics, and indeed of the nature and boundaries of the ‘political’, centred on the state, are met with accusations of fostering nihilism.⁴ It is also in this sense, as I will show in more detail below, that the notion of a universal shared experience within a homogenous community (itself made feasible in the first place

by a resolution of the status of human being) is taken as a given, a natural and necessary aspect of politics, ethics and responsibility.

Thus, these resolutions of identity, place and time lead in turn to a positing as natural or logically consequential a particular type of ethical agent whose responsibility is directed towards a particular object/subject. The conduct of this relationship both forms the boundaries of the 'political' and is limited by these boundaries. Concomitantly a particular constellation of the relationship between imputation and judgement is also posited. The fundamental ethical agent in both liberal and realist strands of international relations is the autonomous sovereign individual. More concretely, it is the citizen, before whom all uncertainty is brought for resolution (Soguk, 1999: 9). This ethical agency is transposed onto the state following two sorts of "domestic analogy" (Warner, 1999b: 6-7). The realist one suggests that as each individual is to the state, so too is each state to the system or society of states. Daniel Warner cites R. J. Vincent on a liberal domestic analogy: "the individual is to the state as the society of states is to world society." (Warner, 1999b: 7).

Ostensible differences between the two cannot conceal a fundamental similarity in their mutual searches for closure, for predictability and regulative order. As Daniel Warner points out – with recourse to R. B. J. Walker – the realist transposes onto the state an analogy of the individual as autonomous and responsible only to himself. The liberal perspective focuses on an inter-subjective individual and thus conceives of the state as a co-operative entity engaging with other states in a world community (Warner, 1999b: 6-7). The similarity in these is that both begin with a foreclosure of the extent of responsibility, a positing "of the parameters of the community of responsibility before deciding for what one is responsible." (Warner,

1999b: 10). The presumption of a community that exists prior to consideration of the extent of one's responsibility is a univocal constriction or de-limitation of the field of enquiry. It is posited as a result of a resolution of the trajectory of the processes of international relations in terms that assert the rudimentary priority of the metaphysical foundation of Cartesian subjectivity.

In terms, that is, that foreclose on the question of the possibility of excess, 'otherness', inhabiting the margins of thought. Alonso's observation that identity and history are propelled to a reconciliation within the boundaries of a territorial state is illumined, as I have already argued, by an understanding of the post-Enlightenment mathematical rationalisation of space that allows for the appropriation, occupation and utilisation of geographic space.

The ethical agent in international relations is, by analogy, the sovereign state. Critiques of this formulation when suggesting that in the contemporary milieu non-state actors of various types are increasingly significant, fail to address the fundamental epistemological and ontological resolutions at the heart of 'territorialisation'. The commodification of 'space' that territorialisation involves is an effect of an evaluation and consequent assertion of right of possession over a particular space. When a critique posits empirical evidence of the influence of non-state actors but fails to address the underlying epistemological and ontological resolutions, the violently edifying categories of understanding through constriction may continue. Practical evidence for this may be found in alternative strategies or theories of development. Christine Sylvester argues that "alternative-minded NGOs can fall into the trap of not questioning an ultimate goal of modernisation informing their human development approaches, which undercuts the claim to be offering a new paradigm" (Sylvester, 1999: 709). Akin to what I am talking about here, the

methodological implication of this for the “alternative-minded NGOs” in question is that the position of the development expert is thought to be transparent or innocent: “some advocates of alternative development do not read themselves into the communities they are there to help, maintaining instead a position of social distance akin to the neoliberal expert on development” (Sylvester, 1999: 709). A further examination of the limitations of certain alternative development strategies occurs in chapter three which looks at aspects of Oxfam’s humanitarian/development work with refugees (legally perhaps ‘internally-displaced people’) in Sri Lanka.

It may be argued that the idea of the individual subject as autonomous of the external world, but able to exercise rationality in order to understand that world, forms the basis of the thought of ethics in the state-centric perspective on world affairs. It determines where in the world ‘international relations’ occurs, it judges the degrees of importance of different lives and different deaths. There is a distinction or separation of the lives of individual subjects: there is no intrinsic reason why I should relate ‘ethically’ to my neighbour (or my neighbour’s neighbour for that matter) but nor is there any reason why I should not. The thought of an action as ‘ethical’ is only so following reflection on it; a reflection that occurs in and reflects particular epistemic milieus. Judgement thus refers to a set of rationally arrived at rules and regulations organised by a similarly rational legal process and adopted by autonomous subjects within an epistemic milieu that takes as resolved fundamental questions of being and security. It is this resolution that contains the ethical within political borders. If ethics is conditioned by a thought of the necessity of making the future predictably secure, the onus is on creating current conditions conducive of this.

The focus of these ethical rules, the object of ethical attention, is de-limited by the resolution of the scope or extent of ethical relations within a territorialised frontier. This is so at least as long as we remain focused on the state as primary actor of note in international relations. In this perspective, the legal processes of the state set the limit of justice at respective political borders. It also establishes and appropriates the identity of the alien other through the emphasis placed on legalised citizenship as that element of singular important in denoting human identity. Thus the treatment of aliens is moderated to the extent that they carry proof of their membership of the international system or society of sovereign states. The exercise of the law thus reinforces that law, it reinforces “a sense of what it is to have a will and make a decision in that community, as well as to what ends and purposes these may be devoted.” (Dillon, 1999b: 158)

In noting that the conception of ethical attention is restricted to state-centric and territorially-bound law appears increasingly passé before the apparent ‘globalisation’ and ‘fragmentation’ of contemporary humanity, a critique of ethical attention may direct itself beyond empirical political frontiers to the frontiers of thought, those ontological and epistemological assumptions that oversee the modern ethical imagination and praxis. We may emphasise, then, the wide reach of the territorial imagination: that integral to this imagination is the sense that an essential identity of human beings and, consequently, a similarly essential understanding of political processes is comprehensible to a properly exercised rationality. Indeed it must be emphasised that I am arguing in terms of a performative exercise of rationality: that the investigation enacts a particular sense of self and of others. And then, consequently, enacts the emphasis placed on fundamental verities of life such

as the search for and the securing of a political community within which identity may flower.

It is thus the *possibility* that the difficult and inimical nature of human being may be taxonomically and rationally *essentialised* that underlies the territorial imagination and territorial ethics. More concretely, the positing of the state as ethical agent and the concomitant ethical gaze that differentiates ethical objects (citizens) from aliens outside the remit of territorial justice is *enabled* by a sense of the autonomous and rational nature of the human able to instrumentally exercise his powers of rational enquiry to understand and identify. Thus a de-territorialisation of ethical responsibility while ostensibly calling on moral imperatives that refuse to be dictated to by political borders between sovereign states may be inadequately cognisant of the real problems behind territorialised ethics.

The nature of the correlation between imputation and judgement – between, that is, the establishing of responsible agents in specific contexts and how this is reached through those localised conditions of whether blame or praise is to be imputed – presumes a definition of “the parameters of the community that can impute responsibility and to which responsibility can be imputed.” (Warner, 1999b: 14). On the one hand, if the state remains the primary political community, the ethical frontiers that contextualise who is responsible, towards whom and as a result of what, remain straightforward political borders. It is in this sense then that no external judgement of responsibility can be put forward, the notion of the good is subsumed into the question of the state: that which is conducive to the security of the state is defensible. However, when the focus turns, due to cognisance that those communities within which ethical life is played out often stretch across straightforward political borders and due to a sense of discomfort with the treatment

of the state as the ultimate good, the argument focuses instead on historical and cultural specificity involved in demarcating political community (rather, that is, in trying to figure out adequate communities for the refinement of judgement and the imputation of responsibility).

The correlation between community and the imputing of responsibility is seen by Daniel Warner as an attempt to effect a closure on the identity of the ethical and political agent. Against this Warner suggests, citing William Connolly, that the quest for a sense of community forming the backdrop and indeed making feasible (and perhaps even inevitable) particular ways of being is an aspiration for terminus in the process of constitution and re-constitution that make up the historical fact of human being. In other words, the fixing of a community lays the boundaries of a necessarily restrained subjectivity and ethical agency.

The frontiers of thought in modern international relations theory shut out or violently expel the unmanageable. These frontiers effect the identification of the unmanageable, of the recalcitrant or dissident (Dillon, 1999b: 161), as that which does not square with the imperatives that secure the metaphysical foundations of modern thought. This recoil from excess creates a de-limited field of enquiry wherein processes and identities remain predictably secure. It is from this *de-limitation* that particular senses of ethical agency and classifications of objects of responsibility become posited as given or natural. The imputation of responsibility and the judgement that this entails reveals a historically and culturally specific drive to maintain through exclusion, differentiation and repression the bounds of a given community. The territorialisation of international relations must then be studied both in terms of the particularities of an ethics confined within the political borders of sovereign states and in terms of Connolly's "homesickness"(Connolly, 1991a: 464) –

a drive for a place wherein closure on the question of human identity may be imputed .

The Centrality of Language

In the articulation of identity, ethics and politics, there is an important presumption that the tools enabling the articulation – language and the concomitant inter-subjective rules that allow the transmission of coherent meaning – is a neutral conduit. That is, the social embeddedness of language is downplayed. The notion that it reflects hierarchical society and is consequently vital to debates surrounding international relations is relatively unexamined in the traditional enquiry (Bleiker, 1997: 58). Even less of areas of study are the ideas that our knowledge of “‘reality’ is always preinterpreted by the language that we employ to assess and express it” (Bleiker, 1997: 66) and the consequent possibility of our inter-subjective relation with ‘reality’ – or, more specifically, our knowledge about reality and how we assess and express it.

Language is, then, integral to the articulation of human being, ethics and politics; language is the conduit for the articulation of thought, the medium for representing what we think about the human condition and, consequently, a reflection of how we think. Michael Dillon, commenting on the centrality of thought to justice and politics, writes:

All thought of justice and politics must, of course, pass through thought. How could it be otherwise? We think justice in the way that we do because of the various forms through which it is established and distributed. We also think justice in the way that we do because of the way that we think. The thought of another Justice is necessarily dependent therefore upon a way of thinking other than that which has historically come to govern our diverse onto-theological traditions of justice (Dillon, 1999b: 158).

Just as politics is tied up with thought, so too is 'thought' integrated with articulation. It is the articulation of thought that is important. As Jacques Derrida writes:

'Thought' . . . means nothing: it is the substantified void of a highly derivative ideality, the effect of a *différance* of forces, the illusory autonomy of a discourse or a consciousness whose hypostasis is to be deconstructed, whose 'causality' is to be analyzed, etc (Derrida, 1981: 49)

"Thought" that is, is subject to the subjective historical input of a particular milieu, it is to be 'deconstructed' because of this. The frameworks that encourage a certain way of thinking while discouraging others are to be subject to critique. In Derrida's terms, thought as the blank part of the text needs to be investigated, that part of the text needs to be filled in with the author (Spivak, 1994: 89).

The presumption that it is possible to essay one particular mode of being that is indicative of an insuperable border to radical ethical or political innovation presupposes that language is adequate to convey an inner intention with its integrity intact (Warner, 1999b: 18). That is, in Connolly's terms – more precisely Warner's interpretation thereof – the idea that self-knowledge is resolved within the bounds of a community demarcating inside from outside presupposes that language is a neutral conduit for an inner intention. Against this, Derrida has argued that the articulation of meaning or identity always has within it the spectre of other possible meanings (Derrida, 1978b). That is, there can be no neutral explication of intent, such explication is always dependent on engagement with otherness (Derrida, 1999: 51-52). The repulsion or ignoring of this contamination by otherness is an act of power stemming from a desire to reify into objective status a subjective and historically located stance on meaning or identity (Trinh, 1989: 21). A text – and discourse – is thus implicated with the spectre of otherness and with the desire of the author.

It is useful to draw a distinction between this idea of implication with otherness and the idea of the 'inter-subjectivity' of meaning. The idea that meaning is constituted inter-subjectively, through the interactions of individual subjects, seems to take place after the event of interpretation, after the meaning of a term is digested in individual contexts. It does not indicate, like Derrida does, that the fundamental quality of language is that the meaning of a term depends on its differentiation from other terms unto infinity for the isolation of a temporal meaning. The idea of contest in the more conventional idea of inter-subjectivity does not address the fundamental contingency and implication with otherness of all identity; one might say prior to the advent of ontology that distinguishes different subjectivities.

Language, Meaning and Ethnocentrism

Jacques Derrida reminds us that that the 'significative' structure of language, where words/concepts are imbued with meaning through their differentiation from other words/concepts, means that our descriptions of a thing, process or event do not correspond to an internal 'truth': words and concepts are metaphors for a truth that cannot be directly manifested (Derrida, 1978c: 7-8). This, Derrida suggests, is particularly so for the experience of "exile": "for in question here is a departure from the world toward a place which is neither a non-place nor an other world..." (Derrida, 1978c: 8). In making this point, I take Derrida to be arguing a double meaning in the idea of 'exile'.

First, that attempts to remove oneself from the overarching ascendant way of thinking never ends in a 'non-place'; that is, a ground for thinking that is immune to

the politics of 'place-founding' is probably impossible to come by. The violence of exclusion, differentiation and repression that occurs in demarcating a standpoint which is always subjective remains. In Connolly's terms, the possibility of closure remains in the demarcation of a standpoint for further enquiry that is not cognisant of the subjectivity that goes into the demarcation of these standpoints, however open-ended or aporetic they are intended to be. Thus closure can exist even when the aspiration for a 'home' is ostensibly eschewed so long as the position of the critic is inadequately problematised.

Second, that it is also never an escape to "another world" insofar as the exclusions, differentiations and repressions of the present world continue to play on and effect the demarcation of an other world and the thought that springs from it. Therefore, what I take from my understanding of Derrida is the idea that it is integral that the position of the critic is not rendered transparent or invisible, but that the contingency of what flows from him or her is re-connected to the critic.

There are two principle consequences of Derrida's critique of meaning and the possibility of its expression and the limits of its interpretation that I wish to highlight here and that underlie central claims and intentions of the argument being made in the thesis. First, that estimations of a meaning of a thing is, as a direct consequence of the estimation, embedded in the estimation as an evaluation or judgement. By looking at meaning at the level of questions about its expression in language, Derrida focuses on the embeddedness of the investigator in specific epistemic structures: the details of history. Consequently, statements of the meaning of phenomena involve a placing of value that "contaminates" (Beardsworth and Derrida, 1994: 7) what is seen and, conversely and concomitantly, makes what is not seen an important point of discussion.

Language, Dillon notes, is “central to being human” (Dillon, 1999b: 162). The articulation of being sets parameters that fix the trajectory of being. Derrida suggests that the logic of an articulation is enabled by a particular resolution of grounds, a given framework or structure that gives itself to the articulation of particular modes of being while similarly proving inimical to other articulations. That structure, Derrida argues, is reduced to a fixed origin which functions “not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure – but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure.” (Derrida, 1978a: 278). The origin is fixed in the sense of its mooting as having escaped “structurality”. It is not open to the historical contextualisation of the structure itself.

In escaping “structurality”, however, the centre cannot be made *present*, it cannot, that is, be articulated without making it subject to the prior demands of language which, Derrida says, never generates a fixed meaning but always depends on the social relation to other possible meanings. It is in this sense, then, that the centre of the structure itself is subject to the vagaries of a particular epistemic context. The embeddedness of the investigator or critic in the very isolation of sovereign grounds means, then, that the positing of an objective ground beyond the constituting and re-constituting play of history derives from particular historical contexts. The origin of thought is thus not unitary but always plural. Multiple meanings reside within the would-be autonomous sovereign ground; the sovereign subject is inherently imbued in the experience of otherness.

The second consequence relevant to my argument stems from the resistance to this excess of otherness, that which is adverse to articulation in terms of the centripetal structure, characteristic of a structural thought premised on the

banishment of anxiety and uncertainty. This is, I suggest, a manifestation of the de-limitation of a field of enquiry that 'modernity' pursues. I have suggested that 'modernity' may in part be understood as that attitude which presumes that a correct interpretation of experience may be gleaned and that that interpretation may serve as a basis for political praxis. I have suggested that the ruse of certainty is achieved by a de-limitation of a field of enquiry. Put another way this is "an assumption that theoretical 'purity' is possible" and "an assumption that 'purity', even if possible, is politically desirable" (Williams and Chrisman, 1994: 10).

Such operations repeat the very way in which traditional philosophy (Enlightenment or otherwise) cuts itself off from a self-reflective consideration of its relationship to material and political power, deluding itself to its pure and autonomous status, and thereby becomes all the more readily an instrument of social domination (Williams and Chrisman, 1994: 10-11).

The constitution of stable entities of 'self' and 'other', 'subject' and 'object' is dependent on a non-reflexive stance on the implications of the framework from within which the critic operates. Put another way, a holistic and apparently socially-abstracted theory of causes, volition, effects and possibilities depends on a filtering of historical processes, a de-limitation of the field of enquiry, highlighting phenomena in its own terms in order to bolster its sense of universal relevance. Against this holistic and violent artificial universality, a strategy of historicism may be posited. This is a strategy that seeks to 'historicise', to subject to the processual conditioning of history, specific assumptions and aspects of holistic theories. In a sense this may seem to be what I have been arguing for earlier with recourse to William Connolly and Daniel Warner. However, I argue that this method is open to two charges of reductionism.

The first stems from the sense that an operation that mounts strategic forays into the whole of the theory by juxtaposing a repressed history against the dominant

narrative may suppose that in these forays the entirety of different takes on the repression may be reconciled to prove a point against the paradigm. In his recent article, “Why Fight: Humanitarianism, Principles, and Post-structuralism” (Campbell, 1998), one of David Campbell’s strategies is to take note of the historical experience of dissent in his attempt at historicising an intrinsically dissenting universal (but hybrid) subjectivity in opposition to homogenous and pliant Rational Man. What, however, are the exclusions and subjugations involved in outlining a finite field constituting a historical moment of dissent? *Who* is it that dissents? Are all the “contradictory and heterogeneous aspects of history” reconcilable with or reducible to this moment? (Williams and Chrisman, 1994: 9).

The problem, as Walter Benjamin has argued, is that the isolation of an historical moment as the source for a generalisable take on the present is “filled by the presence of the now.” (Benjamin, 1999/1968: 252-253). A ‘historical moment’ *becomes* historical (and is not in itself historical) through the power of contemporary reflection that is always situated in particular contexts and that finds hierarchical structures in what it reflects on: “for every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.” (Benjamin, 1999/1968: 247). Perhaps the question here is what is gained by the highlighting of a ‘historical moment’? How is it utilised to make an argument coherent or logical?

The second difficulty stems from the critique of ‘modernist’ history as linearity, starting from a fundamental origin and progressing along a discernible line to a (pre-conceived) point of consummation. In a fine example of how an understanding of modernity reflects back on the critic, the challenge to linearity when undertaken in the spirit of a sweeping disavowal of fixed identities may

continue 'modernity's' abstraction and objectification of diverse otherness. Against this, the individuality of identity is approachable by a stance that is cognisant – in terms echoing Benjamin – “that the study of history involves images as well as linearity.” (Williams and Chrisman, 1994: 9). For Benjamin, the study of history involves not only the idea of linearity and the critique of linearity but also the encounter with images of the past that “shock” our senses of ourselves and brings an individual episode to the fore. Benjamin's is an argument against the idea of “homogenous, empty time” (Benjamin 1999/1968: 254; Williams and Chrisman, 1994: 10); finding in that time images of discontinuity and fragmentation. What this means is that the encounter with ‘images’ – and the politics that go into the manner of their depiction allows for an examination of individual episodes of oppressed history.

Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad (Benjamin, 1999/1968: 254; Williams and Chrisman, 1994: 10).

Benjamin's theory of history puts emphasis on the location and interests of the investigator, and is perhaps akin to Theodor Adorno's aesthetic mode of understanding. Adorno – like Benjamin – speaks of the “shock” in the receipt of (for Adorno) “aesthetic objects”, a shock to the self and its boundaries which does away with the clear opposition between investigator subject and investigated object (Adorno, 1997/1970: 244-245).⁵ The onus is thus placed on the questioning of the critic's interests in isolating historical moments to prove a point that is thought to be of universal relevance. Not only does this put paid to the possibility of positing a universality that is non-reflexive insofar as the contradictions inherent in deriving universal grounds from Euro-centric philosophy and history are not recognised, but also – consequently – emphasises the detail of history run roughshod over by the

historicising method. The isolation of individual moments of dissonance throws different light onto the historical era, emphasising paradox and the incommensurable without slipping into the positing of alternative ‘histories’ that fail to consider how it may continue to be a reflection of elite positions.

Exile, Desire and the Possibility of Beginning with Marginalised Experience

The argument that it is the aspiration for certainty and predictability, a control of what the future may bring, that repels dissonant otherness is interpreted by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as a call to heed the fundamentality of reflection on the ideological interests and motivations of the critic that colours what is seen and determines what is not seen (Spivak, 1994: 95). The implication of the investigator in power structures suggests that a critique of identity cannot be removed from the context within which the critic operates. Thus, from this standpoint it is perhaps apt that a critique that wishes to exist on the limits of thought instead of formulating critical perspectives to do away with a particular interpretation of a paradigmatic subjectivity and history rather focuses on the critic’s embeddedness in particular historical locations that determine how knowledge is produced and acted upon.

It is in this sense, then, that Rey Chow argues for a cognisance of the power of the dominant (she says western patriarchal) gaze in consigning the subaltern (she says Third World woman) to particular objectified identities (Chow, 1992). Chow suggests that it is cognisance of the complexity of this state of affairs, of identities and lived experience, that would prevent the co-option of subaltern identity to terms of yet another vein of the European canon. Allied to this, Frantz Fanon has written of the tethering of the colonist to the colonised subject. Fanon writes of the dialogic

relation between coloniser and colonised and the structure of desire, fantasy and repression that informs this, informing the identities of both with the image of the other and ultimately disturbing the historical place and future security that the colonist has made for himself.

Eduardo Guerrero traces the implication of the dominant gaze of white patriarchal society in constituting a series of repressions, alienation and self-loathing influencing the structure of desire in the Afro-American characters in the novels of Toni Morrison (Guerrero, 1990: 761). The implication of the other in the constitution of the dominant (Western) self demonstrates the fundamental contingency of selfhood and, consequently, makes discomfiting the reduction of otherness to ascendant terminology. Following on from this, it is important to note that the implication of the de-animation of colonised or subaltern identity is that a response to the reduction of otherness may effect a premature destruction of lived identities. Hence, rather than attempting a generalised critique of identities – based on reference to the critical richness of one Western theory against another Western theory marked out by its poverty – the concerned scholar may rather read oneself into and delve into the detailed histories of compound identities.

A critique of the limits of understanding must also understand the limits of critique. A critique that wishes to exist on the limits of understanding – on the liminal horizon – must retain a sense of the ethnocentrism involved in demarcating other ways of being, other subjectivities and other ethics from a European standpoint that is inadequately aware of its potential for generalisation. It is my argument in the thesis that the emphases on the location of the critic in structures of power and the need to consequently focus on a detail of individual history stemming the possibility of universalisable subjectivity or politics is in itself an ethics. The onus is not, then,

on the idea of ethics as a means of investigating the extent to which the human subject is free of the hegemonic structures of power but rather cognisance of the difficulty of removing oneself from context, or borders.

NOTES

- ¹ I use the term 'de-limitation' in this article as Jacques Derrida uses it. As Beatrice Hanssen notes, Jacques Derrida uses the "hyphenated term" 'de-limitation' to emphasise a double meaning. First, in terms of a desire for the articulation of borders or frontiers that corral thought. Second, when the prefix 'de' takes on a negative force, the term is used by Derrida to show the excess that confounds the drive to extend limits. (Hanssen, 1998: 167, n. 8).
- ² For an example of such an argument in International Relations theory, see Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics* (George, 1994: 41-65, 139-166) and David Campbell, *Why Fight* (Campbell, 1998: 504-510). The latter's argument is investigated in detail in Chapter 4.
- ³ I have indicated, and will argue in more detail in Chapter 4, that Dillon's insight into desire occurring here is (I think) inadequately developed, especially in his argument on refugees (Dillon, 1999a).
- ⁴ See David Campbell's defence of post-structuralism against these charges (Campbell, 1998: 501-503).
- ⁵ Adorno does not do away with the distinction between subject and object however. I think he asserts their mutually-constitutive relationship but is wary of the possibility of a desire to impress upon the object the specific meaning deriving from a specific episteme.

Part I

Refugees and the Territorial Imagination

Refugees and the 'Territorial Imagination'

The first part of this thesis suggests that refugees are perceived by a 'territorial imagination' as abject effluents of the international system of sovereign states with the subject-as-citizen at its core. This imagination, it is argued, propels the recognition of identity and political and ethical community in terms that take the state as the normal or principal actor in international relations. At the core of the imagination is, then, the idea that the autonomous citizen is the "proper subject of political life: the principal agent of action, the source of all meaning ... and the point of decision to which, ultimately all matters of political uncertainty must recur" (Soguk, 1999: 9). I suggest that refugees are considered abject because they are understood in terms of what they lack before the citizen. They are considered a problem, a particular sort of problem meriting a particular sort of solution, because of pre-conceptions on the proper nature of political life. These pre-conceptions mean that, generally speaking, the solution to the 'problem' of refugees is already inherent in their construal as a particular sort of problem. In the three chapters that comprise this part of the thesis I attempt an examination of different facets of this abjection.

The first chapter reflects on the links between an 'international refugee regime' and the territorial imagination. The chapter suggests that refugees are seen as a 'threat' by the regime because of their perceived haphazard mobility: without membership of a static political community, refugees become a stress upon those rules and rituals that give order to world affairs. The chapter suggests that refugees are 'aberrations' insofar as they are 'outside' the regularising system of sovereign

states. Thus the international refugee regime moves to ameliorate this threat through inter-state action that restricts the possibility of mobility and to remedy the aberration by seeking a resolution of refugee status either through repatriation or assimilation within the fold of one state or another. It is emphasised in the chapter that seeing refugees as ‘outsiders’ actually works to ameliorate the ‘threat’ that is said to be posed by the refugee to the coherence of the international system of sovereign states. Indeed it will be argued that construing refugees as ‘outsiders’ is integral to the character of the ‘inside’. This intimate relationship between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ blurs the distinctions between them and suggests that political life straddles excluded and included.

Chapter two looks at limitations of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. Specifically, I argue that the Convention duplicates a number of unwieldy and untenable assumptions prevalent in a state-centric perspective on international affairs, including refugee affairs. In sum, the consequence of this is that a number of people experiencing persecution may fail to be recognised or defined as a refugee. The legal term ‘refugee’ is a term of ‘art’. It is a term “verifiable according to principles of international law” (Goodwin-Gill, 1998: 3) and, it will be argued, actually verifies who may or may not be a refugee in terms reflecting the central actor of international law – the sovereign state. A refugee, at the most fundamental legal level, is someone who has experienced or has a well-founded fear of experiencing ‘persecution’. Interpretations of the Convention which respect its founding assumptions, its attempt to verify refugee status within the already-established ambit set by a pre-existing international law, tend to understand ‘persecution’ in state-centric terms. In order to qualify as ‘persecution’ the harm suffered by an individual must, in some way, be traced to a state.

Feminist critiques of international law contend that the domestic public/private distinction is replicated at the international level and this is pertinent for people whose experiences of ‘persecution’ may be confined to experiences in the private realm: international law (here international refugee law and international human rights law) only binds states – only states may be held liable (Macklin, 1995: 235). Moreover, in the assessment of the well-foundedness of the fear of persecution the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ *Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status* (UNHCR, 1979), which is a recognised guide to the interpretation of the 1951 Convention, suggests that “mental development and maturity” are integral to the capacity for recognising if one has a well-founded fear of persecution (cited in Goodwin-Gill, 1998: 357). Children are vulnerable to having their case for refugee status being thrown out because of a perceived lack of maturity bizarrely precluding the possibility that they may ‘properly’ feel fear. Chapter two uses the political persecution of children as a means of highlighting the occlusions of the 1951 Convention. It will be highlighted how child refugees are tied into a grotesque and contradictory regimen: on the one hand, they are not recognised as capable of assessing the well-foundedness of any fear of persecution, but, on the other hand, unaccompanied children are likely to be treated as adults insofar as they are subject to a consideration of their persecutory experience where ‘persecution’ is defined in state-centric terms. Not only are children vulnerable to failing this assessment of persecution but also they may be subject to the same treatment as adult refugees who fail: they may be repatriated and without, necessarily, a study of how conditions in the country of origin may specifically impair upon a child’s physical or mental health. Goodwin-Gill is one of a number of scholars who suggest that this is a disjointed way of treating child

refugees. This is a way that is not cognisant that integral to responding adequately to displaced children is a holistic approach that takes into consideration the nature of the situation back home and the likelihood of there being adequate carers and that children require means of succouring personal, physical, emotional and mental development. Not, in other words, just focusing on ‘persecution’ – and a narrow definition at that.

Despite all this, however, it must be said that international refugee law, the body of precedent-setting interpretations of the Convention, is fluid and changeable, with the scope of what constitutes ‘persecution’ liable to grow. However, I will argue that the state-centric basis of the Convention, with its emphasis on the state as the pertinent party with pertinent obligations, restricts the scope of interpretation where onus is on a refinement of the notion of ‘refugee’ in international law. Indeed the onus on defining refugees in terms of what they aberrantly lack before the proper situation of international political life remains. Left unexamined are the predicates that call for a territorial resolution of human being, unexamined are the ontological and epistemological predicates that in attempting to secure a fixed sense of human identity produce the abjection of the refugee through its resolution of the meaning of the ‘political’(Dillon, 1999a: 103).

The third chapter, the last in this first part of the thesis, looks at specific examples of humanitarian representations of the refugee. I suggest in this chapter that from the perspective of the ‘territorial imagination’, the refugee is *a priori* understood as ‘helpless’ and ‘voiceless’ – without the means to establish a politically consequential narration of their own. My argument suggests that once refugees are construed as ‘speechless’ and ‘helpless’, without, perceptibly, the means to create an “oppositional discourse” (Werbner, 1999: 133), refugees can and do become

consigned to “visuality” (Chow, 1992: 105), reduced to their bodies, a primordial and apolitical state representing in mute and pathetic fashion the “eternal victim” (Malkki, 1996: 378). The argument suggests that taken in this way, humanitarian discourse may be conceived of as de-humanising, refugee images become ‘commodified’, conveying a predictable gamut of emotions in the observer and thereby utilised for advocacy and fund-raising. Bereft of an oppositional discourse threatening to the norm, indeed consigned to being a-political because of their exclusion from the bounds of a monopolistic modern sense of the ‘political’, refugees become ripe for utilisation in fund-raising schemes.

The central focus of this third chapter is an examination of a project undertaken by Oxfam GB in Sri Lanka which is called *Listening to the Displaced*. This project, while intended to focus on refugee narratives in order to give refugees the opportunity for politically and institutionally consequential narration, ends up further silencing refugees. I find Oxfam’s method of ‘listening’ to refugees to be affected by a prior conception of refugee helplessness and condition of being a-political, as well as of the imperative of securing a stable and predictable image of ‘refugeeness’ allowing thereby for the efficient delivery of humanitarian aid. Refugee narration is taken out of specific political or social context and contrived to fit into a narrative structure effected by the requirements of Oxfam as a humanitarian agency. I will argue that Oxfam’s project is premised on the possibility that objective and distanced knowledge may be gleaned by the suitably-trained expert. The subjective input of the expert in filtering out what is to be heard and what ignored is, I will try to show, inadequately examined. I will also argue that Oxfam creates a ‘bureaucratised’ body of information about refugees where this information is translated into a form suitable for the needs of Oxfam as a

development/humanitarian organisation and abstracting it from individual social, political and historical context.

In sum, this first part of the thesis will try to provide detailed and specific studies of different sorts of 'abjection' that refugees arguably encounter. The intentions behind these studies are, first, to imbue particularity into the general category 'refugee', highlighting some of the manifold aspects and meanings of 'estrangement'. This may thereby provide a buffer against both 'mainstream' and 'critical' utilisation of concepts of refugee 'estrangement' for their own purposes. The second intention is to take note of the central role that a state-centric territorial imagination plays in the abjection of refugees. This may serve to emphasise the intimacy of 'inside' and 'outside', refugee and citizen. For purposes integral to the second part of the thesis, this may highlight the intertwining of identity between ostensibly distinct bodies of self and other.

Chapter One

Abjection and Objectification of Refugees by an International Refugee Regime

Berliners are wrapped up in the latest in performance art — people in boxes. The people are asylum-seekers and their silent vigils cooped up in cardboard boxes in a Berlin gallery are as much political as artistic statements ... Entitled *Six People Who Cannot Be Paid For Staying Inside A Cardboard Box*, it has drawn strong emotions. Matthias Hickl, 37, a sculptor, said: “The CDU make immigration something evil and abstract. This brings it all home that there are people and lives behind the statistics.”

- The Times, ‘Refugees Boxed in as Art’, 28 October 2000.

It is difficult to speak of the refugee. This is despite the fact that there is much popular, political, humanitarian and academic discourse in western Europe that is now deeply concerned with speaking of, about, to and for the ‘refugee’ and other ‘forced migrants’. Refugees take up column inches in newspapers where they are, variously, objects of concern, fear, animosity, loathing or guilt. The writing of refugees, the inscription of meaning onto refugee personalities and experiences, as the writer and poet Naiyer Masud may put it, is revelatory of “domains of fear and desire” (Masud, 1998: 75) in our homes (it has less to do with their world than our world) (Doty, 1996: 5). Refugees are objects of art and commerce. Occasionally ostensibly subversive like the exhibition in a Berlin gallery; other times, used commercially in advertisements to sell designer jeans¹ and to front greeting cards.² Trafficking in refugees is big business, as is the legal immigration advisory business.³ Refugees and immigration are main talking points in election campaigns; refugees are threats to economic and social well-being and cohesion; refugees must be put under surveillance (see generally, Doty, 1999; and Nyers, 1999). Their abandonment – forced or otherwise – of citizenship renders ineffective the rules of engagement between peoples of different communities, they are the opposite of the

'normal' sedentary lifestyle (Malkki, 1996: 377-379); disciplining is required to impose predictability and generate security in the face of mercurial aberrance. In humanitarian discourse, refugees are also objects of control: the intention is to conceive of refugee identity in a way that allows for the efficient delivery and distribution of aid. They are similarly objects of knowledge, the need for relief aid generates a dehistoricised sense of the eternal-ness of the refugee; that he or she may be recognised by characteristics 'interior' to himself or herself. 'External' conditions that have led to a thousand stories of exile are not relevant; the consequence is that the right to narrate refugee stories is appropriated by Western 'development' or 'aid' experts, who tend to speak in a conventional and generalising language of refugee 'flows', a 'mass of humanity', resulting, as Liisa Malkki has noted, in the difficulty of approaching refugees as individual and historically-located human actors. When Oxfam initiates a programme of 'Listening to the Displaced', the basis remains a 'dehistoricised' sense of the refugee as mute actor overwhelmed by his or her victimisation. The onus is placed on "consciousness awakening"; the goal remains the same: to understand how to best effect an efficient delivery of required relief aid and 'development' assistance (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 16).

It is difficult, then, to speak of the refugee because of the layers of representation seeking to problematise and utilise the experience of exile. Refugee identity becomes ancillary to these representations and their utilisation in different contexts. The figure of the 'refugee' is a mediated one, engagement with "refugeeness" (Malkki, 1995b: 506) necessitates involvement with the discourses that dominate and delineate it.

Overarching these discourses, as has been argued, is a territorial resolution of identity. This resolution regularises the sedentary citizen as the normal focal point of

politics and ethics. Insofar as we are concerned here, the refugee is then defined in opposition to this regularised citizen. The refugee – in the sense of one deprived of or refusing citizenship – is thus an ‘aberration’ before the norm.

The initial consequence of this is that the refugee is construed as an object of knowledge; one about whom peculiar identifying characteristics may be gleaned. These characteristics reflect the territorial resolution of identity: a refugee is one who has fled his or her country of citizenship due to persecution therein. The legal discourse on refugees further refines this basis, limiting and qualifying the legal term ‘refugee’ to mean, among other things, one who has fled across sovereign borders due to persecution of one’s civil rights by state authorities. The secondary consequence of the perception of the refugee as aberration is the construal of the refugee as an object of assistance whose aberrant status requires remedying via a re-introduction into the “national order of things.” Allied to this, the humanitarian discourse on refugees builds on the sense of aberration requiring therapeutic intervention by reflecting a bias of the territorial imagination which treats notions of home and culture in terms of their correspondence to citizenship. The refugee as one outside his or her state of nationality is one who has ‘lost’ not only the succouring representation of a state in international affairs but also that which is most important to her sense of home or culture. This, I will argue, contributes to a humanitarian depiction of the refugee in terms of unparalleled helplessness – almost at times puerility.

Refugee constructions, then, highlight the aberrance, abnormality and wretchedness of the condition of exile. The refugee is “lost”, living, Michael Walzer says, in “limbo” (a state “just beyond the state”) (cited by Malkki, 1995a: 9), outside of the safety of the “national order of things” (Malki, 1995: 1). This construction of

the refugee, as I have said, is actually fairly tortuous, it is contrived and self-referential. The perception of being outside of the “national order of things” acts as a reinforcement of this order (that of a separation of geographical space into distinct parcels with legally sacrosanct boundaries); it problematises refugee experience in terms that make sense to and reinforce the order, allowing only those ‘refugee’ experiences that are legible to “the national order of things” to creep into the field of vision.

As a legal term, the meaning of the term ‘refugee’ depends for its legibility on the “territorial imagination” animating the dynamics and ensuring the security of “the national order of things”. Similarly, those ‘refugees’ who fail to meet the legal criteria for protection, who are therefore primarily objects of humanitarian assistance, are also dependent for their legibility, their recognised appellation, on this territorial imagination. Whether in terms adjunct to, but not quite equal to, full legal refugee status – the bestowal of *prima facie* refugee status by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is an example of this as is the growth in the last decade of a regime of ‘temporary protection’ – or in outright refusal of any protective status, the claimant to asylum has his or her persecutory experiences defined and appraised in terms relevant to the state-centric territorial imagination (these legal issues are explored in greater depth below, but mainly in chapter two).

The assertion of being outside the structure of sovereign nation-states is not, then, a neutral one. It ameliorates the threat of an ostensibly unboundaried humanity – of the threat of a human being without an “address” (Dillon, 1999a: 105), not having been reconciled to pursue self-realisation within the confines of the state – by fine-tuning vision, highlighting and legitimating those ‘refugees’ whose experiences fit into a state-centric world view and jettisoning those who do not. The ‘refugee’ is,

above anything else, a problem and an aberration bereft of state protection, requiring therefore therapeutic and corrective forms of intervention. The state is made out to hold a monopoly on forms of political community, and citizenship is seen as the normal and desirable badge of human identity. When exiled from the protective confines of a sovereign state, refugees are conceived often in terms that depict them as lost, voiceless, or helpless. These are not neutral descriptions, in a representation of displacement they are terms of simplification and appropriation; one is 'lost' if one is lost to a system of sovereign states and one is 'voiceless' because the state is unwilling to provide one with voice, to speak for one, to be one's agent in international affairs. These depictions then reassert the referential priority of the territorial resolution of identity and politics.

It is the argument of this chapter that a study of the forms of response, and conceptions of the extent of responsibility, to the refugee is illuminated by an examination of the ascendancy of a "territorial imagination" (Soguk, 1999: 11) which connects political identity to a legal demarcation and organisation of space. There are, specifically, at least two avenues of study. First, in terms of the ascendancy of a legally codified regime of responsibility which takes as its normal point of reference the subject-as-citizen insofar as responsibility for a person devolves upon the country of his or her citizenship; and towards whom reference is made in the problematisation of the legality or otherwise of an attempt to renounce that citizenship through a claim for asylum in another country. Second, in terms that accentuate the lack on the part of displaced people of an inherent and legally recognisable means of narration that is of institutional and political consequence (Malkki, 1996: 378). "In a state of limbo" the refugee lacks the status of citizenship ensured by the protection of the state, and the concomitant channels for narration,

that allow for a perspective and voice. That is, the displaced person lacks an inherent legally-codified subjectivity which allows for identification, protection and narrative capacity. Where his or her experience of displacement coincides with the criteria of international refugee law and the specific interpretations of these in individual countries, that refugee – often after much legal wrangling and economic and social abasement – is granted a legally-codified subjectivity of one sort or another (temporary protection, full refugee status, special dispensation to remain). The legal criteria reflect the givenness of a territorial resolution of political life and the consequent notion that the state is the natural unit of politics.

This chapter will proceed in the following way. I begin with an examination of the connections between the onus to a particular mapping of the world, the movement from geographic mapping to political and ideological ‘territorialising’ of space, and the linkage of political identity to territory (along with its implications of sedentary and circumscribed lifestyle and ‘culture’, the possibility of spontaneously recognising and limiting difference, a legally codified set of rights and obligations, and a hierarchical distinction between public political life and identity and the ‘private realm’). I do so in order to set the basis for an examination into the interpretation, and indeed performative recognition, of incidences of displacement as hazardous and problematic aberrations to a perceived ‘international system of sovereign states’. This forms the second part of the chapter where I will focus on the growth of an international refugee regime to deal with the ‘refugee problem’.

Mapping Territory, Security, and Identity

The plotting of terrain into orderly spaces may be understood in terms of at least two inter-linked genealogies or histories. The first may concern itself with the growth in

European philosophy of a perspective on an internally coherent subjectivity that emphasises its rational capacity to survey and discern from distance (Walker, 1993: 125-140; Scott, 1998; Dalby 2000). This dual reconciliation of 'human nature' (in terms that equate consciousness with the practice of rationality) and 'knowledge' (the rational capacity to objectively grasp – and utilise – the workings of a rationally ordered environment) lays the basis for the possibility of demarcating forms and receptacles of existence that best meet human requirements for orderly and secure conduits of the good life.

The second history may investigate how this order or sense of security has come to be equated with a stress on surveillance, the capacity to see (and hence control) behaviour, ensuring the highest probability of predictability. There are, I think, at least five aspects of this creation of order through surveillance. First, making visible those actors under surveillance. This is a performative act, insofar as the act of seeing and identifying creates a particular type of actor. The act of making visible is, in itself, a means of reconciling identity within a particular field; it is, in itself, a means of ensuring predictability by undertaking an a priori de-limitation of the field of enquiry. A second aspect of creating order through surveillance is, then, power to make invisible or subjugated undesirable elements potentially threatening of security. Thus, a third aspect of surveillance as a means of ensuring order is the violence and ahistoricity that results from the above. A fourth aspect of surveillance reflects the sense of the subject as autonomous institutor of particular actions. This is the sense that the rational subject may distance himself or herself from social or cultural determinants of thought and pursue objective knowledge and control. A fifth aspect of surveillance reflects a conflation of any distinction between the capacity of the rational subject to see or understand an event or process on one hand

and to control either of these on the other hand. Judith Butler suggests that ascendant ideas of (masculine) western subjectivity presume a subject who may achieve *his* aims with ease (Butler, 1992: 10-12). The prior institution of a fixed field of enquiry – with the agents therein established as fixed objects of knowledge – allows for the teleological sense of a subject whose will immediately translates into a successful deed. The successful accomplishment of something desired is premised on strategies of control and discipline that have de-limited the field of enquiry, excluding from the survey unexpected outcomes of an action (Derrida, 1978: 16-17).

In the Introduction preceding, I have suggested that there is in this formulation an equation of knowledge with the capacity to survey and understand. This surveillance, premised as it is on the fundamental homogeneity of space and of individuals, gives itself to generalised conclusions posited as having universal relevance and consequence. The treatment and evaluation of de-mythologised space ('here be monsters' is no longer inscribed on unfilled space in maps; all spaces are filled) becomes subject to the requirements of Rational Man. Space becomes territory, commodities,⁴ goods to be possessed, appraised and then utilised (Soja:1971:9; cited in Walker, 1993:129-130). This way of possessing space, and the finite goods that each portion of space has, translates into the possession and employment of space as territory by a given community; borders work – as physical barriers and as phantasmal constraints on the contemporary political and philosophical imagination – to prevent the acquisition of that territory and the goods therein by other parties and to comprehend political processes in its terms.

