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Refugee advocacy and the biopolitics of asylum in Britain

The precarious position of young male asylum seekers and refugees

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Figure 1: Image accompanying 'Asylum 6 sue UK for £300k', the *Sun*, 3rd November 2008.

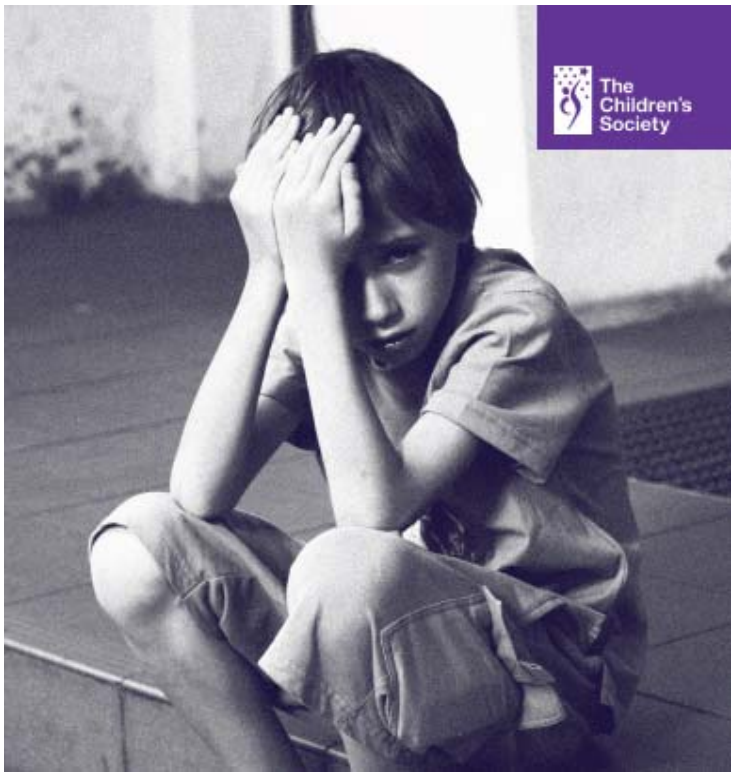

Figure 2: Front cover of report by the Children's Society, February 2008.

Young Men

The opening images illustrate two sets of potent narratives about asylum seekers and refugees in contemporary Britain. Figure 1 accompanied a November 2008 article in the *Sun* covering the story of six asylum seekers who were detained. Initially considered to be adults, they were later found to be under 18, and were undertaking legal action against their imprisonment and breaches of their human rights. Faceless young non-white men scale a fence, breaching a boundary. Figure 2 is the cover of a report by the Children's Society advocating for better rights and conditions for young displaced people at risk of destitution. A monochrome picture shows a young boy sitting on a concrete step, thin and hunched over with his head in his hands. These images draw our attention to representations of a particular group of displaced people, young men. The extreme disconnect between these images prompts inquiry into the tendency of representations of displaced people to either criminalise or victimise their subjects. What are the discourses that give rise to such divergent images? Where do young men stand in relation to them?

This dissertation will argue that young[1] male asylum seekers and refugees are situated in a precarious position at the intersection of several powerful discursive fields. In the exploration of dominant discourses concerning refugees and asylum seekers, young men's uncomfortable position raises some important and interesting questions, particularly towards pro-refugee discourses and action, henceforth referred to as 'refugee advocacy'.

May some parts of the displaced population, such as young men, be situated in a marginal position to benefit from advocacy? The controversy raised in the *Sun* (above) was over the disputed age of those seeking asylum, which raises further questions about those displaced people situated on the boundaries of the social categories of 'childhood' and 'adulthood'. The children's rights discourse has risen to great importance in UK refugee advocacy recently.[2] This dissertation will critically engage with refugee advocacy, including the question whether its reliance on the discourse of children's rights and its 'solutions' may have effects that place certain asylum seekers and refugees in the UK in challenging positions due to their age and gender.

A concern with young men as invisible or problematically visible, despite being the majority of the demographic seeking asylum in the UK, prompted this avenue of inquiry. In 2007, 70% of principal applicants for asylum were male, and 67% of these were aged between 14 and 29 (Home Office 2008). Therefore, although I am aware that there are dangers with the analytical category of 'young male asylum seekers' being a slightly crude label which obscures the complexities of gender and age, asking about advocacy's effects on 'young men' is fundamentally questioning whether advocacy works for the majority of people seeking asylum in Britain.

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[1] 'Young' is deliberately left undefined in chronological age, as I do not see it as an unproblematic category. Rather the object of my analysis is the perceptions of young people on the boundaries of childhood and adulthood which may encompass a range of ages. However, I particularly have in mind during my discussion males from the point of adolescence on rather than children in their early years.

[2] For example, the Refugee Children's Consortium, made up of 27 refugee and child centred NGOs, coordinates lobbying for children's rights in asylum and immigration policy, and due to the established support for children's rights wields political influence over and above 'refugee issues' (Giner 2007).

A repeated return to the figure of the young male refugee as a provocation supports a questioning and denaturalising stance that reveals the silences and tensions in advocating for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK and why they matter.

Theoretical Perspectives

This dissertation proposes to scrutinise some of the lenses through which we look at displaced young men in contemporary Britain. The premise of such an exercise is a belief that the way in which we conceptualise forced migrants matters. Discourses, sets of texts and images, are powerful and productive - part of constituting, not merely reflecting, reality. The language, images, categories and metaphors that we use to describe forced migrants are not innocent but are part of how we interpret and therefore act towards those who are displaced (Turton 2003). They may work to serve certain parties' interests and circumscribe those of others. Furthermore, the articulation and material effects of discourses play a role in the construction of identities. An interrogation of certain discourses, who they benefit, as well as the unintended effects they give rise to as they are negotiated is essential in order to understand and respond to relations of power.

Particularly important in a critical analysis of how discourses work to shape refugees and their lives in contemporary Britain are Foucauldian notions of power and knowledge. Here power is not seen as absolute, a 'thing' coming from a single source, but rather is relational and produced through social interactions and the fields of knowledge which shape them (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2005, Li 2005). The power-knowledge relation is not totalising and repressive but 'productive' of subjects who are positioned as having different characteristics and capacities for action (Li 2005, Ong 2003). Contestations take place over forms of subjectification (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2005), revolving around 'who we are', either through refusals to accept certain determinations of our identities, or attempts to reformulate certain aspects of what it means to be 'a refugee', 'a male' or 'a child'. These theoretical background insights prompt us to think about how power-knowledge relations in contemporary Britain produce the refugee subject. Who are these refugees? What behaviours are expected of them? Are there contestations from different sources over the dominant notions of the refugee subject? Where do young men fit into these notions of refugeehood emanating from advocacy and the mainstream, and what are the implications of this?

Another Foucauldian idea that helps to approach an investigation into the position of displaced young men in the UK is that of 'biopolitics'. A biopolitical perspective sees that there has been a shift in the primary means of rule, from the law and an absolute power to take life, towards techniques of ordering through 'administering life' via powerful norms concerned with the body that are 'at once benign and disciplinary' (Foucault 1980, Ong 2003). This mode of governing to increase the 'utility and docility' of populations is enacted through concern with welfare - bodies, health, subsistence and habitation (Foucault 1980). However, these processes and practices of 'governmentality' do not merely emanate from the state, but complex networks of actors exercise power relationally through a 'general problematic of improvement' (Li 2005).

So state and society are not oppositional categories but enmeshed, and particular 'solutions' of humanitarian action may be crucially linked to broader techniques of rationalities of 'governmentality' (Hedman 2009). This is helpful for this line of enquiry because it may reveal beneath both 'benign' discourses and those that are seemingly divergent from them, a biopolitical logic that sees refugees as 'a problem' in a way that renders solutions 'technical' and 'non political' (Hedman 2009).

The work of Peter Nyers (2006) is particularly pertinent to this dissertation, bringing together many of these critical strands of thinking. He writes that we cannot merely focus our analysis on the 'moving bodies' of refugees as anomalous and problematic, but must examine how the movement of the 'body politic' is also implicated in how we understand refugees - how 'refugeeness' is constituted through political practice. Central to understanding this is the idea of the 'state of exception'. The refugee is constituted by being exposed to the violent outside edge of sovereignty – they are included in discourses of 'normality' only by their exclusion from the normal and ordered spaces of statehood. In reaction to their subversion of statist ideas of the political, the law may paradoxically become indistinguishable from violence as 'the law can be legally suspended for the purpose of preserving the state', its inside/outside distinction and the community within.

Similar thinking to this can be seen in critical work around the concepts of 'sovereignty' (Doty 1996, Haddad 2004, 2008) and 'security' being used to invoke crisis thinking and action beyond the normal rules of politics (Bigo 2006, Buzan et al. 1998). The bulk of work specifically critical of the growing restrictionism and the securitisation of asylum in the British context (for instance: Hubbard 2005, Lynn and Lea 2003, Pirouet 2001, van Selm 2003), although providing valuable critical insights, often stops short of several interesting junctures of enquiry. For example, work concerning representation and discourse has mainly deconstructed the stigmatising and exclusionary dynamics in the media, elite political discourse and popular opinion (Hubbard 2005, Lewis 2005, Lynn and Lea 2003, Statham 2003, Steiner 2003). There is a need to elucidate the workings of other discourses of growing importance to understandings of displaced people – namely those concerned with their welfare and human rights. A biopolitical perspective such as Nyers' (2006) throws light upon the fact that 'solutions' and the fixing of what it means to be a refugee 'has as much to do with the cultural expectation of certain qualities and behaviours that are demonstrative of "authentic" refugeeness (e.g. silence, passivity, victimhood) as it does with legal definitions and regulations' (Nyers, 2006: xv). The 'capture' of the refugee not only involves the sovereign political relation, but also relations in the space that is ostensibly depoliticised and humanitarian in its concerns.