Not only may the graphing of the world in terms of sovereign space as territory be seen as a reflection of the de-mythologising of the external world, it may also be seen as a reflection of the figuration of Rational Man. Being subject to the

requirements of Rational Man, space as appraised sovereign territory exerts a similar appraisal of subjectivity. The utility and value of sovereign territory as receptacle for ascendant forms of political identity and ethics depends, at least in part, on a restriction of the physical and metaphorical movement of the subject (Soguk and Whitehall, 1999). The assertion of a 'territorialised' identity necessarily subjugates those forms of relation and allegiance that stretch across sovereign borders. In a similar vein, the universalised figure of rational man cannot take into account differences of race or gender, for example. Those categories of gender, race, class, religion, and various transnational forms and senses of kinship, allegiance and relation are subsumed within or subjugated before the universalised figure of Rational Man.

It is important to note that in my argument this act of subjugation creates a plane that does not do away with 'otherness', it is not *pure*, but is tainted by a contaminating otherness. The question becomes then, not the critique of Cartesianism in terms of a desire for univocity, but rather the demonstration that this philosophical tradition is constituted by difference and that the mongrelity of traditions, discourses and articulated identities must be approached as such. How, then, are 'self' and 'other' to be theorised but at their meeting points in liminality? (Critchley, 1999:133).

The sovereign state is, then, put forward as the agent representing the interests of a collective of rational citizens whose more insubordinate features have been successfully reconciled. In International Relations the state is more often than not taken as the actor or agent of especial note (Bleiker, 2000a: 9-14; Suganami, 1999; Doty, 1998). It is through the image of a world consisting of internally coherent states that perceptions of difference and the manner of relation to that

difference is enabled: notions of politics, identity, ethics and responsibility are “territorialised” (Campbell, 1999). It is also, hence, through the state-centric perspective that fundamental difference, the possibility of radical variance, is limited. The priority taken by the state-centric or territorial imagination to narrate the human condition and, consequently, secure it – tying it down, preventing movement – leads to the reduction of other narratives and interventions to make them legible to the ascendant way of approaching, thinking, seeing and doing international relations. Narratives contrary to the common sense postulations of the ascendant stories, both in terms of grammatical form and story-content, are dismissed as dangerous, reductive, irremediably hostile, irrelevant, simplistic, fatuous and/or obscurantism. Ways of being (or narratives thereof) that fail to be subsumed within a linear projection stretching from autonomous subjectivity to state-centric international relations to international anarchy or international society are likely to be subject to this. Ways of being, that is, that refuse, or at least resist, the primary methodological, epistemological and ontological resolution: of an internally coherent subject reflecting on (or surveying) the world as a distant object to be understood (and thereby appraised and utilised).

As should already be evident, a central theme in this thesis is the argument that once understood in terms of narrative capacity and the controlling of the very grounds of story-telling about the human condition, the ascendant paradigms of international relations require reflection on the level of *form*, not simply content or substance. This is the primary theme of the second part of the thesis; for now Jonathan Z. Smith’s evocatively titled *Map is Not Territory* may – very briefly – be used to provide a few pointers (Smith, 1978). Understanding that the ascendant way of mapping a world violently subjugates is not necessarily the same as ‘de-

territorialising' that world. The empirical demonstration of people and groups whose ways of understanding themselves, either because of volition or causality (or a mix of both), are not respecting of borders does not in itself equate to a deterritorialisation – of a removal of possession (important as these empirical demonstrations are). Proprietary right is accorded, ultimately, on the basis of a control of a language, of a means of re-presenting information. This is a language whose rules and conventions enable certain ideas and concepts to be represented while preventing – or making fantastic – others. This language, it will be argued in chapters four, five and six frames the discipline in question in terms of particular debates, premised on particular stories of the human condition; engagement with the language, and not solely with the substance of the debates, is a necessary aspect of 'deterritorialisation'.

I have, in this section of the chapter, put forward a brief argument about the territorialisation of identity, politics and ethics. I have suggested that there has been in western philosophy a mathematical plotting of homogenous space with the same underlying idea of rationality enacting an internally coherent and homogenous subjectivity exerting right of possession upon demarcated spaces. Different spaces are then distinguished; different groups have, in theory, sole proprietorship over different spaces. The primary signifier of identity, and that which allows recognition and place, is citizenship.

The 'International Refugee Regime'

Studies that represent what Nevzat Soguk calls the "conventional discourse (or attitude)" on refugees begin with a "world imagined to be composed of mutually

exclusive, territorially bound spaces". The refugee thus "figures only as an aberration of the proper subjectivity of citizenship; lacking the posited qualities of the citizen, she does not properly belong anywhere" (Soguk, 1999: 9, 11). Not belonging anywhere, not having co-possession of any sovereign space, means that the relation of the displaced person to a sovereign space is not predictable. The aberrance of the refugee is potentially a threat, undermining the security that comes with a restriction of the metaphorical and physical movement of subjectivity to predictability. The movement of the refugee, in both senses, thus leads to another characterisation of the 'refugee problem'. Refugees are a problem because of their very mobility,⁵ they chaotically spill over and through the boundaries of sovereign states, they are beyond the modes of governance and control available to individual states. Refugees also spill over and through the phantasmal borders of the territorial imagination; because of their condition of neither here nor there, not having been reconciled to live out their lives within the secure borders of a sovereign state, the advent of the refugee is, arguably, fundamentally subversive in the face of the political epistemologies that seek to fit human life within a set trajectory. Refugees are thus construed as an inter-state, or international, problem; this means that international regimes "as mechanisms of policy coordination and harmonizing among states" (Soguk, 1999: 11) are posited as possessors of solutions to the 'problem'; they possess, that is, the means of reconciling the subversive refugee back into the fold of a state or to ameliorate the threat posed by isolating refugees. However, it is vital to note that not all people who would like to be identified as refugees are mobile. Thus even the construal of the threat of the refugee because of her mobility is an appropriation of the figure of the refugee and a simultaneous amelioration of that threat. It is to justify the enclosing of the meaning of the term

‘refugee’ delimiting who may or may not be so defined, and in the de-limiting legitimating the grounds of relevant legal definitions of the refugee and the ‘European geography’ and masculinist idea of politics and persecution upon which it is based (as I will show below and in the two chapters following).

Reinhard Lohrmann, staff member at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), worries about the “disorderly” and “irregular” nature of “migration flows”. The unpredictability is a threat to international security:

Irregular migration flows and involuntary population displacements have significant implications for the individual security and dignity of migrants and refugees, which may render them, *inter alia*, unpredictable actors in international relations (Lohrmann: 3-4)

Lohrmann suggests co-operative inter-state regimes to generate order in the movement of peoples.

Governments in various regions of the world now recognize that the implementation of innovative approaches to the problems of international population movement and human displacement necessitate the establishment of regional frameworks to replace ineffective unilateral activities ... It is through the implementation of a comprehensive framework of international cooperation that the destabilizing implications of international migration must be addressed, so that movements of persons across borders will not be a source of insecurity in international relations, but rather a factor contributing to harmonious inter-state relations and to the development of countries of origin, transit and destination alike (Lohrman, 2000: 17, 19).

Lohrmann succinctly details central points of concern here. Refugee flows require disciplining. Disciplining means ensuring that actors within international relations remain predictable; that is, harmonious to – and not destabilising of – the inter-state nature of world politics. Put another way, the refugee is a body unpossessed and unappraised, disciplinary strategies that can, first of all, appraise and then perhaps utilise for strategic purposes a ‘refugee experience’ may be required. It is important to note in Lohrman’s argument a problematisation of the refugee and of refugee events to give these a meaning that is reinforcing of statecraft. Refugees do not have to be a source of insecurity but may, with the correct approach, be conducive to the development of harmonious co-operation. Indeed the right sort of approach may

culminate in the development of a fixed and linear solution to the problem. Refugees may smoothly pass through the countries of origin and transit before coming to a halt in the country of destination. The approach to the problem of the refugee is beneficial because it may reinforce the state-centricity of international relations. It is also interesting that Lohrmann feels that he may posit an image of an easy and fluid movement of refugees between countries. Inter-state co-operation may even do away with problems of violence, age and physical and mental illnesses as well as gender constraints that often mean that those people who are most able to flee are young men.

The international refugee regime is thus the aggregate of those co-operative practices that seek to, first, configure the 'refugee' as an object of knowledge and assistance before the territorial imagination, producing – and limiting – the condition that is readily discerned as “refugeeness” (Malkki, 1995b: 506); and, second, to enact solutions that reassert the primacy and regularity of the sovereign spatialisation of world politics, ameliorating the threat posed by haphazard border crossings to a system premised on neat and impermeable divisions containing orderly activity.

One view in the literature, exemplified by the work of Gil Loescher, believes that “refugees have been a feature of international society for a long time”. The contemporary figuration of the 'refugee' is not seen by Loescher as a historical moment, enacted and made legible and recognisable by disciplining, reconfiguration and modes of representation that have their specific genealogies. Instead Loescher sees a fundamental likeness or continuity between refugees of “modern” times and those of a century ago (as well as of “international society”). Refugees were, and remain, those people who “broke with their home countries.” For Loescher it is the response to refugees that distinguishes modern refugee phenomena from past ones:

“although refugees have been a feature of international society for a long time, before this century there was no international protection of refugees as we know it today” (Loescher, 1993: 33-34).

Loescher’s argument takes the regimes of protection as largely innocent and neutral conduits of a concern about the security and humanitarian problems posed by refugees (rather than instrumental *enactors* of ‘refugees’ as particular sorts of security and humanitarian problems; an enactment that serves to shore up the grounds of state-centric political discourse). Loescher speaks of the regime of international protection addressing the “hordes of homeless” people that constitute the refugee “problem”. Concern for the lot of refugees construes displacement as a problem, but it does not, in Loescher’s argument, effect or modulate the recognition of refugees and, consequently, the very condition recognisable as “refugeeness” (Malkki, 1995b: 506). Loescher’s finding of a fundamental link between contemporary refugees and those of a century ago is dehistoricising and depoliticising. It is to extract individual refugees from their specific historical and geographical – and hence cultural and political – locations; it is to make individual narrative, constituting a thousand stories of a thousand sorts of exile, unimportant or irrelevant when generalising common factors are evidently accessible. Contrary to this, it will be suggested here and in the next two chapters of the thesis that particular disciplinary practices, and their institutionalisation in particular contexts, occurring in Europe after 1945 are constitutive of a high-universal international refugee regime which determines the contemporary contextual recognition of refugees; or, as Liisa Malkki puts it, the identification and recognition of the aberrant condition of “refugeeness” afflicting some human beings. Liisa Malkki takes note that studies of the contemporary state of “refugeeness” (Malkki, 1995b: 506) may be subject to

charges of Euro-centrism. Much of the work in this field is done on a Euro-centric level (Soguk, 1999; Goodwin-Gill, 1998; Goodwin-Gill, 2000; Warner, 1999a; Loescher, 1989; Loescher, 1993; Tuitt, 1996). There is, however, fairly good reasoning behind this. It is, as Malkki notes, in the Europe that emerges after the war of 1939 to 1945 “that certain key techniques for managing mass displacements of people first became standardized and then globalized.” (Malkki, 1995b: 497).

It is my argument here that the nature of the regime of international protection and its enactment of particular strategies of management and disciplining of refugee identity lead to a particular recognition of what it means to be a refugee. There are perhaps at least two sorts of disciplinary practices standardising of “refugeeness” that were institutionalised after 1945.⁶ These relate to the perception of a need to impose order upon the haphazard and unpredictable movement of refugees. Two strategies were involved: first, rather crudely, a physical termination of movement and of its transitory and messy nature. The refugee camp as a means of confinement became in the years after 1945, directly consequential of the experience of concentration camps in the war just passed and often in the very same sites, “emplaced as a standardized, generalizable technology of power” (Malkki, 1995b: 498).

The segregation of nationalities; the orderly organization of repatriation or third-country resettlement; medical and hygienic programs and quarantining; ‘perpetual screening’ and the accumulation of documentation on the inhabitants of the camps; the control of movement and black-marketing; law enforcement and public discipline; and schooling and rehabilitation were some of the operations that the spatial concentration and ordering of people enabled or facilitated (Malkki, 1995b: 498).

Second, the institutionalisation of the meaning of the term ‘refugee’ in the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (and the 1967 New York Protocol which removed the temporal and geographical limitations of the former) encouraged a metaphorical restriction of refugee movement. As Patricia Tuitt has

argued, it would be somewhat naïve to see the 1951 Convention in purely humanitarian terms. Significant constraints on the meaning of 'refugee identity' occurs in the Convention and has continued to remain of contemporary concern as reflected in the interpretation of the Convention's statutes; constraints that speak to the concerns of western European 'recipient states' to ensure, first, that excess financial or social obligations are not required of them (Tuitt, 1996); second, particularly in the context of the Cold War, that the reasons taken to be legitimate for according refugee status are legitimate within a particular liberal-rights context (Macklin, 1995: 224; Akram, 2000) and, third, that the definition of who is a refugee is properly respectful of the international system of sovereign states (Geissler, 1999; Goodwin-Gill, 1998: 1-8; Abdullahi, 1994).⁷

The first condition is manifest in individual states' interpretation of the Convention, in particular following the wave of Third World refugees into western Europe from the early 1980s onward. The capacity of states to contract the space into which the refugee is displaced is important (Tuitt, 1999: 109-110): the implementation of visas for nationals of a 'refugee'-producing state, carrier liability and the threat of detention or restrictions on welfare are just some of the strategies employed with ever-increasing regularity in Europe against non-European refugees since the 1980s. The second condition is manifest in the Convention's emphasis on a deprivation of 'classic' individual rights of freedom of conscience and religion, excluding, for example, 'natural disasters' or socio-economic deprivation as reasons for according refugee status. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) tries to address this oversight. Their 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa sees the legal definition 'refugee' applying to

every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or

nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality (OAU, 1969: 1(2)).

The OAU charter highlights, in the clause of “events seriously disturbing public order,” that ‘natural’ disaster and socio-economic disturbance may be legitimate reasons for according legal refugee status. Moreover, the integrity of the state is weakened. While, arguably, the onus on the Geneva Convention is on the individual to try his or her very hardest to remain within the borders of his state, the OAU suggests that a person may flee due to problems in one part of her country. In a socio-economic rights context, the OAU African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (the “Banjul Charter” of 1981) notes in Article 22 (1):

All peoples shall have right to their economic, social and cultural development with due regard to their freedom and identity, and in the equal enjoyment of the common heritage of mankind. 2. States shall have the duty, individually and collectively, to ensure the exercise of the right to development (OAU, 1981; cited by Malkki, 1995b: 507, fn. 10)

The third condition is manifest in the insistence that a person claiming refugee status be outside the sovereign space of his or her nationality. In Article 1A(2) of the Geneva Convention, it is stated that a refugee is to be accorded legal status if:

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is *outside the country of his nationality* and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who *not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence* as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (UNHCR, 1951: 1A(2))

It is interesting to note the differences here between the OAU and Geneva conventions. While the latter is insistent on the primacy of a “nationality” in a person’s identity, the OAU convention distinguishes between place of origin and nationality and grants them both similar merit.

Malkki demonstrates that in the years following the war in Europe, the reality of large numbers of displaced people on the continent were seen by the Allied victors primarily as a military problem. Worries about the threat to order and the possibility

of “revolutions, or the partial or complete breakdown of central or local government authority in Germany” posed by “uncontrolled self-repatriation” of these displaced people led the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) to conclude that because of this endangering “of millions of Allied nationals” the refugee problem “will be regarded as a gauge of Allied capacity to deal effectively with major European problems” (Malkki, 1995b: 499). Refugee camps were organised in a quasi-military manner. Spatial confinement allowed for techniques of discipline – and of care – that isolated refugee populations, allowing study and documentation. The confinement of refugees, their enforced sedentarism, allowed for a control – or at least amelioration – of the threat to sovereign spaces. It is in this sense then that refugee camps are sites where displacement may be managed and, through this management, refugee camps become also cogs in the process of determining refugee identity.

This is so in three senses. First, the ostensible sense spoken of by Malkki; camps isolate refugees allowing for the collection of data and reflections on that data. Second, in helping to universalise an image of the refugee as ‘lost’ victim. Refugee camps are perceived as transit points, a temporary stopping place on the way to a better future within one sovereign state or another. In the immediate post-war years they were usually points of transit for resettlement in a third country; since the 1990s refugee camps have become symbols of a new regime of ‘temporary protection’ the aim being to contain groups of people fleeing conflict situations (Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosova) temporarily, the ultimate aim now being repatriation (Fitzpatrick, 2000; Chimni, 1999). Either way, “the refugee experience” of being in limbo between sovereign states requiring solutions premised on the re-introduction of the refugee into the confines of one sovereign state or another characterises ‘the

refugee experience' principally in terms of "loss" (Chimni, 1999: 5), loss of home, culture and (therefore) identity. The definitions of 'home' and 'culture' as corresponding to or premised upon life within a particular sovereign space is, to say the least, unimaginative. The taken for granted correspondence between exile and loss of culture is similarly pre-determined in terms of a state-centric or territorial resolution of identity (Chimni, 1999:5). The anthropologist David Parkin has questioned this territorialisation of identity and 'culture' by noting the re-making, and consequent de-objectification, of identity by forced migrants through the carrying of "transitional objects" of cultural knowledge, such as religious relics or family keepsakes (Parkin, 1999). Allied to this, Sara Ahmed has noted the re-creation of what 'home' means through the collective discursive recollections of an emigrant community (Ahmed, 1999: 329). Neither home nor culture nor identity can be said to be singularly dependent on sovereign spatiality.

Third, the establishment after the war and growth since of camps as a preferred method for channelling and controlling displacement has significantly altered the dynamics of "refugeeness". The limiting of spaces available to displaced people – concomitant with the restrictions on entry placed especially by European states – has altered the nature of asylum-seeking insofar as rather than the classic image of a refugee moving from one sovereign space to another, displacement now usually involves flight that ends in isolation in camps. The legal conception of the refugee as a "moving entity" (Tuitt, 1999: 109) presumes a portrayal of space as infinite, "fixed, undialectical, immobile", eminently conducive to refugee flows, eminently conquerable by powerful subjectivities (Foucault, 1980; Tuitt, 1999: 109). Space is portrayed then in the legal definition of the refugee as a neutral presence, "rather than being prone to expand or contract with politics, history, economics and,

in the refugee context, the containment policies of mainly Western states” (Tuitt, 1999: 110). Witness, for example, the nightmarish shuttling back and forth of around one thousand refugees between Austria and Hungary in the summer of 1992 after Austrian authorities imposed a visa requirement on citizens of the former Yugoslavia. The refugees finally settled in ‘temporary camps’ in Hungary where many remained for up to four years (Huseby-Darvas, 1995: 154; Horváth, 1995: 147). Witness also the United States’ original intention of isolating Kosovar refugees in a “safe haven” in Guantánamo Bay (the unfeasibility of this plan meant it was rejected but criteria for admission became whether or not applicants had relatives in the country; an aid to integration and non-extrusion) (Fitzpatrick, 2000: 280). Refugee camps are also often sites of violence, with children and women the most affected, they are a space not easily conquered. Incidents of violence also demonstrate that the legal image of refugees moving fluidly through spaces is problematic (Dugan, Fowler and Bolton, 2000; Crisp, 2000; Human Rights Watch, 1999). Refugee spaces are violent and degrading spaces, they are not neutral channels through which people magically pass through. The positional leverage that some refugees have in camps is also masked: refugee men of a certain age are more likely to hold positions of authority, they are more likely to be visible, are more likely to be well fed, are more likely to be physically and mentally healthy, they are more likely to be economically viable (Macklin, 1995).

It has been argued in this section that the international refugee regime construes the refugee as an object of knowledge and assistance relevant to and legible in the language of a territorial imagination. The state is central to those practices creating the condition of “refugeeness”. By halting the physical movement of displaced peoples and isolating them, sovereign borders remain intact. The very

action of halting refugees alters significantly the nature of ‘the refugee experience’. And in tandem with international refugee law, a particular “European geography” is taken as a referential norm in determinations of legal refugee status (Hyndman, 2000: 8-17).

The term “European geography” is used by Jennifer Hyndman to show the “cultural” input behind determinations of refugee status by an Euro-centric international refugee law which regularises a picture of the world as composed of neat divisions between sovereign states where the importance of transnational allegiances of kinship, for example, is minimal. The regularised picture of the world, where the sovereign state is the main actor of note, leads also to an emphasis on a state-centric definition of ‘persecution’: the persecution undergone by displaced people must, legally-speaking, be attributable to direct action, or refusal to act, on the part of the state. The OAU’s convention on refugees recognises in part that the borders of many African states are less binding on their citizens than their European counterparts. This convention stipulates that a legal refugee (among its signatory states) also includes those who have fled their country because of disturbance in *one part of the country* (and not necessarily the whole country). This definition of the legal refugee is cognisant not only of ties of kinship that in many parts of Africa stretch across artificial colonial borders but also of the logistical problems faced by persecuted groups and individuals in many parts of Africa where it is simply not feasible to flee to a safe area within the state of one’s citizenship. Moreover, this definition highlights a change of emphasis over the Euro-centric Geneva Convention: whereas in the latter onus is on the persecuted person to try to remain within the borders of one’s state, the OAU definition is framed very much in terms of a persecuted person’s – or group’s – right to flee (Hyndman, 2000: 12-13).

Refugee camps in recent years increasingly act as containment areas for ‘prima facie’ refugees, those recognised as displaced by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) but not as legal refugees by the Euro-centric terms of the Geneva Convention. This is particularly relevant for those displaced by socio-economic factors and, increasingly, for groups of displaced people whose individual claims for refugee status may not be met. As I have noted, there has been – particularly since the 1990s – a fundamental change in the nature of ‘refugee experience’ where the flight from persecution culminates not in admittance into a sovereign state but into the isolation of refugee camps where minimal physical security – and often also minimal food, shelter and ‘social goods’ – is the norm.⁸ This contraction of space may be associated with Patricia Tuitt’s argument that international refugee law aims to limit the financial and social obligations of western European and North American states. The ceding of responsibility to the UNHCR in these cases may be seen as indicative of a recognition of the redundancy of state-centrism given the increasing porosity of many international borders. It seems more likely however that given the strategy of isolating groups of refugees away from western European borders – and away from public and media gaze – and the difficulty the UNHCR has in receiving both funding and, where thought necessary, armed personnel, that this apparent ceding of responsibility is a way of attaining arguably the primary aim of the international refugee regime: that of maintaining the integrity of a territorialised way of life in the face of the hazardous mobility of displaced persons. A culture of perpetual ‘displacement’ is also generated. Simon Turner and Liisa Malkki have both shown that refugees find in their condition of in-betweenness conditions productive to generate collective senses of identity and – sometimes – relatively secure lives (Malkki, 1995a; Turner, 2001). Their evidence

puts paid to the depictions of displacement as universally tragic and to the adage that refugee identity is premised on and propelled by the search for a territorialised home (a simplistic received wisdom that perpetuates the territorialised view of life).

Summary

In this chapter I have noted that the international refugee regime undertakes two sorts of disciplinary practice⁹ in order to control the threat to sovereign borders and a territorialised form of life posed by the refugee. These practices are intended to exert a physical restriction on movement and a metaphorical restriction of the same by limiting the meaning of the term 'refugee' to those displaced people whose persecutory experiences are subsumable within a Euro-centric and 'territorialised' international refugee law. I have noted that these practices when associated with a contraction of what are already (western) Euro-centric spatialisations (a world and its diverse relations being reduced to the confines of a sovereign state) fundamentally changes the nature of the 'refugee experience'. I have focused primarily on those practices that seek to mollify refugee identity by making displaced people subject to particular forms of knowledge.

There is another sort of practice which I have touched on briefly: the construal of the refugee as an object of assistance. This disciplinary practice suggests that the refugee experience as an experience of displacement from territory is characterised in terms of 'loss', leading not only to the inevitability of particular strategies of response (repatriation or resettlement) but also to the removal of the individual's narrative capacity. Chapter three will look at how the figuration of the refugee as 'speechless' abstracts individual experiences of displacement (and the

persecution leading to it) while putting in its stead a dehistoricised and universalised figuration of the refugee as mute victim.

Specifically, I will examine how these practices are furthered by humanitarian aid agencies who, in their response to the refugee configured as an object of assistance, actively (in some cases) further this representation, particularly as a means of generating income and ensuring that displacement remains in the western public eye. I will also look at and critically review an attempt by Oxfam to remedy this silencing of individual experience, noting the need to resist the epistemological basis of territoriality (spoken of earlier) if attempts to “listen to the displaced” are not to repeat in other ways the configuration of the refugee as mute and faceless, a body awaiting possession, appraisal and – ultimately – exploitation. Specifically, I argue that strategies of appraisal are conducted by these agencies; this appraisal allows then for the ‘refugee experience’ (or an approximation thereof) to be utilised for particular ends. In aid agency representations the end or goal is to get funding and in the “Listening to the Displaced” project the end is to improve the process of aid delivery. Either way, it is difficult to see the individual behind the generalising appraisal that is undertaken. My argument, however, is not that humanitarianism is confined to an inevitable repetition of the violent practices of territorial epistemology but that significant attention must be paid to the possibility of such practices being imbued in this statist epistemology.

Before that, however, I investigate in more detail the disciplinary practice of international refugee law. Chapter two may be considered an annex to this chapter, looking in detail at the qualifications made by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees from the perspective of child refugees. The focus on child refugees is in part an analytical device that allows the argument to focus on the

disturbing occlusions that are part of the Convention. Moreover, a focus on children in the state-centric discipline International Relations is perhaps long overdue. Feminist interventions have shown that how International Relations is conducted and thought in the mainstream occludes the experience of women (Sylvester, 1994). The particular social, economic and political condition that women find themselves in in different areas of the world is occluded by a method of studying International Relations that takes the workings of the domestic realm to be tangential to the study: conventional International Relations theory presumes an abstract subjectivity that is saturated with patriarchal assumptions. Similarly, the de-politicisation of children has received inadequate study in the discipline. What consequences are posed for the way the discipline in a study of the political experiences and aspirations of children? How does the presumption that children occupy a 'private realm' away from the public realm of politics abstract from an understanding of the particularity of their political experience? The following chapter will attempt to show that the state-centricity of international refugee law has a tendency to obviate from the discussion the particularity of children's persecutory experience. Moreover, just as the feminist challenge to conventional IR has often been portrayed in terms of a challenge to epistemology, so too does a consideration of the occlusion of children's political experience pose a challenge to the epistemology of conventional International Relations theory. It may be said that a conventional epistemology restricts the field of 'politics' to a public space, thereby limiting the nature of the 'political' (thereby also precluding the experience of children confined to the 'private realm'). It may also be said that this conventional epistemology understands ostensible evidence of 'conventional' political participation by children in terms that assert its anomalous character (the proper place for children is the private). With

regards the latter, the prior conceptualisation of where the proper place for children is directs the response to children's political experience (premised on reasserting the right of the child to an innocent freedom in the private realm, returning the child to education, to family – without necessarily consideration of the brutalisation of children in times of warfare and the damage to mental health and the alienation of the child from his or her family and wider community). Yet the particular place that 'the refugee' has in the contemporary Western imagination is important here as well: as will be shown, child refugees are often taken to be first refugees and only secondly children, with the specific obligations of a state authority towards children sometimes withdrawn.

NOTES

- ¹ Diesel Jeans ran a campaign in early 2001 with a spoof article on displacement, reversing the roles to have images of rich Africans wondering whether to help famine-struck Europeans. See *The Guardian Fashion and Beauty Magazine*, Spring/Summer 2001.
- ² See for example the “note cards” for sale on the United States Committee for Refugees online store: <http://www.refugeesusa.org/store/>.
- ³ The cryptically-titled “American Immigration Centre” (they are not, a difficult to find disclaimer says, actually a US government agency) sells over the internet a “Do-It-Yourself Asylee/Refugee Package” for US\$60 “plus shipping.” <http://www.us-immigration.com/index.html>.
- ⁴ Rob Walker cites Edward Soja in this regard (Soja, 1971: 9; Walker, 1993: 129-130).
- ⁵ Not all people who would like to be refugees are mobile. Thus even the construal of the threat of the refugee because of her mobility is an appropriation of the figure of the refugee and a simultaneous amelioration of that threat. It is to justify the enclosing of the meaning of the term ‘refugee’ delimiting who may or may not be so defined, and in the de-limiting legitimating the grounds of relevant legal definitions of the refugee and the ‘European geography’ and masculinist idea of politics and persecution upon which it is based (as I will show below and in the two chapters following).
- ⁶ Malkki also isolates the same two practices but there are differences in our analyses.
- ⁷ I do not deal in any great detail here with the ins and outs of international refugee law; chapter two reflects the centrality of the legal cornerstone of the international refugee regime in examinations of how certain types of refugee experience are marginalised (chapter two).
- ⁸ The UNHCR has a policy of ‘humane deterrence’ involving in part not making the camps too comfortable, providing minimal shelter and social goods such as education (Hyndman, 2000: 9).
- ⁹ I don’t claim that these are the only two, rather they seem to me to be central to the disciplining procedures that enact contemporary ‘refugeeness’.

Legal Refugee Status and the Protection of Child Refugees

The previous chapter outlined the nature of the international refugee regime, highlighting its importance in recognising a condition of “refugeeness” (Malkki, 1995b: 506) and, in that recognition, ameliorating the threat posed by refugee mobility. I have suggested the regime is premised on re-introducing the refugee back into the fold of the state. This is done in order, it has been argued, to reinforce a territorial imagination which takes the state as the normal actor in international relations. This chapter will focus on the legal aspects of the regime, specifically the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (‘The Geneva Convention’). Feminist scholars of international law have long highlighted how international refugee law obstructs the recognition of displaced women as refugees. They have suggested that in premising as pre-extant the international system of sovereign states, in taking the sovereign state as the primary actor in international affairs, international refugee law obscures the patriarchal basis of the state. They have argued that women refugees whose experiences of ‘persecution’ may not occur in the public realm are disadvantaged. In a similar vein I highlight here how refugee children find the particularity of their experiences obscured by the Geneva Convention. More than that, however, I argue that those qualifications which effect a particular way of recognising the legal condition of “refugeeness” occludes children.

It is thus the intention of this chapter to highlight how children become – or fail to become – ‘refugees’. This, however, is not intended to be primarily an empirical review. The examination of how children become – or fail to become –

refugees is here a survey of those practices of induction and definition generated by the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. Particular emphasis is placed on this Convention because of its claim to universality. I have already argued (in the previous chapter) that this Convention reflects norms and premises of a 'European geography' and that its 'universal' claims are effected. This chapter will be a minute analysis of the qualifications and assumptions within the Convention. The chapter intends to highlight how the meaning of the term 'refugee' privileges a public sphere of conduct. Human rights are skewed in favour of the public realm. People whose persecutory experience can demonstrate a chain of responsibility to the state are more likely to be bestowed with the legal term 'refugee'. Similarly, people who have been persecuted because of conventional political action are also more likely to receive refugee status. More likely, that is, than inhabitants of a 'private realm'. I suggest that the conventional state-centricity of the regime, where the emphasis is on holding a state responsible, names an illegitimate non-state 'private' persecutory experience. I suggest that the conventional perspective distinguishes its definition of 'refugee' from the private realm where 'persecutory' experiences are inadmissible and illegitimate in deciding the status of 'refugees'. It may be said that the conventional definition creates an abject and silenced realm of suffering which it draws upon to make coherent its meaning. It is in this sense that the ostensible realms of 'inside' and 'outside', public and private, exist in symbiosis.

It is also important to note that the 1951 Convention is subject to individual states' interpretation. These interpretations range for a number of reasons from the strict (UK, Germany) to the relatively liberal (Canada, New Zealand). The onus of my study, however, is not to distinguish a pattern of response of individual countries. In keeping with the themes of my thesis, the intention of my argument in this chapter

is to isolate integral assumptions of the Convention. These assumptions, it is argued, restrict the range of interpretations. This is not to say, however, that liberal interpretations have not significantly bettered the lives of many people. Rather, it is to take note of how the Convention demands an interpretation that accords priority to the state-centric norm. By the terms of the Convention, people who would not normally or readily be afforded refugee status and are helped by a liberal interpretation remain particular cases, distinct from the norm. It is this establishment of a 'norm', which draws upon an excluded and abject 'illegitimate' refugee experience to reinforce its meaning, that is the primary object of critique in this argument.

The study of the Convention following is intended, therefore, to highlight not only fundamental difficulties that children have in fleeing persecution (lack of mobility, lack of relative power) but also in getting this persecution recognised. The examination of how children become refugees is then intended to be "contrapuntal" (Critchley, 1999: 134). Such an approach involves more than studying the specificity of the experiences of refugee children leading to a particular type of displacement (with particular vulnerabilities), but also how, and through what principal epistemological and ontological lens, this experience of displacement is problematised or made sense of. The intention behind contrapuntal criticism is to foster a comparative analysis of the intertwining histories and geographies of "cultural assemblages"; a hybrid critique that seeks to understand hybrid identity in its hybrid form. 'Refugees' are hybrid creatures in the sense of being the subject of multiple narratives (Malkki, 1996: 377-390). These include their own (which are often degraded or silenced); the romanticising picture of refugees that some humanitarian agencies give us and which are just as silencing of refugee 'voice' as a

legal refugee regime,¹ and narratives generated by international refugee law itself. The intention, I must emphasise again, is not, therefore, to uncover a true or most correct narrative on refugee identity. It is rather to recognise that narratives are always delivered to an audience, that it is subject to varying interpretations and representations. It is thus integral, I argue throughout this thesis, that narratives on identity be understood as inherently contaminated by others who respond to them. One thus must consider identity as a hybrid assemblage and resist the privileging of any of the many interpretations of an identity.

The deprivation of legal refugee status (the terms and importance of this status, while under dispute,² remains integral to protecting displaced people) occurs when an applicant's experiences (or the extent to which he or she is able to express these) fails to correlate with the interpretation of relevant criteria. There is covert politicking and ethnocentrism in the first point of contact for refugees and asylum seekers. The roles of national and international bureaucracies in controlling and determining refugee identity should be taken into account. It is the expression of identity and experience that is vital; language is a site of power. The United Kingdom asylum bureaucracy, for example, understands this and seeks to control the very grounds of refugee experience thereby allowing the covert attainment of desirable goals. Jeremy Hardy shows that in the United Kingdom at the end of the year 2000 38% of applicants rejected are those who have failed to properly fill out – in English and within ten days – a form detailing their persecutory experience. The UK government's goal of a faster approach to assessing asylum claims, in the face of rabid media coverage, will be accomplished by stealth: that is, by refusing to look at a large number of applicants (Hardy, 2000).

There is a nexus here between understanding – problematising – and protection. How a displaced person is understood (meaning the extent to which a person’s experience of displacement may be explained by the disciplining signs of the territorial imagination manifest in international refugee law) determines, at the very outset of understanding because of fundamental assumptions made, the type of protection that may be accorded to him or her. The criteria for comprehending displacement, it has been extensively argued (Malkki, 1995b, 1996; Soguk 1999; Giles et al 1996), reflects and is derived from a political and philosophical imagination that takes as its normal focal point of politics and ethics an abstract and somewhat idealised male adult subjectivity. This means that phenomena encountered tend to be met with referential criteria that bestow meaning and value in terms relating to the ascendancy of the normal, standardised, subjectivity. A primary disciplining sign or tool within the territorial imagination is – as I have argued – the sense of an international system of sovereign states and the consequent monopoly of the sovereign state over political agency in the international realm (Soguk, 1999: 183). If there is, then, a standardised adult male subjectivity, a study of displaced children, in their difference before this idealised subjectivity, is relevant for demonstrating the limits and prejudices of the refugee regime which leaves a number of displaced people either with a contrived and coerced understanding of their experiences and suffering or wholly absent from the gamut of refugee studies and policy (though underlying these and being used to cohere these).

The international refugee regime presumes, then, in its depictions of refugee identity a young adult male engaged in public or civil life and persecuted – by state authorities – because of this. The regime refers to a “functionalist” model of society in its depiction of refugee experience and identity (Malkki, 1995b: 508). This leads

to the refugee being seen as an anomaly, an aberration, or even a threat. Refugee identity, the very concept of “refugeeness” and exile, is constructed in terms that assert the primacy of a sedentary lifestyle within clearly demarcated social and political territories. The very construction of refugee identity determines the nature of response to the ‘refugee problem’: emphasis is on reasserting the security and commonality of a territorialised identity; this then takes for granted the correlation of identity – and the correlates of identity such as ‘culture’ – to a sedentary lifestyle within a territorially bounded *polis*.

This chapter is thus concerned with demonstrating the implication of the international legal refugee regime in constructing a state-centric sense of the refugee. This chapter is also concerned with emphasising that the political experiences of children are often thereby ignored or diminished. The chapter begins with an analysis of the legal regime, noting the restriction of the meaning of the legal term ‘refugee’ in accordance with state-centric principles. I emphasise that underlying this restriction are a number of assumptions that end up privileging a ‘public’ sphere over the ‘private’. The consequence of this is that the persecutory experience of children is diminished. I suggest that this diminishing occurs as a banal consequence of state-centric international refugee law. The second part of this chapter highlights the persecutory experience of children. I emphasise that different sorts of persecution of children occur on an everyday basis and that the international refugee regime is blind to the political nature and consequences of this because it takes the state as reference point for defining ‘refugees’ and the conditions productive of ‘refugees’.

The International Legal Refugee Regime and Refugee Identity

The 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees (“the Geneva Convention”) provides a nigh-universal consensus on the question of the fundamental aspects of refugee identity and on fundamental obligations for her protection. (Goodwin-Gill, 1999: 221). At the time of writing one hundred and thirty-seven states have ratified the treaty.³

Although not often acknowledged as such, and therefore leaving central assumptions unexamined, a central premise behind the drafting of the Geneva Convention was the sense that the refugee was one who had been deprived of his or her full status as a person before the law; deprived, that is, of Article 6 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the right to recognition as a person before the law (Goodwin-Gill, 1999: 220). The Convention thus seeks to reinstate that fullness of protection, to oblige state parties to recognise the refugee deprived of the protection of the state of her nationality as a person before the law through the granting of asylum whenever the appropriate criteria are met. In this somewhat appropriative working of refugee identity and, consequently, the ‘refugee problem’, the international system of sovereign states is taken as pre-extant. The identity of the person is summarised in terms of the fundamentality and sufficiency of a relation between a settled and relatively unambiguous subject to a state willing to furnish, secure, protect and represent his or her legal and political rights. The “aberration” of the refugee – displaced into an arena bereft of the normal agent of protection – requires, in this thinking, normalisation: re-entry into the structures of protection afforded by the system of sovereign states through one of the three UNHCR devised strategies of repatriation, reintegration or resettlement (Soguk, 1999: 14).

Thus within this primarily legal sketch of identity lies a resolution of constructions of one's home, allegiances, attachments, consequent duties, rights and responsibilities, and roots (Malkki, 1995b: 505, 508). Through processes of repatriation or assimilation, the reference points that determine identity are simplified. Reference to a collective memory or extra-territorial allegiances to religion, shared cultures or transnational families are marginalised in favour of a restrictive view of autonomous and abstract subjectivity with a clear lineal relation to the protective agency of the state and with consequent limited obligations to others outside that state. The resolution of identity – indeed of the notion of 'personhood' – is an equation of the principle elements of identity with rights as a citizen of a sovereign state. Liisa Malkki takes note of the subtle bolstering of the international system of sovereign states and the notion of the fundamentality and sufficiency of the identity this system grants to its primary constituent, the citizen. This bolstering is inherent in the universalised strictures of a refugee's identity (Malkki, 1996: 405). These assert that the refugee is one without identity or bereft of cultural space: the argument implies that it is only in a sedentary existence under the auspices of a recognised sovereign authority that identity and a sense of common culture may be cultivated: "again and again, one finds in this literature the assumption that to become uprooted and removed from a national community is automatically to lose one's identity, traditions and culture" (Malkki, 1995b: 508).

The character of displacement, in this conceptualisation of the 'refugee problem', is transnational: it involves more than one sovereign state. Following on from the discussion of this in the previous chapter, it is worth re-emphasising here that this conceptualisation is itself a strategy of appropriation in at least two senses. First, the subversion and threat to the norms of settled sovereignty posed by internal

displacement is rendered invisible by a territorial perspective that demands of the refugee cross-border flight. Second, the potential for disruption of fundamental values and ontological resolutions arguably inherent in the very condition of displacement – external or internal (Dillon, 1999a) – is rendered null by an appropriative understanding that pre-emptively asserts the primacy of the citizen towards whom reference is made in characterising ‘the refugee’, or “refugeeness” (Malkki, 1995b: 506), as an aberration to be normalised. The conceptualisation of ‘the refugee problem’ as an inter-national one, has meant an emphasis on multilateral activities among bounded sovereign entities to resolve it (Soguk, 1999: 11). The conceptualisation of refugee identity, in emphasising refugee aberrance and lack before the normalised figure of the citizen and in emphasising its extra-territorial quality, demands strategies of co-option and simplification to re-integrate the refugee into the territorial norms of the international system of sovereign states. Beyond the capacity of unilateral action to remedy, the ‘refugee problem’ requires international effort; the particular problematisation of the identities of the constituents of the ‘refugee problem’ by the international refugee regime ensures maximum likelihood that the range of solutions remain premised on the primacy of a state-centric political, legal and ethical imagination. This has all meant that international regimes are seen as both necessary and sufficient instruments of response to the refugee problem. Regimes are instruments that serve to cohere policy, providing a generally agreed to set of referential data, in order to achieve goals that unilateral action would not allow (Ruggie, 1993: 139).

The international regime on refugees is predicated, justified and vindicated in large part, if not primarily, by a consensual legal definition of the fundamental requirements of refugee-status; one that reflects the ‘statist’ concerns that motivated

the regimes. As James Hathaway points out, “refugee law is a politically pragmatic means of reconciling the generalised commitment of states to self-interested control over immigration to the reality of forced migration” and the Geneva Convention “exhibits acute concern for the protection of the self-defined interests of states” (Hathaway, 1991, cited by Russel, 1999a: 53). Patricia Tuitt is more terse, arguing that the law underlying the primary international refugee convention, the Geneva Convention, exists to decrease the ‘cost-burden’ of the refugee to the western state in four ways:

First, by defining the refugee as ‘alien’, refugee law contains the more vulnerable and thus more costly of refugees within the refugee-producing state. Second, refugee law operates to reduce the refugee identity by privileging certain forms of human rights violations above others and thus de-legitimising major forms of refugee-producing phenomena ... Third, refugee law ensures that refugees contribute to the attainment of the political goals of Western states, and thus defray external costs. Refugee law ... is currently utilised as a means to unite Western states in opposition to all forms of migration. Last, but by no means least, refugee law seeks to reduce the costs of refugees by operating as a mechanism within which such costs can be spread, distributed or shifted to other states (Tuitt, 1996:7).

Hathaway and Tuitt are both aware of the implicit strengthening of the statist territorial discourse through international refugee law: in the premises that colour its very enactment, international refugee conventions restrict refugee identity, emphasising those aspects of refugee-inducing phenomena which bolster its own state-centric perspective. The equation of identity with certain rights and obligations and of a refugee, as an aberration deprived of these specific rights, sets up a hierarchy of rights (Hathaway, 1991: 108-111). Legitimate persecutory experience is distinguished from, and made comprehensible in this distinguishing, from illegitimate. Hierarchies of refugees ensue, a distinction is made between those who meet the conditions for full refugee status and ‘de facto refugees’. The latter are in limbo, it is important to note that the term ‘de facto refugee’ is not a catch-all. As Tuitt has noted, this term is increasingly restricted, becoming ever more a term of

'art'. 'De facto' refugees are not protected against forcible repatriation, they are voluntarily protected by legally disinterested states (Tuitt, 1996: 46-47).