This Dissertation and its Approaches

With these key theoretical perspectives this dissertation sets out to ask: what is revealed about the discourses of refugee advocacy, particularly the children's rights discourse, and its effects, through trying to seek out the figure of the young male asylum seeker or refugee? In section two, following this initial introductory section, I will ask what the dominant discourses are regarding displaced people in the UK and explore how displaced young men are in a precarious position within them. In section three I will ask what position the increasingly influential children's rights framework for refugee advocacy puts young men in, and what this reveals about the limits of children's rights as a framework

for advocating for young refugees. In section four I will explore the ideas laid out in the previous two sections by examining two reports from children's rights organisations working for refugee rights, looking at how they represent, or are silent on, the figure of the young male. This reveals particular points that expose potential contestations between advocacy discourses and other voices. In the final section, I will ask how such reflections on the position of young men in these discourses might begin to provoke new approaches beyond the limits of current refugee advocacy[3].

What are the dominant discourses regarding displaced people in the UK and how are young men positioned in relation to them, especially those representations of refugees and asylum seekers which might be normatively termed 'positive' in their proposals for interventions and solutions? I will begin by taking a cue from Pupavac (2008) who argues that overall, there are a dominant set of 'counter stereotypes' used by refugee advocates. The first theme is that of 'trauma', which uses feminised images of refugees as vulnerable and dependent victims. This trope goes hand in hand with sanitised examples of refugees as exceptionally talented and thus deserving. Young men may not fit comfortably into the confines of these discourses of the ideal refugee, with exceptional talent, or displays of gendered notions of trauma and vulnerability as markers of their authenticity. Where does this leave them? Against this backdrop of the widely acknowledged 'will towards exclusion' in Britain since the 1990s (for instance: Chimni 1998, Giner 2007, Steiner 2003, Zetter 2006) young men may be particularly susceptible to caricatured xenophobic imaginings (Hubbard 2005). Consideration of these dominant discourses reveals the importance of the body as the site of the politics of asylum, those arguing for refugee rights focusing on their suffering bodies, as opposed to the gendered and racialised body of asylum seekers conceived as morally deviant and threatening (Fassin 2001, Hubbard 2004). I will explore how young male asylum seekers, perceived as potent, masculine bodies, become easily situated in a negative space. Concern with the body as central to both advocacy and discrimination leads us to suggest the overarching binary image of refugees as 'vulnerable victim/ threatening criminal' in the UK is underpinned by a biopolitical logic (Bigo 2006). This logic works to exclude those who do not conform to the right type of embodiment but its 'care' and concern with welfare may create a space that limits political agency.

One particular example that allows us to look in more critical detail at the difficult positions that refugee advocacy puts young men into is the children's rights discourse. On the one hand we might hope that the strength of children's rights as a powerful platform for protection at the international and domestic level might cast young men in a more favourable light. Children's rights advocacy for refugees seeks to disaggregate the refugee population, using sympathetic portrayals of certain refugees and the rhetoric of universal human rights in promoting 'help' for refugees through particular concern with 'the child'.

[3] I wish to emphasise that I do not intend to demonise refugee advocacy. Regarding positionality, I have had positive experience working voluntarily with young asylum seekers and refugees, through various pro-refugee NGOs. Therefore my motivation is very much geared towards more productive conceptualisation, better articulation and defence of the interests of certain sectors of society, rather than producing either detached 'scientific objectivity' or debilitating textual deconstruction without ethical engagement (Scheper Hughes 1995). However, in order to do this, we must ask questions that destabilise and reveal how our comfortable ways of thinking work.

However, thinking about the position of young men helps to shake up our preconceptions about the refugee subject, 'childhood',and whether refugee advocacy's new reliance on children's right discourse really serves people who are displaced. Rather than restoring visibility and agency to displaced young men, a powerful western ideal of childhood as a time of innocence and safety free from politics or responsibility that underpins children's rights thinking leaves some in an ambivalent position. This may be especially true for adolescent males, less easily absorbed within the image of the displaced child as a depoliticised passive victim. The approach taken here draws upon insights of the growing literature concerned with displaced young people (Boyden and De Berry 2004, Boyden and Hart 2007, Hart 2008), in an attempt to extend its critical approaches further into the global north and to continue to expand inquiry into gendered identities, particularly those concerning men (Hart 2008). Most crucially, this dissertation aims to link critical thinking about conceptualisations of childhood with biopolitical arguments discussing concern with welfare as a mode for the regulation and ordering of certain populations.

Looking at examples of children's rights for refugee advocacy brings into clear view that refugees in the UK are still often understood within a 'crisis identity'. This casts the refugee as a problem in need of technical and operational solutions, and 'imprints' onto refugee identity a non-political body whose capacity for speech is drastically curtailed (Nyers 2006), despite an increased fashion for the inclusion of 'refugee voices' within advocacy. 'Ideal' refugees and their non-political bodies are often imagined within certain gender and age confines. Looking at the tensions between 'refugee voices' and the advocacy texts they are embedded in reveals how discourses produce and interact with refugee subjectivities, and furthermore shows the modes and language with which individuals contest what it means to be a 'refugee'.

How might we begin to move beyond the limits of discourses of refugee advocacy? A critical theory approach need not end boxed into an ever more obtuse analysis of the inescapable victimhood of the refugee but rather, looking at contested meanings in discourses about the refugee subjects prompts us to rethink identity and politics. For instance, Nyers (2006), writing about refugee warriors, writes of the potential for new imaginaries they provoke.

> … [they] explode the civilian, humanitarian, and – above all – nonpolitical character of refugeeness. They operate at the limit of the humanitarian discourses on refugees, disrupting and unsettling the prevailing binaries of refugeeness (i.e., refugee-warrior, victim-agent, passive-active, speechless-vocal, humanitarian-political, etc.) (Nyers 2006: xviii)

This dissertation aims to propose a similar 'unsettling'. Young men's uncomfortable position in relation to the dominant discourses regarding displaced people in the UK both exposes problematic binaries, and, by revealing the limits of advocacy discourses, may push advocacy and politics beyond our comfortable ways of thinking. We can question whether advocacy remains depoliticised through looking at some examples of emerging advocacy. The figure of the young male may refocus attempts to put civil and political rights back into asylum debates (Pupavac 2001, 2008), but there remain further questions regarding the challenge to think beyond state-centric solutions.

In a way this dissertation is primarily concerned with situating young men in the contexts that shape how we perceive refugees. Often the things that are consigned to being seen as 'background information', nationalism, racism and xenophobia, ideas of human rights and citizenship, identities and diaspora are set aside in favour of a blinkered study of the refugee who is depoliticised and dehistoricised (Malkki 1995). Focusing analytical attention on refugee advocacy reveals the tendency to inscribe the political and historical onto the bodies and psyches of refugees (Malkki 1995). To imagine beyond this essentialised refugee and towards new political engagement, there is a need to take a critical stance towards not only what Malkki (1995) refers to as the 'national order of things', but also the production of subjectivities and categories in the 'international', 'humanitarian' and 'universalist' order of things (Cowan 2008). Throughout, I keep at the forefront of my analysis that there is a pervasive conception of refugees as:

> beyond or above politics, and beyond or above history – a world in which they are simply 'victims'... without the gravities of history and politics [that] can ultimately become a deeply dehumanising environment (Malkki 1995: 518).

2 Dominant Discourses and Young Men's Precarious Position

What are the dominant discourses regarding displaced people in the UK and how are young men positioned in relation to them? Reading some critical analyses of asylum discourse in the UK, it would seem that stigmatising representations in the popular press have taken over the entirety of the public imagination. But these discourses are not totalising. Other imaginings of refugees and asylum seekers emanate from academia, refugee NGOs and advocacy organisations, human rights and children's rights NGOs. Pupavac (2008) argues that advocacy discourses are dominated by two tropes, talent or trauma. This chapter explores how young men slip easily to the sidelines or silent areas in the main positive themes of refugee advocacy and its portrayals of the refugee subject, but simultaneously are easily subsumed into the ugly caricature of a threatening young male asylum seeker. Might young men and their precarious position reveal that the seemingly irreconcilable portrayals of displaced people may in fact be based on an underlying dynamic of a bodily politics of asylum and the 'social reduced to biological' (Fassin 2001)?