The Geneva Convention and Refugee Identity

The Geneva Convention defines a 'refugee' as one who,

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (UNHCR, 1951).

"Convention refugees" are thus identifiable by four ostensible characteristics. First, they are outside of the country of their nationality; second they are unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country; third, such inability or unwillingness is due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted; and, fourth, they fear persecution for their membership of a particular social group or for their political opinion or for reasons of race, religion or nationality (Goodwin-Gill, 1998: 20).

A further three characteristics are implied. First, that the refugee has demonstrated and acted upon an *individual* motivation to avoid persecution through (cross-border) flight (Tuitt, 1996: 32-3). The Convention, in reflecting the territorial imagination's conception of an autonomous agent and the sanctity of states' borders, prejudices itself against those people who lack (or may appear to lack) an individual motivation to flee and those who find it difficult or impossible to flee. It also excludes altogether any responsibility for internally displaced persons. The premise of individual motivation has led to two sorts of interpretation that are relevant here. On the one hand there is a duty that each asylum seeker's case be considered on its own merits. On the other hand, there has tended to be a narrow and even dogmatic

approach to the question of individual motivation; narrowly assessing evidence presented while refusing to consider auxiliary factors such as persecution of a family member. The meaning of 'individual motivation' becomes impinged by the taint of an idealised autonomy and consequent self-accountability. It invokes an instrumental power to effect one's circumstances – a central motif of the Western subject-citizen.

Children, whose political activities or circumstances may be incomprehensible to conventional understandings, and indeed may be in a statist view null, are marginalised. The Refugee Legal Centre cites the case of a Nigerian boy refused asylum in the United Kingdom:

In the case of a Nigerian boy fleeing persecution because of his family's political activism, the Home Secretary rejected his application for asylum on the grounds that he had not produced any corroboration of his claim, that he had not already been persecuted, that it was implausible that a 16 year old would not know to which branch of a political party his parents belonged to, and that being a child with no one to turn to in Nigerian added nothing of substance to the asylum claim (Cited by Russell, 1999a: 53).

Children and other ostensible denizens of the private realm are further hampered in their asylum claims by the difficulty of demonstrating that any personal harm inflicted has wider implications (that is, that their motivation to flee has been well-founded) and derives from (a conventionally understood) 'repressive' and 'political' agenda. (Butler, 1996: 143). This difficulty is connected to the difficulties of getting the political and repressive agendas behind gender-specific violence recognised. The child is harmed, by proxy, through any harm inflicted upon his or her primary carer, usually a female. Simon Russell, writing for Amnesty International, points out that it is ill-recognised that deprivation of her primary carers is sufficient for a child to require protection as a refugee (Russell, 1999b: 82). In many countries, the specific violence that children face is in itself an inadequate basis for recognition as an asylum seeker. This is in part because of the difficulty

posed in getting children recognised as a potentially persecuted “social group”. Up to five years ago in Italy no-one under the age of eighteen could be considered for asylum and in France refugee children may only be granted asylum through their guardians, excluding altogether the claims of unaccompanied refugee children (Tuitt, 1996: 28). While the United Kingdom does not explicitly withdraw a right to asylum for a child, this has tended to be dependent on the status of his or her principle guardian. (Tuitt, 1996: 28).

Thus, the second implied characteristic of the ‘Convention refugee’ stems from the notion that persecution has two aspects: one, that harm inflicted on the claimant to refugee status amounts to persecution and, two, that that harm must be traceable to an accountable state authority (Macklin, 1995: 222). The process of determining refugee status supposes, then, a dichotomy between public and private spheres of conduct, with the former being privileged. Ordinarily, refugee status is accorded to those who can show persecution at the hands of state authorities because of the conventional political activities that they have undertaken and not accorded to those suffering mere ‘harm’ inflicted by non-state authorities (members of one’s family for example) or those engaged in non-conventional forms of politics for which they fear persecution (in some parts of the world women’s ‘political’ activities encompass caring for and nursing male rebels and dissidents).

“Persecution” is not defined in the Geneva Convention, though a state-centric definition is implied, and redress is made to a certain extent by the non-binding United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ (UNHCR) handbook on determining criteria for refugee status (UNHCR, 1992). The handbook leaves the meaning of persecution deliberately vague so as to allow maximum leeway to the claimant:

a threat to life or freedom on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group is always persecution. Other serious violations of human rights – for the same reasons – would also constitute persecution (Cited by Macklin, 1995: 222-223).

In the assessment of the extent of the harm inflicted – whether it amounts to persecution or whether there is a well-founded fear of it amounting to persecution – the territorial imagination and its premise of an adult male subject-citizen as its focal point comes into play in the UNHCR's outline of relevant criteria. In Hathaway's outline of a hierarchy of rights, the protection of the family, especially women and children, is part of a "third order" of rights (Hathaway, 1991: 108-111; Macklin, 1995: 224-225). These rights are not enforceable, states are however required to undertake an effort to remedy loss or abuse of these. As they occupy a relatively low position in the hierarchy of rights (Hathaway identifies "four orders")⁴ these tend to be derogated in the consideration of refugee or asylum claims. Again children are discriminated against and inflicted with unrecognised, depoliticised harm by proxy, by what happens to their mothers. Bernadine Butler notes that the issue of dowry deaths in India tends to be treated in the context of the third order right of protection of the family and children – rather than a first order right to life (Butler, 1996: 154). The link between harm inflicted and whether the state can be held responsible emphasises the derogation of persecution inflicted in the private realm and the linkage of the identity of the refugee with a deprivation of civil and political rights or the possible deprivation of life as a result of activities undertaken in defence of these rights. The international legal definition of torture, freedom from which is a "first order right", moreover explicitly states that this must be inflicted by a relevant authority or with the consent of authority.

... the term 'torture' means any act by which severe pain or suffering ... is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of

having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, *when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity* (UNGA, 1984).

Hilary Charlesworth argues that “rights are defined by the criterion of what men fear will happen to them” (Charlesworth, 1991; cited by Macklin, 1995: 232). Audrey Macklin charges that the system of state sovereignty premised in international law where the state is the central referential point for comprehending and categorising phenomena reinforces the depoliticisation, and hence derogation, of women’s experience and suffering. She cites Catherine MacKinnon,

In this statist structure, each state’s lack of protection of women’s human rights is internationally protected, and that is called protecting state sovereignty. A similar structure of insulation between women and accountability for their violations exists domestically ... This is called protecting the community (MacKinnon, 1994: 17; cited by Macklin, 1995: 235).

The relatively limited propensity to mobility and agency of children links them intimately in any study of refugee matters to their primary carers, usually their mothers or other women or girl children. The requirement of young children to a proxy determining and representing their interests and the fulfilment of their rights and, consequently, in determining their relative position in the structure of refugee identity is little recognised in the conventional scholarship or in policy. This has consequences both in the criterion of an individual motivation to flee and in assessments of what constitutes persecution.

The third implication of the Convention is that there is a clear distinction between perpetrator and victim. In the language and implication of the Convention, the refugee posits himself as the victim by the act of flight from the ill-intentions of a persecutory state. There are four separate issues here. First of all, aside from the delegitimisation of the persecutory experience of large numbers of denizens of the private realm and those subject to non-state violence, reasons for displacement include economic deprivation and incidences of ‘natural’ disaster – in neither of

which will there be a clear perpetrator.⁵ The Organisation for African Unity have noted the tendency for people in their continent to become displaced due to ‘natural’ disasters but other legal instruments do not address this. The self-interestedness of states, western in particular, identified by Hathaway and Tuitt is here revealed in a distinction between ‘economic’ and ‘political’ refugees. Second, not all displaced people are the victims of violence, some are ostensibly the perpetrators, others who are part of ‘mass’ refugee flows are not directly or individually in fear of persecution but are psychologically unwilling to return.

The third issue is who is it that distinguishes between victim and perpetrator? Who decides upon which type of displaced people the spotlight will fall thereby aiding their asylum claims? There are cultural and ideological interests at work in assessments of perpetrator and victim (Chandler, 2001; Connolly, 1999). This includes assessment of whether ‘harm’ amounts to ‘persecution’ and assumptions on the nature of ‘justice’ (Dillon, 1999b). Proclamations on justice and the just involves and presumes an ontological resolution: that which is ‘just’ is so because it addresses the specific requirements and capacity of a problematised subject for a particular type of ‘good life’. The restrictive problematisation of ontology – adhering to a particular grounding and appearing to make sense because of it – has led, as I have indicated, the international refugee regime to assert solutions of resettlement, integration and repatriation. All of these are premised on the priority of the international system of sovereign states which, it would appear, because of fundamental assumptions on the nature of personhood, represent the limit of justice.

Fourth, the concept of the refugee as victim is a bureaucratic-administrative tool that sets up a universal figuration of the refugee and the causes of refugee flows, removed from context and ripe for state-centric resolution. Remarking on the causes

of refugee flows is also to insinuate a particular trajectory for resolution of the 'problem'. Conceptions of 'victim' and 'perpetrator' necessitate a stable referential point by which they, and their difference, may be problematised – *made sense of*. Consequently, a 'victim' is one who has been subject to a type of persecution which may be co-opted into the fundamental features of the territorial international system of sovereign states (and its fundamental justification – the autonomous egocentric subject). I have already indicated the bias and incompleteness of the territorial imagination's perspective on 'persecution'. Moreover, while many refugees – if not most – have indeed been subject to terrible violence, the figuration of victimised entities, especially when coupled with images of mass movements of peoples, leads to the removal of refugee agency. Suffering is removed from historical or political context, one is encountered with faceless images of 'suffering strangers'.

In summing up this section of the chapter and laying the basis for the study of the persecutory experiences of children following, it may be useful to note that children are put into an unusual double-bind by the conventions of international refugee law. On the one hand, their political experiences of 'persecution' are precluded by a territorial international law that sees the state as principal actor in international relations and, consequently, takes politics to be those conventional actions carried out in the public realm. The de-politicising of children's experiences of persecution by actors in the 'private realm' is important here. On the other hand, children are also taken and treated as adults in many instances where the particular dependency and vulnerability of children is not fully appreciated. This is despite inroads in this regard made by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁶ Even these inroads have to be qualified, the relevant article to do with refugee children is not enforceable and

the United Kingdom, for example, has opted out and is thus not legally bound to treating refugee children like it would other children. The UK is not, for example, prevented by law from incarcerating refugee children. This situation where children who are refugees are not taken to be simultaneously children is curious. When reference is made to generalised codes in deciding who is or is not a refugee and how he or she is consequently to be treated, the specificity of individual needs and experiences are precluded. There is no room for experiences and suffering which appear contradictory to a refugee Convention premised on univocity and general abstractions.

In attempting to counter the exclusion of children from the political, the next section emphasises that children are often actors in the political arena and that they are also explicitly acted upon. I suggest that children engage in political action that is specific to their characteristics as children. I also suggest that children are specifically targeted for particular types of persecution because they are children. Children are engaged in the public sphere of politics in the sense of being actively politically and in being persecuted. Yet in these two senses their engagement highlights the inter-relation of the public with the private. Violence directed against children, for example, is often explicitly intended to foster a sense of all-encompassing fear. It is, as I will demonstrate, often intended to emphasise that the aims of political violence will not stop with the ostensible political opponent but will expand to encompass all sectors of the community. Similarly, political action by children has to be understood in a more nuanced way than that of adults. The causality between volition and action may be adequate to judge an adult perpetrator of atrocity (for example) but child soldiers who perpetrate atrocities do not necessarily have a clearly lineal relation between volition and that action. Indeed, it

is important to note that neither are they always expected to have one. The image of the instrumental and accountable political actor is questioned by the encroachment of the child who is supposed to be confined to the private. The final part of the following section will highlight the age-specific nature of refugeeness. Child refugees are subject to particular sorts of violence and they are also hampered by specific difficulties from flight.

Persecution of children

To destroy the big rats, you must kill the little rats.
Radio Libre Mille Collines, Rwanda. Broadcasting April 1994. (Beasley, 1999: 31).

Children are subject to violence that both meets with and does not meet with the international refugee regime's criteria of being state-sponsored persecution. They are subject to violence specifically attuned to their physical and mental vulnerability before adults, they are subject to violence as part of a wider political agenda of repression, and they meet with perhaps the most intense of the manifold types of suffering caused by war, famine or other social disturbance as well as in conditions of displacement, flight and transit. There are thus two collections into which the types of violence and the reasons for them may be loosely grouped. The first is one that recognises the growing sense that children are legitimate targets for violence and persecution. The second takes note of the specific suffering of children in situations of generalised violence or upheaval. With regards the first group, I highlight particularly the experiences of child soldiers. I do so to illustrate forms of violence fine-tuned to address the particular vulnerabilities of children and violence against children that serves to further certain political aims. This latter point is further developed in a brief survey of how a child is persecuted in order to intimidate the wider community.

Child soldiers

Violence attuned to children's specific vulnerability appears to reach a nadir of sorts in areas of general social breakdown, such as war zones. Children, both boys and girls, are recruited by both rebel and government militia, reflecting the nature of much of the world's armed conflicts which pitch government armies not primarily against the armed forces of another state, but against a variety of armed opposition groups, in which fixed battle lines are the exception (Brett, 1999). Notwithstanding recent UN proposals, the minimum legal age for recruitment into armies remains fifteen. Optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child have been passed to raise that age to eighteen. It is important to emphasise that the experiences of a fifteen year old in well-disciplined armed forces – often well aware of their need to act in loco parentis – differs greatly from those of children in rebel and government militia fighting ongoing wars and with a propensity to undertake violent atrocities (Child Labour News Service, 2000: no page number).

In northern Uganda the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), an armed opposition group fighting the Ugandan government, use drugged children in the frontline of conflicts, recruiting them by force, persuasion, or at the behest of their families. Family groups in war zones finding themselves with more children than they can cope with do at times differentiate these children, categorising some as expendable due to a lack of physical or mental resilience or capacity. These children may be abandoned, sold or militarised.⁷ Children – often those separated from their families or motivated by ideological commitment – also join of their own accord.

The LRA, who operate largely in northern Uganda and southern Sudan, are at best unclear as to any political or social aims beyond stating that Uganda should be

ruled according to the Ten Commandments. For people in areas under their rule this involves not using bicycles, not keeping pigs and not living by the side of roads. The punishment generally meted out for riding a bicycle is amputation of the feet. Amnesty International alleges that the LRA receives support from the Sudanese government who use them to fight by proxy against rebels in southern Sudan and to destabilise the Ugandan government. However, this interpretation of events must take note of Amnesty's agenda of seeking a responsible agent for human rights abuses in the international arena, the constitution of which is not that organisation's job to question. Amnesty's level of analysis operates at state-level and in doing so takes as given a western model of an authoritative clearly demarcated state authority (Amnesty International, 1997a). These children⁸ are subject to violence and are forced to commit atrocities themselves, further brutalising them and making any sort of reintegration to the wider community difficult. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) estimates that between 1995 and 1997 five to eight thousand children were recruited (cited by Brett, 1999: 55). Amnesty International interviewed and recorded the experience of a fifteen year old girl recruit.

She was made to kill a boy who tried to escape. She witnessed another boy being hacked to death for not raising the alarm when a friend ran away. She was beaten when she dropped a water container and ran for cover under gunfire. She received 35 days of military training and was sent to fight ... the government army (Amnesty International, 1997b: no page number).

Amnesty International finds that LRA commanders force children to take part in the ritualised killing of others soon after they are recruited, forcibly or otherwise.

The intention appears to be to break down resistance to the LRA, destroy taboos about killing, implicate children in criminal acts and generally to terrorize them. Three boys were ordered to use an axe blow each to kill another child in August 1996. In October 1996, a group of girls was forced to kill another girl who had tried to escape, before being caned 15 times themselves as a warning (Amnesty International, 1997a: no page number).

Other militia in other parts of the world use similar tactics of ritualised violence in inducting child soldiers. In Mozambique:

Kidnapped boys and men were "trained" through a brutal process of deprivation, spanking, threats and subject to breaking all taboos, such as to eat human flesh, to kill a family member. This process presumably takes place to alienate the soldier from his past, making him totally dependent on Renamo (Mausse, 1998: no page number).

In common with other rebel militia using child soldiers, LRA girl recruits are compelled to fight and are raped: "the rape of girls in forced marriages is fundamental to the organization of the LRA. They are allocated to senior soldiers as rewards and incentives." (Amnesty International, 1997a: no page number)..

Due to their malleability, child soldiers are at times preferred over adults. A Congolese rebel officer is quoted by Agence France Press as saying,

The kadogo (boy soldiers) make very good soldiers because they don't worry about anything. They obey orders; they are not concerned about getting back to their wife or family. And they don't know fear either. (Cited by Brett, 1999: 61-62)

Child soldiers are also drugged, increasing their bravery in the frontlines. Images Asia documents testimonies of defectors from the Burmese State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) army who say that young soldiers were given amphetamines, tranquillisers and alcohol before being sent to battle.⁹

Before battles, we would take tablets the size of goat pellets and mix each with a lemon ... in the Ho Palaung area, they ground five of these tablets and mixed them with army rum and gave them to thirty porters. The porters were sent to mined areas to sweep for mines. All of them died. Often the officers would mix four tablets with a bottle of rum for the soldiers or the porters, to increase their strength and courage, and dull their sensitivity and ability to feel pain. (Images Asia, 1996:41).

A commander of the rebel secessionist group, the Karen National Union, notes the recklessness of SLORC child soldiers,

some defectors told us they were given whiskey before they went into battle. I don't know if they put something in the whiskey. But at Phalu, there were a lot of boys rushing the field, screaming like banshees when they rushed the barbed wire... It seemed at first like they were immortal or impervious or something, because we shot at them but they just kept coming... At one time most of the dead SLORC soldiers [were adults] ... now there are a lot of young boys (Images Asia, 1996:42).

A former Colombian child soldier says,

To calm our nerves we used to drink gunpowder in milk. If you take it by itself it gives you a headache. With the gunpowder you stay energetic, longing for the troops to pass in front of you so that you can kill them (Cited by Brett, 1999: 64).

In studying child soldiers the distinction between persecution and the neutrally political becomes skewed. Certainly, Amnesty International is of the view that recruiting child soldiers in of itself an act of persecution. Because in some aspects of the liberal Western imagination they occupy a private realm (Freeman, 1999; O'Neill, 1994), their encroachment into the public realm distorts the same. Yet as John O'Neill points out, the child is missing in liberal political theory, the central role of the family in underlying and making coherent secular liberal political theory is not acknowledged (O'Neill, 1994: 3). In the extreme situation of child soldiers, however, the way in which the public realm draws on the private which it excludes to reinforce its meaning is evident. That is, it is at least evident before the largely Western narratives that are highlighted here. The Western narrative is important to my purposes because, as I have suggested, it occupies a predominant role in understanding and classifying different types of political experience. The primacy of the Geneva Convention with its European geography is an example. The incidence of child soldiers provides a shock to the perspective. It distorts the neat divisions upon which the coherence of 'the political' is premised.

Violence Against Children and the Intimidation of the Wider Community

In conflicts without fixed lines of battle, without, consequently, straightforward distinctions between civilian and military targets, the likelihood is that a situation of all-encompassing emergency arises, one that draws in the social, cultural, economic, political and private lives of denizens within its zone (Goodhand and Hulme, 1999). The all-encompassing nature of the conflict and its rooting in the very make up of society makes it difficult or possibly unnecessary to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate targets. Moreover either the absence of clear orthodox political or economic ends (the LRA) or the targeting of groups differentiated on the basis of ethnicity (Rwanda) ensures that conflictual practice is rooted as an aim in itself.

As is well-documented, children are among the first to die or be seriously injured in war zones or areas of general social upheaval. The UN notes that between 1986 and 1996, two million children were killed in armed conflict and six million seriously or permanently injured (United Nations General Assembly, 1996). This is both due to their relative physical weakness and to a tendency, in conflictual situations, to direct violence at children in order to intimidate the wider community (United Nations General Assembly, 1996). In a sense similar to the growing cognisance of the widespread use of rape as an instrument to achieve certain goals, there is greater cognisance that children are subject to intimidation and violence by virtue of their being children; that is, by virtue of their particular situation in terms of the claims that society as a whole makes upon them. Children are the repositories of the promise of a culture's continuity. They can become, therefore, sites of contest if there is an aim to invoke fear in a society.

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) allege that the Bahrain government, in conflict with Shiite rebel groups, have stretched battle lines to include the wider Shiite community.

On 25 March 1995 ... Hamid Qasim [aged 17] was hit by a rubber bullet outside the Duraz Intermediate School, then shot again at point blank range as he was lying on the ground and dragged into the school which had been occupied by riot police. The following morning his mutilated body was delivered to his family, with several fingers cut off and severe wounds to the top of his head, the side of his face and underneath his chin. (OMCT, 1999: 49).

On 28 November 1995, 200 pupils of the al-Jabria secondary school were arrested ... The children were taken away in five buses to an unknown destination. It is believed that these acts are an attempt to intimidate the local population. (OMCT, 1999: 50)

Similarly, peacekeeping troops in Liberia picked up in 1999 this radio message transmitted by a “warlord” to his troops: “where there are any little girls, they should be raped” (cited in Black, 1999: 12).

The violence and persecution directed at children is a manifestation of a quest to blur distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate targets. It is to spill the public over into the private. Further examination on how children are systematically targeted for violence by virtue of their being children is important for a number of reasons. Not least, it may throw further light on the too-neat and orderly distinctions between public and private spaces. It may acknowledge that the demands placed upon conflict resolution are complex, demanding a long-term and imaginative commitment. It may also indicate that the attempt at a neat and orderly approach to the recognition and classification of refugees does not sit well with messy and bloody reality.

The Contingency of Flight

The reconciliation – indeed, appropriation – of the identity of ‘the refugee’ along territorial lines as described above (and in the previous chapter) leads Patricia Tuitt

to speak of “the death of the refugee” (Tuitt, 1996). The discourse on the refugee becomes – in the context of the antecedent arguments – an appendage to the discourse on the citizen, itself the foundational subject for a statist world view. The normalising and marginalising processes of identification and differentiation means that one is forced to speak of the refugee in terms of the particular problematisation enacted by a statist discourse. As Soguk points out, the primary discourse is intent not simply on assimilating the potentially subversive refugee but on “controlling the very ground” on which the difficulties posed by the refugee are expressed (Soguk, 1999: 50). The point of this discourse is to demarcate specific spaces, thought of in terms relative to the primacy of the bounded sovereign space of a state. The set of images and conceptualisations that constitute the personality of the refugee are then those which first of all reinforce the primacy of the state, its sovereignty and its central point of reference, the subject as citizen, and, second, problematise the refugee in terms amenable to solutions within the ethical and political rubric of the state-centric discourse. This problematisation, it should be emphasised, is based on a universalisation of specific types of refugee experience with the precondition of cross-border exile – of having to flee one’s territory for another - being probably the single most important defining characteristic. Thus a historically contingent experience of a particular type of refugee experience is reified to be appropriate to a wide range of phenomena. (Tuitt, 1999: 107).

There are two concepts playing on the refugee’s exile. The first is the concept of movement and the second that of the demarcation of bounded territorial spaces. The characteristic of movement is a disarmingly facile aspect of the ‘refugee’, one that is little commented upon – in orthodox or more critical approaches.¹⁰ Yet its implication of a sovereign and powerful entity moving

between territorially bounded spaces, controlling and indeed conquering space (Tuitt, 1999: 115), in effect moving between identities, is a surreal affront to the sheer physicality of contemporary refugee experience. The onus placed on an exilic precondition places a particular burden on women who either because of social mores or family burdens are considerably less likely to be able to cut and run than men; as well as on younger children, the sick, elderly and disabled. If these groups of people are able to overcome the particular difficulties they face and manage to flee, they are still considerably less able to 'conquer' space than men. The implication of a refugee fleeing from violence to a place of safety fails to acknowledge that most refugees are either interned in camps or placed in often unsatisfactory and isolated accommodation, given little material aid and no permission to seek paid work, all resulting in little or no opportunity for interaction with the general public. They are in effect interred in spaces where the restriction on movement serves to discipline the refugee's identity.

Patricia Tuitt notes that women and children are prime among those groups less mobile than young adult men due to various structural conditions, cultural patterns and, most notably, by a "'broader universe' which privileges the public sphere over the private sphere in terms of the general recognition of, and thus by extension access to, human rights." (Tuitt, 1999: 113). Quantitatively, then, people from those groups daunted by the physicality of the exilic experience are absent from cross-border flight statistics (Tuitt, 1999: 113). Qualitatively, in terms of ability to 'conquer' space, women, children, the elderly and disabled occupy, in the demarcated spaces instituted for refugees, a marginalised and violent area. Refugees generally do not move between spaces with ease; they do not readily exchange one identity for another. Most refugees are, if they are in parts of Africa, Europe, or

Australia, interned in purgatorial camps. In western Europe refugees are marginalised and isolated from wider society due to minuscule material benefits, ineligibility for paid employment, restrictions on movement and inadequate and isolated housing (Harding, 2000).

For women and young girls, refugee camps, other points of transit, the state of flight itself and repatriation are all arenas of fierce physical and sexual violence (Gilles et al, 1996: 13). Children in refugee camps are vulnerable to “hazardous labor exploitation, physical abuse, denial of education, sexual violence and exploitation, cross-border attacks, militarization of refugee camps, and recruitment as child soldiers” (Human Rights Watch, 1999). Unaccompanied children face other hazards, including the possibility of detention if in the United Kingdom or the United States (Russell, 1999a), and a denial of food and physical and sexual violence by caregivers in other parts of the world (Human Rights Watch, 1999). Refugee children in parts of Europe do not have adequate access to education, are the worst affected by the poverty imposed on their families by inadequate welfare benefits, and are perhaps most vulnerable to violent racism (*The Times*, 20 November, 2000; *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 November, 2000). Men in refugee camps are also better positioned to be granted refugee status. Not only will men in general have the upper hand *positional* – they are more likely to hold positions of authority, they are more likely to be visible – but are also less costly than women and their children, they are less likely than women and children to require mental or physical care (Macklin, 1995: 220).

The sheer physicality involved in flight is obscured from the Convention definition of the refugee. The refugee is not, by and large, a mobile person. He or she is interned in purgatorial camps or restricted to different spaces in strange

countries. Moreover, the definition of 'the refugee' in terms of his or her mobility in the precondition that he or she must be outside the country of nationality is an appropriative one. That is, it reinforces the well-being and security of sovereign states. It removes from the gamut of responsibility those people who are unable to flee. It emphasises the inviolability of sovereign borders and creates a hierarchy within a marginalised group. Left brutally abject and unrepresented are those people whose persecutory experiences do not fit well with the European geography that is presumed. The excluded subalterns here become the basis upon which this European geography constitutes itself. It allays some claims by bestowing the legal definition 'refugee' on a certain number. However, this bestowal itself reinforces the European geography, it emphasises its leverage in distinguishing the legitimate from the illegitimate in its own terms.

Summary

In this chapter I have studied the legal basis of the international refugee regime from the perspective of its relevance to child refugees. I have shown that the Geneva Convention's assumption of state-centricity coupled with its concomitant premise on the centrality of adult male subjectivity leads to an elision of the political experiences of children or to the reduction of these experiences to generalised categories that are unable to appreciate the specific nature of child refugees' political experiences and their consequent needs. I have suggested that the marginalisation of children's political experiences occurs as a consequence of the territorial assumptions on politics and political identity underlying international refugee law.

The next chapter examines the representation of refugees in 'humanitarian' discourse. This is, I will argue, another method of disciplining and controlling refugee identity and in this sense flows on from this chapter's analysis of the primacy of international refugee law in this. The next chapter suggests that a consequence of the territorialisation of political life is a rendering of refugees in humanitarian discourse as 'mute' and 'helpless'. The chapter will look at a humanitarian/development project undertaken by Oxfam in Sri Lanka and find in that organisation's attempts to listen to the voices of the displaced an intricate and ironic increase in their abjection and silencing.

NOTES

- ¹ Judy Mayotte, writing for the influential United States Committee for Refugees is typical of this international humanitarian regime that seeks to exhort, by way of romanticising and valorising, a sense of compassion (sympathy?) and empathy for refugees. “These women, who have endured so much in exile, are women of uncommon resilience and well springs of human resources and talents. Exhausted from the effects of war and desirous of peace and stability, millions of them are reaching out across war-torn countries to find ways to resolve differences by non-violent means, to transform their societies through reconciliation, and to heal the spiritual wounds of war. Women, who so often are the sustainers of culture and nurturers of society, are often uniquely endowed to create a climate of peace and reconciliation.” (Mayotte, 1997: no page number).
- ² This is under dispute in two senses. First in terms of the ongoing interpretation and re-interpretation of the relevant aspects of international refugee law. Second, through moves based on international human rights law to extend the protection afforded to displaced people – not legal refugees – through the category of ‘de facto refugees’ and the practice of humanitarian intervention for example.
- ³ Up to date details of ratifications may be found at <http://www.unhcr.ch/refworld/legal/instruments/asylum/51engsp.htm>
- ⁴ First order rights are non-derogable and include the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of life and freedom from torture. Second order rights include freedom from arbitrary trial and to a fair trial and the freedom of expression and opinion. Third order rights are those that exhort the state to work for social improvement. This includes the right to medical care, food, shelter and protection of the family. Fourth order rights include the right to property and protection against unemployment (Hathaway, 1991: 108-111; Macklin, 1995: 224-225).
- ⁵ However, when citing a linkage between displacement and the economy, one must be aware of forming too tight an alliance with advocates of treating the mass displacement of peoples in the Third World with development strategies. Not only does this simplify the mass of stories behind mass displacement to a catchall economic reductionism, but it also reinforces a link between conflict resolution and a particular form of development.
- ⁶ Article 22 (1) of which states: “State parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status ... shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties.” However that this is non-binding and that states can opt out of this particular right for the child is important. The United Kingdom does not afford the same rights to refugee children (freedom from detention, for example) as it does other children (Russell, 1999a).
- ⁷ See the research project at Oxford University Refugee Studies Centre War-Affected and Displaced Children Programme (<http://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/rsp/on17.html>).
- ⁸ Children most vulnerable to recruitment are those who, as noted, are abandoned by their families and those who are marginalised in other ways, including those separated from their families, from economically deprived backgrounds, refugees, street children, and certain minorities. (Amnesty International, 1999). These categories apply also to peacetime recruitment and in the relatively peaceful industrialised countries. (Brett, 1999).
- ⁹ SLORC is the military junta that took power in Burma following protests in 1988 against Ne Win’s government.
- ¹⁰ Patricia Tuitt, in both works cited here, is the notable exception.

Chapter Three

Humanitarianism and Representations of the Refugee

Title:

Refugee Mother and Child in Eritrea - Note Cards

Item Type:

Gift

Description:

This 5" by 5" full color card depicts a refugee mother holding tightly to her child in Eritrea. The inside is blank. Each packet includes 10 cards and matching envelopes.

Price:

\$8.00

Author:

USCR

“Note Card” for sale at United States Committee for Refugees Online Store¹

The image of the refugee as a person displaced from the protective confines of territoriality, an unfortunate creature stuck in purgatorial circumstances, conditions forms of therapeutic state-centric response: through processes of repatriation or resettlement the refugee is reintroduced into the family of nations. This depiction of the refugee problem (of the refugee as a particular sort of problem) depends on territorialised notions of ‘home’, ‘culture’ and ‘identity’. The refugee is lost, “in limbo” (Malkki, 1995a: 9; citing Michael Walzer), and helpless: without citizenship her plight is not to be characterised as merely culturally or physically precarious, she is without help, without the means to call on the protective agency of a state. As the bestower of identity, and its corollaries of autonomy and dignity, the state’s relation to the well-being of its individual citizens pre-empts or defines in its terms other avenues of assistance. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees thus

has as its principle strategies repatriation or resettlement, premised on reintroducing the lost refugee back into the fold of a state.

Characterised as lost and helpless, the refugee is taken as ‘voiceless’ insofar as narration that is of consequence to the institutions and disciplinary practices that seek to deal with the ‘refugee problem’ is denied her (Malkki, 1996: 378). The refugee is characterised, automatically, by default, as helpless by humanitarian discourse because of the priority accorded to a territorialised form of life.

The refugee experience as an experience of displacement from territory is characterised in terms of “loss”, leading not only to the inevitability of particular strategies of response (repatriation or resettlement) but also to the removal of the individual’s narrative capacity (Chimni, 1999). This chapter will look at how the figuration of ‘the refugee’ as “speechless” (Malkki, 1996: 377) abstracts individual experiences of displacement (and the persecution leading to it) while putting in its stead a dehistoricised and universalised figuration of the refugee as mute victim.

The central focus of this chapter will be a critical examination of an attempt by Oxfam GB to remedy this silencing of individual identity (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000). The critique of Oxfam’s project is based on a text produced by themselves, a working paper, arguably conveying a particular bureaucratised knowledge about refugees and the methodology for “listening” to them. The ‘bureaucratisation’ of knowledge about refugees, the extrapolation of refugee experience from individual social and historical contexts and the creation of a veneer of objectivity and dislocation, occurs in a text designed to impart exhortatory information without problematising – indeed, making invisible or irrelevant – the author’s position. What occurs is a failure to read the author into the text. The strategy of objective dislocation is furthered in the project itself – or to be more specific the way in which

the project is outlined in the text; indeed the interpretation of the project in the text accentuates through certain writing and documenting strategies the dislocation and transparency of the project's "facilitators". The theme of objective distance continues in the research methodology where the subjective influence of the facilitator is downplayed. More specifically, in the reporting of the methodology the role of the facilitator is downplayed: in the creating of a textual documentary of social reality, bureaucratisation as that practice which distinguishes an action from the actor (and a text from an author) disregards the historical or political context in creating a delineation of reality intelligible and referable to the agenda of the agency (fund raising, advocacy, the organisation of relief and development programmes and so on) (Hyndman, 2000: 74). Given Oxfam's intention specifically to read the refugee into the project this charge of violent reductionism requires defence. For now, it may be noted that the inclination to interaction with 'difference' is clearly different to 'traditional' inclinations but the methodology remains similar and because of this the reduction of difference continues. As Joan Scott notes the difficulty arises when it is assumed that unproblematised notion of 'experience' remains the bedrock of knowledge, in Oxfam's sense it is the experience of the refugees as voiced by themselves:

... what could be truer, after all, than a subject's own account of what he or she has lived through? It is precisely this kind of appeal to experience as uncontested evidence and as an originary point of explanation – as a foundation upon which analysis is based – that weakens the critical thrust of histories of difference. By remaining within the epistemological frame of orthodox history, these studies lose the possibility of examining those assumptions and practices that excluded considerations of difference in the first place (Scott, 1992: 24-5).

The point here is that the notion of experience has to be problematised in order to read the subjectivity of the investigator, specifically its importance in digesting this experience and facilitating its expression, into the picture as well as the historical and social contexts.

This chapter begins with an overview of practices of representation in humanitarian discourse that place over the particularity of different refugee experiences a blanketing and generalising depiction of refugees as helpless victims. Indeed the pertinent point is that refugees are consigned to their body; that is they are rendered speechless and without agency, a physical entity – or rather a physical *mass* within which individuality is subsumed. Refugees are arguably consigned thereby to ‘visuality’: to the pictorial representation of suffering and need. One of the central effects of this consignment is the ‘commodification’ of refugee experience. With the capacity for agency, for presenting an oppositional discourse, suitably pacified, refugee events and experiences become a site where Western ways of knowing may be reproduced and recycled – as in Oxfam’s “Listening to the Displaced” programme. The second part of the chapter will, then, investigate in detail Oxfam’s methodology and the assumptions regarding epistemology and methodology underlying it.

Representing the Refugee Body

Liisa Malkki associates humanitarianism with an objectification of refugee experience (Malkki, 1996: 388). By this she means the identification of refugees not in terms of their individual humanity but as a group whose boundaries and constituents are removed from historical context, reduced to norms and terms relevant to the territorial imagination.

The territorial imagination conceals the fragility of its fundamentals and is entrenched as the norm to which, in Nevzat Soguk’s words, “all matters of political

uncertainty must recur.” (Soguk, 1999: 9). Ana María Alonso emphasises the hegemonic role in Western theory of a state-centric perspective on identity and politics. As a “cultural inscription” this hegemony is not static or a finished article, it must be constantly “renewed, recreated, defended and modified” (Alonso, 1994: 381). By “cultural inscription” Alonso refers to the state being granted a “misplaced concreteness” borne of the moral legitimation that comes from a separation of the political from social and historical processes. Rather than being understood as the temporal manifestation of particular historical processes, the state acts as the ultimate receptacle into which these processes – the constitution of identity, heritage, kinship – are necessarily channelled. The moral legitimation of the state thus arises, Alonso argues, from a perspective that sees questions of identity, heritage and kinship as reconciled within the sovereign borders of the state. In ensuring this hegemony, the state-centric perspective, the ‘territorial imagination’, acts through “regulative and coercive devices” to legitimate certain forms of subjectivity and restrict others (Alonso, 1994: 381).

Arjun Appadurai takes note of the constitution of subjugated ‘others’ in these disciplinary practices by which the territorial imagination reinforces itself (Appadurai, 1993). Homi Bhabha emphasises that the intention behind this is to aid the creation of an “Other” that has lost its “power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse” (Bhabha, 1994b: 31; Werbner, 2001: 133). In saying much the same as Bhabha but associating this more directly with racism, Appadurai is more earthy: he notes that the reinforcement of an orderly territoriality distinguishes the violence of recent “tribal” nationalisms from “modern” North American and Western European subjectivity. He argues that there is a notion in the academic and public arena that

“ethnic and nationalist stirrings around the world are a throwback to something deep, *biological*, bloody and ancient” (Appadurai, 1993: 798, my emphasis). ‘European subjectivity’ is apt to distinguish between the higher rational mind and the primitive body, associating itself with the former and people of colour very often with the latter (Lock, 1993).² ‘European subjectivity’ is apt to nurture a territorial imagination that sees the utility and value of the ‘lower’ ties of kinship, religion and so on being subsumed to the ‘higher’ rational secular (politically and legally so) ties that permeate though the modern state. It is in this sense then that the territorialisation of identity, its animation in terms of the state, derives from a perspective that sees in the establishment of an ordered community confined within political borders a reconciliation of the mind/body dualism thrown into sharp relief by the Cartesian and then Kantian depictions of rational subjectivity (Warner, 1999b: 18).

The deprivation of citizenship leaves the refugee with bare corporeality, a flashback to primitive humanity before the civilising (rationalising) offices of the state. Liisa Malkki notes that deprived of the capacity to narrate, to present, in Homi Bhabha’s words an “oppositional discourse”, by those discourses that make the right of politically-consequential narration dependent on territorialised existence, the narration of refugee experience becomes the domain of Western aid and development ‘experts’. What the refugee is left with is biological corporeality: Malkki takes note of the tendency to represent the physicality of the refugee, as a mute body. She cites Allen Feldman,

Generalities of bodies – dead, wounded starving, diseased, and homeless – are pressed against the television screen as mass articles. In their pervasive depersonalization, this *anonymous corporeality* functions as an allegory of the elephantine, “archaic”, and violent histories of external and internal subalterns (Feldman, 1994: 407; Malkki, 1996: 388).

The reduction of the refugee to the mute image of the body, argues Malkki, is to reinforce a sense of a universal, primordial humanity. Refugees are ‘universal victims’: a dehistoricising generality makes it difficult to understand that there are individuals behind the pictures of teeming masses of bodies. When photojournalism and film focus on individual refugees, it is noteworthy that women and children tend to be prevalent. Malkki and Peter Nyers both argue that these two groups of people embody in the Western imagination “a special kind of powerlessness; perhaps they do not tend to look as if they could be ‘dangerous aliens’.” (Malkki, 1995a: 11). Note the titles of “note cards” for sale at the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) website, all of them have photographs of mothers and/or children. Moreover the simple titles of these cards suggest a fetishising of refugee women and children: it does not take any particular advertising to sell these cards, the bodies – without narration that contextualises politically, socially and historically – are adequate.

Refugee Mother and Child in Eritrea
Sudanese Refugee Girls
Refugee Mother and Child Returning Home
Refugee Children³

In discussing the reduction of ‘others’ to mute corporeality, Rey Chow emphasises the way a “white male subjectivity” makes women out to be powerless through reducing them to cinematic or photographic images. She argues that “one of the chief sources of the oppression of women lies in the way they have been consigned to visibility” (Chow, 1992: 105). Her argument assesses the appropriation of the female body and its representation on the cinema screen and how this creates a mechanised “automaton”, where characters “can be guaranteed to think, speak and act exactly as you would expect” (Smith, 1973: 18; cited by Chow 1992: 105). The consigning to “visibility” of the female body is then an act of power, undertaken by

what Chow sees as a Western masculine subjectivity to reinforce its epistemological, ontological and political boundaries. There are three consequences of this disciplinary practice – all resonant for us by now. First, the reduction of the female to her body and then the consigning of that to “visuality” thus enforcing a mechanistic predictability. Second, the cinema screen exaggerates and stereotypes physical characteristics, creating melodrama and encouraging a certain sort of response from the viewer. Third, thus objectified – in the sense of having been made mechanistically predictable – the female subject as objectified body becomes a thing to be utilised: Chow takes notes of the ‘commodification’ and appropriation of an anaesthetised female figure by the ‘culture industry’.

The media image of refugees initially depersonalises but also exaggerates: suggesting a sense of universal primordial humanity, in all its naked helplessness. The refugee is thus represented as an object of pity. The exaggeration of ‘bare humanity’, Malkki argues, evokes a sense of empathetic pity, “we are all humans after all” is the refrain (Malkki, 1996: 388). Refugees, then, as images on film and paper are mechanistic like Chow’s automatons: there is an anaesthetising repetitive regularity about conventional refugee documentary. film that more often than not has a grave unseen narrator describing refugee experience with the odd on-screen commentary from aid agency officials; and photographs with brief captions in newspapers – and increasingly on the internet – that take the place of any individual narration (particularly, says Malkki, when the refugees in question are especially dark-skinned). Repetitive and predictable in the gamut of emotions they convey, an archetypal refugee image becomes then ripe to be utilised to further particular ends (such as fund raising schemes). My intention is not, however, to suggest that there is a single interpretation of documentary film or photography on refugees.

Peter Nyers has shown the assumptions of voicelessness behind UNHCR public relations and refugee advocacy posters (Nyers, 1999). Similarly Jennifer Hyndman takes note of a UNHCR poster with the picture of a “stylized” refugee sheltered in a tent, with the legend “UNHCR, a voice for the voiceless” beneath (Hyndman, 2000: 196, fn. 21). My principle concern here is how following the process of objectification the refugee becomes ‘commodified’. Consigned to “visuality”, stuck in static signification of particular meanings, refugee images – indeed the very resonance of the refugee experience – become commodities, appraised goods, to be utilised to further certain ends. The description of one of the USCR’s notecards (“Sudanese Refugee Girls”) reads:

This 5" by 7" full color card depicts 2 Sudanese refugee girls. Violence in Sudan has produced more victims than any conflict since World War II. All are individuals with thoughts and hopes like this young girl. Ten cards come in each set. A matching envelope is included.⁴

Perhaps the reduction of refugees to a \$10 set of “full color cards” with “matching envelopes” to be purchased by Western consumers demanding a certain quality does not sit very well with the claim of the note cards conveying individuality. This description is representative of the other cards being sold by USCR. There is something that makes me uneasy about the usage of individual human images in this context. They are perhaps intended by the USCR, as a refugee advocacy body, to be used to convey a sense of affinity or empathy with refugees – remembering Malkki’s suggestion that maybe the preponderance of children in refugee images conveys the perception of the helplessness and vulnerability of refugees especially well. Claims to the effect that the cards convey individuality are watered down by their instrumental use (fund raising); the images are anaesthetised, the people pictured can be guaranteed to think, act and speak as one would expect. While all may be

“individuals with thoughts and hopes like this girl”, no narration, no outline of the girl’s *individual* thoughts and hopes is actually offered.