Trauma, Universal Humanity and a Fundamental 'Otherness'

Discourses which seek to promote interventions to better the lives of refugees often are driven by a strong need for displaced persons to embody suffering, and this dynamic works in a way that can be seen to disadvantage men. Images of vulnerability are gendered. Before I explore these ideas around gender further, I must first sketch out the central elements to one dominant theme of refugee advocacy - that of the refugee as traumatised (Pupavac 2008). The rhetoric of the extract from an article on asylum and human rights is familiar (see below in Figure 3), showing how pervasive images of refugee trauma have become to paint a picture of the horror of refugeehood and to criticise policy through 'extreme case formulation' (Lynn and Lea 2003). Many displaced people have

suffered severely in situations of protracted violence and the journey to seek asylum which may result in serious physical or psychological consequences. However this perception of refugees as 'traumatised' has not always been predominant. In the past a political-legal approach to conceptualising refugees dominated, but with the changing ideas of refugeehood relating to the end of the Cold War and a loss of refugees' geopolitical value (Chimni 1998), 'rehabilitating a political actor shifted to managing a victim at risk' (Pupuvac 2008: 279). Concurrently the discourse of human rights and its accompanying institutions have risen in power. European states 'increasingly treat[s] the humanitarian rationale "as a priority" and political asylum "by subsidiarity"' (Fassin 2001: 4).

"Today, those caught up in the EU's deportation drive include torture victims, those severely traumatised by war, psychiatric patients and the terminally ill. Even vulnerable children, including those who have sought asylum in Europe unaccompanied by any adult, are caught up in it. Some have developed symptoms of complete depressive breakdown, including severe apathy. Unable to thrive emotionally and physically, due to traumatic experiences in their home countries compounded in Europe by their fear of deportation, they have had to be hospitalised and fed intravenously."
Feteke 2005, in Pupavac 2008: 278.

Figure 3: The Refugee as Traumatised

This prevailing shift from a political to a humanitarian logic is problematic because in it refugees are easily 'othered' and victimised. Many refugees evidently do have needs for mental healthcare, but representations of helplessness and loss naturalise the social dimensions of the refugee experience, confining refugees to their minds and bodies rather than locating the 'problem of refugeehood' in the political and historical reality they have fled and in which they arrive[4] (Fassin 2001, Malkki 1995, Rajaram 2002). Trauma may also be a way of exoticising refugees. On the one hand, refugee advocacy constantly asserts that refugees are 'just like us' or invoke the universal vision of human rights, that refugees are also humans (Nyers 2006, Way 2009):

> And yet, despite the apparent universality of their condition, refugees are subjected to a wide variety of Othering strategies that, ironically, cast them as something less than human (Nyers 2006: xvi)

For instance, Ted Way (2009) examines how refugee otherness is constructed and commodified in refugee advocacy. In discussing discourses of refugee trauma he highlights the debilitating narrative strategy of 'after only' (as opposed to 'before and after'). An example is the Medical Foundation's 'Celine's Story', which essentialises a refugee 'life' through a list of all the horrifying experiences of a particular woman, starting from the first instance of persecution. Any identification with the woman is foreclosed, because although she is 'just like us', she is also not, because she is tortured and

[4] Although the example above does acknowledge the role of politics as a source of refugee suffering, that focus is obscured within the barrage of images of pathetic and helpless figures listed. Another prevalent trope is the frequent use of 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD) as a label of suffering, which arguably is often merely an imposition of western cultural modes of individualising, pathologising and medicalising stress and suffering (Bracken 1998, Chatty et al. 2005).

traumatised. There is little hope for normality in the 'after only' scenario because we cannot picture refugees as ordinary citizens, their identity begins with and is encapsulated in their persecution (Way 2009).

The problematic nature of discourses reliant on the trope of refugee trauma becomes even more apparent when trauma is used as a marker to affirm refugee authenticity. Fassin (2001) argues that as the civil and political rights of asylum seekers have been eroded, the 'suffering body' rather than potential political violence has become the most legitimate grounds for displaced people to claim recognition. This can be seen as 'biopolitics' – a concern with welfare that constrains the sanctioned forms of embodiment for certain populations. Ideas of refugees as traumatised seem on the surface 'commonsensical', and seem to portray refugees as equal subjects of international human rights – trauma and torture could occur to any of us, theoretically. However, seeing refugees as traumatised will tend to cast refugees as dependent due to their impaired capacity (Pupavac 2008). Furthermore, if individuals need to perpetually display 'the suffering body' or incapability in order to access the benefits of being seen as a 'genuine' refugee, whether in refugee determination procedures, or in social attitudes within the country of asylum, young men may be left in a particularly difficult situation.