Beyond Commodification?

In describing the ‘commodification’ of what is conceived of as the definitive ‘refugee experience’ and its purported reduction to signify a limited register of meanings, the presumption is that there is a mass somnambulism, a non-resistance of the passive consumer. One response is to rally against the purported emasculation of individual capacity, and individuality itself, in the march of the culture industry. Another is to remark Baudrillard-fashion (Baudrillard, 1993) on the erasure of the distinction between the masses and the commodified culture (exaggerating the mass consumerism of the masses so that rather than focusing on an all-controlling culture industry, the onus is on an all-consuming mass): “the mass(es) in its (their) stubborn, somnambulant silence, in its (their) simulated or simulating acquiescence to the media, become(s) abandoned in the ruin of representation” (Chow, 1992: 109). Rey Chow argues that it is the white Western feminist who purportedly possesses the autonomy of interpretative capacity to transcend the reduction of “Woman” to commodified social object. Chow suggests that to take on the spectrality of the woman in her state of visibility is to focus on the ‘feminine’ as a social construct, to criticise it from within (rather than from a transcendental point outside or free from the reduction of “Woman” to commodified social object) is thus to critique those economic, political, philosophical and cultural norms that lead to its formation.

What, asks Hélène Cixous, “if the doll became a woman? What if she were alive? What if, in looking at her, we animated her?”(cited by Chow, 1992: 110). Rey Chow argues that the Western critic must be wary of proposing an animation of “the doll”. The critic must be wary of presuming a transcension of the subject-object duality of ‘modern’ political theory which registers the woman, or the refugee, as a subalterned, objectified prop to the Western philosophical – and hence political – edifice. The Western critic must be wary, then, because of the possibility of reasserting the right of the Western critic to, again, universalise; to reach generalised conclusions on the basis of a reading of one’s particular life. Strategies that purport to de-objectify but begin with an unreflexive reification to universal proportions of Western experience arguably continue to insist that non-Western individuals be defined in Western terms. I want to argue that if desiring to create thinking and narrating space for objectified others, the Western critic must first investigate his or her complicity with the wide and complex epistemology of objectification. One of the central consequences of this epistemology of objectification is the reduction of the identity of non-Western individuals to their perceived grouping. A purported ‘deconstruction’ of this grouping may only offer non-Western ‘others’ an opportunity to define themselves in terms of yet another vein of the Western canon.

The ‘deterritorialisation’ of identity can, when originating in a reification to universal proportions of a specific European critique, de-legitimise these collective designations or groupings of identity where the non-Western ‘other’ is depicted as inextricably part of a group identity (an aberrant opposition to the autonomous subjectivity of the West). However, it runs the risk of treating aspects of European methodology, epistemology and ontology as given. Against this, the cognisance of the wider epistemological investments involved in the depiction of the refugee as

victim may enable the refugee to 'speak'. This may offer narrative that is of fundamental consequence to institutional and political forms. If we are on the level of narrative, cognisance of the ascendant discourse (and its attendant assumptions on epistemology and ontology) must be addressed if the narratives of displaced and objectified people are to pose fundamental questions about their institutional and political objectification. It is perhaps through their lived experience as "automatons" consigned to their 'images' or to "visuality" that the 'others' of Western discourse may speak (rather than through the deconstruction of these in terms of yet another Western theory).

Ostensibly critical discourses of knowledge from within the Western academy, charges Rey Chow, do not necessarily provide thinking and speaking space for the subaltern.

By the logic of commodified culture, feminism shares with other marginalized discourses which have been given "visibility" the same type of destiny – that of reification and subordination under such terms, currently popular in the U.S. academy, as "cultural diversity". As all groups speak like automatons to the neurotic subject of the West, an increasing momentum of instrumentalism, such as is evident in anthologies about postmodernism and feminism, seeks to reabsorb the differences among them. Our educational apparatuses produce ever "meta" systems, programs, and categories in this direction. Feminism has already become one type of knowledge to be controlled expediently through traditional epistemological frameworks such as the genre of the "history of ideas" (Chow, 1992: 112-113).

The difficulty, then, with giving marginal discourses visibility is the fact that this language has to be translated into a medium relevant, acceptable and comprehensible to the language of the Western academy. Strategies such as creating "thinking" or "speaking" space for subalterned others, increasingly popular in the Western academy and in the 'critical' discourse on international relations, fail in their incapacity to address the "local", in this sense, the fractured identity of *individual* non-Western 'others', people deprived of space. The difficulties, and indeed dangers, involved in attempting to create a space for contending narratives to compete

includes the possibility that hegemony remains (in Alonso's use of the word described above). Related to this, the question of how that apparent "thinking space" has come about remains contentious. The critique of a particular European philosophy may be taken as a displacement – a deterritorialisation of space, identity and politics – of generalised and universally pertinent 'modernity' instituting thereby a field where identity may be contested. The way in which modernity is displaced – and the presumption on what modernity is that this involves – maybe cannot create space for individual subalterned selves to consider complex relations of identity. Rather, given that a particular critique of a particular European philosophy is used to address contemporary (global) problems of the present, it seems likely that the play of identities remains within a hegemonic Western ambit.

In Roland Bleiker's terminology the difficulty is that rather than addressing the *form* of theory, arguably the language that gives theory and praxis a particular style, analysis remains on content, inadmissibly divorced from the linguistic form that imposes a particular structure and demands a particular way of becoming and being coherent. Non-attentiveness to the form of theory leads, I argue, to a limited analysis of the link between theory and its manifestation in practical societal contexts. The subject of theory when addressed in terms of issues of language – "how they constrain and enable, how they are part of a discursive form of domination" (Bleiker, 1997: 60) – exerts a simultaneously enabling and restrictive effect on practice. "Language frames politics" says Bleiker (Bleiker, 1997: 60), turning form into substance. But the onus on creating thinking or speaking space for objectified others does not, indeed cannot, address the linguistic form so long as there is a reification to universal relevance of a particular critique of a particular European philosophy. This is because the framework of contingency and modesty

that is revealed in a critique of the linguistic form is not forthcoming in an approach that masks or is unaware of the contingency of the European critical experience. The relevant point, as both Bleiker and Chow note, is how to escape canonical knowledge that would seek to re-pose the question of the 'other', and the questions posed by the 'other', in yet more terms of Western European origin. More specifically, the important point is to consider the possibility of such an escape.

Is it, then, possible to examine not the received philosophical wisdom, that would perhaps deconstruct prematurely subaltern identities, but focus rather on lived experiences at the margins of European thought? Rey Chow suggests pressing the claims of the "local":

Pressing the claims of the local ... does not mean essentializing one position; instead it means using that position as a parallel for allying with others. For the Third World feminist, especially, the local is never "one." Rather, her own "locality" as construct, difference, and automaton means that pressing its claims is always pressing the claims of a form of existence which is, by origin, coalitional (Chow, 1992: 114).

Against the impulse to reinsert other experiences into the Western canon, it may be possible to delve into the richer strands of postmodern theories; mixing the rich vein of textual analysis with attention to the need to "*detail* history." (Chow, 1992: 114, emphasis in original). In other words, the critic needs to emphasise the connections and coalitions between different identities; the "local" is never one. The thinking of marginalised identity must resist an essentialist viewpoint and strive for understanding the multiplicity of lives within single bodies. This will be a theme picked up again in the latter part of the chapter when I examine Oxfam's essentialisation of refugee women in Sri Lanka (i.e. removing them from social and political contexts – or making those contexts depend on a prior conceptualisation of their femininity).

It is perhaps the function of the critical and concerned among ‘us’ Western academics to investigate ‘our’ complicity in the discursive strategies of ‘modernity’. One should, in other words, be wary of the complexity of the jaded and overused call to self-reflexivity. The relation to those far removed is fundamentally affected by the methodology involved in delineating a space where, as in the example I shall shortly turn to, identity may be contested.

I have tried in this section of the chapter to suggest, that the representation of the refugee emphasises a mute corporeality that allows for the dual strategy of ‘commodifying’ refugee experience by enforcing a mechanistic predictability on it and of thereby utilising that image, playing on the sense of refugee vulnerability and helplessness – particularly in the depictions of refugee women and children which seem to be prevalent in the industry. I have noted that among the difficulties of presuming a transcension of these mechanistically predictable images is the possibility of reasserting a hegemony of Western theory by other means. It is hoped that the critique below of Oxfam’s ‘Listening to the Displaced’ project will shed a practical light on the themes I have brought up.

The project’s genesis is in the growing awareness among humanitarian aid agencies that refugees and other displaced people are without voice; ceding that to aid and ‘development’ experts. The problem, as Oxfam sees it is how are they to know if aid is forthcoming and relevant to needs?

Oxfam’s ‘Listening to the Displaced’ Programme

Jennifer Hyndman and David Campbell both argue that humanism runs the risk of muting difference. They note that as a Western construct that is not sufficiently aware of its cultural specificity, humanism, and its ‘societal’ and political practice as humanitarianism, acts as both a conduit for the possibility of difference and its constriction within certain parameters (Campbell, 1998: 498-501; Hyndman, 2000: 61-86). Campbell specifically associates humanism with a reductive ‘modern’ approach and this is evident probably on three levels. First, in the approach to a field of enquiry or action where the possibility of distilling ‘field experience’ to ascertain relevant and necessary strategies is mooted often without cognisance of the mediated nature of experience. Joan W. Scott has argued that this methodology presumes, “a direct, unmediated apprehension of a world of transparent objects” without taking into account the role of ideology and subjectivity in determining what one sees and what one does not (Scott, 1992: 23). Second, in the concomitant simplification of individuals within a field, rendering them “transparent objects”. As the subject of humanitarian action, refugees are many times represented as powerless victims; a simple subjectivity – often in contrast to the complex subjectivity of the aid worker (Jaschok and Shui, 2000: 34) – allowing for the straightforward identification and relief of particular types of suffering. Third, in the practice of humanitarianism, the delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid or the cultivation of humanitarian development strategies, and its reduction of individual subjectivity to group subjectivity, can mask the fundamental influence that gender and age, and other variables, can have on individual refugee experiences. This masking is, however, difficult to uncover from within the humanist gambit. The point is again the methodological tendency to seek simplified, transparent subjectivities. One must be wary of treating the *expression* of the methodology as the pathology, hence masking

the methodology itself. Humanitarian practices then veer from masking the particular experiences of, for example, women refugees in the interests of cultivating a comprehensible subject-object of assistance to emphasising them as fundamentally vulnerable or helpless and hence peculiarly dependent on aid (see generally, Turner, 2000; Turner, 1999: 8). Again, one may argue that the same interests – of the cultivation of a simplified object of assistance – are at work; the individual is de-contextualised, de-historicised, de-politicised, de-personalised.

The intention of this part of the chapter is to review an attempt by Oxfam to avoid this muting both of difference and, on a related but importantly different level, of refugee voices in general. Oxfam's "Listening to the Displaced" project seeks to imbue their development projects with the opinions and experiences of the people it seeks to help. It tries to avoid basing itself on an 'essentialised' image of the refugee by attempting to 'hear' the voices of women, children, the elderly, the disabled and other marginalised people. Indeed a central focus of the project – which Oxfam abbreviates to 'LTD' – is inclusive participatory development, subverting traditional humanitarian agency schemata (and thereby also subverting norms of the societies agencies work in) which address or consult primarily with cultural or familial leaders of a group or with local government representatives or non-governmental organisations.

The LTD project is operative in Sri Lanka in the region known as the Wanni which comprises most of the northernmost administrative regions of the country – Jaffna excepted. The Jaffna peninsula is a stronghold of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the main militant group engaging in an armed struggle with the Sri Lankan government with the aim of creating a 'homeland' for the country's minority

Tamils. Oxfam works with people of Tamil origin displaced into the Wannu from Jaffna as a result of the often intense battles between the Sri Lankan army and LTTE in Jaffna. Control of the Jaffna peninsula and the Wannu itself shifts periodically. Oxfam estimates that as a result of the army's taking control of the peninsula in 1995 up to 500,000 Tamils were displaced into the Wannu. Since that time a consortium of Western humanitarian non-governmental organisations and the UNHCR have been responsible for the provision of clean water, non-food relief items (sheets, clothing, buckets, cooking utensils, materials for house construction and suchlike) and community health education programmes. The Sri Lankan government is responsible for a basic food ration and health and education services (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 9-11).

Initial humanitarian interventions by the consortium of relief agencies focused on the immediate provision of emergency relief. Oxfam notes that emergency relief provisioning is problematic in two ways. First, by necessity, the need for urgent relief goods lead to "assumptions about people's basic needs". This means that "what the IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons] need or want is often unclear, and their voices are lost in the process." However, this process often continues, Oxfam says, after the initial period of emergency has passed:

Indeed, the process of 'helping' people can become a difficult habit to break. In addition, when field personnel work within a specific context every day, they feel that they are in touch with the IDPs' needs, even when these 'needs' have not been discussed with the 'needy' for some time (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 15)

At least implicit in this criticism by Oxfam is the desire to move beyond casting displaced people as victims, as well as an awareness of the skewed power relations between Western aid agencies cast in the role of expert helper and the displaced person as 'needy' helpless victim. The second problem Oxfam identifies in emergency relief provisioning is that when many different NGOs are operating in the

field a holistic approach may not ensue. That is, displaced people may receive specific types of help from specific NGOs reflecting their specific expertise but if other needs are not addressed surreal situations may ensue with plentiful water or cooking utensils but no food: “there needs to be a better way of understanding how people prioritise their overall needs in such situations, and how to react to those priorities” (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 15).

The LTD programme is thus intended to address these two perceived problems. LTD is intended to act as a “mechanism” to provide “a rapid means of finding out what people [need]” to bridge the gap between what agencies think they need and matters ‘on the ground’. Oxfam, as noted, also seems concerned with the objectification as mute victims of the people it tries to help. The LTD intends to try “giving the displaced an opportunity to be heard amidst the chaos of the immediate emergency”. And as noted earlier, Oxfam is at least ostensibly cognisant of the tendency to mask diversity as the LTD is intended also to assess the perspectives of women and children, while trying to avoid the age-old problem of treating them as one category. In this sense then, Oxfam describes their LTD programme as a means of bridging the gap between relief and development work, with the latter referring to “promoting self-sustainability” (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 16).

The LTD is run annually and has been since 1996.⁵ The LTD, says Oxfam, is an important source of information for Sri Lankan government authorities who, Oxfam alleges, lack a channel to hear “the *voice* [sic] of the IDPs”: “In Sri Lanka, the attitude of government officials is often ‘We know what the people need’, and this type of research can provide them with useful data to inform their decisions” (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 16, my emphasis). The LTD is also an important source of information for local non-governmental organisations (LNGOs). Oxfam says that

due to influence or control by the LTTE, LINGOs have “links to the communities [that] are often rather weak.”

One of the uses of LTD is to encourage LINGOs to see people’s situation *more realistically*. The research and the resulting report can often function as a source of information for lobbying LINGOs to act in the people’s interests. It can also be used as a training tool with LINGOs to build an understanding of what it means to take people’s opinions into account and to work with and for people (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 16, my emphasis).

The LTD is thus an attempt to overcome the contextual limits of humanitarianism to enable a shift from “working for people to working with people”. In the LTD programme this involves primarily allowing the displaced to speak for themselves:

The inclusion of direct testimony in the development debate can help to make it less of a monologue and more of a dialogue ... it is not enough for the development ‘expert’ to summarise and interpret the views of others – *the others must be allowed to speak for themselves* (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 16; citing Slim and Thompson, 1993, my emphasis).

It is difficult to judge the extent of the LTD’s success in assimilating the views of those it seeks to help. Oxfam notes that provision of relief items in the Wanni are now better attuned to what people say they need. They are also hopeful of using the “voice of the displaced” as an advocacy tool allowing for greater flexibility in relief items the Sri Lankan government allows to enter the Wanni. This “voice” has also been included in discussions with donors, with Oxfam using it to advocate a shift from relief to development work. The relatively brief time that the LTD has been in operation does however limit assessment of its success in changing the way displaced people in the Wanni are helped.

The focus of my study however is on the methodological difficulties involved in de-objectifying refugees through giving them voice. I think that from Oxfam’s summary of the project, on which this analysis is based, the agency is inadequately cognisant of these difficulties. I am able to deduce four difficulties which I briefly describe now before outlining them in more detail. First, the reduction of the

identity of “the displaced” to fit the institutional frameworks of Oxfam as a humanitarian agency. Second, the de-politicisation of people in the study that emphasises in stasis and in isolation the identificatory variables of gender and age. Third, Oxfam’s association with marginalised groups against central or traditional forms of authority. Through the LTD project, Oxfam intends to act as an advocacy group for displaced people against government officials as well as within communities in favour of relatively more marginalised groups of displaced people. This is a difficulty insofar as it is a way of “decentring structures of political and intellectual privilege” (Jaschok and Shui, 2000: 37) that is prone to the transferring of particular norms onto “the displaced”. This is furthered by the de-politicising essentialisation of certain markers of ‘identity’ (such as gender) without taking into account the socially-located nature of gender as a construct. Fourth, an ethnographic relation premised on distance. This has four aspects. One, a reliance on a mode of knowledge-acquisition that assumes the possibility of a neutral survey and digesting (re-contextualising into relevant experience) of the reports of displaced people. Two, the concomitant utilisation of this experience to authenticate and essentialise positions of identity and knowledge (Jaschok and Shui, 2000: 37). Three, the consequent establishment of a hierarchical relationship between hermetic bodies of aid worker as processor of experience and displaced people as conveyors. And four, the non-examination of the role of the aid worker as investigator, indeed the institutionalisation of him or her as objective listener. There is inadequate cognisance of the role that the aid worker plays in influencing identity and reported experience through allowing a specific narration of past events, neither is there cognisance of the way interaction with the objects of investigation relay back onto the identity of the aid worker.

i. *Reduction of identity to the contexts of a humanitarian organisation*

The goal of allowing others to speak for themselves is undercut by what Christine Sylvester has referred to as a tendency of alternative development strategies not to question the overarching paradigm within which development occurs (Sylvester, 1999: 709). The LTD allows for narration by displaced people that is of consequence institutionally and politically only insofar as these convey a series of material needs. Couched within the depiction of “the displaced” are a series of power relations that restrict the identity of displaced people in the Wanni to pre-conceived notions of the character of displacement. Narration by “the displaced” is situated within a particular trajectory that culminates in the goal of making aid more efficient in its delivery and relevant in its nature. It is in this sense then that the identity of the displaced is perhaps reduced to the contextual imperatives of Oxfam as a humanitarian/development organisation.

The LTD is a means of collecting data on material needs and on assessments of what “the displaced” consider to be the most pressing issues of their displacement. It constructs refugee identity in terms of a knowable constellation of physical and economic needs. As a corollary to this, “especially poignant” things that participants said were used in reports disseminated to government authorities and LNGOs as a means of illustrating “the points more clearly ... and to allow the participants’ own words ‘to be heard’.” (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 29). Such “poignant” quotes also pepper Oxfam’s project report on which this critique is based. They are chosen for their poignancy, as a means to convey sympathy. Like the USCR pictorial representations examined above, they do not convey a sense of the historical,

political or 'cultural' locations of displacement. Disembodied, de-politicised and de-contextualised these "poignant" quotes further restrict refugees to an identity characterised by helplessness and puerility. In a sense similar to the pictorial representations of refugees and other 'victims' of complex political emergencies, as a reductive method of representation these de-contextualised quotes further a de-humanising process. Moreover, this is akin again to restricting refugees to a bare corporeal existence: simple quotable words conveying physical and economic peril are taken out of context, institutionalising a social history in documentary form that is perhaps "invariably detached from the local historical context of the reality that they supposedly represent." (Escobar, 1995: 108; cited by Hyndman, 2000: 74). I reproduce here a number of the quotes of "poignant" things said by faceless and nameless people:⁶

We don't lead a life. Three years of displacement looks like 35 years; young people look very old now.
(man in Mannar District, 1998).

Who ever rules us, we are not bothered: we want peace. (man in Jaffna District, 1998).

Our problem is not a shortage of cooking pots or shelter. Our problem is the war. If you offer cooking pots, we will take them; but if you ask what you can really do for us, we will say help to stop the fighting. If you can do anything to help bring peace, we will be able to take care of ourselves and stop being a burden to you." (woman in Kilinochchi District, 1997)

The army hassles us more because we are poor, and the big people walk about freely. (man in Jaffna District, 1998).

The mines are everywhere. Only when our husbands and children return at the end of the day do we know whether they still have their legs. (woman in Jaffna District, 1998).

So many people are coming, asking and then going. Please don't do that. (man in Mullaitivu District, 1998).

I had to leave school to look after my brothers and sisters. (13-year-old girl with five siblings and no mother, in Kilinochchi District, 1998).

Oxfam's goal of allowing "the others ... to speak for themselves" must be assessed against a perspective that has already pre-defined displacement in a humanitarian context. 'Speaking' means outlining material needs to help the efficiency and relevancy of aid delivery. This further fixes refugee identity by essentialising certain aspects of refugee life. It allows for a commodification of refugee experience; their identities fixed and predictable, simple and 'poignant' quotes apparently representative of refugee personality and experience may be utilised in discussions with government and donors; this involves removing them from social, historical and political context. The representation of 'refugee experience' in documentary form, in reports to government and donors, suggests a second form of marginalisation. This contextualisation of refugee voices is a bureaucratisation of refugee experience; the co-option of narration into pre-conceived categories "familiar to the knower but not necessarily to the 'known'" (Hyndman, 2000: 74). The end result is akin to what Arturo Escobar has called the "bureaucratization of knowledge about the Third World" (Escobar, 1995: 106; cited by Hyndman, 2000: 73); the creation and institutionalisation of fixed bodies about whom knowledge is attainable and upon whom particular strategies of aid are enacted.

Liisa Malkki suggests that such context is important for a humanitarianism that would emphasise the political, historical and human nature of "refugeeness". She writes of the resistance of Western aid officials in Tanzania to her research on the productive nature of Hutu refugee experience, and how this is different among 'town' and 'camp' refugees. She notes how the refugees she spoke with saw exile not first and foremost as a tragedy but as a "useful, productive period of hardships that would teach and purify them" (Malkki, 1996: 382). Certainly there would be as

much reductive generalisation in suggesting that all refugee experience is necessarily productive as there is in the opposite view of emphasising tragedy. Nevertheless the uniform sense of tragedy and loss that reverberates in Oxfam's report leaves one to wonder if humanitarianism as a means of providing material help can take into account non-tragic depictions of refugee experience and also if these may be unnecessarily complicating of aid delivery and fund-raising.

ii. *Depoliticisation and eternalisation*

The LTD project primarily sub-divides "the displaced" into categories of "gender" and "age". The LTD differentiates between relative states of marginalisation, distinguishing traditional figures of authority from those experiencing a secondary state of marginalisation – traditionally bereft of voice and agency and distinguishing the effects of displacement on people of different socio-economic status. The LTD project tries then to make assessments of development needs more nuanced, reflecting the specific physical requirements of women and children on the one hand and, on the other hand, refusing to be dictated to by traditionally authoritative voices on communities' priorities and requirements.

The concern here is that the LTD essentialises in biological stasis gender as a particular determinant of identity. It is telling that in the "poignant" statements reproduced earlier gender is the only identificatory category mentioned. Oxfam notes that "women and men have different priorities, related to their different responsibilities within the household and household economy, and their different personal needs" (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 44). Gender is important as a social

category because it reflects different physical needs and social roles of men and women. The category 'gender', then, rather than diversifying or making more nuanced Oxfam's programme in the Wannu serves to reinforce the pre-established sentiments of refugee identity and the role of the humanitarian agency. Gender becomes a determinant of identity that may be utilised to further the image of refugees as particular sorts of people. 'Gender' becomes a "knowable set of relationships in humanitarian situations" (Hyndman, 2000: 75); emphasis is placed on 'gender' as a category about which facts may be ascertained.

The privileging of a particular sense of 'gender' divorces – again – refugee voices from social, political or historical contexts. Maria Jaschok and Shui Jingjun wonder at the relative positioning of gender analysis with respect to other forms of inequalities (Jaschok and Shui, 2000: 35). They suggest that this privileging of gender as an analytical category in stasis and in isolation from historical and social processes embeds a simplified view on women that is not cognisant of "diversely constituted constellations of inequality." They suggest that the simplistic analyses of gender may be a case of Western academics – a point I would think that is equally applicable to Western NGOs – marginalising the compound nature of women's voices or narratives by "inscribing their political correctness" upon different lives. Refugee women's voices in the Wannu are heard within a context that allows for their appropriation by the terms of a traditional humanitarian discourse: their restriction to an exposition of physical needs means that women's voices are heard within a context that does not question the paradigmatic sense of the refugee as tragic, voiceless and corporeal victim. Pressing questions that may illumine a study of the situation of refugee women in the Wannu may include: how do we interpret the historical relationship between Tamil ethnicity and women in pre- and post-colonial

Sri Lanka? How do we conceive of the place of women in LTTE vis a vis ‘traditional’ places – in Hinduism or Dravidian culture for example? How is the situation of Hindu Tamil women different from that of Muslim Tamil women? How is the body of the Tamil refugee woman inscribed as a site of warfare (rape and sexual abuse occur as a normal by-product of the war in Sri Lanka and as specific tools of conducting warfare – as they do elsewhere)?⁷ The necessarily unique situation and compound political identities of Tamil women refugees – as women, as Tamils and as refugees – may be begun to be understood through moving away from simple generalisations to specific and compound questions that wonder at the manifold identities taken up by and pressed on to refugees as well as how and by whom these have been narrated over time. Rey Chow’s suggestion that we need detail in our histories is pertinent here.

iii. *Association with marginalised groups*

It is difficult to mount a critique against a perspective that in resisting hierarchical and hegemonic structures of authority avoids dominant voices and seeks out the marginalised. It derives from a critical resolve not to allow co-option into “self-serving discourses of hegemonistic regimes” (Jaschok and Shui, 2000: 37) and is, I think, laudable in many senses. Oxfam note that

LTD tends to focus on widows and their households, because Tamil culture constrains the activities of this particular group ... While the LTD has never purported to be representative of the entire population of the Wanni or Jaffna, it has attempted to enable the voices of those who do participate to be heard. In Sri Lanka it is difficult for INGOs and LNGOs to avoid working with the elite of the community ... because the entire system of relief is channelled through them. Humanitarian workers in Sri Lanka often do not know how to conceptualise working outside this system, because they have never done anything else. LTD provides a starting point for putting the focus back where it belongs: in communities, taking advantage of their wisdom and their experience. *It does not ignore the elite, but tries to make their voice equal to that of the displaced.* (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 44, 48, my emphasis).

This is a rich summation of Oxfam's democratising agenda. My critique is, as I have said, hesitant but I think necessary, given a series of assumptions that guide this democratising.

As I have noted, the LTD project – the very act of giving voice – restricts refugee identity. Giving a particular space for refugees to speak is not the same as working 'outside the system', it is rather to make more efficient the workings of the system. Confining refugees to a cycle of repetition of physical needs reinforces their identity as helpless and abject; it does not easily subvert, question or threaten hierarchical structures and indeed leaves them intact. The LTD programme rather than taking advantage of the "wisdom" of "communities" not only establishes another hierarchical structure of dependency (between "communities" and Oxfam) but also in ignoring traditional forms of authority potentially increases the vulnerability of marginalised groupings. The onus on making everyone the same or equal also has potentially the effect of reducing the "elite", those with voice and with an articulated sense of themselves that is perhaps not conducive to efficient aid delivery, to a common abjection. It is to reinforce the primary role of Oxfam over the 'indigenous' elite in marking out the identity of the less dominant groups. It is to suggest innocence in Oxfam's mediating of who can speak and who cannot, it is to suggest that Oxfam has no particular interests (or can ignore these) when they render all voices equal. Moreover, the link between Oxfam's levelling approach to refugees and the abstracting of refugee voices from context should be emphasised: when voices are taken in their contrived isolation the compound nature of identity – that it is construed on different levels in different inter-actions in different contexts – is downgraded.

Oxfam's role is not rendered transparent, Oxfam's equalising of diverse peoples is undertaken with a particular aim in mind. Difference is not enabled by this process but is rather constricted within a particular framework that emphasises homogeneity, thereby not only reinforcing a general abjection as those marginalised groups are encouraged to speak within Oxfam-established parameters but also couching relations of power that remain unthreatened. Ultimately Oxfam's democratising work is, on this evidence, another attempt at isolating, commodifying and rendering abject refugees by isolating them from wider political and social processes.

iv. *An ethnography of distance*

Within the scope of the LTD, refugees in the Wannu configure their identities through a narration of the present. I have noted already that this narration is forced into particular parameters that restrict refugee identity, what the 'present' constitutes is narrowed down with emphasis placed on aspects of physical deprivation. The role of Oxfam as a body with power to determine the limits of refugee identity so that it remains in accord with its own ends is inadequately examined. For a project that intends to allow "others to speak for themselves", this lack of reflection on the part that the investigator can play in restricting identity through a restriction of narration is problematic.

The ostensible pursuit of a goal of allowing "others to speak for themselves" is perhaps in itself misguided. Not only is there a sense of the primeval purity of these others ("the wisdom of the communities") that can be reached once the blanketing voices of "the elite" are pushed aside but there is also a sense that identity is developed in isolation, that neutral knowledge of refugees in the Wannu may be

gleaned by an investigator without cognisance that interaction with Oxfam as investigator may play a role in the processual development of refugee identity. Julia Kristeva's insight that it is interaction with the stranger that refines 'our' identity works both ways (cited by Jaschok and Shui, 2000: 38). Jennifer Hyndman quotes bell hooks: "Their [white people's] amazement that black people watch white people with a critical 'ethnographic' gaze, is itself an expression of racism" (Hyndman, 2000: 65).

It is as a result of this ethnography of distance that refugee experience is distilled into essentialised identities; it is also a result of this ethnography of distance that the encounter with refugee experience need not be premised on an examination of the role of the humanitarian agency as 'knower'. A hierarchical relationship of dependency ensues between refugees as transparent objects and a shadowy aid worker. Oxfam's *Listening to the Displaced* report on which my critique is based uses quotes from "research facilitators" to make its points. Like the quotes of refugee voices, these disembodied quotes of two or three sentences are removed from social context. Arguably, on the one hand they reflect a bureaucratised mode of acquiring knowledge where, Hyndman suggests,

bureaucracy is *par excellence* that mode of governing that separates the performance of ruling from particular individuals, and makes organizations independent of particular persons and local settings (Smith, 1993: 12, cited by Hyndman, 2000: 74).

This bureaucratic separation of individual actors ("research facilitators") from their subjects of study (refugees in the Wanni) justifies the usage of disembodied quotes to illustrate points relevant to the development of a bureaucracy of knowledge about Tamil refugees. Bureaucratic interventions, however, not only separate the investigator from the investigated but also encourages a de-individualisation and a concomitant sense of investigative objectivity. Whereas the

quotes of refugee voices (appended above) emphasise a ‘subjective’ insight through a clarification of the gender of the person speaking, an investigator is only a “research facilitator” or a “report writer”. This reinforces the simple subjectivity of the refugee whose insights are contextualised within the essentialised – and corporeal or biological – gender category; while the Western aid worker is able to transcend determinants – like ‘gender’ – of a subjective viewpoint.

Yet the complex subjectivity of the aid worker remains evident in the disembodied quotes. When juxtaposed against the “voices of the displaced” peppering the same report, sometimes on the same or on adjacent pages, two differentiating characteristics are evident. First, whereas refugee voices are mostly descriptions of a tragic situations relayed in a plaintive and helpless manner, aid workers’ voices relay power: they give expert recommendations, they outline actions undertaken. For example:

I had a difficult child in my group. He wanted all of the attention. So I made him the leader of a younger children’s group and asked him to supervise their work. This worked very well and he did a good job. (debrief notes, Mullaitivu District, 1998).

Sample size should have been increased, location(s) should have (been) selected randomly, attention should have been paid to take a sample resembling the different classes. Process has to be improved to get the maximum participation of the people. (Jaffna research team, 1998).

In April 1999, 10 months later, I was based [near a field site] for a short period. One evening I cycled with the driver [into town] to buy fish. As soon as I entered the village, people recognised me and came to see me. One man ... called other people, saying that I had come back to see them ... (research facilitators comments, 1999) (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000: 33, 41, 51).

The second characteristic differentiating aid workers’ and refugees’ voices is, I think, very important. The sense of individual humanity in people able to take decisions and do mundane things along the way (“buy fish”) is more apparent than in plaintive and predictable lamentations. This is furthered, crucially, in the way the quotes continue to convey aid workers as individuals, hinting at complex lives,

whereas refugees are part of a wider community. The pronoun 'I' is used by aid workers, refugee voices are made to reflect a collective: 'we' is the pronoun most often found in the "voices of the displaced" used by Oxfam. Their opinions and identities are situated within wider groupings ("gender", "age). As I have noted, depictions of refugees subsume senses of individuality – and the nuance, detail and specificity that that would entail – in favour of generalising and violent collectivisation.

Jaschok and Shui suggest that against the essentialisations of identity that I have suggested runs through Oxfam's LTD project, a meaning of identity as a "production', signifying the dynamic interplay of history, culture and power" does more to illumine the practice of humanitarianism. Jaschok and Shui's definition of identity would convey the "intersubjective and embodied" and "irredeemably social and processual" nature of identity formation. Identity here is an ongoing production, involving ethnographer and subject (and, pertinently, subject and other subjects) in a mutually constitutive relationship (Jaschok and Shui, 2000: 37-38).

Oxfam's LTD has no doubt significant potential in making the important work of relief provision more relevant and efficient. I am well aware that my criticisms of the LTD have sometimes been sharp, but my intention is to provide a constructive critique of a potentially valuable project conducted by an agency whose general work and outlook is, I think, of merit. But as a means of moving from a typical relationship of dependency characterising relief projects towards a promotion of self-sufficiency in a development project (Demusz and Oxfam, 2000), Oxfam's non-questioning of a simplistic, reductive and ultimately violent sense of refugee identity coupled with the usage of an objective ethnographer's gaze cannot overcome

the workings of the humanitarian relief system. Indeed in its claim to be allowing “others to speak for themselves” the LTD can further entrench the view of refugees as helpless, powerless, abject and tragic victims. This depiction is particularly evident when juxtaposed against the complex and powerful individual subjectivity of the aid worker.

Summary

This first part of the thesis has outlined how the refugee is situated as an object of knowledge about whom certain types of information may be gleaned in international affairs. I have suggested that this situation is made possible by a territorial resolution of identity and the concomitant casting of the refugee as an aberration before the citizen. This casting allows for a particular definition of what it means to be a refugee, a definition that is entrenched via disciplinary practices of the international refugee regime.

In this chapter, I have noted that the casting of the refugee as an aberration outside of the system of international sovereign states has led to a depiction of the refugee as mute and helpless, an eternally tragic and powerless victim. I have taken note of how this resolution of refugee identity in terms that assert the predictability of refugee personality allows for a commodification of refugee experience. I have noted that overcoming this commodification is difficult, and have emphasised, with certain strands of post-colonial feminism, that ‘de-commodifying’ refugees must be wary of merely asserting another de-historicising and de-personalising Western framework on the bodies of undifferentiated refugees. In this regard I turned to a study of Oxfam’s *Listening to the Displaced* project, in order to emphasise a series

of methodological difficulties lying in wait for any attempt at de-objectifying refugees in the sense of approaching their individual and unmediated lives.

The difficulties involved in addressing that which is in excess or 'outside' of the bounds of political community will be a central theme of the second part of the thesis following. It will be suggested that central to post-positivist attempts at widening the bounds of political and ethical community must be a problematisation of the role of the critic, an attempt to read the critic into the critique.

NOTES

¹ United States Committee for Refugees Online Store,
http://www.refugeesusa.org/store/individual1.cfm?item_id=2352

² In the different relations 'the Westerner' has with peoples of colour, it may be apt to cite Appadurai's note that the Western media has a tendency to distinguish degrees of primitivity roughly corresponding to differences in skin colour: those forms of warfare that involve lighter skinned people (Bosnia) are called "ethnic"; those with darker skinned people (Rwanda) are called "tribal" (Appadurai, 1993: 798). Also noteworthy is Robert Vitalis' discernment that 'humanitarian interventions' invariably involve people with lighter skin helping those with darker skin (Vitalis, 2000).

³ <http://www.refugeesusa.org/store/titles3.cfm>

⁴ http://www.refugeesusa.org/store/individual1.cfm?item_id=1460

⁵ The document on which my examination is based covers the period up until 1998.

⁶ There is certainly a certain amount of reductionism involved in my extrapolating some quotes over and above others. Yet I think they are fairly well representative of the tone of Oxfam's report.

⁷ See regular articles on the rape or abuse of women by soldiers at <http://www.tamilnet.com>.

Part II

Aesthetics and the Challenge to Territoriality

Part Two

Aesthetics and the Challenge to Territoriality

The second part of the thesis has two central themes: the demonstration of the reinvoation of Euro-centric terms by post-positivist scholars in the discipline International Relations (IR) and an examination of an aesthetic method of approaching, highlighting and beginning with subaltern experience rather than abstracted Euro-centric theory. The critique of post-positivist arguments in IR highlights the importance of self-reflexivity in the critique. That is, it suggests that it is important to consider *how* one approaches a would-be otherness, it is important to consider how unexamined assumptions of the critic may unintentionally restrict the meaning of this otherness. A central aspect of the particular aesthetic mode of understanding that will be delineated here is its processual or unceasing critique. This is a critique that in emphasising the non-conceptual in objects renders meaning unstable. The meaning of an object, in this view, undergoes an unceasing constitution and re-constitution. The aesthetic approach which obliquely reflects, *refracts*, the non-conceptual may provide a means of beginning with subaltern or marginalised experience. I examine 'disruptive writing' as a means of highlighting incendiary subaltern experience, one that may throw out of kilter the smooth façade of the political.

Part II of the thesis begins with a critique of David Campbell's critique of humanitarianism (Campbell, 1998). I suggest that Campbell reinforces the positional leverage of European critique. Campbell suggests that humanitarianism derives from Cartesian modernity constituted by the repression and abjection of the other

who is mute and faceless. However, in his attempt to create thinking or speaking space for the other, very little is actually said about this other. And indeed, in the Euro-centric tools that Campbell uses, the absence of the non-western other may reinforce the positional leverage of a European subjectivity. It may be said that the Euro-centric critique that Campbell utilises reinforces itself by the very absence of a non-problematic and non-oppositional other. The Euro-centric subjectivity may continue to claim to represent, speak for and act on behalf of humanity. Aside from Campbell, Michael Dillon's utilisation of the estrangement of the refugee (Dillon, 1999a: 109) will be analysed and a similar critique will be offered. I will emphasise the intimacy of relations between self and other and that the nature of this relation, of how the identity of each depends on an engagement with the other, must be theorised if we are not to conceive of "the Other" as an empty prop holding up Euro-centric critique and subjectivity.

Chapter five is an analysis of Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory. Specifically, it is an examination of the potential of "aesthetic understanding" to offer a non-reductive method of understanding. Adorno's aesthetic theory juxtaposes the non-conceptual sensuous against the norm of a pseudo-scientific, Enlightenment-derived rational understanding. In doing so, Adorno challenges the meaning, and the right to give meaning, of the rational understanding (Adorno, 1970/1997). I suggest that while Adorno offers an important critical framework, this has to be made distinct from Euro-centric and reductive tendencies within Adorno's own thought. Adorno accords privilege to certain forms of European art, and disparages non-European, saying that engagement with the former is what will bring about an expansion of political and social theory and praxis. A similar critique will be made of an attempt by an International Relations theorist, Vivienne Jabri, to

utilise aesthetics as a means of conceiving of a subjectivity that is open towards and respectful of otherness (Jabri, 1998) Specifically, I suggest that in locating transgression in the individual's aesthetic practice, Jabri does not consider the limitations of a subjective attempt at transgression. It appears as though the subject is transparent, that his or her embeddedness in traditions and epistemologies is unimportant. I suggest that in Jabri's argument, like Campbell's, the other may be given a space to think and speak that reflects the norms and practices of a particular European subjectivity.

It is important to glean from Adorno's argument the idea of processual understanding. Juxtaposing the non-conceptual "sensuous particular" (Bernstein, 1996: 3) against the norm means for Adorno that the ready progress of instrumental rationality is thrown out of kilter. Processual understanding is, then, *negative* insofar as it may not be summarised in terms of what results from it. Unlike the understanding that Adorno finds to be prevalent in post-Enlightenment political and social theory, aesthetic understanding does not end with the grasping and classification of the object it pursues. Instead, as aesthetic understanding approaches an object uncertainty is multiplied. Being cognisant of the irreducible and non-conceptual, aesthetic methods of approaching an object or subject does not end with its being summed up. Adorno's approach is thus non-reducible and may provide a means of beginning with subaltern experience that does not end up prematurely determining that experience.

Chapter six will look at the "disruptive writing" (Shapiro, 1997: 38, Bleiker, 2000a: 17) strategies as an aesthetic method of approaching otherness. I will emphasise that ostensibly 'disruptive' literature can, if not connected to a theory of methodology and epistemology such as Adorno's, continue to reflect norms and

assumptions of the mainstream. Such literature can continue to obstruct marginalised experience. I suggest that Adorno's aesthetic method of understanding indicates that it is the constitutive form – and not only the content – that must be addressed. I make an argument that the constitutive forms of a piece of writing are those literary devices that constrain a piece of literature within certain parameters and precludes the possibility of certain meanings or interpretations. Specifically, I suggest devices such as plot progression and narrative style give a particular sense of time and space to the work. In a conventional piece of writing, one may encounter a linear plot progression, replete with discernible watersheds and a clear sense of beginning and climax. Central characters and their environment are distinct and clearly outlined. I use the work of three authors, Naiyer Masud, Árpád Göncz, and Tadeusz Borowski to indicate how such clearly progressive and linear writing with its bounded spaces restrict the type of meaning that may arise. Masud, Göncz and Borowski in different ways, through different literary devices and styles, highlight means of beginning with marginalised meaning and experience. Particular attention will be paid to notions of 'home' and 'exile'. This is in keeping with the focus on refugees that is central to this thesis. I will suggest that more expansive senses of the meaning of 'home' and 'exile' lay the building blocks for approaching refugee experience and understanding refugeeness from without the statist perspective. It lays the foundations for beginning with refugee experience.

The second part of the thesis forms the substantive argument that I am making here, one which I hope makes an original contribution to International Relations theory. I will suggest that post-positivist forays against the territorial way of seeing, understanding and doing international politics run the risk of re-imposing a Euro-centric classification upon the other. I suggest that this may be due to

inadequate attention being paid to the question of *how* to approach otherness. The methodology of understanding is as important as the understanding because it influences its nature. How we approach something influences the range of possible meanings of that thing. It is because of this that I delve into Adorno's aesthetic understanding. I suggest that his is a method of understanding that may enable one to begin with the subaltern, with the 'local', and with a non-determinate and compound (rather than unitary) understanding.

Chapter Four

Humanitarianism and Post-structural Critique: of the Western Subject and the Right of Narration

I have not sworn an oath of silence. It's just that I do not need to speak. This has been made possible for me by the kind people who live in this house. They spotted me somewhere, recognized me, and told me that for many generations our families had been very close. They brought me to this spacious house and graciously urged me to pick any room I wished to live in.

- Naiyer Masud (Masud, 1998:102)

Man is Europe and the Bible, everything else can be translated.

Emmanuel Levinas¹

Different takes on humanitarian interventions acknowledge in one way or another the centrality of questions to do with figurations of 'political space' and, consequently, of identity and responsibility (Hoffman, 1993). Indeed the notion of 'humanitarian *intervention*' exists or is posited as a policy alternative because of the priority accorded to a particular resolution of political space and identity (Malkki, 1996). That is, a resolution of political space in international relations in terms of the sovereignty of territorially bounded states and the concomitant conception of the sufficiency and fundamentality for his or her identity of the individual's relation to the state, underlies the discourse on humanitarian intervention. It is in this sense, then, that Nevzat Soguk speaks of the *instrumentality* of humanitarian intervention: it is, in his reckoning, a means to sustain and bolster the international system of sovereign states, and the regimes and institutions living off of it, in the face of relations, experiences and phenomena that are perhaps transgressive of the territorial norms of the international system. From this perspective, humanitarian intervention

is in part a strategy employed to emasculate or marginalise the a-territorial or extra-territorial force of the scandal of those events – such as the displacement of people – that would properly be called a humanitarian emergency (Soguk, 1999: 188).

David Campbell has developed an influential critique of humanitarianism based on a post-structural problematisation of the questions of identity, community and responsibility in international relations (Campbell, 1998). Soguk's scepticism towards resolutions of political space and identity which allow for what amounts to a consensual debate on humanitarian intervention arguably provides the opening for a fluid conception of ethics and identity. This fluidity promises, Campbell argues, a responsibility to others that is not beholden to state boundaries nor to codes of conduct which are said to stem from and address fundamental verities of human being. In short, Campbell's critique identifies a 'humanitarianism' underlying and making legible humanitarian intervention. A variant of modern Western 'humanism', it bases itself on certain reconciliations of ontology. This involves a simplification of complex political emergencies and of individuals therein. It presupposes that subject has a capacity for ontological and epistemological autonomy; it presumes that the subject may "distance [itself] from others, diagnose a complex set of social and political relations, conceive of actions and practices designed to meet certain goals, and implement them as planned" (Campbell, 1998: 500).

The discourse on humanitarian intervention may be said to occur within a way of doing and thinking international relations that takes the immutability of political borders as the proper basis for life. Michael Dillon argues that this involves a prior ontological resolution which determines how phenomena is understood: "whether or not you know or acknowledge it, the ontology you subscribe to will

construe the problem of action for you in one way rather than another” (Dillon, 1999a: 98). Dillon argues that, therefore, devising new forms of politics and ethics involves, fundamentally, a revision of ontology. Regarding humanitarianism, the problem, as Liisa Malkki has noted, is cognisance that “these forms and practices of humanitarianism do not represent the best of all possible worlds, and that it is politically and intellectually possible to try to come up with something better” (Malkki, 1996; 398). For Malkki this involves imbuing the static and prematurely closed-off depictions of the causes, agents and victims of humanitarian emergencies with a sense of historicity. Following Foucault, she advocates a ‘discursive’ analysis of the grounds of human identity, one that emphasises that how we think about human identity is the result of different stories and narratives on history and the human condition being elevated over others. This stance arguably highlights the power relations – the occlusions and exclusions – that have been brought to bear over time in asserting the centrality, priority and normalcy of a given identity.

Prior to that however, in the conceptualisation of the dominant take on international relations, in comprehending the ontology and consequent structure one wishes to distance oneself from, one must be wary of two related pitfalls. The first is mistaking the critique of a particular ‘dominant’ tradition from which ascendant views of international relations are drawn as sufficient pathology from which to draw generally-pertinent conclusions. The structure of mutually dependent elements, postulations and assumptions that constitute a symbiotic theoretical structure, the ‘territorial imagination’ for example, serves as a closed totality in the sense that its problematisations derive validity from the founding assumptions of that structure. The ordering of the structure is by way of a centripetal origin; an archimedean point which limits, predefines and vindicates the play of theory. The pitfall is commonly

made: confusing the limited temporal, cultural and geographical relevance of the theoretical structure at hand with a generalised, universalised and coherent 'modernity'. The difficulty is, simply put, that the attempt to account for the nature of the ontological resolution locates a purportedly universal condition of the present in a particular philosophical tradition. Why, for example, would a critique of Cartesianism (especially Cartesianism taken as a 'pure' tradition, insulated from cross-cultural contamination) be adequate to allow the critic the freedom of purportedly universal bounds (of the 'modern condition')? How can the critique of a particular tradition enable the sort of freedom that would allow one to speak for or on behalf of manifold others without simultaneously reinvigorating the European critic's right to reduce other lives and voices to Euro-centric categories and philosophical terminology?

Regarding the isolation of a particular tradition that is used to explain or illumine the nature of the present, Simon Critchley asks: why is it the norm that explanations on the nature of the present are sought in a particular tradition of Greek philosophy or its outgrowth (or, one might add, a particular critique of Greek philosophy or its outgrowth)? Is there not an implicit "imperialist, chauvinistic or racist logic" at work in the 'universalisation' of *particular* tradition? (Critchley, 1999: 131). Is the European philosopher "the functionary of humanity"? (Goldberg, 1993: 6; Critchley, 1999: 128). Further, is there also not a problem with the treatment of this tradition as univocal or unitary? What has happened to other cultural ensembles that have worked together, contested each other in the constitution of what we commonly know, for example, as Greek philosophy and culture? And then, how does the sense of a linear outgrowth culminating in

Descartes, Kant and so on also act as a reinforcement of the European purity of the Greek tradition?

The second pitfall arises within the context of post-positivist² discursive practices. By and large those scholars who find themselves in one way or another associated with the terms 'post-structural' or 'postmodern' acknowledge the fundamentality of language and its inherent violence – in terms of the judgement, erasure or simplification of complex epistemes. It is in this sense that one cannot dissociate oneself completely from the terminology, assumptions and manifold violence of the prevailing order. One can, however, in the construction of an aporetic politics point and indicate ways forward. This is integral as David Campbell, Michael Dillon, Michael Shapiro and Roland Bleiker, to name just a few, have all recently shown to the development of a post-positivist epistemology that is capable of engaging with 'concrete issues'. It is integral to the development of an extra-territorial ethics and responsibility. In the construction of aporia however, one must be aware of a potential pitfall that can occur in the process of distancing oneself from the dominant paradigm. In order to speak of 'going beyond' a politics centred on the narrowly-conceived state, one perhaps has to speak of *form*; one has to speak, that is, not to and against the processes of politics – the *content* – but to the arche, the origin, which gives one a *style* of politics (Derrida, 1999: 73-74). Bleiker notes that 'form' becomes 'substance' – the pathology to be examined – in the cognisance of the ordering role that language plays in ideas of ourselves and others (Bleiker, 1997; 60). Critique is hence localised, it operates within and not without. It addresses specific structures, it operates not on the basis of a freedom from whence objective and distanced critique may ensue but rather it, and this is important, addresses always one's complicity with the dominant paradigm and its expression (Derrida,

1978: 36). It is in this sense that critique hesitates before pointing ways forward. Gayatri Spivak admires Derrida because he precisely does not seek to lead her anywhere, but is rather more interested in how he, as a Western intellectual, is implicated in discourses of power (Spivak, 1994: 87-89). Malkki suggests that Frantz Fanon's observation that for the "native", "objectivity is always against him" is particularly apt for displaced people as the objects of humanitarianism. Spivak notes that the tendency to point the way forward, to address otherness on the basis of a critique that arises from the 'outside', stemming from a state of freedom, leaves the critic's subjectivity unexamined, beyond critique. In approaching otherness in creating space for the other, Spivak's point is apt: one should seek "to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman" (Spivak, 1994: 91). It is in this sense, then, that I will in the next two chapters explore how aesthetic understanding may encourage a non-deterministic approach to otherness.

I try and do two things in this chapter. First of all, I attempt a critique of David Campbell's 1998 article, "Why Fight: Humanitarianism, Post-structuralism and Principles" (Campbell, 1998). This is done in order to show that Campbell's attempts to develop a post-humanist humanism is ironically marginalising of 'otherness'. This is despite the ethics of alterity that he strives for, that would be central to his post-humanist humanism. I use Campbell here as an example of inadvertent Euro-centrism extant in recent critical attempts from within the International Relations (IR) discipline at thinking of an ethics of alterity. I suggest that in IR theory, including recent critical or post-positivist IR that explicitly is concerned about creating thinking and speaking space for the non-Western other,

very little is actually said about this other. And indeed in the Euro-centric critiques and tools utilised, and the purely European tradition one is given a picture of, the absence of the other may be reinforcing the positional leverage of one episteme over other ways of knowing and being. Indeed by dint of its absence or exclusion, the non-contextualised other is drawn upon to reinforce the bounds of Campbell's argument. The attempt to create space for the marginalised may, if the relation of marginalised identity to centralised identity is not thought through, end up creating thinking or speaking space for marginalised identities within the bounds set by a Western subjectivity whose particularity – in the sense of its understanding and perceiving – is rendered transparent or unimportant.

Thus the second aim of this chapter is to think through and emphasise the consequences of an inter-dependent and *inter-stitial* relation of self to otherness. How do the complications of the relation between self and other effect attempts to create an ethics geared towards otherness? The theoretical studies pursued in this chapter are akin to those pursued in a practical arena in the previous chapter with regards Oxfam and Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. While the previous chapter provided practical examples of both the objectifying of Tamil refugees before the powerful subjectivity of Oxfam and of the ironic inter-dependency of refugee and aid-worker identity, this chapter explores in much more depth the theoretical rationale behind these.

My intention, it must be said, is not to mount a critique of post-structuralism, or more generally post-positivism, as such. In a straightforward sense, it is mainly a critique of how we should or should not “fight” (Campbell, 1998: 497). It is a suggestion that resistance to oppression is ill-conceived if it comes from a base of human being, or – as Campbell prefers – “being human” (Campbell, 1998; 506)

which is derived through Euro-centric analysis. This is a call to read the critic into the critique, of emphasising the likelihood that the other may be called into being in terms of Europe. It is an emphasis that tradition should be thought as contaminated by what it excludes and that, therefore, the nature of this contamination must be analysed.

The critique being developed here is thus solely, though this solitary pursuit I hope leads to other things, a challenge to Campbell's development of a "humanism of the Other" (Campbell, 1998; 508) which would turn away from the certainties and consequent oppression of Cartesian subjectivity to embrace the idea that identity is contingent on recognition by otherness. If I understand Campbell well, realising this contingency of one's identity leads to a gravitation towards otherness, towards difference. A "humanism of the other" is thus "an ethical struggle for and on behalf of alterity" (Campbell, 1998: 513). As I understand it, this ethical bent develops from an ontological base. This is the contingent human being, identified in terms of its relation with other beings, in their state of difference.

I am concerned about how a critique of a certain European philosophical tradition may lead to a notion of being human that is better "attuned to human-ness" (Campbell, 1998: 505). Why is it that a critique of Cartesianism taken as a European tradition allows for a sense of "being human" that is more attuned to otherness? Why is it that a critique of Cartesianism may be sufficient for thinking a way of "being human" that is more attuned to human being's actual condition of dependency before otherness? Is indeed the European philosopher the functionary of humanity?

Where is the other in all of this? What are the contradictions faced by Euro-centric in attempting to de-centre the European subject? How is it that a European

critique of subjectivity may lead to a more open-ended subjectivity, one that is unhesitatingly welcome of otherness and difference? What role does the critic's subjectivity play in mediating what is seen and not seen? How is it that this Eurocentrically-derived subjectivity has not failed to determine the identity of others, or at least set the boundaries wherein difference must be played out?

I take note that Campbell's critique of Cartesianism precisely does not consider the *active* (as opposed to passive) relation of "others" (Campbell, 1998: 505) to Cartesian subjectivity. Indeed these others remain faceless, a mass who are passively subject to "violence" and "abjection" (Campbell, 1998: 505), but whose effect on Cartesianism is not considered. How would a thinking through of the effect on the repressor of those who are repressed colour Campbell's formulation of an ethics of alterity? What are some of the immense complications of a Cartesian desire that is contaminated by its relation to that which it represses? The central premise of my argument in this chapter is thus fairly straightforward: it is insufficient to assume that a notion of being human as being more attuned to alterity may be derived from a critique that has a specific and constrained base.

The chapter will proceed in the following way. I begin with a brief review of critical post-positivist notions of space and the consequences for notions of identity, politics and ethics. This section then speaks to the preceding chapters that have examined a 'territorial' resolution of identity, politics and ethics but have not explored the post-positivist critique of this. A focus on these critical notions on space in IR theory is important because, as I have said, Campbell's "humanism of the other" finds the root of a constrained responsibility to those far removed from ourselves in a spatialised view of the world where ethical and moral communities are (more or less) clearly marked out, distinguished and polarised.

I then move on to considering epistemological bases and implications of the ‘humanitarianism’ Campbell identifies, highlighting a sense of objective distance and power to automatically translate desire into deeds. The third section of the paper will critique Campbell’s critique of this. The main points of this critique have been briefly highlighted above and will be expanded upon.

Post-Positivist Space and the Ethical Relation

In striving to move beyond the static confines of a legally codified responsibility that is typical of Occidental ‘modernity’³, scholars typically grouped in IR under the rubric postmodern, or post-structural, characteristically begin proceedings by noting that this ‘modernity’ is a structure of intelligibility which effectively conceals the historicity and contingency of its grounding assumptions. In effect ‘modernity’ is a modality of enunciation which asserts the primacy of its viewpoints while violently concealing or disparaging epistemic contest. What is left open to contest are the contents of political theory; as opposed to the legitimising form (see generally, Dillon, 1999a; Dillon 1999b; Bleiker 1997; Connolly, 1991b; Connolly 1993; Connolly 1995).

The postmodern description of Occidental modernity as a structure of intelligibility serves three fundamental purposes. The first is to assert the potential for change and re-structuring that is inherent in the very legitimating and normalising edifice of Occidental modernity. What I have called the ‘form’ of the discourse, its particular style which in the discourse commonly referred to as “modern” identifies all forms of political or social conduct within a regularised and identifiable unity, is, argues someone like Michael J Shapiro, ultimately grounded in an historically and geographically specific statement on the conditions of meaning (Shapiro, 1999: 58).

The second is to argue that the violence of Occidental-modernity is a violence of monopolistic representation. By this I mean that it is argued, again by Shapiro for example, that the specific conditions of meaning emphasised by what I have called Occidental-modernity are intent on controlling the very grounds upon which political or ethical expression occurs. Judith Butler suggests that the “contingent foundations” – the rooting in localised and temporal conditions of legibility – of Occidental-modernity are reified in an attempt to ground theory or politics in a universal speech-situation or subject-position (Butler, 1992: 7). This reification is expressed by Shapiro in terms of the typically “monological” imperial encounter with colonised others, made so by an assertion of truth or ultimate logic in the grounds of Occidental modernity. This is a truth or logic which asserts its overall power to narrate and to prevent other narrations from emerging (Shapiro, 1999: 57-58).

The third purpose of the postmodern description of modernity as a structure of intelligibility is to show that not only is a fundamental change in the way theory and politics is conducted possible, but also that the very discursive basis of the structure of intelligibility leads to a particular form of change; subversion of the dominant structure is inherent and pre-determined in the very structure. That is, a restructuring of structures of intelligibility and, consequently, politics and ethics, does not come in the form of another contending structure of intelligibility. The very contingency of all representations means that the relation to alterity, being’s other, is fundamental to the production of meaning. Hence a reflexive awareness of the contingency of the foundations of meaning involves also cognisance of the implication of alterity in any given structure of intelligibility. Ethically speaking, this involves cognition not only of the radical dependency of all representations (and

therefore, arguably, the impossibility of an exclusionary one) but also of the implication of others in the constitution of structures of intelligibility by which I come to have a sense of myself. This is an ethical transcendence of universal proportions but it is arguably different from the universalising procedures of Occidental-modernity because of the cognisance of the relativity of representations. This is then a universality without fixed universal foundations.

Perhaps the primary argument regarding ethics that comes from this postmodern critique is to do with the affirmation of being “against theory” (Campbell, 1998: 504; Caputo, 1993; Furrow, 1995). Against, that is, the possibility of an internally coherent and exclusionary set of rules made valid and viable with reference to a sovereign arche. Ethics organised around a sovereign origin – be it a figure of sovereign Subjectivity or universal shared characteristic or experience – gives licence to reduce and nullify epistemic contest to the prior demands of the sovereignty. There is thus a denial or disparaging of the contingency and relationality of theoretical grounding; this involves thus the ethnocentric privileging of a particular epistemic statement on how human beings should live their lives coupled with the abjection of other – now ‘subalterned’ – epistemic frameworks.

Insofar as we are concerned here (with the question of response in international politics and of the borders of ethical and political community constraining this) there are two consequences of this. First, the ethics of international relations where a particular spatialisation – a particular arrangement of political space – is taken as fecund origin and limit of the ethical imagination is put to radical questioning. R B J Walker has influentially noted that in the subject of ‘ethics and international relations’, this ‘and’ is treated as an intersection between two separate areas of inquiry (Walker, 1993: 50). The onus is thus on application or

extension of one codified set of traditions into another. Seeing this onus as an outcome of a perception that the domain of international relations is morally-anarchic (thereby being in dire need of ethical input) (Walker, 1993: 50) is less fruitful than viewing IR as the site of an appropriative mapping where, in Frederic Jameson's terms, ontology is made to collapse into geography (Jameson, 1992: 4; Smith, 1978; Shapiro, 1999b).

The collapse of ontology into geography involves a nullification of what William Connolly has called the 'ontopolitical' (Connolly, 1992). The central premise of this neologism is that how we see and understand the world is a direct consequence of our assumptions on ontology, the nature of ourselves and our consequent relations to other beings. Michael Shapiro demonstrates the perception of neutrality that a prominent and influential realist IR scholar perpetuates in his state-centric mapping of the world. Samuel Huntington, charges Shapiro, presumes a neutral technicality in his description of the world that emphasises the threat of an 'other' while simultaneously drawing a border around a unitary and univocal culture of the "West" (Shapiro, 1999b). The "violence of representation" – the co-option of undifferentiated masses into simple unitary groupings and the priority accorded to one cultural and moral geography – is not recognised by Huntington; for him the mapping of a field of knowledge is a neutral and technocratic exercise:

Simplified paradigms or maps are indispensable for human thought and action...We need explicit or implicit models to: 1. Order and generalize about reality; 2. understand causal relationships among phenomena; 3. anticipate and, if we are lucky, predict future developments; 4. distinguish what is important from what is unimportant; and 5. show us what paths we should take to achieve our goals (Huntington, 1996: 30; cited by Shapiro, 1999b).

The separation of the two bodies of inquiry, ethics and international relations, leads then to the application of ethical norms to alleviate those antagonisms and conflicts that are problematised in 'international affairs' in ways that betray the moral input of

the cartographer. This moral input occurs in terms of place-naming and boundary drawing constitutive of particular self-other relations and, in IR, consequent emphasis on a territorial arrangement of political and moral life (Shapiro, 1999a: 60). Exclusion is hence part and parcel of this moral cartography: the naming and making coherent of identities and places occurs in the stead of other possible world-views, other names.

Against this, the post-positivist attention to ontology in the political highlights how a particular spatialised sense of ourselves comes to structure how we see the world and thereby limit the play of the ethical. The de-anchoring of human being from the organising strictures of the national order of things occurs I think most forcefully by way of an argument that asserts the “wandering grounds” of human attachment to earthly – and, for the most part, territorialised – soil (Soguk and Whitehall, 1999). Such “wandering grounds” are due to the “transversal” nature of human relations. The term “transversal” is used to describe forms of “political practice that not only [transgress] national boundaries, but also [question] the spatial logic through which these boundaries have come to constitute and frame the conduct of international relations” (Bleiker, 2000a: 2; see also, Soguk and Whitehall, 1999: 682; Campbell, 1996). Nevzat Soguk and Geoffrey Whitehall use the notion of “transversality” to describe what they see as the fluidity of people living migrant and refugee lives, and how this fluidity cannot be entirely accounted for and subsumed into a territorial imagination that would have the movement of peoples occur between states. Transversality is here the very condition of identity; attempts at anchoring notions of culture, kinship and relations to others to a sedentary and rooted lifestyle marked above all by citizenship and the orderly movement between territorialised spaces are successful only if the subverting mobility of human beings

– a mobility that is not fully comprehensible as an aspect or appendage of monopolistic territoriality – is forgotten.

Movement, in all its modalities, disembeds identity from modern attempts to permanently situate and fix people's identities within the spatial territorial boundaries of the state. In other words, in the ever shifting and deepening modalities of movement, territoriality—as geographic, socio-cultural and political processes—is necessarily transformed into a practice of transversality (Soguk and Whitehall, 1999: 697).

The identification of a transversal condition of human relations, itself predicated on the fluidity of movement and spaces (their resistance to unfettered explanation by a territorial imagination), is based on the impossibility of capturing, bedding down and anchoring human being's identity. Movement – metaphorical or actual, ongoing or possible – is the surfeit, the remaining excess. It is the remainder that cannot be accounted for by Occidental-modernity's pseudo-scientific rationality, following attempts to fix identity and the ethical relationship to the other.

Soguk and Whitehall acknowledge the asymmetry of power relations within spaces of movement; though, it appears, only in passing. There are those, particularly due to their relative physical strength and social standing, who are more likely to be able to move between spaces and there is an immensely important qualitative difference (in terms of life and death very often) between a metaphorical fluidity of identities and actual physical movement.⁴ There is moreover, significant importance to the whole issue of identity and ethical relations in the acknowledging of the harshness and violence of spaces assigned to the refugee. Also, post-positivist theoreticians of this sort of fluid transversality should be aware of the qualitative and consequential importance of the question, who is it that has relative power to perceive, narrate and control identity? A refugee caught up in asylum bureaucracy interested in codifying and controlling even the minutiae of refugees' daily practices may perceive a sense of transversal identity beyond the strictures of territoriality but

that perception pales into insignificance alongside the opposite view of the asylum bureaucracy and its power – in the form of rejection, repatriation and incarceration – to assert the primacy of its view and, indeed, to control the very grounds on which identity is expressed (Harding, 2000; Hardy, 2000).

The post-positivist affirmation of being ‘against theory’ leads, then, to a cognisance of the ethnocentricity of a territorial mapping of ‘international affairs’. A conventional modern-Occidental view on international relations, exemplified in the work of Samuel Huntington, treats its description of the events and processes of the international realm as a neutral and somewhat technical sketch designed to abet foreign policy. In this perspective, ethics is filtered through or transposed over the modern-Occidental reconciliation of identity and collectivity. Ethics becomes that set of finite rules which has as its *telos* the preserving and/or strengthening of the territorial international system. The post-positivist critique, in outlining the ontological basis of cartography and of the transversality of movement beyond the grasp of a territorialised spatialisation, brings into question the settled givens of modern-Occidental ethical discourse.

The second consequence of the post-positivist stance ‘against theory’ for notions of ethical response flows from the de-anchoring of identity from national territory. This point is to do with the identity of the subject and the way that the depiction of this moves the onus away from conjecturing a theory of ethical practice to a consideration of the implications of an ethical relation to otherness which is inherent to the very constitution of the subject. This fundamental change in thinking about ethics is made possible, like the critique of ethnocentric cartography and the de-anchoring of identity from political territory, following the argument that philosophy and all forms of theory are structures of intelligibility ordered and

organised by means of a discursive relation of elements to each other, themselves chosen and made to appear valid because of a similarly discursive arche or origin.

The term 'discursive' is meant to indicate the prior imbrication in language of constitutive elements or foundations of a given theory or perspective. This does not, in the main, mean that reference to 'discursive formations' in post-positivist scholarship indicates and boils down to being a synonym for language. Reference to the mediated nature of all estimations of actuality serve rather to indicate that our notions of what are 'true' or 'good' are, because language is not neutral, constructed reflections of our historical-, geographical-, age- and gender- specific assumptions and values. To speak of the discursive nature of theory is thus to take note of the power relations that exist in the establishing as dominant or ascendant a particular way of being over other ways. 'Truth' is therefore always localised; it is difficult to speak of a generalised and universally-valid Truth. However, as I have noted, what is probably the dominant perspective in contemporary IR post-positivist scholarship does speak of the universal foundation in otherness of human subjectivity. The great lesson of post-positivist epistemology is, however, that that foundation may be conceived of in negative terms, in terms of absence. The difficulties and potential pitfalls one has to look out for in contemplating negativity will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter. For now though it will suffice to hint at some of the themes that will be brought up then. Most important is the difficulty of ensuring that the basis remains inherently imbued with ongoing critique. Building upon a negative basis, that is a non-determined, non-conceptualised foundation (an origin that cannot serve archimedean purposes), one has to be wary of imbuing the foundation with a particular directing ideological imagination that culminates in an application of what would properly be 'outside' 'society' to the problems of that

society: how does one do this without conceptualising negativity in the taxonomic terminology of the society? How does one do this without imbuing on the negative foundation specific subjective interests thereby influencing how phenomena is approached and understood?

All that, however, for later. Returning to the issue currently at hand, the discursive constitution of theoretical components, Jacques Derrida writes of the constitution of the subject in processes of differentiation. I have already examined this in the thesis introduction and will not go into much detail. Rather I highlight here consequences for the subject's ethical relation with alterity that was not of deep concern to the argument in the introduction. For Derrida, identities come into being through a process of differentiation in language where an unnameable (to name would be to integrate difference into an economy of the same; or, put another way, to reduce the meaning of alterity to terms and concepts viable to language which is always ethnocentric) alterity anchors what appears to be an incursion into presence with absence. There are two consequences of this that are important for us here. The first is that the ruse of sovereignty, of presence and delight in presence, of bringing before oneself the apparent and essential truth of an identity, is revealed (Derrida, 1976: 296; Polat, 1998). The establishment of a sovereign arche or ground of theory – such as the sovereign subject – is a ruse precisely in that it allows for the development of theory and the conduct of politics and ethics claiming a transcendental and universal relevance, and indeed naturalness and legitimacy over and above other theories and politics, based on the sovereign ground's apparent correspondence with metaphysical truth, beyond the purview of embodied critique as it were (Parkins, 2000: 59-60). The nature of this ruse is to imbue manifestly ideologically-motivated assumptions and knowledge with a veneer of innocence,

objectivity and neutrality (Flax, 1992). It is to provide the impression that one is legitimately constrained in one's actions by an abiding sense of 'the way things are'.

The second consequence of Derrida's critique of the linguistic bases of all structures of intelligibility arises from the way he chooses to undertake a subversion of claims to neutrality or inevitability. Derrida argues that language, the means by which we necessarily express all ideas about the world and the way things are, is not, in the first place, a neutral or mirror-like conduit of an inner sense or meaning which we may wish to convey. Language rather than expressing the inner truth or meaning of an autonomous figure actually expresses a meaning that reveals that figure's entanglement with shadowy spectres of other potential meanings or perceptions. It is via a process of differentiation – the specifics of which are due to historical, geographical or cultural contest or consultation – that a particular meaning is temporarily extracted from the play of differentiation. Because this meaning is not dependent on some metaphysical anchor beyond the critical play of differentiation, it is eminently open to challenge and change.

Human identity is thus localised, specific ways of being address particular temporal and spatial constellations of power. Human identity is thus also implicated in what has gone past, in what has been inscribed over and excluded in the demarcation of a particular identity. It is in this sense then that rather than speaking of untenably universal ethical theory, post-positivist scholarship addresses the fundamental relation to difference, to other ways of forming individual or group identity, that is, hence, properly constitutive of subjectivity.

By definition, if the other is the other, and if all speech is for the other, no logos as absolute knowledge can *comprehend* dialogue and the trajectory toward the other ... This 'saying to the other' – this relationship to the other as interlocutor, this relationship with an *existent* – precedes all ontology (Derrida, 1978: 98).

At its most fundamental expression, this implication in difference becomes an ethical one in (at least) the Levinasian variant of post-positivist IR scholarship in the sense that the interest in protecting difference – being *for* difference – finds a rationale in the subject’s fundamental implication with otherness in her make-up.

In this section I have highlighted what I think are salient points of the post-positivist critique of Occidental modernity and how this is argued to lead to a deterritorialisation of identity and responsibility and, hence, the borders of political and ethical community. I have done this in order to set out the main points of a general post-positivist notion of ethics (of the constitutive critical ethos that forms the basis of mistrust of universalised foundations growing from a notion of ‘the way things are’) and the inherent ethical relation to otherness of the subject constituted in and through difference. This has all been done in order to set the basis of the following examination of David Campbell’s critique of ‘humanitarianism’, of interventions in recognised ‘political emergencies’ that do not appear ostensibly to hold much conventional geo-strategic interest. Campbell’s critique is premised on the idea that conventional humanitarianism, while ostensibly irredentist in its action across borders, actually holds within it a series of assumptions and justifications that reinforce the territorial basis of conventional notions of political and ethical community.

David Campbell’s critique of humanitarianism

David Campbell’s critique of humanitarianism may be studied from two vantage points. The first is in terms of how the epistemological critical ethos and the ontological ethical relation, both described above, relate to the political strategies (methodology) of a certain orthodox humanitarianism and its assumptions on

ontology which pre-determine the ethical imagination and conceptions of what type of ethical stance is and is not possible. The second vantage point is in terms of how much better, if at all, Campbell's post-structuralism addresses 'concrete' issues faced in the encounter with humanitarian emergencies. Of these 'concrete' issues, of greatest concern to me here is the possibility of a non-reductive relationship with others.

Campbell's critique of a modern humanitarianism reflects the two primary facets of post-positivist IR identified above: first, the critique of territorialised politics in favour of one that is more appreciative of 'transversal' relations; and, second, the de-anchoring of ontology from the development of universal ethical theory.

Critical Ethos and the Ethical Relation vs. Humanitarianism

The challenge for scholarship posed by what are generally called 'humanitarian emergencies' remains, at its most basic level, the development of a sense of responsibility among those physically and mentally removed from areas of immense human suffering and towards those physically and legally removed and differentiated from 'ourselves' and 'our' way of life. On a more sophisticated level, the challenge is how to imbue one with a sense of such responsibility when the normal receptacles – and limits – of ethics, the subject as citizen and the territorialised nation-state, have become fluid and ambiguous signifiers?⁵ The representation of crises is important here (as is the representation crisis) for representation – *mapping* – with its ontological and moral input pre-determines the nature of response to the suffering of those removed from ourselves. It is inadequate to surmise a sense of affinity or empathy with the suffering of those far removed from ourselves if this is not

associated with a critique of the ontological and epistemological foundations that guide representation. The de-linkage of identity and human relations from territorialised politics is a vital pre-requisite for responding, as well as for cultivating or realising a sense of responsibility in terms of ongoing responsiveness, to those far removed from ourselves.

As suggested in the early part of this chapter, the initial critique made against conventional humanitarianism is its assumption of a particular territorial arrangement of international relations and unproblematic reference to principles and rights premised upon state-centric international human rights law – particularly in this case international humanitarian law but also international refugee law. Nevzat Soguk’s description of “humanitarian interventions as practices of statecraft” (Soguk, 1999: 179) makes the point well: a response to ‘humanitarian emergencies’ couched in a language of intervention presupposes, and thereby reinforces, a particular state-centric mapping – and appropriation – of (transversal) human relations that takes the sovereign state as ascendant organiser of politics. As Soguk notes:

It is around the principle of state sovereignty that a specific imagination of the world as a world of sovereign states is obtained, empowered, and privileged, and that practical realities of ‘living within sovereign borders’ and having security, peace, stability, welfare and human rights are historically effected and practiced (Soguk, 1999: 181-182).

Examination of the ontological and epistemological implications stemming from, grounding and justifying the state-centric international political imagination indicates, in David Campbell’s view, the ascendancy of a figure of ‘Man’ which, Campbell argues, particularly after René Descartes emerged as the “essential, sovereign, and universal ground of knowledge” (Campbell, 1998: 504). The multiple functions of the Cartesian subject is noted by Campbell via Foucault: this subject is both an object of knowledge and a subject that knows. It is in this sense

that the Cartesian subject acts not only as fecund origin of theoretical concepts but also their justification or rationale. The Cartesian *Subject* is then, in Campbell's view, a unitary foundation for incontestable theory emerging from reflection on the nature of human being. It is the isolation as pre-eminent of this particular 'tradition' of Western philosophy that allows Campbell to suggest that humanitarianism is a collection of principles that base their truth claims on, in particular, two aspects of Cartesian ontology.

The first is the capacity of the Cartesian subject for autonomy. That is, Campbell remarks on the ability of this subject to distance itself from its surroundings. It claims an existence autonomous of other people or the environment in general, and – expanding Campbell's argument to show an important conflation of terms – conflates, equates or treats as logically consequential this perceived ontological autonomy with a similar epistemological autonomy. This is the ability to disregard social or cultural norms and to put in their stead an objective identification and analysis of problems and, as a result, logical solutions thereof (Campbell, 1998: 500). This conflation of ontology with epistemology is important: it betrays a reduction of human consciousness to rational enquiry and/or quantification and (as Theodor Adorno for one has noted) fairly successfully dismisses what is ostensibly 'unquantifiable' (at least in terms of the tools it has at hand) as irrational (Adorno, 1970/1997: 55).

The condition of ontological autonomy of the Cartesian subject is thus conflated with epistemological autonomy to allow for a sense, in what Campbell has identified as 'humanitarianism', that the objective mapping of conditions is possible – as is the formulation of solutions to these conditions. It is also worth noting that the concept of ontological autonomy takes as given, or barely worthy of mention, the

separateness of individual human beings. That is, the proper and rational condition of mutual existence with other beings is, for a subject whose consciousness is reduced to the exercise of a certain type of rational logic, marked above all by a lack of inherent connections or links that can be rationally perceived. Those ‘extra-rational’ familial or credo-based links are consigned to be played out within a ‘private’ realm. This is further justification for the premise that the encouragement of moral behaviour between individuals – or states – depends on, ultimately and primarily, finite legal codes.⁶

The concept of intentionality, of a subject acting upon and – for the most part – realising *his* intentions, is the second ontological aspect of Cartesianism relevant to Campbell’s explanation of the ontological origins of a certain ‘humanitarianism.’ Campbell notes that humanitarianism presumes a capacity to implement goals “as planned” (Campbell, 1998: 500). Reading again slightly beyond Campbell to emphasise the complexity of this Occidental-modern humanitarianism, we may note that this is a coupling of omniscience with omnipotence, partly due to the previously noted conflation of epistemology and ontology. Judith Butler notes that the figuration of an instrumental subjectivity blessed with the intellectual capacity to objectively map out strategy corresponding to different circumstances takes for granted that subject’s ability or power to implement what he wills. This figuration serves thus

to champion a masculinized Western subject whose will immediately translates into a deed, whose utterance or order materializes in an action which would destroy the very possibility of a reverse strike, and whose obliterating power at once confirms the impenetrable contours of its own subjecthood (Butler, 1992: 10).

The image of a subject whose intentions materialise into accomplishments depends, argues Butler, on the capacity of that subject to institute a closed field of reflection. That is, the perceived predictability and linearity of the effects of the

Occidental-modern subject's actions depend on that subject's monopoly of representative mapping which in addressing and problematising a field of enquiry problematises elements and actors within that field as constituents of a greater world view. This world view, argues Butler, arises as a consequence of historically and geographically specific effects which constitute a horizon within which we act (Butler, 1992: 10). A field of enquiry is then not entirely distinct from ourselves but rather is represented in a way that reflects ascendant epistemology; the horizon encompassing our world view is the constitutive possibility of the subject's capacity to act as well as the boundaries within which the scope of action is limited. The potential for unpredictable effects or consequences are hence limited and even nullified. Only those effects which may be represented in a way, or a language, that makes sense or is legible within the limits of the constitutive horizon, which can be subsumed into the relevant categories of comprehension, arise into view. Similarly, the problematisation of identities, experiences and personalities serves to limit the scope of action and agency; creating controlled subjectivities whose trajectories are more or less mapped out and accounted for within the greater perspective. The ruse of omniscience and omnipotence is tautological.

Certainly events occur that appear to put paid to the neat structure of predictable action and effect. These, as Butler suggests, question the sovereign grounds of this powerful subject; their anomaly and sudden unexpected irruption poses important questions for the closed totality of Occidental modernity. However, one should not under-estimate the capacity of Occidental modernity to re-work these disruptive events, integrating them into the ascendant structures of intelligibility. It is in this sense then that arguments which assert the inherent transgressive quality of refugees must be read alongside Malkki's demonstration of the appropriation of

scandalous refugee identity (Dillon, 1999a: 95) by the ‘international community’. Neither should one mistake the acknowledgement of strategic error as necessarily indicative of a deconstruction of sovereign grounds. The acknowledgement of error tends in the policy-oriented scholarship to be explained by claiming miscalculation, misreading the facts; the ability to ‘read’ these facts is not put into question (Whitman, 2000).

Campbell’s critique of humanitarianism highlights thus a representative mapping of both the contents (or objects) of humanitarian intervention and the place of humanitarianism within a state-centric moral cartography. In the latter sense, humanitarianism while ostensibly distinct from politics bolsters the state-centric moral sensibility of ‘traditional’ international relations. Interventions of a humanitarian nature continue to presume the centrality of state sovereignty, most notably in their reference to relevant aspects of international humanitarian law, or international human rights law generally (including by analogy international refugee law) (Geissler, 1999). Less tangibly, the conceptualising of a situation as a ‘humanitarian emergency’ depends for its identification and comprehensibility on an antithetical relationship to those properly political situations where, as Campbell notes, ‘national interest’ is imperilled. Campbell argues that “the humanitarian needs to be appreciated as the null-site produced by and, thus, reinforcing the continuing operation of sovereignty, the *absence* made possible by the *presence* of sovereignty” (Campbell, 1998: 498; emphases in original).

The mapping of the contents of a field of humanitarianism is an auxiliary effect of the reliance on expert experience to accumulate a body of knowledge about conflict situations thereby refining strategy to alleviate, counter or negate undesirable consequences of actions. This is linked to the demarcation of a restricted

field of enquiry noted above. Campbell argues that a 'new humanitarianism' has arisen in recent years as a response to field experience of how aid has sometimes fuelled rather than ameliorated conflict. The response of this new humanitarianism is to argue for a more complete mapping of conflict situations. The experience generated from a holistic view would thus, it is expected, generate a range of options to be filtered through the expert experience of field workers allowing for the maximum likelihood of action that would "do no harm" (or as little harm as possible) (Campbell, 1998: 499-500). Campbell takes note of the ontological autonomy that reliance on experience involves: what counts as experience has necessarily undergone a process of judgement and interpretation that has cast aside some observations in favour of others. Consequently, it is this that is constitutive of a restricted field of enquiry. Campbell argues that humanitarianism is a derivative of a Cartesian statement on the autonomy of human being and rational enquiry. In the expectation that the possibility of unpredictable effects may be eliminated or at least greatly minimised, humanitarianism appears akin to Judith Butler's description of a "masculinized" Western theoretical approach. Also of concern is the perhaps inevitable casting of the constituents of a humanitarian emergency, those actually undergoing the experience, as *objects* of aid, deprived, Liisa Malkki would argue, of humanity by a humanism which would construe them as objects of knowledge, universal victims, helpless, and without agency: their individual narratives unnecessarily complicating of the quick delivery of aid. The assumption of the possibility of an autonomous perspective on conflict situations feeds, argues Campbell, the tendency to rely on referential frameworks of principles and values to address complex political situations:

Modernity's 'preference for deriving norms epistemologically over deciding them politically' means that we are inclined to believe that the construction of normative frameworks can resolve political questions (Campbell, 1998: 501).

Campbell thus favours "political contest" – the "fight", the engagement with everyday and specific incidents, – to construct a similarly specific and localised stand. I have already indicated that sufficient doubt may be cast on his success in this endeavour.

To sum up, Campbell argues that the methodological and epistemological assumptions of humanitarianism may be explained in terms of a perceived ontological and epistemological autonomy. This, he suggests, is a derivative of a wider modernity stemming from and reliant upon a Cartesian resolution of human being which reduces human consciousness to the exercise of rational enquiry. The figure of rational 'Man' that ensues is both the root of and justification for a methodological practice which asserts the possibility of objectivity in the reliance on expert experience and the derivation of principles and norms that translate into a code of conduct. On one level this translates into a reassertion of the fundamental ethical grounds of conventional Occidental-modernity: the autonomous subject-citizen requiring the application of codes of conduct to ensure a viable existence with other autonomous beings and the role of the state as primary actor in global politics. On a second level, the principle consequences when it comes to 'concrete issues' of individuals suffering in conflict situations are an objectification of individuals as universal and voiceless victims and the concomitant irrelevancy of their individuality.

The next section assesses the extent to which Campbell's post-structuralism addresses those 'concrete issues' arising in the encounter – and prior to the encounter in the meditation on methodology of encounter – with suffering others. In short, this

section will examine the extent to which Campbell's post-structuralism offers a viable and desirable alternative way of responding to the suffering of those far removed from 'ourselves' (from, that is, Western subjects).

Contest, Identity and Political Tradition

Campbell's criticism of European humanism, and of its societal and political practice as humanitarianism, is premised on the argument that the conception of 'humanity' underlying humanism is ahistorical. He argues that the methodological approaches and the norms they lead to are founded upon and made not only possible but logically desirable by a notion of the universality of the autonomous, rational, powerful and unitary subject (thereby controlling the very grounds upon which difference may be expressed). Against this sense of infallible rationality, Campbell attempts to emphasise the contingency or dependency of subjectivity in a post-humanist subject characterised by the fragmentation and contingency of identity. The central difficulty with his argument as I see it is that the attempt at securing an open-ended, aporetic and universally relevant conception of being human is derived from a critique of a particular tradition. Moreover this tradition is interpreted largely in terms of its desire for unity, univocity and purity. However, what is said about the ways in which this desire is always already contaminated by what it attempts to resist and exclude is limited. As Simon Critchley argues,

On a deconstructive account, then, any attempt to interpret tradition and culture in terms of a desire for unity, univocity and purity must be rigorously undermined in order to show how this desire is always already contaminated by that which it attempts to resist and exclude (Critchley, 1999: 133).

Specifically, little is said in Campbell's argument about the place of 'the other' and little is said about the character of his or her relation to the dominant

party. How does the contamination of what Campbell sees as a desire for univocity manifest itself? What does it look like in different spaces and places? What does it do 'the other' and to the Cartesian subject? How might a theorisation of the subaltern other reflect back onto Campbell's post-humanist humanism which takes the form of a "humanism of the other" (Campbell, 1998: 508)? How might such a move alleviate the impression of the other as a generalised and empty prop to the European subject who must be the primary focus of an argument that focuses on the philosophy that constitutes it? Who is this other towards whom we are encouraged to think?

There are, I think, two movements in Campbell's critique of humanitarianism. The first is an attempt to problematise the Cartesian notion of humanity, upon which – says Campbell – is based humanism and its societal practice as humanitarianism. Campbell recasts the notion to signify "an economy of humanity, within which various renderings of human being distil and differentially value being human" (Campbell, 1998: 506). The second is to find in this economy "an affirmative answer to the question 'why fight?'" (Campbell, 1998: 510), that is why become involved politically and for what purpose. In so doing Campbell first of all seeks to deconstruct the archimedean Cartesian subject which, he argues, is the source of a reductive and dismissive understanding of other ways of being. This leads to an assertion that a notion of the subject is always made sense of against, with reference to, other ways of being, it does not stand alone but is contingent. Second, Campbell speaks to a particular critique of ambiguous subjectivity which argues that in order to provide a politically engaged theory a set of norms, principles and criteria must be posited to the subject. Against this, Campbell suggests that it is possible to conceive

of the subject as one intrinsically dissenting: resistance is intrinsic, he argues, to the constitution of subjectivity over time. Moreover, given “the radical interdependence of being” this affirmation is cast as a “struggle for – or on behalf of – alterity rather than a struggle to efface, erase, or eradicate alterity” (Campbell, 1998: 513).

Campbell’s variant of the postmodern or post-structural critique of ‘modernity’ suggests that paying attention to the recoil of modernity from the ‘excess’ at its margins reveals the contingency of human being, and indeed the possibility of a notion of the human that is more attuned to the inherent indeterminacy and relational nature of its being. Specifically, Campbell posits against the Cartesian subject as the suppressive manifestation of subjective desire an ontology, a theory of being, animated by an affirmation of “the radical interdependence of being and our inescapable responsibility to the other” that “*does not derive from the conscious desires or intentions of a subject*” (Campbell, 1998: 513, 509; my emphasis). It will be important to note if Campbell manages to distance this affirmation from the “desires or intentions of a subject”.