The figure of 'Celine' (above) reveals that images of vulnerability are gendered. Advocacy often uses images of women and children (Malkki 1995) due to important imaginaries of female and child helplessness in Western culture. Additionally, an increasing concern with sexual and gender based violence in thinking about displacement and portrayals of women as 'doubly jeopardised' may implicitly set men up as 'better off' (Jaji 2009). A more nuanced understanding of 'gender' helps elucidate that the advantages of maleness are contingent and patriarchal norms do not benefit all men. For example, notions of women as 'vulnerable' may both constrain women to men's benefit, but also provide advantage to some women and obscure how certain men are symbolically and literally criminalised (Calavita 2006). Even if examples of individual men are used, the trope of trauma gives a broader impression of the refugee as 'feminised'. Gendered identities, expectations of how women and men should represent themselves, are multiple and fluid but powerful norms that have crossed many cultures have often ascribed to the masculine notions of 'strength' and the feminine 'weakness' (Jaji 2009). Individuals are positioned within the operation of powerful socially produced ideologies of what it means to be a displaced man, which have profound implications both for men's subjectivities and how we perceive them (Hanlon 2008, Pessar and Mahler 2003). Thus if refugees are seen as 'weak', depoliticised and dependent this may be problematic for men as they are less likely to fit into our notions of the refugee and less likely to wish to conform to this image due to the prevalence of this gendered ideal. Furthermore, as I will explore later, the potency and strength associated with young bodies further compounds a perception of young men as marginal to these images of refugee vulnerability, and instead associated with negative discourses (Section 2.3). Although this is evidently a rather simplified portrayal, and there are numerous other divisions of class, race and sexuality that should be taken into account when we locate young male asylum seekers next to refugee advocacy discourses, we may say that broadly, young men through virtue of their bodies are marginal to the trauma images of refugee advocacy and sidelined from the 'marketing' of the refugee cause (Rajaram 2002, Way 2009).

Talented and Deserving

One refreshing antidote to this is the presentation in refugee advocacy of refugees as exceptionally talented and making a 'contribution to the nation', but this also has questionable impacts on the position of young men. For instance, examples of famous individuals who have contributed to British society proliferate on the Refugee Week website[5] and are also visible in academic texts[6]. Of course many refugees are talented, there is merit in celebrating this, and these communications certainly win some sympathy for the refugee cause. However, we should also think critically about whether they serve displaced persons equally, or leave some marginal to these positive images. As Pupavac (2008) notes, if talent becomes a marker of refugee legitimacy, does it leave 'unskilled' young men[7] as seemingly less deserving of protection from persecution? If a sanitised refugee image is heroised, does the 'ordinary' asylum seeker appear undesirable by comparison? The logic of refugees as desirable and thus deserving is one which resonates more with concepts of voluntary migration. These portrayals often leave notions of the nation-state homeland unquestioned and a victimised refugeehood often lies just below the surface. Figure 4, from the Refugee Week website, shows some of these dynamics at work. An attractive photo shows a woman from Somalia singing full of expression, in colourful clothing that suggests she sings 'traditional' music from her homeland. The impression is that she is talented and dynamic. However, the quote accompanying the picture also suggests she is downtrodden and 'out of place' here in the UK, her desire for homeland as her rightful place drawing attention to her pathos and suffering.

'The first good thing I hear about my country, the first suggestion that it is changing, and I will go back.... Everyone needs their own country. At home you can be a star but then as a refugee you are looked at like a dog....'[8]

Figure 4: The Refugee as Talented. © Refugee Week.

[5] The 'Refugee Fact Pack' lists famous refugees, there is a document listing the 'History and Contribution of Refugees to the UK', another explaining how refugees are a 'Credit to the Nation', see http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk/Resources/Refugee%20Week/Documents/Factpack%20Web%202008.pdf.

[6] For example: 'some of those who stay in the UK are high achievers in spite of what they have been through' (Pirouet 2001: 6). Pirouet also cites the fact that 17 Nobel Laureates came to the UK as refugees.

[7] This alignment of 'unskilled' with my particular demographic may seem a little tenuous, but I am certain there is some currency in the idea - that the perception of male youth as unskilled and problematic has powerful resonance in the popular imagination. See reference to Hubbard's work below for related ideas.

[8] Although as a direct quote this seem a 'transparent' representation of the refugee's views the filtering of the 'refugee voice' makes the message as much the advocate's as the individual's (Rajaram 2002).

Threat and the Male Body

This section sheds a brief glance upon exclusionary discourses in order to show that young men's marginality to advocacy discourses works in tandem with their particular susceptibility to xenophobic, gendered and racialised imaginings of displaced people in mainstream political discourse and the popular press. Ideas of 'dangerousness' are both gendered and racialised in a complex series of interlocking caricatures, centring around the male body as potent, potentially sexually violent and morally deviant.

With the widely acknowledged restrictionism of the UK's asylum policy (for instance: Chimni 1998, Giner 2007, Steiner 2003, Zetter 2006) asylum at times is characterised as a 'tug of war' between inherently exclusionary national interests and wholly positive international norms and morality (Haddad 2004, 2008). A more nuanced analysis sees discursive constructions and debates around asylum as part of constituting national identity (Doty 1996, Pirouet 2001, Steiner 2003). Taking national identity to be a social construction which relies upon the production of knowledge to attempt to fix meanings about who does and who does not belong (Doty 1996), points us to particular caricatured figures and their significance for ideas of who should be included in, or excluded from, the national body.