In unpacking this notion of a subjectivity that is “ontopolitical” – inherently imbued in politics, not autonomous but relational – we may begin by asking how the condition of ‘relationality’ is brought out. Campbell’s argument stems from a Foucaultian critique of a Cartesian subjectivity that remains outside of the flow of history and retains the right to exercise control over what it surveys:

Foucault’s genealogical critique draws out the way in which ‘Man’ – ‘a strange empirico-transcendental doublet’ that appears in the ‘ambiguous position as an object of knowledge and a subject that knows’ – emerged after René Descartes (but was not enthroned until the nineteenth century) as the essential sovereign, and universal ground of knowledge (Campbell, 1998: 504-505).

Against the “secure identities, traditionally authorised grounds, and the political necessities” that comes from a Cartesian mode of understanding is posited a “critical

scepticism” towards fixed identities and suchlike (Campbell, 1998; 509). In other words, against the Cartesian desire for univocity is posited the argument that identities are inherently contingent and fluid. Humanism is located, argues Campbell, within the rubric of Cartesianism: it is premised on the deduction of principles and norms deriving from the secure grounds of abstract subjectivity thereby constraining the scope of action within certain parameters and tainting the practice of humanitarianism with the abjection of the people it tries to help (see above chapter three) (Campbell, 1998: 506). Campbell argues, with Martin Heidegger, that – hence – humanism is not attuned to the dignity of ‘man’, a dignity that may be made cognisant through the refusal of subjugation, an acknowledgement of contingency and the capacity for agency. Campbell’s idea that there is a “human-ness” to which Cartesianism “is insufficiently attuned” takes a second step when he suggests that his development of a Foucaultian/Heideggerian critique of humanism can provide a base for a new sense of humanity that is better attuned to “human-ness”. The argument that human identity is contingent upon difference suggests to Campbell that it “can potentially provide a basis for the rehistoricised and repoliticised sense of humanity which can refigure humanitarianism” (Campbell, 1998: 506). The critique of Cartesian “metaphysics of subjectivity” can, that is, provide one with a notion of humanity better attuned to “human-ness” providing a basis for humanitarian practice imbued with the idea of the radical and fundamental interdependency of human beings. Specifically, this is the development of a “humanism of the Other”:

If one understood ‘humanism’ as exceeding the sovereign grounds of Man and embracing a relationship with the other to become, in Levinasian terms, a ‘humanism of the Other’, could this be the basis of an historicised and politicised humanitarianism? (Campbell, 1998: 508).

This is a “historicised and politicised” affirmation of life where the overriding political concern is “the struggle for – or on behalf of – alterity rather than a struggle to efface, erase or eradicate alterity” (Campbell, 1998: 513). It is based on an “economy of humanity” within which “various renderings of human being distil and differentially value being human” (Campbell, 1998: 506). In other words, central to Campbell’s critique is the argument also posited by Michael Dillon and William Connolly: that the way politics is conventionally thought and done in late modernity is an effect of prior resolutions of the nature of human being. Hence a different conception of human being is integral to the development of a different politics; indeed how the human being (or, as Campbell put it less determinately, *being human*) is conceived of will in turn effect the political imagination, expanding, argues Campbell, the scope of what is possible as well as distorting the structural grid that abets a particular system of values.

One must ask of Campbell, though, how the critique of a particular Western philosophical tradition escapes its bounds. That is, how does what would properly be a refinement of the tradition become transposed onto a “litany of crisis” that characterises contemporary life? (Campbell, 1998: 497). Why is it that the universal crisis of the present may be met by a critique of a particular tradition? Is the European philosopher “the functionary of humanity?” One should be wary though of criticising Campbell exclusively for his isolation of a particular tradition to illumine the present and, for that matter, the conception of ‘crisis’.⁷ Such a move may indeed offer one perspective of many, particularly if it subjects its base to self-reflexive questioning.

Reflexivity, the Problem of Closure and a Host of Questions

Integral to this self-reflexivity is cognisance of the problem of 'closure'. As Simon Critchley describes it, cognisance of closure is cognisance both of the impossibility of transgressing the limit of the philosophical tradition and of remaining within it (Critchley, 1999: 132). In his considerations of the problem of closure, Critchley emphasises a "double bind":

if there is no outside to the philosophical tradition from which one can speak in order to criticize its inside, then, by the same token, *there is no inside to the philosophical tradition from which one can speak without contamination by an outside* (Critchley, 1999: 132. My emphasis).

On the one hand, the critic operates always within the wider epistemic tradition he or she is located in, the escape to a pure point free of the language and the desire of the tradition is not possible. On the other hand, just as there can be no 'outside', there is no pure 'inside': all points of reference remain in some way contaminated by the spectre of other thought that has been excluded. Thus the moment of "affirmation" in Derrida's theory comes from a cognisance of the impossibility of remaining within a concept of tradition taken as unified or pure, the delirium of otherness (Spivak, 1994: 89) is always within. Similarly though, the spectre of the epistemic tradition remains when one strives to go beyond. It is for this reason that I argue that integral to this is an examination of the nature of the contamination of the dominant episteme by the subaltern it would repress. The conception of a unified tradition as a cause for a primary effect is premised upon certain exclusions, the inclusion of which would subvert the logical trajectory of the thought.

To what extent does Campbell posit a unified Cartesian subjectivity in his description of the repression of otherness? If the Cartesian subject retains in its underbelly the contamination of other ways of being then how does the nature of the relation between Cartesian self and other effect the different sense of being human

that Campbell would posit? My argument is akin to that of certain post-colonial feminist scholars who argue that it is integral to examine the nature of the relation of patriarchy to the female subaltern, particularly in Third World contexts where there is yet another order of repression, before the onset of the post-structural critique and the celebration of fragmentation. This is a call to specificity, to detail, to understanding the specific modes of relation between patriarchy and subaltern in the contexts in which they manifest themselves. A general theory of repression and resistance that Campbell posits has the potential to lose focus on variables such as gender or race. Moreover, the question of subaltern desire is elided (see generally, Spivak, 1994; Chow, 1992; Haraway, 1992; Trinh, 1989; Quillen, 1998).

Does Campbell's argument retain a sense of the multiple-constitution of the tradition it interrogates? Campbell's critique of Cartesian philosophy as "the essential, sovereign and universal ground of knowledge" (Campbell, 1998: 504-505) emphasises its primacy in the subjugation of otherness. Campbell's critique begins by taking Cartesianism as a sovereign ground, the taint of otherness only comes into the picture vis-a-vis the new form of being human that arises after the critique posited by post-structuralism. The complications of a Cartesian subject already implicated and contaminated by the other that it represses in different environs is avoided.

Also avoided, then, is a question of the identities and desires of the "abject" (Campbell, 1998: 505) others. By beginning his critique with a conception that Cartesianism enacts what seems to be a one-way operation rendering abject a mass of undifferentiated others, the (possibility of an) oppositional force of the subaltern's identity is tamed and in this taming a critique of Cartesian subjectivity allows for the comfortable positing of a new sense of being human without reading the subaltern

into the picture. As Larry M. Preston argues with regard to specific “postmodern” arguments:

Analytically, these theoretical views claim to allow a place for the marginalized to speak. Yet it is uncertain whether and how any others have been consulted; for the most part their agency is allowed and defined through the grace of analysis ... Again, the nagging questions come to mind: Whose language is this? *From what form of life does it speak?* (Preston, 1995: 946).

Preston is concerned, thus, with how the particularities of one’s epistemic background (remembering now the impossibility of escape posited by Derrida with regards the problem of ‘closure’) plays on and sways the nature of one’s analysis with certain blindspots. Campbell is certainly concerned with the abjection of others by Cartesian thought that occurs in construing the other as “oppressed and devastated”, without agency (Campbell, 1998: 506). Yet in theorising agency without a consideration of the detail of other histories (Chow, 1992) Campbell posits a generalised picture of otherness that I think can only reassert a Euro-centric stance. Campbell argues only that his Foucaultian theory of repression and resistance working hand in glove is “historical rather than transcendental” by noting that “while resistance is indivisible from being, it is nonetheless practised differently by different people in different circumstances.” How may a detailed examination of the different “degrees and states of resistance” play back onto and effect his notion of “being human”? How useful are the generic terms “resistance” and “repression” when the rubric of desire and inclusion and exclusion, identification and de-identification remain unread into them? How are ‘Western’ identities viewed in the ‘non-West’? bell hooks argues, as I have previously mentioned, that white people’s “amazement that black people watch white people with a critical ‘ethnographic’ gaze, is itself an expression of racism” (cited by Hyndman, 2000: 65).

How, then, is 'the Other' theorised or thought through in Campbell's argument? The apparition of 'the Other' is evident throughout Campbell's argument which culminates in an ethics of a struggle for alterity – for otherness and its 'right' to be as otherness. Yet "the Other" remains a space unfilled, an abstract concept, a general figure without colour, sex, class, home, history or, crucially, a desire of its own. By 'desire' here is not meant a site of 'native' purity but a compound mix, reflecting the engagement with 'Cartesian' oppression and the particularities that stem from the reflection on an image of 'indigenous' culture (and the tools handy for doing this) and from the condition of abjection many 'Others' find themselves in.

It is a desire that forms an opposing force to the stereotype of pure and undifferentiated Cartesian desire, as a desire for a 'centre' or origin of thought, which would feed upon and feed back onto Cartesianism (in Critchley's terms, contaminate the unity of Cartesianism and the Cartesian subject). In other words, how, in the quest for the centre, and indeed repressive creation of the conditions wherein this centre may *appear* to have been reached, has the Cartesian desire itself been contaminated by the spectre of otherness that it wishes to repress? What happens when this is investigated? Would it then tolerate a simple positing of a different mode of "being human" flowing directly and consequentially from the critique of Cartesian "sovereignty"? What happens when that sovereignty is seen and treated as an imagined sovereignty? If the Cartesian subject is not an integral whole, but a many-splintered thing stretching beyond itself to encompass a relation with otherness that it wishes to exclude, then how does a consideration of the relation between self and other complicate the development of an ethical way of being human that is geared towards otherness?

What sorts of ideological intent have gone into the presentation and perpetuation of “the Other” as undifferentiated prop to the Cartesian agent? How is the agency and the political demands of the other to be understood? And how does the non-theorisation of “the Other” allow a particular logical flow to Campbell’s argument? How do the complications of the relation between the Cartesian subject and “the Other” determine characteristics of the Cartesian subject which have to be accounted for in the deconstruction of that subject and the concomitant outlining of the outlines of a post-humanist subject?

Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott ask of post-structuralism:

What is the significance of poststructuralist critique of binary logic for the theorisation of the subaltern? Where are the critical intersections between postcolonialism and poststructuralism that reveal the critique of Western logic as part of the critical decentering of colonial hegemony? What contradictions does Eurocentric theory face in trying to expose the constitutive logic of colonial oppression? (Butler and Scott, 1992: xv).

What contradictions are inherent in formulating a sense of being human from Eurocentric grounds? Where is the non-Western subject? Is it adequate to derive a sense of being human from Euro-centric critique without examining the particularities of different subject-constitutions through different epistemic stances located in different historical, cultural and geographical bases? Does ‘the Other’ towards whom Campbell gears his humanism remain, then, an undifferentiated, unproblematised and homogenised prop that augments the positional leverage of a particular episteme?

A similar sort of argument may be made against Michael Dillon’s utilisation of a generalised figure of “the refugee” and the quality of “estrangement” that the refugee is purportedly representative of. Michael Dillon argues that refugees subvert the regular and regularising condition of modern political life insofar as their status in this condition as estranged props conducive to the territorialisation of identity

reminds of the general condition of estrangement pervading the imposed conditions structuring what it means to be human (Dillon, 1999a). This “estrangement” at the core of human modes of being is a sense of the inherent alienation of human being from the ‘identity politics’ of a conventional political method that is geared around the establishment and occupation of a ‘home’, a telic point towards which human being is propelled. At the core then of Dillon’s thought is a notion of ontology, of what it is to be human, that presents a scandal for a politics which “presupposes that the goal of politics is the realization of sovereign identity” (Dillon, 1999a: 95).

My immediate concern here is that the likening of the estrangement of refugees to a condition of general estrangement of human beings fails to particularise the former. That is, the consequences of the historical location of different types of estrangement – different types of experience of and reaction to exile, dislocation, expulsion – remains under-examined in Dillon’s argument. The specificity of different types of estrangement and the way they configure a particular nexus of identification and relation before the dominant gaze is important, it colours in the blanket figure of ‘the refugee’ with sex, class and politics. As Sara Ahmed notes: “Estrangement is always an estrangement from a particular place and time: to universalize estrangement as that which brings us together is to conceal how estrangement marks out particular selves and communities” (Ahmed, 1999:344).

The attempt, as Ahmed has put it, to “universalize estrangement” in Dillon’s argument runs the risk of distancing the ontological ground of meaning – the estranged human being – from the representation of the meaning of estrangement. The particular interests and desires that profess to discern a universal condition named “estrangement” are not examined. What is at stake in a perspective that sees

in “the refugee” a fundamental questioning of modes of being and of political association?

For the refugee raises the question of association beyond, outside, in the margins, or in excess of, established political sociation, because the refugee is by definition asocial, apolitical. Being political, or as one might say the being of politics, *is profoundly at issue here, in and through the presence of the refugee* (Dillon, 1999a: 117, my emphasis.)

The apolitical or asocial condition of ‘the refugee’ arises by dint of its very definition: territoriality defines ‘the refugee’ in terms of its lack before the fulcrum of modern politics, the citizen. Yet in the weight placed upon an undifferentiated figure of ‘the refugee’ the detail of different sorts of estrangement and its potential input for notions of political association and identity – and all the back-up notions of ‘home’ and ‘culture’ and so on that this presumes – does not become a point of consideration. While Dillon is cognisant of the ‘in-betweenness’ of the human being (Dillon, 1999a: 94), of its entanglement with the abjection consigned to the margins, the question of the relation between ‘human’ and ‘other’ precisely does not attempt to see ‘the other’ in specific historical or epistemic contexts or spaces. To be more precise, a perspective that claims a condition of ‘universal estrangement’ without acknowledging the way in which it depends on a particular European viewpoint perhaps effects a premature closure, preventing specific types of estrangement and different articulations of estrangement from entering the dialogic realm.

In essaying a shared sense of estrangement due to what David Campbell has called, with Michel Foucault, the universally common fact that we are all governed and to that extent in solidarity, the focus becomes a deconstruction of the logic that posits a “final arche” – “God, Leader, Party, Nation, or State” – calling human being to definition in its terms. The deconstruction is purportedly adequate to “recall the radical instability of meaning and the incalculability of the human”

(Dillon, 1999a: 95). More precisely the deconstructive advent of the refugee effects an opening of political boundaries:

That is what makes the refugee a touchstone for the very democratic politicality of any community – its capacity, in making way for other beings, to make way for other ways of political being to be in its very own way of being ... The ‘we’ is in question as a question, then, when faced with the refugee because the refugee poses the very questionability of the ‘we’ at us directly and politically, but in a way in which the answers we have currently settled upon – and in – no longer answer. (Dillon, 1999a: 119).

Yet in the construction of the refugee and *its* condition of estrangement in homogenised terms, coupled with *its* deployment against another homogenised body of ‘modern’ political method and against the epistemology that recoils from evidence of the instability of meaning, Dillon perhaps does not allow for specific questions to be asked of the mode of being that purportedly challenges boundaries.

Black people watching white people watching black people watching white people

The post-structuralist argument against fixed identity is based on an analysis of the discursive grounds of meaning. That is, the articulation of identity reveals not a concrete truth of oneself. Neither for that matter does it fully meet with the pre-conceived intentions of the articulation. Rather meaning is produced – that is, something appears to make sense – as a result of the differentiating and, in Derridean terms, deferring play of meaning. What this means (in part) is that on the one hand, one can only come up with a meaning of oneself (one’s identity) through differentiation from other meanings. It is thus part of an economy of meaning and has to be understood in terms of a discernment between ‘identification’ which is the striving for a particular sense of who ‘we’ are, and personal identity (an intuition of reality): I may be aware that my skin is relatively dark, but once I articulate this I become caught up in a maelstrom of histories, acts of violence and desires. On the other hand, by the deferring play of meaning Derrida means the continual

postponement of truth integral to a sense of the contingency of meaning. The articulation of identity is thus an attempt to capture and bed down a sense of oneself that is doomed to failure: it is always advancing, always looking to the future.

As an articulation that is not autonomous and is not a pure reflection of any inner truth, the articulation of identity is transfixed by and criss-crossed by the wider social, cultural and epistemic milieu in which it finds itself. In other words, the articulation of identity remains inter-twined with the relation to others, it is a reflection of the *tethering* of the self to the other (Bhabha, 1994a: 115). This tethering when construed in historical terms can, in the offering of a background of social and historical facts, deviate from detailed consideration of the nature of the relation between self and other. That is, the positing of a backdrop of structural facts against which emerge individual and collective identity may elide from the enquiry the constricting and enabling *desire* in the play of differentiation that gives meaning, that gives, in other words, the process of identification.

As Carol Quillen notes, analyses of 'desire' are important in understanding the stakes of the debate between humanist and anti-humanist positions (Quillen, 1998). She suggests that this is so because exploring the role of desire in the processes of identification both brings into question the conventional humanist moral and political categories - 'autonomy', 'freedom', and 'rationality' for example - while revealing that rejecting these out of hand as intellectually ill-founded may elide from consideration the complexity of identity formation. This inadvertently furthers the marginalisation and alienation of the repressed *identities* of the 'other', inadvertently omitting the examination of the desires that go into our identifications (Quillen, 1998: 41-42). Fundamentally, Quillen is emphasising that our sense of desirable and undesirable, of what we want and what we don't, is formed not in

isolation but in engagement with others. Moreover, Quillen also notes that this co-joined sense of desire feeds back upon the identity from which it stems; challenging ready notions of autonomous or free human beings, distinct from other beings.

What Campbell's argument lacks is analysis of the constitution of the 'Other' through a nexus of fantasy and desire and how this feeds back upon the identity of Cartesian Man. In what follows I take the example of the colonial milieu to examine how a framework of fantasy and desire construe identities and the process of identification of both colonist self and colonised other. This relates to what I have described in the Preface. I suggest that mounting a critique against an ontological or epistemological relation obscures the importance of the way that desire founds and underlines elements of brutality or fear or loathing in the relation of repressor to repressed. Thus, an abstract critique is not sufficient to bring about an ethics affirmative of otherness. It is important to emphasise that the aesthetic approach that I will put forward as a means of highlighting subaltern experience does not claim to have transcended desire in identity. Rather, I suggest that this aesthetic approach, disruptive writing, lays the groundwork for a focus on desire. It does so by not beginning with an abstract critique but in endeavouring to start with marginalised experience that has not been subject to Euro-centric reduction. That is, the aesthetic approach, by calling into question those ordering structures of articulation that are impenetrable to certain meanings, perhaps allows for an approach that is cognisant of the compound and particular nature of identity.

Contaminated Bodies

Notions of being have an effect on notions of time and space; specifically the notion of the homogenous rational Man leads not only to a commodification of space and its

arrangement into distinct sovereign parcels but also to suppressive action upon any evidence of the alter-image of rational man – “madness, self-hate, treason, violence” (Bhabha, 1994a:116). This suppression, condemnation and explaining away of evidence of characteristics contrary to the image of rational and in-control Cartesian Man serves to shore up the boundaries of political community and its philosophical underpinnings. Against the possibility that the fruits of rational man are ambivalent, the modern apologist accounts for dissonance as “alien presences” (Bhabha, 1994a: 116). What I am concerned with here is how ‘identity’ is in part constituted by and mediated through a network of fantasy and desire. Moreover, I am also concerned with how this fantasising about otherness, this relation to the image of the other in terms of fear and fantasy, underpins the rational subjectivity of Cartesian Man, distorting it if you will, ‘splitting’ the unified concept of Cartesian Man.

The articulation of identity remains, argues Bhabha, an articulation of an *image*. That is, in not being able to convey an inner truth or intention, the process of identification strives for and posits an image of oneself legitimated by the play of ‘culture’ (Bhabha, 1994a; Guerrero, 1990; Chow, 1992; Quillen, 1998). When understood as a linguistic expression, ‘culture’ may be perceived as an expression not of timeless qualities of ‘a people’ but the temporal and temporary enunciated result of mediated meditation upon a past. ‘Culture’ then does not stand alone, as an enunciation it is subject to influence or contamination by the contemporary milieu it finds itself in and by which it is reflected on. It is subject, in other words, to the interaction between identity and difference. In the, somewhat idealised, ‘post-colonial milieu’, the reflection on culture takes place in circumstances where the taint of colonialism has effected the remembrance of a past. As Fanon put it:

Colonisation is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it (Fanon, 1967).

The force of the colonial experience lies in its capacity to re-make the image of the other in and through its discourse on the regular and the aberrant by inhabiting 'native' institutions, re-working their religions and cosmologies (or more precisely their means of approaching these) and their systems of administration thereby creating a class of native apparatchiks and informants while appropriating native cultural symbols and institutions. As Stuart Hall notes:

Not only, in Said's 'Orientalist' sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those [colonial] regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as 'Other' ... It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. *It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge', not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm* (Hall, 1994: 394-395).

In the colonial milieu that Hall describes, the structure of desire is such that the colonised subject sees in himself or herself the taint of otherness, the aberrance before the norm while simultaneously having the white mask affixed upon him or her. Similarities abound in Western feminist cultural critique of the representation of women in patriarchal consumer society as "eroticized, fetishized, and generally commodified object that is displayed for the enjoyment of a controlling male 'look' or gaze" (Guerrero, 1990: 761). The making of a fetish of otherness feeds back onto the other. Edward Guerrero examines the role of a white patriarchal dominant gaze or 'look' in the novels of Toni Morrison forming a backdrop to the way the black characters in her book identify themselves and others in the urban United States. The dominant ideology is hegemonic and monopolistic: the ubiquity of the ideology means that the other must always speak to it, there is no independent ground upon which one may articulate a sense of oneself. This is not, however, to speak of colonialism as a homogenous act, superimposing itself without cracks and tears upon

an episteme or another. It is not to suppose that colonialism is a blank monolith (Lal, 2001: 138). I hope I avoid the simplistic oppositions of East and West by relaying what Pnina Werbner calls the “ambivalences of power and paradoxes of sociality”; of how, for example, the colonial condition may be understood not in terms of competing, pre-formed cultures, but ongoing conflictual communities, conflictual in their sociality, thinning the heavy lines of demarcation between ‘cultural groups’ (Werbner, 2001:134).

Guerrero speaks of the desire of the young black woman in Morrison’s novels being thrown out of kilter. Through cinematic and pictorial image she comes to equate beauty with a physically unattainable white ideal: “she is ... forced to look at and apply to herself a completely unrealizable, alien standard of feminine beauty and to experience the dissatisfaction resulting from the contradiction.” (Guerrero, 1990: 764). Caroline Quillen argues that the identity of the woman is “split”, the dominant gaze enacts a structure of identification where the image of oneself that is striven for is influenced by the imperative of how one appears before the dominant ideology:

The identification of desirability with perceived beauty works, within current gender arrangements, to supplant the woman’s sense of autonomy with a sense of being appreciated by another. “A woman is thus split, seeing herself in private as she really is, but also having to be perpetually aware of how she appears to men” because the way she appears to men is, under current gender arrangements, crucial to her ability to recognize herself in the world (Quillen, 1998: 42; partly citing Butler, 1989: 236).

Notwithstanding an idealised and not very nuanced sense of “a woman”, Quillen’s argument is important for the purposes of emphasising that the image towards which the other seeks identification is mediated and corrupted by the milieu within which this identification is expressed. Homi Bhabha suggests a distinction between personal identity, the notion of the self – “an intuition of being” –, and the societal articulation of oneself that is the process of identification with an image whose

contours are formed in and through public discourse, 'culture'. The process is criss-crossed by the play of desire, investigating it involves asking how the dominant gaze enacts a particular ideological hegemonic milieu which constricts the debate on identity, it is to investigate how desire is constricted so that it is thought in terms of the hegemony (Bhabha, 1994a: 118). This is not however to suggest that the other is a purely reactive automaton, without agency (neither, I reassert, is it to suggest a cocooning of oneself into one's 'true' body). It is to emphasise the *splitting* of identity where the political demand of the abject other is caught up with the tension of the desire: "the fantasy of the native is precisely to occupy the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's avenging anger" (Bhabha, 1994a: 117). It is – argues Bhabha – in the in-betweenness of the colonial condition that the other may be theorised.

It is precisely the difficulty of extracting a wholly separate 'other' from the figure of the Colonist-Cartesian subject that is important. When identity is understood in terms of an image, the centrality of desire in the positing and eventual taking-up of that image is important. The colonial subject is neither left wholly outside nor entirely inside the discourse of regularity and aberration. Made to feel distinct and aberrant yet at the same time influenced by the order of desirability posited by the hegemonic discourse, the other is simultaneously within and without. Moreover, as the underlying dissonance, the aberrant threat dissipated to the margins of rational political community, the other underlies political or civic identity, it contaminates it. Identification, the taking up of an image, thus occurs at the point of the inter-twining of different places, it is only in terms of a relation to what it is not, a negation – neither purely outsider nor completely insider, that the identity of the other (or for that matter, as we shall see in a while, the Colonist or dominant Self)

may be posited. Moreover, the consideration of the inter-contamination of desire also provides pathways to study colonist identity in a more nuanced sense.

Bhabha's Fanon-inspired critique of desire is not one I adopt wholly. This is because there is underlying this a psychoanalytic sense of the unconscious desire playing itself out in the public realm. Albeit Bhabha is ambivalent about the role of "the unconscious" that he finds in Fanon's argument, though he notes: "it is through image and fantasy – those orders that figure transgressively on the borders of history and *unconscious* – that Fanon profoundly invokes the colonial condition" (Bhabha, 1994a: 115, my emphasis). I emphasise, on the other hand, Derrida's argument that a recourse to "the unconscious" is untenable because there is no unmediated means of articulating or understanding that "unconscious". An approach to "the unconscious" draws it into a realm of articulation with concomitant challenge and contest. A conception of "the unconscious" is subject to the epistemic and social context that the critic is embedded in. Thus the articulation of that which would be without the rational structure of enunciation draws it unreflexively back into it. In doing so unreflexively, one is in danger of enforcing as objective a subjective interpretation of an underlying 'true' or 'repressed' subject. Derrida makes his point in a critique of Foucault's *History of Madness* in which he claims that Foucault strives to write an actual history about madness *itself* rather than those practices of disciplining madness that Foucault claims as his focus:

Sometimes Foucault globally rejects the language of reason, which itself is the language of order ... throughout the book runs the theme linking madness to silence to "words without language" or "without the voice of a subject" ... The history of madness itself is therefore the archaeology of a silence. But first of all, is there a history of silence? Further, is not an archaeology, even of silence, a logic, that is, an organized language? ... Does it suffice to stack the tools of psychiatry neatly, inside a tightly shut workshop, in order to return to innocence and to end all complicity with the rational or political order? (Derrida, 1978: 34-35, author's emphasis).

It is in this sense that my argument strives to remain relative without recourse to an absolute logos or truth (Derrida, 1978: 37). It is in this sense that I strive to understand 'desire' in terms of how it is structured by social, economic and political contexts and not how it derives from an "unconscious".

One may make a similar argument against Campbell's claim that the affirmation he seeks is not linked to "conscious desires or intentions of a subject" (Campbell, 1998: 509). Campbell argues that this is because the affirmation he seeks is motivated by a disinterested "deconstruction", the playing out of the instability of meaning which is inherent in all articulation. Yet, as I have suggested, Campbell's critique begins with a truncated Euro-centric base – Cartesianism taken as a pure tradition with a one-way effect on repressed "others" (Campbell, 1998: 505). Derrida emphasises the Euro-centricity of a language that stems from a constricted base, the play of 'deconstruction' is channelled within certain parameters that serve to shore up Campbell's argument. Derrida writes:

All our European languages, the language of everything that has participated, from near or far, in the adventure of Western reason ... *nothing* within this language, and *no one* among those who speak it, can escape the historical guilt... (Derrida, 1978: 35, author's emphasis).

There are two further consequences of my critique for Campbell's argument. First, while to be is indeed to be in terms of another, to be *for* another because of the interplay of identification, the argument that this translates into "a struggle for – or on behalf of – alterity" does not necessarily follow. Campbell agrees that the security and the identity of the Cartesian discourse is contaminated by the spectre of otherness, yet a cognisance of the inter-dependency of being translates for him into a "political figuration [that] encourages distinctions between antagonisms, conflicts, pluralities, and multiplicities ... a principle concerned with struggle for and on

behalf of alterity [that] cannot be read as an ethic of tolerance for the intolerable” (Campbell, 1998: 514). At the level of the minute and actual relation between self and other, the freedom by which to distinguish presupposes that the complexity of desire in the relation between one and another has been ameliorated. It assumes, that is, that the subject has extracted himself or herself from the ongoing process of identification before the gaze of another. How has this occurred? As Michael Dillon argues with regards Levinas’ conception of an ethics of alterity:

Since the Levinasian concept of proximity is supposed to allow both being with, and yet continuously also an unbridgeable separation from, the Other, the philosophical issue revolves around whether or not it serves well enough to allow the Other its Otherness when face to face with an ethically invoked subject. Proximity seems to insist that the Other’s space can never be occupied. Levinasian desire is the subject wanting the Otherness of the other. *An ethically charged subject, keen to substitute, may nonetheless mount a devastating intrusion into it, if not restrained by their desire.* (Dillon, 1999b: 174, fn. 31, my emphasis).

When understood as the positing of discursive images one against another, the identity of the self and of the other is to be theorised in their in-betweenness, their liminality, their condition of existence on the margins of dominant and subaltern ‘zones’.

The second consequence for Campbell’s argument is then found in a consideration of the desire of the look of the dominant party. Bhabha suggests that in the act of epistemic violence that makes a fetish of the dissonant other, so too is the dominant party’s “field of vision disturbed.” I have noted above, with reference to Judith Butler, how the sense of omniscience and the impression of secure predictability in the Cartesian political space is arrived at through a constriction of the field of enquiry. By acts of naming that deny the dissonance of the other, the secure borders of the political community are shored up. Yet underlying the secure community is the flip-side to the rational programme, evidence of the idea that rationality is ambivalent in its effects in figures of dementia and violence. One result

of this is to call into question, as I have argued in chapter one, the very time of a dominant way of being that in treating the territorial state as the naturally logical receptacle of rational human being restricts the historical play of the borders of political community (Alonso, 1994). Gayatri Spivak suggests – with Derrida – that we render delirious the voice of the other within (Spivak, 1994: 89). That is, the political aim of resistance to homogeneity must be premised on the disturbing and irredentist otherness upon which security is based. Bhabha argues that the violence underlying the security of the rational political community marks out the perversion of “post-Enlightenment man” that “bizarre figure of desire, which splits along the very axis upon which it turns”. Cartesian man is split between the ostensibly rational and civilised world and the dark underbelly of repression and violence that ensures this civility. The connection with the spectre of that subjugated other “splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his very boundaries ... disturbs and divides the *very time of his being*” (Bhabha, 1994a: 116; my emphasis). The consequence of this for Campbell’s argument is that the tethering of the dominant discourse to the subjugated other in its underside points to a form of resistance that rather than celebrating the fragmentation of identity, takes up the powerfully resonant identity of subjugated otherness that is both within and without the rational civil edifice.

In Rey Chow’s terms this is a strategy of finding in the consignment of the other to a commodified and fetishized state a site of political resistance (Chow, 1992: 112-113). It is through the marginalised identities, through “pressing the claims of the local”, that strategies of resistance must be thought. Pressing the claims of the local means resisting the generalised fragmentation of identity into an economy of humanity where the hegemonising nature of Euro-centricity appears under-thought (Chow, 1992: 113). In a more positive sense, pressing the claims of the local is a

strategy that is cognisant of the inter-twining of subaltern and dominant identities. It is an attempt not to come up with a sense of being human but is a strategy of subversion: to manipulate the representation of the human being (Bhabha, 1994a: 121).

This is a strategy of manipulation that is cognisant of the interstitial agency of the subaltern. Akin to the moment of affirmation in Derrida's recent philosophy which is fundamentally an affirmation borne of the realisation, as Simon Critchley has reminded us, of the impossibility of both remaining within and escaping the epistemic milieu, an impossibility that reminds of the taint of otherness in our very being and the concomitant play of fantasy, fear and desire in the articulation of the meaning of ourselves, the strategy of manipulation means using the totems and isignia of subaltern identity in fundamentally unusual and disruptive ways, repeating the images and patterns of behaviour in unusual locales.

Walter Benjamin's thesis of 'imagistic' history reacts against the de-personalisation that stems from notions of time as an ordered whole, the progress of which is recognisable to rational subjectivity (Bhabha, 1994a: 114). Benjamin argues that against the oppressive homogeneity of linear notions of time may be posited the discernment that "thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well" (Benjamin, 1968/1999: 254). The cognisance of disruption, of irregularity amidst the aggressively regular, gives the configuration of oppressive linear time "a shock by which it crystallizes into a monad" (Benjamin 1968/1999: 254). As the configuration of Western historicism is premised on an oppression that bolsters the sense of its linearity – an oppression borne of *de-limitation* (as discussed in the Introduction) – Benjamin construes it as a "state of emergency" which is not the exception but the rule (it is not, hence, regular or normal or sane, but premised on

oppression, underlined with dementia and violence) (Benjamin 1968/1999: 248). In the struggle for the oppressed, the struggle to “brush history against the grain” (Benjamin 1968/1999: 248), the state of emergency is also a state of emergence: in the positing of irregularity against the oppressive norm the configuration of Western historicism – and the de-personalisation that this entails – is put to the sword. And as Bhabha argues, “if the order of Western historicism is disturbed in the colonial state of emergency, even more deeply disturbed is the social and psychic representation of the human subject” (Bhabha, 1994a: 114).

Benjamin’s is a methodology that seeks out the minor, the individual, the fragment: it is a re-personalising of an oppressive structure of intelligibility. It is a strange and unusual method, but by its very irregularity manipulates received identities and stories.⁸ I find in Theodor Adorno’s aesthetic theory a similar distortion of reality in his methodology, ‘aesthetic understanding’, that focuses on an irreducible individuality. Adorno’s methodology provides a rich detailing and qualification of procedures by which to approach the repressed other as monad, as irreducible individual. However – probably because of the very attention to detail – Adorno’s aesthetic understanding I think has its problems and is bolstered by reference to Benjamin and to Derrida’s and Fanon’s depiction of the role of desire in the process of identification.

Summary

I have tried in this chapter of the thesis to outline post-positivist notions of space and the concomitant attempt to ground ethics in the discursive formations that are said to underlie a particular way of conceiving of space over others. I then looked at David Campbell’s critique of humanitarianism and found in his attempt to conceive of a

“humanism of the other” a disturbing lack of analysis or theorisation of the other. It is in this sense then that Campbell’s argument may be said to continue the objectification of ‘other’ experience, of restricting otherness to being an undifferentiated and generalised prop to the edifice of Euro-centric theory. As a means then of expanding the bounds of political community, Campbell’s positing of a humanism of the other is lacking insofar as it fails to consider the contradictions of Euro-centric theorising.

In contrast to Campbell’s work I have introduced here the notion of desire and of the inter-contamination of sites of ‘self’ and ‘other’. I have suggested that moving the bounds of political community involves an attempt to theorise and differentiate otherness and to mount a critique of the subjective desires of the critic, in essence to problematise the intention of the critic in essaying a particular way of being. In the three chapters that follow, I suggest that keeping the bounds of one’s critique open must stem not from a resolution of human being (or “being human”) but from an epistemology that is cognisant that subversion is intrinsic to the meaning of objects themselves. This is because once meaning or identity is articulated it becomes the ‘property’ of the public sphere and, consequently, of otherness: the spectre of other meanings upon which it depends for its veracity simultaneously hampers any claim to certainty.

The next chapter will study Theodor Adorno’s ‘aesthetic understanding’ which understands objects as intrinsically insecure, always undermined by the spectre of the ‘unsayable’ which puts paid to the notion that rational explication may exhaust all that is to be said about the meaning or identity of an object. The study intends to introduce a methodology of understanding, aesthetic understanding, that

may be utilised in disruptive writing strategies to approach marginal identity and experience non-reductively.

NOTES

- ¹ 'Je dis parfois: l'homme, c'est l'Europe et la Bible, et tout le rest peut s'y traduire.' From Levinas' conversations with François Poirié, *Emmanuel Levinas, 'Qui êtes-vous?'*, Paris: La Manufacture. 1987, p. 136. Cited and translated by Simon Critchley, (Critchley, 1999: 278).
- ² I have preferred to use this term rather than 'post-structural' or 'post-modern'. Both the latter two are perhaps best understood within the particular historical and intellectual context from which they have arisen. They both come with a number of loaded implications. I use the term 'post-positivism' to highlight a perspective that post-structuralists and post-modernists arguably share. This is the critique of a reductive understanding of experience coupled with the assumption that that understanding may be utilised for different sorts of political and social praxis.
- ³ I use the term 'Occidental' here to emphasise the western or Euro-American leverage that this attitude or perspective has. I continue to see 'modernity' as that attitude which is transfixed on the possibility that a coherent and contemporary interpretation of experience may be utilised to enable secure political praxis.
- ⁴ On the relativity of 'mobility' see in particular Patricia Tuitt, 1999: 108-113.
- ⁵ It is important to note as well that what are called 'humanitarian emergencies' have tended to generally imply apolitical motivations and aims. Postmodern understandings of response preclude the possibility that politics may be separated from intervention.
- ⁶ Campbell holds to this argument – that 'modernity' (of which humanitarianism is a part) is reliant on the epistemological formulation of principles (adhering logically to grounding assumptions) to decide the boundaries of ethical conduct. There is certainly a sense of shared humanity underlying and motivating responses to international humanitarian emergencies. However, it is important here to distinguish, as Liisa Malkki does, for example, between an ostensible and probably very real concern for the suffering of people far removed from ourselves on the one hand, and, on the other, how that response is played out, by what epistemological lens is it understood and implemented thereby actually determining its nature (Malkki, 1996: 398).
- ⁷ That is, what does being 'in crisis' entail? Is it a crisis as an aberration from a norm that can be re-attained following the right tweaking of the right buttons? Does Campbell's critique offer an adequate re-thinking of what it means to be in crisis?
- ⁸⁸ Hannah Arendt in her introduction to Benjamin's *Illuminations*: "Benjamin probably was the most peculiar Marxist ever produced by this movement, which God knows has had its full share of oddities" (Arendt 1968/1999: 16-17)

Chapter Six

Disruptive Writing and the Critique of Political and Ethical Borders

The intention of this final chapter is to explore how the bounds of political community may be stretched by an aesthetic perspective that sees in the production of identity an inherent irregularity that ironically precludes the securitising of that individual; that obviates the hermetic impulse which sees the individual as an autonomous font of politics and ethics. Indeed the intention of this chapter – and one of the principle intentions of this thesis – is to demonstrate that the production of the autonomous self is premised on an exclusion or abjection of an underlying perspective that distorts the rational world view and the conception of the rational subject. One of the differences between the perspective that is being essayed here and the works of David Campbell, Michael Dillon and Vivienne Jabri explored in previous chapters is that I seek to explore how the position of the critic may be simultaneously thrown into the critical gambit.

I have suggested that Adorno's aesthetic understanding initiates a processual, ceaseless, critique that does not stem from the wiles or wishes of an intending subjectivity but from the inherent instability of meaning. It has been the argument made here that while those post-positivist critiques examined in the thesis would claim to be indeed generated from the instability of meaning and expression (and not, primarily, from the exercise of the positional leverage, that a particular subjectivity has over others), a strong case may be made to the effect that they are ultimately rooted in the privileging of one standpoint over others.

This chapter examines three different styles of disruptive writing as a means of focusing non-determinatively on marginalised experience. I will suggest that the authors looked at here consistently challenge the constitutive form of the territorial discourse. They do so via strategies of writing that mount critiques of notions of linear time and space that restrict the range of the possible in the territorial imagination. Specifically, via exercises in different ways of plot development and narration, the disruptive writing strategies that I look at emphasise the series of repressions that go into justifying notions of linear time and space that constitute a de-limited field of enquiry. The thesis has looked at Judith Butler's argument that it is this de-limitation of a field of enquiry that generates the ruse of a powerful subjectivity accomplishing stated goals with ease (Butler, 1992: 12). It is the resolutions of notions of space, time and identity that underlie and make viable this de-limitation. Hence, the disruptive writing strategies examined here explore alternative notions of space, time and identity in order to question the monopolistic resolution of these. This questioning highlights marginalised experiences and identities and perhaps provide a means for beginning not with another vein of the European canon but with marginalised identity. This amounts to an approach towards marginalised identity, and in seeking not to prematurely conceptualise this identity Adorno's aesthetic understanding with its notion of the processual and oblique critique of forms that enable a certain way of seeing and doing while disabling others will be utilised.

Critique, I would argue, does not begin then with an analysis of the limits of a European philosophical modernity but rather with the inter-contamination of sites of 'self' and 'other'. There is thus no pure origin for the critique of modernity, there is rather an analysis of the inter-contamination of 'self' and 'other' in their

enunciation in the public sphere. Moreover, the method being outlined here does not begin with a deepening of self-understanding. It notes instead that subjective limitations are evident in the choice of tools by which one enacts a self-understanding, thereby leading to the supposedly pure and autonomous understanding of oneself being contaminated by an unwanted privileging of a particular subjective standpoint. It is in this sense – in the sense of an attempt to read the critic into the critique – that the method being outlined here, I think, provides space to begin with marginalised experience, provides space to begin not with the generalisation of undifferentiated and purportedly deconstructive ‘refugee’ but with the capacity for reading detail into the historical, political and cultural location of different refugee lives.

The centrality of language to this critical perspective has been outlined in previous chapters. Derrida’s notion that enunciation of meaning is inherently insecure because it invokes the spectre of other possibilities has been referred to. Language is contingent on otherness and is its own de-stabiliser. But because meaning and identity are necessarily enunciated, it is important to note the centrality of language in politics and philosophy. However just as language enables, it also disables: how we “approach, think, conceptualise and formulate” are effected by hierarchies that entrench a particular enunciation over others. Language is not a neutral conduit of how we see things, it effects what is seen and how we see. Language is thus not simply substance but also form. In what follows I explore the relation of form to substance or content and take note of the potential for certain examples of prose and poetry, “disruptive writing” (Shapiro, 1997: 38, Bleiker, 2000a: 17) that self-consciously do away with the distinction between form and content (recognising that how something is written effects the meaning enunciated).

I explore how such self-conscious writing – in the short stories of Naiyer Masud, Árpád Göncz and Tadeusz Borowski – mount a critique of taken for granted notions of time and space that enable particular formulations of identity, community and ethics while simultaneously obstructing others.

In assessing the capacity of aesthetic forms of understanding to stretch the bounds of political community by focusing on and problematising language, problematising that which gives us a particular form or style of politics while simultaneously de-legitimising others, this chapter will, first of all, make the case for considering identity as contaminated at the outset by otherness. It then moves on to explore Naiyer Masud's collection of short stories, noting his conflation of form and content which draws meaning into an ambit of ceaseless reference. The next two sections will explore how Árpád Göncz's and Tadeusz Borowski's short stories problematise notions of being 'at home' and of 'leaving home'. Göncz and Borowski emphasise through different stylistic devices the extent of the inter-contamination of self with other and the difficulty – if not impossibility – of outlining a point of terminus in the process of constituting identity. Moreover, I will look at Göncz's problematisation of the notion of 'exile': taking note of how his de-location of 'the exile experience' from territoriality allows a consideration of the polymorphous condition Liisa Malkki calls "refugeeness" (Malkki, 1995b: 506).

Irony and Aesthetic Representation

It is in Homi Bhabha's idea of the intrinsic and non-negotiable embeddedness of the self and its concomitant tangle with otherness that the uncertainty always present in the given may come to the fore (Bhabha, 1994a). In other words, it is in the realisation that the identity towards which we strive is not an outcome or reflection

of any truth about ourselves revealed in isolation, but an *image* that is the ultimate property of public discourse. As an image, it is its own ironic reminder of its contingency, uncertainty and dependency.

Jacques Derrida speaks of “interruption”, of an interruption of the security of the self undertaken by otherness. Identity as an image enunciated in the public sphere is, hence, dependent on otherness for its meaning. This is Derrida’s principle of *différance* where subjects and terms have their true meanings deferred and depend on a temporal and contingent meaning within the differentiating order of otherness to convey a contingent and temporal sense of what they are. Derrida notes that the course of phenomenological description, simply put the description of consciousness or a sense of oneself, is interrupted by its very movement because of the insecurity of consciousness. This insecurity is made apparent by, in Derrida’s Levinasian take, the advent of ‘the face’ of the other:

The interruption is not imposed on phenomenology as if by decree. In the very course of phenomenological description ... the interruption is *produced (by itself)*. It is *decided (by itself)* in the name of ethics, as interruption of the self by the self. Interruption of the self by a phenomenology that gives itself over to its own necessity ... the respect of consciousness ... as hospitality [to the other’s face]. (Derrida, 1999: 52. Author’s emphases).

The interruption of the subject’s secure being does not then depend on a deepening of self-understanding. The uncertainty inherent in the public discourse of identity as image means that interruption occurs in the very enunciation of identity. The ultimate result of this interruption is a critique of the motivation to understanding knowledge as revelation: “What thus turns out to be interrupted ... in the first moment of hospitality is nothing less than the figure of the veil and of truth as revelation” (Derrida, 1999: 52-3). “*In the first moment of hospitality*”, in the initial encounter with otherness which cannot be avoided (because it occurs in the enunciation of identity) the idea of truth as revelation, of uncovering an integral truth of oneself, is sacrificed to the demands of a public discourse. In consequence, the

autonomous pursuit of self-understanding through the autonomous understanding of the limitations surrounding oneself is not possible.

The contamination of would-be distinct spheres of identity is thought by Gayatri Spivak as the possibility always of “invagination”. By this term, Spivak understands the potentiality always structured into the mindset she investigates (a certain Hinduism) that radical alterity may bisect the ostensible wholeness of a mode of being (Spivak, 2001: 124). The approach that expects that anything may be contaminated by alterity, and hence be significantly altered, is called by Spivak that episteme which has a dual “impulse” that carries with it a sense of doubt about “the stability or constancy of the apparent.” This epistemic stance thus cuts through the “allegorical” structure of meaning whereby symbols transparently function as reflections of intention. The dual impulse is thus ironical, if by irony is understood the ultimate basis “of an allegory ... the systematic undoing, in other words, of the abstract” (Spivak, 2001: 124, citing Paul de Man). In Spivak’s argument a certain Hinduism invokes or calls down the indefiniteness of supernaturality and ‘incarnates’ itself in the natural. This impulse is thus marked by a distortion of fixed identity as well as by indefiniteness. In studying the Hindu idea of incarnation not through “intellectual Hinduism” that speaks in the language of European academia but through a cognisance of “structures of feeling”, Spivak makes the case for Hinduism as an ongoing ‘cultural’ construct that posits itself against the privileging of cerebral explanations of what Hinduism is (Spivak, 2001:122). By “structures of feeling” Spivak seems to mean an approach to understanding which does not make recourse to intellectual conceptualisation of phenomena but rather as a means of understanding something as a culture where “it is in the making” (Spivak, 2001: 122). This is to detract from the quest for a clearly distinguished object of

understanding in artificial stasis and a subject who understands this. Spivak suggests that intellectual Hinduism fails to explain the notion of incarnation insofar as this is an attempt to describe the supernatural in a conceptual language. She suggests that the ambiguous and non-conceptual understanding of structures of feeling approaches incarnation, prayer and religion generally in ways not amenable to finite rational discourse. The dislocation of a necessarily truncated intellectual Hinduism from a linear relationship of knower to known suggests that a more expansive understanding of Hinduism may be generated from looking at Hinduism as an ongoing cultural construct. That is, she advocates a way of knowing that is more attuned to how a culture is 'made'. In acknowledging that Hinduism is a culture understood in part through structures of feeling, the consequence is that the privilege accorded to intellectual summing up is questioned by the emphasis that there remains another way of approaching Hinduism, an affective one rather than an intellectual one. There is a dual impulse that throws into doubt the coherence and privilege of rational summations.

The ironic perception, Spivak's 'dual impulse' or Adorno's 'aesthetic understanding' that sees in objects both the rationally explicable meaning and the unsayable 'sensuous' or indeterminate sense of an 'aesthetic object', may be connected thus not to an "intending subject" (Spivak, 2001: 157, n. 7) but to what Spivak has called the observation of culture where it is in making (Spivak, 2001: 122). That is, Spivak calls for an observation directed to the interstices or margins of culture where the processes of culture's constitution, de-constitution and re-constitution occur. This is akin to Bhabha's cognisance of the inter-contamination of images of self and other. Spivak's dual impulse, which allows a perspective on ways of knowing different to intellectuality, is thus not intended to uncover an indigenous

way of knowing, it is not to privilege non-Western experience against Western. Rather, Spivak's usage of Raymond Williams' notion of "structures of feeling" is intended to understand cultural production as an ongoing and multi-faceted operation. Rather than positing against a static and reductive "intellectual Hinduism" an indigenous 'Hinduism of the people' that would, inevitably, be static and reductive also, Spivak posits a fluid dual impulse against the privilege accorded to a static monological way of comprehending cultural issues. The result is that against the archimedean and linear causal logic underlying (conventional) academic takes on Hinduism – as Spivak argues – is posited an ambiguous and multi-faceted perspective of Hinduism as an ongoing 'culture'.

Pnina Werbner argues that "conflictual communities" (she uses the colonial example of South Africa in the 1930s) should be seen to be representative of a "single, organized culture ... rather than a social aggregation of heterogeneous cultural groups" (Werbner, 2001: 135). Werbner does not suggest however that this single culture would or should represent univocity. Rather, she sees culture in terms of the hybridity that ensues from engagement between different groups. This is a situation of mixing or contamination that does not occur on a conscious plane. It cannot be traced – as Spivak has said – back to the isolated and autonomous intentions of a distinct subject.¹ Rather, "the mixture remains mute and opaque, never making use of conscious contrasts and oppositions" (Werbner, 2001: 135, citing Mikhail Bakhtin). In the unconscious hybridity of culture, the images of identity that are taken up represent a compound distortion of univocity: they reflect the effect that desire and the desiring gaze has on identity and the way in which identity is recognised. And they note in the disturbingly non-commensurate nature

of these images an “interruptive” quality that renders colonial authority ambivalent.

Werbner, citing her South African example of an opening of a bridge in 1938, says:

The Zulu warrior standing guard as policeman at the bridge is not a Zulu warrior. Drinking tea in the middle of the veld is quite unlike tea in Surrey on a Sunday afternoon. In this sense, hybridity is unconscious, yet disturbing and interruptive. It renders colonial authority ... ambivalent, uncertain. (Werbner, 2001: 136).

Werbner’s distinction between conscious and unconscious hybridity finds in the event of the bridge-opening that she describes an intentional or conscious hybridity as well. This reflects the staged and managed nature of the bridge-opening, with policemen decked out in warrior garb and other such actors playing in a “staged production”. Yet just as the unconscious hybridisation renders ambiguous colonial authority so too does the intentional hybridisation. In the cultural enunciation, the meaning of the identity, of something that is intended to be conveyed, becomes subject – in a Derridean sense – to the public economy of varying interpretation, it becomes subject then to understanding in terms of the differentiating order of otherness: to the spectre of other meanings upon which it depends.

The affective structure of the colonial experience, that structure which yields a framework of desire, is said by Bhabha – with Frantz Fanon – to be marked by a “Manichean delirium”. That is, ostensibly rationally civilised but underwritten by racism (Bhabha, 1994a: 116). In arguing that the enunciation of identity, the process of identification, occurs in the public sphere where it is best understood as the attempt to attain to an image of what one is ‘meant to be’, an image that is subject to the vagaries of the contemporary milieu, Bhabha suggests an investment of the individual in the process of identification. It is through image and fantasy that the relation of self to other, and vice-versa, is ordered. The tethering of self to other in a dialogic relation puts paid to the binary opposition of coloniser/colonised (Darby and

Paolini, 1994: 396n17)¹ which in the relation of human being to refugee allows a homogenised figure that, on the one hand, conceals the different types of “estrangement” experienced by different types of refugees (I have shown, for example, that child refugees experience a particular pressing form of estrangement) and, on the other hand, elides the transformative – or in Bhabha’s terminology, ‘splitting’ – effect of the other on the ‘self’, here the modern figure of Rational Man.

Thus, the role of Adorno’s aesthetic understanding may be ‘confined’ to the expression of a skewed viewpoint, of an enunciation of the ‘unsaid’ underlying every discourse. This is an enunciation that, as Bleiker has argued, does not respect the rules and structures of the dominant enunciation and in so doing casts light upon the neglected or repressed in dominant language.

Adorno’s aesthetic understanding – notwithstanding his tendency to slip into recommending the properties of certain types of art to revive a repressed or true self – is premised on a juxtaposing of the rational determinate sense of something with its ‘sensuous’ or indeterminate doppelganger. It is in this way that I think Roland Bleiker’s idea of poetic writing as flinging things wide open, dissimulating the forms that structure the way we think, may be understood as a means of focusing on the irony at the heart of certainty – the irony that points to the suppression, dismissal or derogation of ‘the irrational’ at the core of the rational view. Bleiker writes of poetry’s recognition that the manner in which something is stated is integral to the meaning its content conveys.

Poetry is ideally suited for rethinking world politics because it revolves around a recognition that (aesthetic) form and (political) substance cannot be separated. The manner in which a text is written, a speech is uttered, a thought is thought, is integral to its content. There is no neutral way of representing the world, a form that is somehow detached from the linguistic and social practices in which the speaker or writer is embedded (Bleiker, 2000b: 271).

¹ On the dialogic nature of the “exile experience”, see Desantis, 2001.

My intention in this chapter is to examine how in the exilic, disruptive writings of Árpád Göncz, Tadeusz Borowski and Naiyer Masud challenges to notions of self and community are posed. These are challenges that – particularly in the poetic prose of Naiyer Masud – eschew univocity in favour of ambiguity in the relation of the subject to community. The “oppositional discourses” (Werbner, 2001:133) essayed in the works that will be examined below expand the literal bounds of politics and community, adding to the gambit different notions of subjectivity, of home and of the world. Masud’s poetic prose, however, takes things to another level. His is a way of writing where form becomes indistinguishable from content.

The manner in which Masud writes subverts the structure of determinate meaning by reminding of the absent, that which has been left unsaid. Not only does this subvert conventional modes of space and time, but in its juxtaposing of the ‘absent’ against the ‘present’, Masud reminds of the incapacity of determinate meaning to exhaust its subject. Like Adorno’s aesthetic understanding which is premised on the ceaseless movement of time, the circularity of Masud’s short stories means that there is no terminus, no final point with which to sum up the ‘message’ of the story; rather, “what it does bring is a continual engagement with the unsaid and the ineffable” (Memon, 1998: no page number). The borders of a given space are then contested, and time does not progress along a given line. By making time not progress along a given line, Masud throws into doubt the congruency of the relation between aspiration and the fulfilment of that aspiration that appears given in the delimited field of enquiry Judith Butler speaks of. That is, Masud demonstrates the repressions and assumptions that go into the demonstration of the powerful Western subject that a goal has been accomplished with ease. Those after effects of an

apparently successful war, for example, are, in the finite linear time of the constricted field of enquiry, outside of the horizon (Butler, 1992: 12-14). I argue below then that Masud's poetic prose allows a processual critique of the borders of political identity and community by reminding of what has been left unsaid, reminding as I think Adorno's aesthetic understanding does, of the repressions that play a part in deciding what is seen and not seen. Bleiker again:

... by flinging things wide, the poetic image has the potential to bring into a dialogical realm many of the repressed voices, perspectives, and emotions that otherwise may never reach the prose-oriented theorists and practitioners of contemporary world politics (Bleiker, 2000b: 276).

Masud's unifying of form and content enable his distortion of received notions of time and space and, consequently, identity and what it means to be at home. Árpád Göncz and Tadeusz Borowski attempt to fill in the spaces created by Masud's distortion of time and space. Their short stories are more obviously political than Masud's: theirs are experiences of home and identity that run against the ideological requirements of communist Europe after 1945. Theirs is an exilic writing that points to the specific silences in specific historical contexts (Hungary and Poland after a failed revolution and a 'successful' liberation respectively) that not only presents a challenge to univocity by indicating the overtly political as well as epistemological and emotional repressions that this entails, but also, consequently, present rich and detailed notions of what home and community might mean. Yet at the same time each present in their writing styles evocative and disturbing images that complicate notions of home and community, reaching to what Adorno calls "the unsayable" to explicitly remind of the disruption of otherness (Göncz) and of underlying chaos (Borowski) that render rational political stratagems inherently insecure.

In Göncz's collection of short stories, *Homecoming*, one encounters in the territorial space of Hungary abiding transnational figures, ghosts of an other or past 'Hungary'. In the present 'Hungary' many former inhabitants have become political exiles or simply non-citizens following the break-up of greater Hungary after 1918 and the repressions of the Stalinist Rákosi regime after the war as well as in the aftermath of the 1956 uprising, reminding of the absent transnationality at the core of the territorial space of contemporary 'Hungary'. One is also met by an array of sensuous experiences, a density of feeling that affects a tie to a place which the reduction of the specific meaning of specific instances of exile that occurs through an argument based on the solidarity of a general condition of estrangement or exile cannot account for. Gayatri Spivak's use of the critical force of Raymond Williams' idea of "structures of feelings" as a means to provide a critical perspective on cultural forms – such as, I would suggest, 'home' – is important here insofar as it detracts from the demand that such forms be represented (and thus watered down, "museumized") in the rational Euro-centric language that is predominant and which fails to represent well enough the manifold implications that a 'sensuous' home brings (Spivak, 2001:121-2).

On the other hand, Borowski's spare writing style that reduces the difference between executioner and victim in the Nazi concentration camps to the mundane ("an extra blanket or the luxury of a silk shirt and shoes with thick soles" (Kott, 1976: 23)) renders ambiguous the divisions between political and ideological communities, he questions the very possibility of being 'at home' or finding what Erin Manning has called (following Nietzsche) "a way of life or afterlife that synchronizes with ... [an] urge to reside within a coherence that successfully keeps alterity at bay" (Manning, 2000: 51). Borowski's writing is borne of betrayal and

brutality; the everydayness of atrocity blurring the line between the normal or good and the abnormal or obviously repugnant. His is a cognisance of the inter-contamination of ostensibly different bodies of victim and executioner. In a review of another Auschwitz survivor's account of "the camp", he wrote:

It is impossible to write about Auschwitz impersonally ... The first duty of Auschwitzers is to make clear just what a camp is ... But let them not forget that the reader will unfailingly ask: But how did it happen that *you* survived? ... Tell, then, how you bought places in the hospital, easy posts, how you shoved the 'Moslems' [prisoners who had lost the will to live] into the oven, how you bought women, men, what you did in the barracks, unloading the transports, at the gypsy camp; tell about the daily life of the camp, about the hierarchy of fear, about the loneliness of every man. But write that you, you were the ones who did this. That a portion of the sad fame of Auschwitz belongs to you as well (cited by Kott, 1976: 22).

Borowski's idea of inter-contamination, of a terrible mutual responsibility refuses the idea that "the camp" may be entirely accounted for in terms of demonic workings of Nazis, nor solely on rationality gone horribly wrong – both of which perhaps deflect from individual experiences and responsibility (of suffering and of imposing suffering) and, thereby, of deflecting the inter-actions that ensure the way in which the camp 'worked' and received its particular character. Primo Levi wrote of "the camp" in terms of a system of exchange that becomes the defining dynamic animating relations there, giving it its particular character, over and above that of individual human agency acting out of freedom to effect a change (Levi, 1958/1987; cited by Parkin, 1999: 306). It is in this sense, in the sense of a participating in a system of exchange, trading one thing or one person for life, that the character of the camp becomes – as Borowski notes – irremediably and irreducibly personal: at root, functioning in the way it does because of individual 'co-operation'. I want to study Borowski's collection of short stories based on his time in Auschwitz, published in English as *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, from the perspective outlined by Walter Benjamin that a condition of 'emergency' is the 'norm', that there remains at all times an underlying emergency below the surface of orderly rational human activity. This condition of emergency is also the site of 'emergence': a

cognition of emergency leads to a perspective – Benjamin’s ‘imagistic’ history that I have spoken of earlier in the thesis – that sees in crisis, and in the explication of the nature of crisis, the emergence of the possibility of a critical identity, a point of resistance. Borowski’s argument calls Fanon-like for the cognisance of the mutual implication of executioner and victim, colonist and colonised, and of the secret desire of occupation by the bereft of the position of power. In this blurring of identities and the way relations are juxtaposed (inmate is pitted against inmate, guard is allied with inmate), Borowski’s short stories maintain, I argue, the need for a critique of ‘home’, of closed political communities; this is a critique that sees in the condition of emergency – in the reverberations of the Auschwitz experience – the site of an emergent identity that refutes the claim to certainty and ultimate good arguably imbued in the quest for a home, of a point of closure for human identity. Yet for Borowski himself the disenchantment of a drive for ‘home’ was not emancipating and it is in his post-war experience that the problems in a tendency to conflate a cognisance of mutual responsibility borne of the discrediting of secure territoriality with ethicality or its possibility must be highlighted. In liberated Poland after the first shock of his ambivalence Borowski became an apologist for the Communist Party. He killed himself in 1951, at the age of twenty-nine.

Naiyer Masud on Form and Content, Space and Time

The compulsiveness of ascendant concepts of space and time is due, according to Adorno’s critique of rationality, to rational scientism’s licence to repress the non-quantifiable and in so doing allow a sense of linearity and boundedness in time and space. These reflect a “violence and domination of empirical reality” (Adorno, 1970/1997: 139). The emancipatory potential of aesthetic representations, or (as I

have preferred) aesthetic understanding, is in its dissociation of rationality from its trajectory (that is, it prevents rationality from reaching its conclusion, from summing up what is known about something). It does this by juxtaposing against the rational empirical world a “second world” which “is directed negatively against the first [or empirical]” world (Adorno, 1970/1997: 138). It is, as I have shown earlier, the incapacity of art to synthesise, to extract a unified meaning of an object, because it cannot help but highlight or refract the unquantifiable, that effects a critique of rationality’s security. In so doing the reconciliation of notions of space, time and causality that underlie the “domination of nature” become similarly subject to critique:

As a musical composition compresses time, and as a painting folds spaces into one another, so the possibility is concretized that the world could be other than it is. Space, time, and causality are maintained, their power is not denied, but they are divested of their compulsiveness (Adorno, 1970/1997: 138).

Art here is emancipatory insofar as it provides a sense that “the world could be other than it is”. However, it is only emancipatory in this way insofar as it retains a perspective that understands that the form that a piece of art takes reflects back on that which is formed, the content. In Bleiker’s terminology, how something is enunciated effects that enunciation: in Adorno’s terminology, how an artwork is ordered determines the nature of its content and consequently the extent of its critique of “empirical rationality”: “form converges with critique” (Adorno 1970/1997: 144).

It is, I argue, a cognisance of those ordering and limiting formalistic elements that gives us a style of enunciation or a style of art that is vital for engaging a critique of the fundamentals of empirical reality. As empirical reality is ordered by its forms of space and time that gives a particular politics and not another, so too, then, does the capacity of art to provide a different conception of space and time to show that the

world could be different depend on the “liberation of form.” Adorno argues that art requires a distance from the empirical world in order not to engage a repetition of its violence and in order thereby to avoid a circular inevitability of the range of political content. It requires a distance in order to provide different and challenging conceptions of time and space, it requires a distance in order to demonstrate different and perhaps more expansive and inclusive modes of enunciation or representation.

There are certainly contrasting viewpoints to this that suggest that the role of poetics – and perhaps one could say other forms of art as well – in politics is complex and multi-faceted with different forms of political engagement having their own relative merits. Roland Bleiker has outlined four different functions of political poetry – activism, providing a different perspective on political events, finding a voice amidst the homogenising norm, and documenting social history (Bleiker, 2000b: 272-280). I lean towards the argument made by Adorno that one should concentrate on form insofar as it seems to me that Adorno provides a methodological theory that would prevent poetry and other forms of would-be disruptive writing from being swallowed up by the homogenising norm, to being a cog in the machine of rationality. It is in this sense that Adorno’s aesthetic understanding seems to me to provide an underlying basis which theorises the capacity, limitations and strengths of different types of literary or poetic political engagement. I therefore lean in the argument made here towards Adorno’s view that it is by dint of its “distance” that “art” can maintain a critique of the fundamentals of political discourse – such as notions of time and space that are taken as neutral facilitators of discourse and action rather than ideologically-loaded premises that disable as they enable.

Precisely by distance from it [empirical objects] art adopts its stance toward the empirical world in which conflicts appear immediate and as absolute cleavages ... This stepping back is, as such, an act of knowledge. Those features of modern art on whose account it has been ostracized as formalistic derive without exception from the fact that *in them content flickers*

incarnate, instead of having been peremptorily adjusted by an easily marketable harmony (Adorno, 1970/1997: 145).

It is the liberation of form from the demands of empirical rationality that allows for an emancipatory critique of empirical rationality.

The liberation of form ... holds within it above all the liberation of society, for form – the social nexus of everything particular – represents the social relation in the artwork; this is why liberated form is anathema to the status quo ... [Art,] the negation of the reality principle, protests against the image of the father and is to this extent revolutionary (Adorno 1970/1997: 255).

The liberation of form precisely occurs in the awareness of the essential unity of form and substance, that how something is said or expressed effects the substance of the expression. My intention is not to suggest, however, that the enactor of aesthetic understanding may begin from a place autonomous of – beyond – his or her epistemic milieu. Rather, it will be argued that attention to form is precisely based on an attempt to put one's epistemic bases to unceasing or processual critique. In the rest of this section I will explore Naiyer Masud's distorting of the notions of space as bounded and time as linear that underlie ascendant conceptions of political community and ethics in international relations (as explored in the Introduction). I do so also to lay the groundwork for the more explicitly political works of Göncz and Borowski.

Masud's stories are obviously of this world insofar as most of his characters and the events he describes are more or less readily recognisable to someone, for example myself, who is a member of the Indian diaspora. Yet they are unsettling insofar as they seem to resist synthesis into definable purpose, meaning or identity. It is in this sense that Masud may be said to seek a distance from empirical rationality in order to indicate that the world may be other than it is. Masud's ideas of the circularity of time and the volatile, undomesticated nature of space highlight the repressions that go into the devising of a neatly ordered world progressing through clearly recognisable stages. It is Masud's distance from politics and political

agitation, as conventionally understood, that provides him with the force of his critique of the implicit ideas of space and time which structure how we think through and express things. It is because he is distant from the world of “the father” that he “protests against the father and is ... revolutionary” (Adorno, 1970/1997: 255).

Naiyer Masud lives in Lucknow, India and is a scholar of Persian and Urdu. His short stories are written in Urdu and were collected in an English language volume, *The Essence of Camphor* (Delhi: Katha), for the first time in 1998. They offer an unsettling image of the world, where purpose is difficult to ascertain and notions of space and time do not flow or constrict as they might. The unsettling nature of Masud’s stories is – on the one hand – certainly due to the disturbingly casual images of death, imprisonment, mutilation and banishment that pervade them. Yet it is more than images that one is confronted with in Masud’s writing. One of his translators, Muhammad Umar Memon, writes that “reading Naiyer Masud’s stories evoked the sensation of being thrown headlong into self-referential circularity” (Memon, 1997). It is more than images that one is confronted with, one is also confronted with a critique of form which then calls to mind the intimate link between image and meaning and the method of writing. Masud refrains from telling us what to make of the images, how to judge them, and in doing so he highlights the centrality of language, of subtle grammatical or structural rules therein, that generate a particular way of thinking and suppresses other ways.

Masud writes in a style that is evocative of absence, the meaning of the images that he writes about are at best ambiguous: they refuse aggregation or synthesis. Rather one is pulled into circularity, into meanings referring to each other unto infinity, evoking a silence and ‘the unsayable’. In so doing Masud distorts the drive to synthesis, the drive to extract meaning and identity. As a consequence

Masud distorts also what Ana María Alonso has called the “spatialisation of being”, discussed in the thesis Introduction (Alonso, 1994: 383). The fictional space that would hold together and make coherent identity and meaning is put in flux by deploying key words across this space, each time carrying ‘meaning’ forward while suggesting its continual flux often by modifying these words. Memon writes of these words:

Often they are woven so seamlessly in the narrative structure that one may miss them altogether. The tendency of the human mind is to fathom and move on. But Masud’s narratives work as a reminder against completion and closure. One experiences things in dynamic movement, not as objects with fixed perimeters, in a state of repose or quiescence. So one cannot be done with them and move on. Circularity has no terminus. Finishing one of his stories does not bring the expected comprehension and completion. What it does bring is a continual engagement with the unsaid and the ineffable, a blurred image of which may be preserved in memory (Memon, 1997)

Masud’s stories tend not to begin or end at a logical point, there is no final summing up of the issue, no lesson to be conveyed. Like Adorno’s aesthetic mode of understanding, he sees things in constant movement, they do not lie quiet and docile awaiting capture. Masud seems to suggest that the impression of the logical necessity or consequentiality of final summations depend on a series of repressions that constrict the play of time and of identity. In a short story entitled, “Obscure Domains of Fear and Desire” Masud writes directly about compression of time and space in accordance with the varying strength of these domains.

The narrator of the story leaves home and takes up a job assessing the age of houses. This is not a definitive beginning, and indeed is not how Masud begins his story, and I am conscious therefore of imposing a narrative on Masud so that I may make a point that will feed into the structured, sequential demands of this work. The narrator comes to feel that time passes within a house at a different rate than without, and that this rate differs from room to room. The appearance of normal progression depends on an obscuring of the domains of fear and desire which the narrator comes

to see as one. Seeing them as one, the narrator becomes able to discern in the whiteness and completeness of the walls of rooms “invisible parts” that could provide a “hiding place for at least one man and one woman.” These invisible parts formed shapes, outlines of objects that at times resembled certain objects but never completely so:

Everything appeared incomplete or fragmented, even though I examined countless such ‘invisible’ parts. Some of these images had familiar shapes ... but they were always unfinished. Other images resembled unknown objects and even though unfamiliar, still gave a sense of being incomplete (Masud, 1997: 89).

The integrity of the rooms, its cleanly bounded space, and the appearance of a functionally progressive or linear time depends on the obscuring of these invisible parts. The repressed or silenced objects appear only as fragments, their wholeness obstructed by fear and desire which are the fundamental leverages posited against recalcitrance. The narrator finds them in every room in a house, except the children’s rooms (the abodes of innocents, before fear and desire lead to the suppression and repression necessary for the development of strength and maturity).

Sekai Nzenza-Shand’s contribution to the journal *Alternatives* “Special Issue on Poetic World Politics” shows how ostensibly apolitical concepts such as time are imbued with a colonial hangover that asserts control over how everyday life proceeds (Nzenza-Shand, 2000; Bleiker, 2000: 277). Nzenza-Shand makes inroads for different ways of knowing that are in opposition to stultifying Western norms. Similarly Memon suggests that Masud’s writing may be understood as an attempt to explore Sufi ontology, of a way of being premised on notions of time and space noticeably different from ascendant Western perceptions of them as linearly and discernibly progressive.

It is perhaps in the positing of alternative ideas of time and space that modulate the perception of ethical and political boundaries that writing like Masud’s

may be said to be making a case for a more inclusive and less excluding perspective. Though of course there are bounds to inclusion, a writer's desire encloses as well as discloses. In Masud's stories women, for example, are described as "extraneous", old women "crones" (old men are respected), and the unevenness of the plane of discourse caused by social and educational privilege – of giving the right of narration to privileged folk – is ignored by Masud whose narrators are well-off males. Masud's distance from what Adorno calls empirical reality reflects back onto his story-telling and while this does avoid the unreflexive positing of political stratagems that do not – and perhaps cannot – question the fundamental ordering role that presumptions of space and time play, at face value it also presumes an objectivity in Masud's writing and does not appear to problematise his stance, his position in society that influences what he sees and does not see.

However, this criticism has to be posited against the importance that issues of form take Masud's writing where content cannot be separated from the form or style of writing. It is because of the inter-twining of form and content found in a writing style that gives an overall sense of contingency, ambiguity and indeterminacy that Masud keeps his boundaries open. It is thereby that he would make a good case in arguing that his boundaries are subject to critique (or, at least, the possibility of critique) by the recipient or reader. The ceaseless circularity of time in his stories that do not have obviously discernible watersheds, beginnings appear arbitrary and so do endings. This circularity means that it is difficult to ascertain an 'authentic' meaning, it is difficult to ascertain the individual parts of the story into a meaningful whole. He offers up an engagement with readers, and in his abandonment of the privileged authorial position allows for the possibility that his prejudices may be brought to light.

It is difficult then to suggest that Masud's writing – and the Sufic ontology it (perhaps) presumes – is premised on an establishment of the unquestionable privilege of the ascendant view. Unlike ascendant 'modern' discourses that arguably do this, Masud's position is characterised by uncertainty and ambiguity, his is an ontology that is forever in the process of constitution and circular self-referentiality.²

In attempting to move beyond the territorial privilege accorded to modern statements on political community and ethics, Masud's stories and writing style focus explicitly on the fundamental role that senses of bounded and integral space and linear time play in delineating the obvious or the necessary. Moreover, Masud also points out that spatial integrity and linear progression depend on the repression of others, who become "incomplete or fragmented". Walter Benjamin speaks of the explosive quality of the fragment, when it is posited against linearity it throws out of kilter the sense of fundamental human progression.

Árpád Göncz: the hybridity of the exile experience

If Naiyer Masud's short stories bring to light the fear and desire of otherness underlying and enabling the ruse of integral spatial structures and the linear progression of time, then Árpád Göncz's stories explicitly attempt to theorise the effect of these repressed others on the integral space of a political community and how this distorts the territorialisation of identity. He does this through an analysis of the experience of exile, highlighting what it means to be at home and to leave home. If Masud's conflation of form and content demonstrates the fundamental role that notions of space and time play in giving us a sense of ourselves and of others, then Göncz's stories on "homecoming" help to colour in the dialogical realm made possible by Masud's critique.

Árpád Göncz was elected Hungary's President after the fall of the Communist government in 1990 and remained in office until 2000. He was a student during the uprising of 1956 and was imprisoned following the Soviet army's repression of this. He was freed in 1963, following an amnesty, whereupon he worked as a translator and wrote a number of plays and shorts stories.

In a short story entitled "Balance", Göncz's study of 'the exile experience' begins fairly conventionally insofar as it is premised on the basic fact that a territorial space has been fled from and another territorial space has been fled to. However, the ostensible conventionality of this perspective on exile is made more complex in his problematisation of the act of having fled, a problematisation that centres around a meditation on what it means to have 'left home' and of 'being at home'.

Sara Ahmed argues that these sorts of narrative may be central to the consideration of instances of exile in their historical and cultural specificity, of avoiding general statements on the 'exile experience' (Ahmed, 1999:329). For Göncz the act of leaving home and of striving to be at home elsewhere involves a dialogic encounter with that which has – ostensibly – been left behind. Leaving behind and settling anew, transgressing one's location and re-making one's sense of oneself, is not, in Göncz's stories, thought of as an act of a heroic individual, striving autonomously and freely forward. Rather the exile meets with the pull of the other who has been 'left behind'. The exile's identity – or image of oneself – depends on encounters and dialogue with the other left behind, not just in a personal sense but in the sense of the wider cultural and epistemic milieu that 'the other' is perceived to be representative of. The extent to which the act of migrancy or exile is an act of transgression cannot be assessed without considering the dialogical relation and the

extent to which one may transgress this. Indeed it is important to note that I see in Göncz's short stories a re-working of the very language that sees in exile an act of 'transgression'. The act of transgression presumes an heroic individual autonomously arising above epistemic and cultural milieus, leaving the old behind and approaching the new, it presumes or takes for granted linear conceptions of time hence allowing the individual's steady progression between successive bounded spaces. This in turn presumes a sense of the human being as self-contained, silencing the demand of the other to be recognised and thereby allowing the sense of a autonomous and powerful subjectivity moving along a linear progression of time. Without the startling image of the other and its different conceptions of knowledge and of being, these presumptions appear given or natural reflections of the way things are. In the particular short story of Göncz's that will be focused on here, we find a repetition of Masud's idea that time is circular, that meaning is entrapped in a cycle of constant reference before other ways of knowing. The act of exile is a process of transgression only insofar as that transgression is a compound or hybrid one: exile is not the act of an heroic individual insofar as it must be understood in terms of the dialogic relation with the other left behind. It is in the dialogue with this other and what he or she represents that the exiled person may give meaning to himself or herself and his or her exile, and consequently the extent of transgression. More specifically, the dialogue with this other, indeed (as we shall see) the manner of carrying out this dialogue and even the identification of the other, allows one to begin a ceaseless process of critique.

Who is it that has transgressed? If we accept Werbner's and Bhabha's ideas of the inter-contamination of identities, then must not the 'experience of exile' be a compound one? What is at stake in the privileging of exile as an experience of the

autonomous individual? In Göncz's short stories, the effect of exile is compound and multi-faceted, one cannot isolate a solitary exiled experience for the meaning of exile is inextricably inter-twined with the other who has been left behind. This is to critique the ruse of linear time where the subject as autonomous agent may move through successive spaces, not having to deal with what has been left behind. Masud has suggested that there is, rather than linearity, a ceaseless referentiality. The linear conceptions of time and the boundedness of space are imploded – from within – by the abiding otherness underlying these (made evident and important by Masud's conflation of form and content). This argument is made more stark in light of Bhabha's idea of identity as *image*: if identity is understood in terms of an image that is the property of public discourse, then the exiled person's attempt to mediate his or her identity involves a specific encounter with or – Göncz suggests – repression of the demand or call of the other that occurs in the process of articulating one's identity.

In a recent attempt in the influential *Journal of Refugee Studies* to theorise “the exile experience” using Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism, Alan DeSantis begins by thinking ‘exile’ as *fundamentally* centred on cross-border movement, thereby ensuring that the legitimating ghost of the sovereign state is central to his argument (Desantis, 2001). While asserting that “monological” thinking cannot account for the contradictory images in exilic writing, casting as it does a false unity over the experiences it surveys, DeSantis perhaps does something similar in his conventional perception on the qualities fundamental to recognising what is and is not “the exile experience.” He thus closes the boundaries of a Bakhtinian dialogical realm. Underlying his study is a conception of the individual as eminently powerful, evidenced in the taken for granted assumption of a capacity for flight. As Patricia

Tuitt has noted, conventional conceptions of the refugee or exile as fundamentally mobile precisely excludes a range of experience: what of those who cannot flee? (Tuitt, 1999).

Göncz's problematisation of what it means to leave home or be at home offers greater capacity for including in dialogical perspective those 'exiles' or 'refugees' who never quite make it to the shores of one Western state or another there to be recognised and branded 'Refugee' or 'Exile' with the mark of the international conventions and the custom officer's stamp in their passports. The de-centring of the territorial state allows one to look at the experiences of refugees in camps along borders, isolated but not quite in exile in the conventional language of DeSantis. The de-centring allows thus a de-centring of Euro-centrism, making inroads for the development of a capacity to understand refugee events not in terms of a Euro-centric language, of mobility or the desire for mobility – preferably so that movement towards a bounded territorial space can ensue –, and not giving certain refugee events legitimacy and meaning (and others illegitimacy) in terms of the Euro-centric refugee conventions (on the Euro-centricity of the 'international refugee regime' see chapter one). Rather Göncz's de-centring perspective makes inroads for a stance that refuses the ready and almost absent-minded reverting to the ascendant and appropriative logics and narratives of Euro-centrism in understanding refugee phenomena. It instead validates what Bleiker calls "the logic of place-based cultures and communities" (Bleiker, 2000a: 277). It is important to note then that what this validation involves is not only a refusal of the Euro-centric privileging of the European-based logics but also the concomitant refusal to disregard marginalised modes of knowing centred on particular ideas of place and identity. This is not a knee-jerk pseudo-postmodern rejection of all identities, it is rather a cognisance of

the hybridity – and validity in that hybridity – of marginalised cultures; a licence to throw into the ring different conceptions of being and knowledge (and consequently, ‘home’, politics, ethics and community).

The de-centring also allows a focus on those left behind – as Göncz attempts. By way of contrast, the perspective that restricts “the exile experience” to a notion of having fled a territorial space, “caught between two worlds”, fails to problematise what it means to have left ‘home’. It fails, precisely, to problematise the relation to the world one has ‘left’. In taking the act of flight from a territorial state as the fundamental sign for recognising and decoding an experience of exile, DeSantis operates within a conventional political gambit which problematises the individual exile’s relation to distinct spaces that themselves appear empty vessels (or at least vessels that do not throw up awkward questions on the nature and possibility of ‘exile’). This tendency is marked with regards the space left behind where the possibility of an oppositional desire of the other left behind, calling into question the sense of individual or heroic transgression marking conventional perspectives on “the exile experience”. The “exile experience” in DeSantis’ argument is located squarely on the individual taken in autonomy:

From a Bakhtinian perspective, therefore, the contradicting discourse of exile literature may be reconceived as an ongoing dialogue between the exile’s centrifugal voice that sees the possibilities of starting over in a new land, no matter how ambiguous and uncertain it may be, and the centripetal voice that desires the sameness and stability of the old land, no matter how tyrannical or oppressive it may have been (Desantis, 2001: 6).

The dialogical bounds are closed off by DeSantis in his colourless depiction of old and new lands. If the subject is understood not in isolation and if the incidence of extra-territorial exile is considered in terms of its effect on the hybrid, inter-contaminated culture that Bhabha and Werbner speak of, then central to the whole idea of the exile experience is a problematisation of its effect on those ‘left behind’, not as ancillary to the ‘real’ exile experience but inseparable from “the exile

experience” which is a compound or hybrid experience that can perhaps only rarely (if ever) be legitimately isolated to centre on any one individual. Similarly, also central is a problematisation of what it means to have left home. DeSantis’ rather constricted view understands leaving home primarily in terms of physical movement. In so doing, he reinforces the sense of the linearity of time as well as what I have called earlier in the thesis the ‘territorial imagination’ that takes the state as the central reference point for understanding actors and agency in international relations.

The initial suggestion made here is that exile is a compound phenomenon and experience. This leads to a distorting of a narrow perspective on exile and this, in turn, leads to a problematisation of ‘home’ and what it means to have ‘left home’ that does not take the territorial state as ultimate referent. In this regard we find in Göncz’s short stories the migrant or exile’s identity forming through dialogue with what has been left behind and also through its violent suppression. This occurs across and in spite of sovereign boundaries.

In a short story called “Balance”, Göncz writes of the uneasy encounter between a man who has remained in Hungary and a woman who had fled to the United States following an unnamed disturbance (Göncz, 1991: 49-57). They are probably former lovers. Their encounter begins with the woman being drawn into a conversation with the man she has left behind, a dialogue that she doesn’t want to get into and that interrogates her identity, the extent to which she has left ‘home’ and the extent to which she is ‘at home’ in the United States.

‘I even dream in English now.’

‘But don’t tell me you don’t have to translate.’

‘What, my dreams?’

‘Well, I don’t know. Yourself. Who you used to be. Your memories.’

‘My memories are also in English.’

‘The first twenty-three years?’

‘They don’t exist.’

‘They don’t?’

'Not there. *Uninterpretable*. Do you know what my daughter said recently? '*Mommy, I hate your girlhood.*' That she abhors it. The siege, the house that fell on me, the poverty, everything.'

'And the vacancy left by it. Doesn't that hurt?'

'The vacancy?' She shrugged her shoulders. 'What doesn't exist, doesn't exit.'

'Like an amputated leg.' (Göncz, 1991:50. Author's emphases.)

Walter Benjamin argues that when one is overly concerned with the reader or recipient of a translation, that translation becomes a transmission, a neutralised and rather bland imparting of information. This translation leaves us bereft of "the unfathomable, the mysterious, the 'poetic'."³ The woman in the story has given up on herself, who she used to be and her memories, they don't matter *there*. Her daughter abhors her girlhood; all that can be conveyed are the dross, dire and ultimately colourless, banal and depressing facts of poverty, a house falling down, a siege, "everything". Where there would be a vacancy, memories of the person – rather than repository of unpleasant to hear facts –, there is nothing, they cannot be conveyed *there*. Made homeless by the language and the cultural sense there that depends – as we shall see – on the exiled person's unproblematic assimilation, she functions in disjointed mode. The "memories" that make up the person depend on engagement with the other whom she has left behind. Engagement, however, brings insecurity, it distorts the linearity, it uncovers the repression that she has undertaken in order to move successively and cleanly from Hungarian space to American.

The demand of the other, the man who has been left behind, the demand that the exiled woman's identity be thought in terms that acknowledge him is resisted by the woman. The man questions her, asking her if she would like to exchange the Golden Gate bridge for the Chain Bridge (one of the bridges connecting Buda and Pest across the Danube), as after all she has paid for it with twenty-three hard years. She retorts: "I don't want to pay another nineteen for this one here." She doesn't want to sacrifice the nineteen years spent in the United States in order to re-enter a

dialogue on her identity, on who she is because “then I would be left with nothing.” She is striving to match the image of the exiled person as autonomously free, heroic. She doesn’t consider, the man responds, “what the other person is left with.” The woman’s identity is torn between two images: she resists the interaction with the other she has left behind, she doesn’t want to consider what he is left with, in order to match the image of autonomous and fresh immigrant – with no hang ups – entering and assimilating into American space. “ ‘A woman’s home is where her husband ..’” she laughs momentarily. ‘Where her lord and master and child are.’” Her philology degree has been “rolled up, neatly, nicely” and she is a receptionist in her doctor husband’s surgery.

Göncz’s story ends in claustrophobic mien, both formally and substantively. The spare and clipped prose, the interminable back-and-forthness, gives Göncz’s writing an oppressive feel. Similarly, the dénouement of the story occurs with the man and the woman going to a friend’s flat where the woman is staying, a heavy and oppressive flat, heavily curtained, blocking out the daylight, heavy with dust and heavy with the memories and knick-knacks of a child who died aged four. The man felt that a “vein was going to burst in his brains if he was unable to find a word. The only word with which to break the silence.” He demands of her that he be recognised, that she consider “what the other person is left with.” Göncz’s story ends in self-mutilation, leaving the mark of the other on the self.

Half of the long cigarette was already burned. The woman flicked off the ashes.
‘Give it to me,’ the man said.
‘Only for a draw,’ the woman said.
‘Not for that,’ the man said. He pushed up one arm of his shirtsleeve. He took a draw from the cigarette. He placed his right hand on the woman’s hand that was resting on the armchair.
The end of the cigarette glowed. The man took it.
‘So that I have something left of you when you leave.’ He pressed the glowing end of the cigarette to his lower arm. ‘Tell me when,’ he said.
The skin on the woman’s forehead tightened. They were staring at each other.
‘Enough!’ the woman shrieked, almost in panic.
The man returned the cigarette. The glow was already turning grey. ‘It won’t stay,’ he said.