Postcolonial perspectives are productive for thinking about the imaginings of these 'threatening' figures. Phil Hubbard's (2004) discourse analysis of local protest against a proposed asylum centre in rural Nottinghamshire, argues that contemporary imaginings of asylum seekers are the inheritors of colonial discourses of 'the other' seen through tropes of non-productivity (in relation to anxiety around 'scrounging' off the welfare state), culpability (in relation to ideas of illegality), and dangerousness (regarding potential criminality). Furthermore, as extracts from the letters below show (Figure 5), these tropes are embedded in an image of the racialised and sexualised male body.

> 'Too many young men who don't speak English, bored and frustrated, men from cultures that don't respect women... as a woman I will not feel safe at night'
>
> 'I am genuinely frightened at the thought of walking from my house into town knowing I will come across groups of these men'
>
> 'A good majority of these people will be single men. Without their own wives and girlfriends, our children will be in danger of falling foul of their sexual advances'
>
> 'Local schools will become a magnet for young male asylum seekers... in Nottingham... groups of young foreign non-English speaking men follow white girls around'
>
> From letters opposing a proposed asylum centre, 2002
> (Hubbard 2004: 61)

Figure 5: The Refugee as Threatening

The quotes above particularly strikingly reveal that ideas of 'dangerousness' are both gendered and racialised in a series of caricatures, centring around the male body as potent, potentially sexually violent and morally deviant. Again, masculinities are not understood in a singular way and race and gender interact in particularly important ways.

'Gender is racialised and race is gendered' (Glenn 2002: 7 in Calavita 2006: 125) and in Western culture the racialised male body has been understood in primarily negative terms. These complex intersections between masculinity and displaced people's identity as racialised[9] are most evident in concerns about rape, as seen above, which may resonate with colonial imaginings of the non-west and its peoples as closer to nature and their 'natural' instincts. There are other examples of criminalised notions of racialised masculinities. Muslim groups in Britain may be imagined as having inward looking, aggressive and hyper-patriarchical masculinity that is linked to national security threats (Alexander 2004, Pratt and Valverde 2002, van Selm 2003). Black urban youth may be seen as inevitably caught in generational breakdown and a resultant problematic masculinity linked with crime (Alexander 2004). These insights expose the resonance of contemporary asylum discourses with older fears of the racialised male body, by its potency, sexuality and dangerousness, implicitly young. The importance of the body both in these stigmatising discourses and in those of trauma points beyond the apparent divergence of these portrayals of displaced people towards an underlying bodily politics of asylum.

A Biopolitical Logic?

We might argue that displaced persons are subject to a binary image of vulnerable victims/dangerous criminals, which revolves around knowledges particularly concerned with the body – the suffering body or the dangerous body. One of the main axes on which the contrast between the two rotates is that of gendered identity. The body as a site on which the politics of asylum is inscribed can be understood in terms of biopolitics. Both discourses of trauma and threat are concerned with a correct embodiment of 'refugeeness', enacted through a logic where refugee legitimacy centres around welfare and the body. Discussions of displaced people rarely revolve around a lack of, or need for, belonging in a political community. Instead, advocates call for the inclusion of refugees on the basis of care – feminised refugees need help as 'suffering bodies', traumatised, or to be given healthcare and housing. In the logic of hostile discourses, exclusion is necessary and desirable on the basis of the threat, embedded in a pathologised masculine embodiment, displaced people pose to the welfare of both the national community and other, more genuine, refugees.

As we have seen, the embodiments of ideal or dubious refugeehood have gendered dimensions. Where the trope of trauma is feminised, concern over certain figures of 'threatening' displaced people - juvenile delinquents and gangs, international criminal networks (Giner 2007) - is entangled with masculinity. When asylum is moving toward 'citizenship on purely physiopathological grounds' (Fassin 2001), young men may need to conform to an expected image of refugeehood that can involve a profound loss of agency,

[9] 'Race' is relevant to perceptions of young male asylum seekers in Britain because although political discourse uses the language of nationality and legality, concern over asylum seekers seems to be non-whiteness: an old ideology but a new rhetoric (Fassin 2001, Lewis 2005, Lynn and Lea 2003). Ideas of citizenship based on phenomenological criteria are corroborated by surveys of public opinion in the UK which show extremely widespread confusion between asylum seekers, 'illegal immigrants' and black and ethnic minority communities (Lewis 2005, Statham 2003). Thus 'race' is inseparable from people's identities as displaced – even if asylum seekers are 'white', they may still be racialised against privileged whiteness' (Hubbard 2004).

or risk being seen as dangerous and thus more likely to face exclusion. Consideration of dominant discourses has revealed the importance of the body as the site of the politics of asylum, those arguing for refugee rights focusing on their suffering bodies (Pupavac 2008, Way 2009), as opposed to the gendered and racialised body of asylum seekers conceived as a morally deviant and threatening (Fassin 2001, Hubbard 2004). The underpinning biopolitical logic to this binary may exclude those, such as young men, who do not conform to the right type of embodiment. At the same time, the normalising tendencies of the 'care' of refugees, testified to in advocacy, may create a space that limits agency.