‘It will stay.’ It is white,’ the woman said. The little round burn mark was white. Only its center was black from the wet ashes that stuck to it.
 The woman stubbed out the half-smoked cigarette nervously.
 ‘Whom are you punishing now? Me or yourself?’
 ‘Isn’t it all the same?’ he asked.
 They were silent.
 ‘For the first time in two weeks I don’t feel alone here at home.’
 ‘Then let me leave now.’
 ‘Go. Now you can leave.’
 He said, ‘I still might.’
 At the door the woman extended both her hands to the man. She kept them low to keep the man from kissing them, or her mouth, or her forehead.
 ‘You have never been this close to me. Ever,’ the man said. ‘You will stay here with me.’
 (Göncz, 1991: 56-57).

In mutilating himself with the mark of the woman’s cigarette, the man essays the depth of their entanglement. It is all the same whom he is punishing, himself or her: their identities depend on each other. For the first time she does not feel alone in Hungary, “at home”. She is at home with the other, at the threshold of the other (Derrida, 1999: 54), rather than in the quest for self-sustaining autonomous heroic freedom to move between spaces, between worlds.

In the welcoming of the other, in the cognisance of the other’s interruption of one’s self, of ipseity’s entanglement with otherness, Derrida suggests that subjectivity be re-defined as “hospitality, separation without negation and thus without exclusion, aphoristic energy of the unbinding in ethical affirmation” (Derrida, 1999: 54). Subjectivity as hospitality suggests that the subject is “host”; hosting the other, separate from the other but welcoming like a host rather than negating. But as a host to the other, the subject is also “hostage”; ipseity is held hostage to the other:

The host is a hostage insofar as he is a subject put into question, obsessed (and thus besieged), persecuted, in the very place where he takes place, where, as emigrant, exile, stranger, a guest from the very beginning, he finds himself elected to or taken up by a residence before himself electing or taking one up (Derrida, 1999: 56).

Persecuted in the very place where she takes place, the woman is a double-exile. In the United States she finds herself “elected to or taken up by a residence”, by a sense of her self; compelled to be a certain way, to understand herself as a certain

subjectivity. In Hungary, though, the epiphany of the final encounter with the other, the man left behind, allows perhaps an ethical affirmation of each, she is similarly besieged by the call of the other. It is in this final 'epiphany' that the ethical affirmation ensues.

In Spivak's argument outlined earlier, a dual or ambiguous impulse or perspective arises from a sense that the incomprehensible alterity of divinity may always become embodied in any creature; this dual impulse is thus hesitant to reductively conceptualise and is interruptive of the "abstract". In the interruption, Spivak suggests, "the feminine enters" (Spivak, 2001: 126). That is, in the distortion of the univocal perspective, the remnant of otherness enters. The duality of subjectivity, the plurality of subject-locations, is thus to the fore in a perspective which in acknowledging – welcoming – the unpredictable and unknowable otherness upon which one depends for a sense of oneself considers the exile experience in its plurality, in its compound effects, rather than in univocity. In so doing the centrality of the idea of the linear progression of time is removed. Similarly removed is the central defining, confining and meaning-giving role of the state. The place where she takes place is both here and there, the impermeability and meaningfulness of the boundaries of the state (of its capacity to exhaust meaningfulness) depends on the linear progression of time: it depends on the exile being able to leave it all behind. The site where meaning and identity arises is the site of the other; it is not confinable to the artificial bounds of the state. The woman is at "home" in Hungary once her dependence on the other left behind for her ipseity, or self-knowledge, is acknowledged. "Home" is thus not a place of rest, not a place where security ensues and where in security and certainty of one's being the other is excluded: rather, "home" becomes a site of contest, of a questioning of the bounds of one's identity.

Tadeusz Borowski: alterity, fragment and transience

If Göncz de-centres the notion of 'home' as territorial space and argues that the other is the 'site' whereupon identity is articulated, and if it may be found in Göncz's stories a relation of self to other that is premised on the idea of the subject as both "host" and "hostage", then a similar doing away with the certainties of linear and progressive notions of time and human community in the short stories of Tadeusz Borowski lead to a study of the difficulty of extracting or distinguishing self from other. While Göncz, I think effectively, considers the dependency of self on other for their mutual identity, he perhaps does not fully engage with two other aspects of the inter-twining of the identities of self and other that Bhabha speaks about.

These are, first of all, the role that desire plays in anticipating the relation of self to other. Bhabha writes of the desire of the repressed party (in his analysis, the colonised) for the place of the other. In Bhabha's argument, the identity and desire of the ascendant party becomes caught up in a framework of fear and fantasy before the demand of the other. Second, Bhabha shows that the inter-relation of self and other, meaning the hybridity of their composite culture wherein their identities are articulated, means that just as the self is "never simply a Myself, then the Other is never simply and *It-self*, a font of identity, truth or misrecognition" (Bhabha, 1994a: 119). The other is not, that is, to be considered as a negation of myself, it is not simply opposed to the self but rather "introduces the system of differentiation which enables the 'cultural' to be signified as a linguistic, symbolic, historic reality." Perhaps Göncz posits against the self (the woman exile) its opposite (the man left behind), allowing thereby for a sense that the woman exile may come to be "at home" following her recognition of the opposite other. This other is not a 'desiring

other' in the sense that his demand is ultimately predictable and remains within and justifies the native or indigenous milieu that Göncz sets for him. Certainly, "at home" in Göncz's short story is not intended to be thought principally as an area of rest, an area of ease and certainty thereby automatically excluding or re-stating the voice of the other. Yet in the predictability of the demand of the man left behind that the woman consider him and herself as traces of a nigh-romantic past, the other serves to shore up or return the woman to the proper place of her being, a return to her proper self. The dialogic boundaries that would enact a processual and ceaseless questioning of the borders of the exiled woman's identity is prematurely closed-off. The man left behind helps her to feel at home ostensibly in his otherness, but it is an otherness that is a reminder of a 'repressed' and 'true' – and barely problematised – past and for this reason offers only a limited demand upon the other. It is a demand that ends once the woman accepts the pre-determined goal (of feeling "at home" in Hungary – the man asks for and receives permission to leave once this is attained). The demand of the other – the man left behind – ceases once that demand is affirmed.

There is underlying Göncz's description of the relation of self to other – exile to the one left behind – a teleology. There is a pre-determined purpose that explains the nature of the relation between self and other, indeed guides it and, ultimately, indicates where and when it is fulfilled. This is made possible, in the first place, by a semi-resolution of the status of the other, the man. The man's demand is simply and straightforwardly that he be recognised, but be recognised as representative of a pure and settled past of a Hungarian community. Thus the recognition and affirmation of otherness does not meet with a continual questioning but allows for the reconciliation of the woman with her 'past'. How that past is presented and reflected

upon, with reference to what relations of fear and desire that enable an *image* of ‘the past’ to come to be, is not problematised. The resolution of the status of the man is thus one that effects a one-dimensional sense of his identity and desire, of who he is and what he wants, and in so doing fails to construe him as a facet of a differentiating order of otherness in the way that an affirmation of otherness which draws the self away from itself and into the gambit of processual questioning would (perhaps) cause.

If there is a fundamental reason for this uncritical affirmation of ‘otherness’, if there is a fundamental cause for such an affirmation in Göncz’s writing, it is due to his initial distinguishing of two distinct personalities: of the person left behind and then the person exiled. While he suggests their radical entanglement, Göncz retains and describes two separate – autonomous – personalities, with particular and somewhat expectable things to say to each other from their different standpoints. The entanglement of the man and the woman occurs through a conscious act, a conscious move to hybridity that occurs in the man mutilating himself with the woman’s cigarette. As noted above, Werbner suggests that the conscious hybridity of cultures or perspectives retains an underlying subversion in the image that is enunciated in the public realm. Yet it probably remains important to note that Göncz’s resistance to processual questioning in the relation of self in other is artificially constrained and then directed towards a particular resolution. The man and the woman retain identities independent and perhaps even sovereign over the system of reciprocal demand and desire that would in theory render their identity as image and ultimately the property of public discourse.

By way of contrast, Tadeusz Borowski’s short stories on life in Nazi concentration camps disregard the notion that identities may be either easily

separable from each other or that human agency is capable of autonomously or heroically arising above and beyond the reciprocal system of exchange and desire that constitutes a 'culture' (Borowski, 1976). This is not to say that agency is constrained by an unyielding structure, it is rather to argue that human agency must acknowledge the context within which it occurs, and – consequently – affirm an ongoing engagement with otherness because there cannot be a pure and uncontested past or origin of itself (such as that which Göncz contrives the other to represent). The transgression that may ensue may perhaps be understood in Walter Benjamin's terms of the emergence of a different sense of oneself and of a repressed other from an acknowledgement that "emergency" – and not civilised stability – is the norm and not the exception

Borowski attempts to show the entanglement of self and other – inmate and guard – through a literary device where three of the stories in his volume *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* are narrated by a deputy kapo (a prisoner, but non-Jew; one who has certain privileges and is in command of a group of other prisoners; Borowski concurs with other concentration camp testimonies in his portrayal of the especial brutality of kapos). In identifying himself with the executioner, Borowski addresses the inter-twined system of exchange Primo Levi speaks about that gives the camp its particular character and that effaces individual standpoint before it (more precisely, it subsumes understanding of individual standpoint within the 'system of exchange').

Tzvetan Todorov argues that Borowski's identification of himself with the kapo is a "moral choice" borne of his sensibility that one cannot write about "the camp" without taking responsibility for the generalised humiliation that the camp inflicts upon its inmates (Todorov, 1996). To the extent, says Borowski, that all

participate in the camp and are all in one way or another components in the character of the camp, one must undertake responsibility for the collective humiliation inflicted. Todorov sees in this statement an admission that there is “no crime that a man will not commit in order to save himself” (Borowski, 1976: 168; Todorov, 1996: 31-2). Borowski’s stories are lists of atrocities.⁴ Todorov attempts to prove what he argues is the opposite to Borowski’s stance: that compassion remains a hallmark of human morality even in the most extreme of conditions. By positing empirical evidence of instances of moral behaviour, Todorov does not address the fundamental point that I think Borowski makes: the inter-contamination of self and other in the composite culture of the camp that gives it its particular character. The identification of himself with the kapo is a reflection of what Borowski believes is the primary characteristic of the camp: the inter-contamination of ostensibly different identities participating in a single hybrid culture that gave the camp its particular character. Todorov’s criticism detracts from the sense of contingency and dependency pervading identities in the camp. Borowski’s argument can be understood not as a cynical perspective on the capacity of human beings for moral turpitude nor primarily an exposé of how brutal conditions can effect brutality, but as a literary device where the association of inmate with guard reflects on the way in which self-identity must be thought in relation to the identity of the other and vice versa.

When this inter-contamination is voiced by Borowski in the literary device of conflating his identity with that of the kapo, Todorov suggests a moral choice is being made, a choice that is the logical consequence of a perspective which understands that a man can do anything to another man in order to stay alive. Todorov posits against the “banality of evil” essayed by Borowski, and by Hannah

Arendt, an admonition to “take heart in the banality of good”; that moral action is always possible, always freely undertaken even in the most extreme of situations (Todorov, 1996: 291). Todorov is concerned about the possibility of nihilism, of a loss of hope and of a concomitant degradation of human life borne of a perspective that sees human morality as influenced by overriding structural factors. Todorov suggests that if the concentration camp may be said to be a consequence of the modern derogation of extra-rational ties between human beings, then a perspective that centres on the automatism of human morality simply feeds this (Todorov, 1996: 292). Todorov suggests that it is belief in the capacity for rational judgement “from the outside” that can ameliorate this stance. The ethical and compassionate force underlying European humanism can clearly be seen in Todorov’s committed engagement with events that go to the heart of contemporary western civilisation.

Yet in Borowski’s depiction of the banality of evil, of the impossibility of returning ‘home’, to a place where the knowledge of atrocity could be forgotten, there remains the potential for an emergent identity. From the condition of emergency perpetuating the ‘modern’ aggregation, from the epiphanic cognisance of this emergency, arises – *possibly* – an attitude that refutes the search for a ‘home’ understood as a place of rest, where the challenge to self and community by the other may be forgotten. Todorov’s ethical humanist reverting to the capacity for rational judgement before the horrors of “the camp” is one reaction; another may be to assess in another way the foundations of the rational thought that lead to the possibility of the objectification of some human beings.

As noted previously, Benjamin suggests that the condition of emergency is “not the exception but the rule” (Benjamin, 1968/1999: 248). Todorov’s humanist reaction to the camp retains the notion of human progress, and with it the linearity of

time and the autonomy of the sovereign rational individual effecting a de-personalisation of the other who may, in his or her demand, pose a threat to this orderly rational master-work. In subverting the linearity “in the fight for the oppressed past”, Benjamin throws up discordant images that reveal the nexus of fantasy and desire in the relation of self to other: it reveals precisely the entanglement and dependency of images of self and other and in doing so it demonstrates the fantastic at the heart of the rational edifice. Homi Bhabha suggests that Frantz Fanon’s struggle against colonial oppression is premised on a Benjamin-like isolation of the image of the “Black presence” at the core of Western progressive linearity:

The Black presence ruins the representative narrative of Western personhood: its past tethered to treacherous stereotypes of primitivism and degeneracy will not produce a history of civil progress, a space for the *Socius*; its present, dismembered and dislocated, will not contain the image of identity that is questioned in the dialectic of mind/body and resolved in the epistemology of ‘appearance and reality’. The White man’s eyes break up the Black man’s body and in that act of epistemic violence its own frame of reference is transgressed, its field of vision disturbed (Bhabha, 1994a: 115).

In Borowski’s ambivalence about the possibility of good triumphing over evil, the possibility of an emergent identity arises. This is an identity that in foregoing the idea of linear progression underlying narratives of rational autonomous human being, focuses instead on the discordant image of the oppressed past. In so doing, this perspective on identity emphasises the tethering of self to other in the sense of their inter-play in the promotion of images of each other.

The emergent identity then refutes the drive for a secure and restful ‘home’. The sense of linear progression is put paid to by a highlighting of “stereotypes of degeneracy and primitivism”, acts of racism leading to the colonial oppression upon which the rational civil edifice is based and then by a concomitant cognisance of the circularity of time, of the unceasing dependency of self and other for their identities (images of identities). The unity of the rational person is broken up by the

cognisance of his tethering to the repressed other. His strange relation of fear and desire before the demand for his place posed by the other, a fear and desire that culminates in his repression of that other, means that the image of himself depends upon – is tethered to – the other.

One is *tethered* to the other, and not *confronted* by the other as Göncz would have it (Bhabha, 1994a: 116). The idea of being confronted by the other suggests an autonomous human being clearly and unambiguously desirous of the unambiguous and distinct place of another: the idea of the self being tethered to the other suggests the inherent and intrinsic, radical and fundamental and ceaseless, dependency to otherness of identity as *image*; it suggests that the places in which we occur are intertwined.

Borowski's erasure of the definitive line between (Fascist) evil and good riled the communist authorities of liberated Poland. His is an ambivalence about identity that calls into question the strategies of shoring up and exclusion that mark out the boundaries of the sovereign state, of 'home'. There remains always the spectre of otherness, of being other than what one may be, of being other than the virtuous citizen, that lends to the thought of community, ethics and politics after Borowski an air of uncertainty and hesitancy. In a poem written after being liberated from the camp of Dachau-Allach, Borowski writes with pointed reference to his American liberators who 'liberate' him into yet another ideological framework:

(they're already threatening to lock up Communists)

We're fed up with national colors!
The pigment of life is what we want,
Not what's on show for holidays.
Let's give every flag new colors –
The Polish flag will be striped!
The stripes, of course, are prison bars ... (Borowski, 1990)

Borowski rails against the actions undertaken on life, on the bare human being, while seeing in that life – the bare “pigment of life” – the focal point of his desire. His is a revolt against the politicisation of human being, or against the striving for a secure home centred on the enemy-making of a group of ‘outsiders’. Yet his idealistic de-politicisation of life stops suddenly; the revolt against national colours ends with the stripes of prison bars on the Polish flag. In railing against national colours, Borowski re-designs rather than destroys flags or national colours; and from the perspective of the “pigment of life” the Polish flag is striped with prison bars: the ‘home’ of a bare, depoliticised life is unachievable, just like the home of virtuous political community. Against the freedom of bare humanity is juxtaposed the conflict with otherness, the striving for ‘home’ is dependent on a locking up of others not like us.

neither poems nor prose
just a length of rope
just the wet earth –
that’s the way home. (Borowski, 1990).

In this sense of contingency and dependency, of the transience of meaning, one can perhaps retain the monadic perspective of Walter Benjamin. It is a perspective that centres on the disturbing fragment of individuality that throws askance the generalised language of the modern aggregation, the contemporary ways of summing up history. It is a perspective, in other words, that seeks out the marginalised identities. It is a perspective that seeks to begin with the marginalised rather than with the European canon. Benjamin writes that a scholar of this perspective,

approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, *a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past* (Benjamin, 1968/1999: 254; my emphasis).

An “iconoclastic, imagistic” approach to history distorts linearity while at the same time resists the sense that identities may be subsumed within a greater critical gaze. The citation above continues:

He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history – blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework. As a result of this method the lifework is preserved in this work and at the same time cancelled; in the lifework, the era; and in the era, the entire course of history (Benjamin, 1999/1968: 254).

Specific lives or ‘lifeworks’ arrest the flow of linear thought, causing their removal from the structure of homogenous time, thereby becoming representative of that time – a new take on that time – simultaneously preserving the lifework or era but also fundamentally distorting it. Benjamin’s view of history is premised on the notion of the constitutive relationship of present to past and vice versa, leading to the future being thrown out of kilter (it no longer flows on logically from a dominant idea of ‘the present’). It puts an emphasis on the mutually constitutive relationship of the subject to the ‘historical moment’ (made ‘historical’ through reflection). Cognizance of the power and subjectivity lurking behind isolations of historical moments leads, then, to the future being doubtful. If human beings are geared towards the future, if, as Benjamin says, the happiness of human beings depends on the predictability of what will happen in the future, then the “shock” of the encounter with the past as image throws into doubt the viability of predictions premised on linear time (Benjamin, 1999/1968: 245). Programmatic politics and ethics centred on the impermeability of taken-for-granted physical and phantasmical borders is thrown out of kilter by the imbuing of time with dissonant images that puts paid to the conception of time as homogeneous and empty, from which a linear order may be extrapolated by the distant subject exercising powers of rational enquiry.

Todorov’s positing of instances of moral behaviour in the camps at first glance appears also to distort the univocal and objectifying stance of a defeatist,

nihilistic or despairing view of the human condition. Yet it is in Borowski's cognisance that there is "no neutral way of representing the world" (Bleiker, 2000b: 271) which leads to the literary device of conflating his identity with that of the persecutor⁵ that allows a reflection to explosive effect on the fragment passed over. Borowski's writing may be said to be composed of two movements. One is the questioning of the possibility of a 'home', of a possibility of shoring up oneself against a clearly definable evil. The second is a cognisance of the radical interdependency of identities of 'self' and 'other'. In the literary device where he shifts between identities, Borowski refuses the notion that an uncontaminated standpoint may be settled upon. Standpoints come in the camp from what Primo Levi calls the principle of exchange that ties inmates and guards into a hybrid culture that forms their identity. In Bhabha's terminology, this is a culture that provides us with contingent and dependent identity: an *image* of identity. Recognising this contextual imperative, the process that isolates a fragment makes out in that image the temporally-specific play of interpretation and representation that lead to a particular contingent identification: "history is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now" (Benjamin, 1970/1999: 252).

Summary

This chapter has tried to envisage the contribution of different forms of aesthetic representation through modes of what may be called "disruptive writing" to the expansion of the borders of the political and the ethical. This has been an expansion that explicitly tries to think through the relation of the self to the otherness upon which her identity is dependent. This has been an expansion that posits against the

possibility of home, a secure home fortressing oneself against the demands of the other, Benjamin's imagistic notion of history where the fragment is blown out of all rational proportion – finding in the forgotten and the obviated the unfamiliar that throws askance the steady progression of linear time. Rather than a confrontation of the other to the self, Benjamin – when associated with Homi Bhabha and Frantz Fanon – emphasises the radical *tethering* of the self to the other, to the repression of otherness.

Benjamin's focus on the fragment distorts the sense of the linear progression of time and refuses thereby the de-personalisation of oppressed others upon which the sense of linearity depends. Like Adorno's aesthetic understanding, then, Benjamin's imagistic history is ultimately rooted, I think, on the idea of the irreducibility of the particular. I have argued previously that Adorno's orientation towards an indeterminate individuality at the core of aesthetic understanding directs the ethics that may be said to stem therefrom. Benjamin's focus on the fragment, on the individual or particular elided by the smoothing out of history, similarly, I think, provides one with the onus to beginning with marginalised experience and not with the European canon. This is a perspective that understands the locatedness of marginal experience, one that observes identity in terms of its ongoing constitution as image before and with respect of other enunciations of being. It attempts then to observe identities, the relation of identities, as culture in making.

This perspective, moreover, is different from that post-positivist critique of identity which – theoretically – allows for the opening up of space for hearing or articulating other voices. Its difference is in two movements that it makes. First of all, it attempts to call into question the desire of the critic, to read the critic into the critique. Benjamin's self-awareness where history is understood as being imbued

with a sense of the present (past and present are tethered to each other and not simply confronted by each other) I think does this in ways similar to Naiyer Masud's conflation of form and content: both Benjamin and Masud are aware that how things are expressed depend on the temporally salient and thereby effect how we understand something. Rather than beginning with the critical merits of another vein of the European canon, Benjamin's imagistic history seeks out the forgotten and, when highlighted, subversive fragment while maintaining an awareness that the representation of its image is effected by tethering of the present to the past and vice versa. In beginning not with creating thinking or speaking space for repressed otherness, but in a self-reflexive consideration of how to approach this otherness, Benjamin strives for an unceasing problematisation of the critic's subjectivity. In other words, the stance being outlined in this thesis moves, I hope fundamentally, away from the pursuit of individual freedom or agency as a means of resisting or acting as the vanguard of a future resistance. Rather, I suggest that the expansion of political community must have more modest roots. It must not take for granted the possibility that the free subject may create thinking or speaking space for otherness. It must rather begin by investigating the depth of the inter-relation of self and other, it must begin by asking what the relation of self to other is and how this may impinge on and constrict such thinking or speaking space.

Second, the perspective being outlined here seeks to retain the marginal identity, the image of marginal identity and indeed seeks to begin with the marginal. It is in this sense – Benjamin's monadic sense of history – that there remains in (in Adorno's aesthetic theory as well) a critique of the subjective bounds of political community that retains a sense of the *value* of the individual; indeterminate individual, contingent individual, individual irremediably tied in with others.

NOTES

- ¹ I must emphasise that I am not arguing for an objective stance where there is no subject or subjectivity (neither is Spivak for that matter). Rather, I am suggesting that insofar as I am basing my argument on culture as a construct there is no intending or autonomous subjectivity underlying and making good the argument here.
- ² On Sufi ontology see for example, J.S. Trimingham, 1971, and – generally – Abbas Amanat, 1989: 70-108. Also Rumi, 1977. In an IR context, Costas Constantinou has excellently explored the Sufic dissolution of worldly and other-worldly spaces noting the view that human security in Sufic terms depends on the annihilation of the ego and the concomitant joining of the self with divinity. He does so in order to explore the consequences of a sense of security as freedom from care that has been elided in IR theory. Costas M. Constantinou, 2000: 298-301.
- ³ Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”, in Benjamin, 1968/1999.
- ⁴ I don’t reproduce them here: for fear of making a fetish of unimaginable situations, of reducing the unimaginable to the limits of the argument being made here. The detailed and detached explication of atrocity that Borowski commits is easily accessible not only from his books, and indeed they are also not central to my argument (because I cannot do justice in attempting to represent the horrific in these pages).
- ⁵ Other inmates accounts show that Borowski’s behaviour in the camp was marked by a concern for others and was not marked by the brutality he writes about (Todorov, 1996: 34).

Concluding Reflections

The thesis has presented an argument in two parts. The first took note of the abjection of people called ‘refugees’ by a territorial imagination that sees the ‘political’ – and its underlying notions of identity, space and time – as resolved within the legal borders of a sovereign state. The second argument formed a critique of this position. This was a critique concerned with how to expand the borders of the ‘political’ and the ‘ethical’ in international political theory.

The first argument suggested that refugees are abject before a territorial imagination which takes the legally-demarcated state as the repository of human identity, aspiration and security and, consequently, the responsible agent in international affairs. This is a sense that the territorial state is at the nexus of a fusion of heritage, kinship and other markers of human identity, it is marked by a *spatialisation* of time. More fundamentally, it is a sense that the resolution of the status of the human being is, in the first place, *achievable* that underlies the territorial imagination. This may be the outcome of a relation to a neo-European rational revolution that saw in human being the autonomous capacity for understanding and effecting the means of progression and comprehension. I have suggested that the *delimitation* of a fixed field of enquiry allows for a sense of linear progression and for a tautological relation to ends where the masterful power to exclude or re-state uncomfortable evidence is exercised; sowing, therefore, the certainty, in the very outset or enactment of an action, that the goal or end of that action may be achieved. This is a sort of understanding which may be summed up in terms of its results, what ensues from it. This is an understanding that is geared towards and motivated by

resolute faith in the correctness, desirability and achievability of goals that are rationally deduced. There is licence to pass over, to run roughshod over detail and particularity.

This is at root an institution of the desirability and achievability of predictability. It is a staving-off of anxiety and physical threat, the violent creation of an endlessly self-referential cocoon. This predictability is approached by a reduction of a given field of enquiry and in that reduction the stamping of that field of enquiry with a particular character always already demanding particular forms of action. There is a reduction of cosmologies and epistemologies of different ways of living, a demand that the other be identified in terms of the ascendant Euro-American norm. If it is premised on this act of reduction, if this reduction is *fundamental* to the successful pursuit of security and well-being, then this is a way of being which appears pathologically unable to move outside of itself.

The critique of this, the consideration of how to move outside of oneself, of how to expand ideas of the political and the ethical, is in the thesis based on a consideration of the fundamentality of underlying resolutions and representations of identity, time and space. I have considered how a distorting and disruptive aesthetic understanding and re-presentation of these may present in strange and unusual ways the marginalised identities and perspectives underlying. This is a form of re-presentation that can perhaps throw askance the linear flow and oppressive homogeneity of the ascendant norm. In the development of this stance, I argue that a consideration of the means of putting political and ethical borders to unceasing critique must be foremost and in this regard I take issue with strategies that conflate specific and located critiques of boundaries with a presumption of having transcended these boundaries.

I have suggested that once the critique of borders moves onto a claim that those borders have been transcended, the particular epistemic stance of the critic which has helped motivate a particular form of critique (and not another) is considered transparent or unimportant. In presuming the transcension of those borders of thought that have demarcated a particular idea of the political, the critique of borders ends. A plateau has been reached, a different sense of human being has been enabled. Yet the critique both enables and constrains. The manner in which a critique of the essentialist standpoint has been undertaken enables a particular form of being and constrains it.

Constrains and enables, that is, within parameters set by the critique of the essentialist standpoint. To what extent, then, has the subject – the European subject – been motivated to move outside of itself? I have argued that an ethical approach to otherness must be founded on a consideration of a methodology that attempts a processual questioning of the borders of thinking. To this end, I have distinguished an aesthetic approach that precisely and somewhat obsessively emphasises that the manner in which we narrate or represent something enables and constrains the meaning of that thing. To this end, I have looked at the “disruptive writing” strategies of different authors who precisely seek to investigate modes of representation that highlight the relation between expression and the thing expressed. It is in this sense that this is a critique which operates at the *inter-stitial* edge of philosophy, concerned with the inter-play and inter-relation between form and expression which demarcate the borders of thought – and of the ‘political’ and the ‘ethical’.

Naiyer Masud, for example, has a writing style which, I think, highlights how notions of linear time and bounded space are taken for granted in normal modes of

expression. Masud, with his arbitrary beginnings and endings and skewed sense of plot progression, moves the ostensible confines or borders of his short stories both forwards and backwards, evocatively calling to mind the unsayable, what is intimated as conceptually irreducible, therein and distorting senses of linear progression and discernibly separate wholes. Masud's short stories invoke through certain writing strategies an unclear memory of the past as well as the uncertainty of the anticipation of the future. Masud questions the idea of human identity as integrally whole, a unit separate and distinct from other similar identities: he calls to mind the spilling over of identity beyond the self towards the other. In so doing the spatio-temporal constraining of being is put to fundamental (though subtle) questioning.

The primary intention behind these arguments that have first of all sought out the stateless refugee as a case of paradigmatic exclusion (and in that exclusion an ironic appropriation) and second of all attempted to think through the approach to otherness is to think through modes of resistance to the stultifying essentialism. The distortions of aesthetic understanding, where the irreducibility of the particular is put to the fore, posits against the homogenising norm the recalcitrant fragment thereby perhaps distorting senses of univocal or linear progression. "Disruptive" styles of writing with their arresting imagery – such as Borowski's conflation of distinct bodies of guard and prisoner – throw askance notions of given progression. The ready distinctions of a subject extractable and autonomous of his environs is challenged here as Borowski takes the idea of inter-contamination to emphasise the implicit mutual responsibility of the system of exchange that gave "the camp" its particular character. Moreover, the argument made here has noted first with Theodor Adorno and then Nayer Masud that experiments with form, with modes of

expression or representation, can put before the ascendant deterministic and teleological understanding a *processual* understanding. This is an understanding that takes note of the irreducible or 'unsayable' that works against final summations of meaning, allowing for a sense of things in flux or movement.

There is then, in the first place, a deep-seated and at times unbearably intimate mutual inter-relation. The cognisance of this is in itself an act of resistance; it is to put to fundamental doubt the potential for and indeed desirability of a secure future premised on the reification to universal proportions of a particular world view. From a 'Western' standpoint, this is a cognisance that motivates a consideration of the extent of the critic's implication in processes of objectification and marginalisation. The onus is thus not for the concerned critic to resist, or act as the vanguard of resistance, by speaking of "freedom" (Campbell, 1998:510; Jabri, 1998: 600; Dillon, 1999a: 115) as the fundamental condition of human being and of resistance (as though one may demarcate the thing to be resisted from the act of resistance: how one conceives of the act of resistance, what assumptions influence how it is done, not only posits a particular enemy to be resisted but also sanctifies the critic). The onus is, quite the opposite, to recognise how this idea of "freedom" may re-institute the positional leverage of one episteme over another. I have noted that particularly in the stances adopted by Vivienne Jabri and David Campbell that the contradictions of a Euro-centric critique undertaken in order to provide means of engagement with the non-European other have been inadequately examined. This examination is to recognise, with Simon Critchley (Critchley, 1999: 122-142), the abiding presence of the ascendant philosophical tradition or episteme and it is to note the possibility of the re-institution of the primacy of a ghostly European Subject in claims to having transcended this.

Rather than speaking of transgression and freedom having effected conditions suitably aporetic so as to facilitate a “struggle for or on behalf of alterity” (Campbell, 1998: 513), the emphasis made in my argument is that the concerned Western critic should begin by trying to learn how to speak to the subaltern other (Spivak, 1994: 91) rather than presuming that this stage has been successfully passed over in the wake of a Euro-centric critique of modern subjectivity. Re-focusing on this basic point leads, I argue, to those questions of the critic’s epistemic location being central. The presumption that one may begin thinking of an ontological base of resistance is, at root, ripe with an assumption that the complexities and contradictions of the relation between self and other have been successfully reconciled. By way of contrast, Adorno’s idea of aesthetic understanding brings us back to the fundamentality of the relation between self and other. Aesthetic understanding is not able to reconcile the identities of self and other or the nature of their relationship, recognising that such reconciliation (which would allow a moving on to the next stage of contemplating ontological innovation) stems from and institutes as universal the particular socially and temporally located understanding of a particular episteme. Rather, in the methodological process of aesthetic understanding there is ceaseless or processual engagement with the meaning of a thing. In Gayatri Spivak’s terminology, one is always engaged with the question of how to talk to or approach the other. This is fundamental; this is an emphasis on an unceasing problematisation of the relationship between self and other, and, concomitantly, of the entrenchment of the critique in particular subject positions.

Processual aesthetic understanding is a methodology of resistance which foregoes ontological innovation and rather focuses on the enabling (and disabling) role that a form of re-presentation has. It understands that how something is

represented effects the meaning of that which is represented. In this understanding, it allows through textual and visual games the representation of the unwieldy and difficult. More fundamentally, it calls to mind the latent rules of expression or representation that impose a particular character upon events and their meaning. This is where Masud's distortion of beginning and endings as watersheds and discernible plot progression come in.

A second aspect of the resistance that is being outlined here is one that directs against the norm the forgotten fragments of the particular. Writing styles that gnaw uncomfortably, that go against the grain, offer a representation of subjugated or disrupted (and, possibly, disruptive) lives and epistemes. The aesthetic representation of these through forms of writing that seek to question the possibility of controlling the meaning of these lives and epistemes, remarks on the lack or void between a thing and the extent to which its meaning may be represented. The aesthetic representation or understanding of a thing, rather than rendering it immobile and fit for capture, emphasises the conceptually irreducible, emphasising that the meaning of a thing is always in flux and impossible to pin down. The intention is thus not to uncover a 'lost' or 'repressed' identity, the intention is to emphasise that resistance to the violent denigration of others must begin with problematising the way we speak to and about others. This position is a step towards treating and considering various 'others' as particular human beings (and not faceless suffering masses) and being cognisant of the extent to which human – and non-human – lives on this planet are intimately dependent.

Without, thus, imposing determinate identity, aesthetic forms of representation allow for the unearthing of the marginalised (more specifically, not a determinate marginalised, a refraction or oblique intimation of the 'unsayable') and

the positing of this against the norm. Forms of representation that call into question those resolutions of space and time which restrict a world view to a pre-determined narrow lens, precisely allow for the representation of identity in terms of its different inter-relations with other identities. This is an attempt to think through identity not along pre-laid pathways but to look at the repressed connections and inter-relations between identities. In chapter three above I have noted Oxfam's consideration of "the displaced" in terms that appear to emanate from the priorities of Oxfam as a humanitarian/development agency. These terms effect a particular meaning of refugee identity (and hence a particular range of responses to a set of affairs pre-determined as a particular sort of 'problem' – indeed, pre-determined as 'a problem'). I have suggested rather that an examination of historical, political and social histories may allow for a re-personalisation of refugee lives. This is a re-personalisation that moves against the imperative of defining refugees in terms of, or with ultimate reference to, an extraneous factor: their expulsion from the collective of sovereign states. This is a re-personalisation that precisely seeks to question the imperative of conceiving refugee identity in terms of lack or aberration before the sedentary citizen. It is to understand that the condition of "refugeeness" (Malkki, 1995b: 506) is not a wretched void, it is to emphasise that the thinking of refugees as helpless and pitiable victims first and foremost is to further a dehistoricisation and depoliticisation of refugee identity. It is also to emphasise that this understanding of "refugeeness" is an act of appropriation: refugees are 'helpless', 'voiceless', almost prurient, because they are outside of the normal confines of political life. Implicit, therefore, in this discourse on refugees is a reassertion of the monopolistic claim of the sovereign state (it is only inside a sovereign state that politics, history and culture

occur), of the territorial imagination and a state-centric way of thinking and doing politics.

Chapter three also examined the inter-relation between Oxfam and refugees. Refugee identity is caught up and tied to Oxfam, tied to the aid-workers who enable certain forms of expression and dis-enable others. This is a practical and minute example of the inter-relation and inter-contamination of identity, of sites of self and other, that has been a primary theme in this thesis.

Michael Dillon has argued that “the refugee” presents a scandal for the political and ethical mindset of the territorial imagination. I have already noted my unease at the generalisation perhaps inherent in Dillon’s category of “the refugee” and the extent to which this may prove a “scandal” to the norm without being coloured-in by a detailed analysis of different types of estrangement effecting different refugees. Nevertheless, Dillon’s insight that the contemporary discourse on what it is to be political and ethical constructs a symbiotic relation between the secure territoriality and the aberrance it excludes is important. The territorial imagination, then, enacts or de-limits both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ as fixed fields of enquiry. The constitution or naming of the ‘outside’ is an act of appropriation by a powerful gaze that situates that which it encounters within particular trajectories. The outside, the (controlled) effluence of the system of sovereign states, becomes clearer and more coherent when those attempts to constitute the boundaries of the inside are at their strongest. Notable among this is the creation of a refugee threat. This is an alarming inversion of the secure and the insecure, with veiled (and not so veiled) warnings of a threat to a society’s cohesion, promoting a siege mentality. In the run-up to his successful re-election, John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia, bizarrely accuses refugees who

(it is claimed, deliberately) set fire to their rickety ship of “intimidating” Australia. The self-centredness of this view obviates the desperation of refugee men and women and entrenches a de-humanised perspective of refugees (faceless, unfeeling mass who would risk the lives of their kith and kin). It gets worse: the Prime Minister’s government, also in the run-up to the election, accuses refugees of throwing their babies into the sea. This is later admitted to be a false claim (*The Guardian*, November 10 2001).

The barbarians at the gate mentality of Western Europe and North America in respect of refugees spilled over in the closing months of 2001 to a “Crusade” and distinctions between ‘civilised’ and ‘uncivilised’ peoples. The inter-connections between a monological thought process characterising the strengthening of the bounds of a secure territoriality in the West and recent events in New York and Washington D.C. are unrecognised in a reassertion of the monological approach. This is clearest, perhaps, in the demand that one is either with ‘us’ or is our enemy; a charge that disguises a forceful attempt at de-limiting a fixed field of enquiry, thereby imbuing it with a finite and predictable progression as well as a specific range of logical actions. Witness hence the rush to hold a state responsible. More fundamental is the search for an origin, a centre emanating orders, and the resolute faith in the capacity to recognise, understand and act forcefully, to bring insecurity to an end.

Judith Butler has spoken, in the context of the war with Iraq, of the rational subject’s determination of a fixed field of enquiry which allows for the image that goals have been accomplished and which detracts from a consideration of the wider effects of actions (Butler, 1992). The detritus of war, of the far-reaching consequences of actions that are difficult to discern, is ignored by a resolute faith in

the capacity to understand the field of enquiry and to limit or control the range of consequences of actions.

Against the resolute re-determination of a one-eyed recourse to state-centric violent posturing, a form of enquiry that is open to the inter-connections of people and events and of the fundamental difficulty in determining the trajectory of these, may, in the first place, abandon the constricting verisimilitudes of state-centrism, forming alliances across and beyond the nation-state. More fundamentally, an expansion of the political and ethical imagination may involve the formation of strange and unusual alliances designed to throw out of kilter the tedious inevitability in how civilisations go about clashing with one another. This is a motivation for coalitions borne of an acknowledgement of uncertainty, of the need to move beyond the simplistic stereotypes of other ways of life, of a re-appropriation of the right to narrate from the monologues of violence on every side. Security is processual and ongoing, it is always at risk, the desire for a culmination to the search for peace and security is feasible only within the restriction of a finite field of enquiry where the after-effects of war are inadequately considered in their multiple postures.

In the second place, a form of enquiry focusing on inter-connections may note the imperative of a taking of responsibility, of an acknowledgement of the West's implication in complex structures of political life. This is fundamentally to recognise contamination, to veer away from the discourse on innocence. This is also to acknowledge the other aspect of contamination, the mutual dependency of human beings. This is in part to recognise the connection between political anger and a skewed international economic system. This is to acknowledge the bullying strategies of the United States and of Western Europe who use the demise of a bipolar world to stringently serve the interests of multi-national corporations. This is

to recognise as unacceptable and outrageous that anti-retroviral drugs are patented and that Western governments support this form of intellectual copyright. It is to similarly rail against “terminator genes”, the continuing lack of straightforward debt-relief and the continuing extremes of wealth and poverty, of the difficulty of finding clean water, of the fundamental insecurity of the lives that ‘they’ live in and which ‘we’ are trying hard to avoid considering in our own securitised world. It is to wonder at the connections between the pretence of order and security amidst a persistent state of global emergency and of the affront caused by ululation in the West that the world has *now* changed. It is to recognise the intimate connections between lives in the world and that the ignoring of violence in Liberia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Angola and the Congo has consequences. It is to wonder at the self-absorbed cocooning evident in the claim by the American president that current events constitute the “first war of the 21st century” (*The Guardian*, September 15 2001). It is to take note of the inter-connections between an international economic system weighted in favour of the creditor, political and personal insecurity and a mindset that is premised on reducing other identities to terms important to it.

The staving-off of insecurity directly results in the detritus of the system, evident in different forms whether in terms of refugees, starvation, epidemic, premature death, war or a type of physical or mental insecurity unimaginable to us in the West. The stronger the efforts made to further a territorially-confined idea of security and of justice, the more the degradation of multiple lives occurs. Similarly, as more efforts are made to further the reach of a capitalist global economy, the more it is likely that individuals are going to find water (where there is clean water) priced out of their reach, that medical and educational services are either impossible to

access or severely inadequate and that under-nourishment continues bringing with it yet a further myriad of difficulties.

It is in the cognisance of the inter-stitial nature of political life that an expansion of the borders of the political and the ethical may begin to be considered. This would involve a process of thinking in International Relations that begins with the compound rather than the singular. It is to take note of the inter-connections in the world, it is to abandon the discourse of innocence, it is to move beyond the comfortable to situations of emergency. This is an emphasis that the state of emergency (which existed, contrary to many commentators, before September 11 2001) is what demands concerted focus. It is to call for International Relations to move away from torrid internal debate as an end in itself to embrace and understand the multiple demands that the emergency places on the discipline. Fundamentally, it is to resist the spatialisation of time and the constitution of a fixed field of enquiry where the necessary is made out to be apparent or logical. It is to call for an engaged critique, one that seeks out the marginalised, that tries to approach the other non-determinately.

Part of this involves expanding the borders of the discipline. 'International Relations' may be illumined through conversation with development theorists. It may also be illumined by a study and utilisation of non-Greek and non-European philosophy. Religious perspectives, taken in their 'religiosity', and not in terms of what they do in a pre-extant field of International Relations, may also widen the perspective. This latter especially calls for new epistemologies and new methodologies, new ways of understanding what knowledge is and how to acquire it.

With regards refugees, this critical attitude is one that may, for example, detract from the ceaseless and worrying recourse to a conventional state-centric epistemology as ultimate arbiter of refugee phenomena in international law. This is a critical attitude that fosters a distortion of a desire for 'home' and its association with the bounds of a secured territory. What would an expansion of the legal meaning of the term 'persecution' (in the context of international refugee law) to include those people (most pertinently children and some women) suffering sustained harm or the fear of this from a non-state authority do to territorialised politics and ethics? What would a dissociation of human rights from the public sphere do to the same? How would a de-centred sense of human rights, enveloping the complex needs of children, effect the notion of an autonomous and powerful subjectivity underlying and making feasible a desire for a 'home'? What, in other words, would a splitting of the subject by emphasising the manifold dependencies and needs of children – who are extant in the public sphere – do to the imperative for (and sense of the possibility of) securing territoriality?

It is perhaps in the jaded and overused call to self-reflection that strategies of political resistance may be founded. This call to self-reflection is a call for IR theorists to acknowledge the disturbing and irredentist otherness upon which security is based. It is a call to *use* that disturbing and irredentist otherness through forms of representation that aver from their reductive conceptualisation in one language or another.

It is a call to rather than attempt a multiple fragmentation of identity through an analytical process that looks particularly European, to pick up on repressed identities and utilise repress identities, to play on what they convey before the norm

(and ourselves). It is an attempt not to come up with another sense of what it means to be human but is rather a strategy of subversion to manipulate the representation of human being.

It is, in the call to self-reflection, an acknowledgement of the critic's position in the epistemic milieu. In more concrete terms, and because this does not occur in a vacuum without race, sex or colour, it is the problematisation of *Western* ways of knowing and a call for Western critics to recognise our positional leverage borne of economic, cultural and political advantage. This is a reminder then of the impossibility of both remaining within and of escaping the epistemic milieu. This is an impossibility that reminds of the taint of otherness in our very being and the concomitant play of fantasy and fear in the articulation of the meaning of ourselves. The strategy of manipulation means using the totems and insignia of subaltern identity in fundamentally unusual and disruptive ways, repeating the images and patterns of behaviour in unusual locales and in unusual ways.

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