This biopolitical logic can be most clearly seen in the concern with who the 'real' refugee is. The criminalised and victimised subjects are created by the same process - in an overarching relation of protection that is concerned with who is the 'real' refugee. That is, the notion of 'protection' for refugees in the UK has moved away from being a duty to provide a sacred place where an agentive individual can find refuge (Bigo 2006). Rather, there are discursive and social practices of surveillance that aim to avoid infiltration of 'the bogus' amongst the citizens and the refugees whilst at the same time advocacy discourses serve a process of normalisation of refugees as 'victims':

> The protection model functions very often as a process of victimisation where the protected is either a victim or a criminal – a forgery and dubious actor – if he refuses this status given through a binary image (Bigo 2006: 93).

This concern with the 'purity' of the protected population can be seen in determination procedures that are arguably pervaded by 'a culture of disbelief' and a high rejection rate. 'Purification' can also be seen in the subjection of failed claimants to various harsh measures in order to 'encourage' return, and act as a deterrent to future 'bogus' applicants: for instance, exclusion from social support, and the fragmentation of the label 'refugee' in the institutional setting which creates various 'second class' displaced people and serves to restrict migration (Zetter 2006).

Both discourses perpetuate a view of the refugee as separate from the citizen, to the benefit of certain actors. Setting up the victim figure as the norm arguably creates dependency on a group of professionals and experts as 'protection becomes less and less a duty, an obligation towards an individual, and more and more a capacity to speak in the name of someone (a group) considered weak or in danger' (Bigo 2006: 94). But refugee advocacy, like any other mode of argumentation in the public sphere, is not static, but dynamic and constantly reframing its arguments (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Thus, one particular approach to refugee advocacy, children's rights, has risen to prominence recently in the UK. We might think of it as an antidote to some of the difficulties I have so far outlined. For instance, may gender perhaps be less a determining factor, and may it return the visibility of young men in a 'positive' way into advocacy? In the next chapter I turn to examine refugee children's rights advocacy and its assumptions, bringing this section's analyses to critique it.

3 'A Child First and Foremost' – Children's Rights for Refugee Advocacy and Young Men's Precarious Position

Might children's rights as an increasingly powerful platform for protection at the international and domestic level protect young men from becoming threatening caricatures in negative discourses applied to displaced adults, and bring them in from the sidelines of refugee advocacy? We live with 'the ideology of a child centred society' (Prout and James 1997) and the mobilising potential of 'protecting childhood' makes it a discourse deserving of scrutiny. The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is almost universally ratified and thus represents a powerful international consensus on promoting the 'best interests' of children. The UK, a leading force in the formulation of children's rights, has strong pro-child domestic legislation.[10] A strong sense in popular and political spheres of the necessity to protect children positions those under 18 to some extent outside the negative discursive and legal frameworks applied to displaced adults. In September 2009 the UK agreed to drop its reservation to the CRC on the basis of Immigration and Nationality[11], something children's rights and refugee groups had strongly argued for. The central tenet of the Refugee Children's Consortium, which represents many of these groups, is that 'the refugee child is a child first and foremost'. In asking whether children's rights for refugee advocacy makes young displaced men less marginal, we must first examine who is the subject of children's rights, the child who comes 'first and foremost'.

Refugee Children: Still Victims

'Children's rights' sets up an image of the 'child' which is no less problematic than trauma narrative in terms of carrying with it notions of weakness, a victimising tendency and a downplaying of young people's agency. Although ideas of what constitutes a child seem deeply 'natural', they vary over time and space, 'childhood' being a socially constructed interpretative frame for the early years of life (Prout and James 1997). Childhood is arguably also a category particularly susceptible to being imbued with moral values (Valentine 1996). The discourse that has come to dominate our understandings since the latter part of the nineteenth century is a view of the child as innocent, and childhood as a time of safety and enjoyment, free from responsibilities and political action (Boyden and Hart 2007, Prout and James 1997, Valentine 1996). This ideal became consolidated through the tension in nineteenth century debates in Western Europe between Romantic views of the child as innately good, versus those concerned with groups of street children in industrialising Britain as corrupt, anarchical, and threats to the order of society (Valentine 1996).

[10] Two 'Children Act[s]' that ensure children's welfare is a key responsibility of Local Authorities, and the 2003 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) white paper which established child well-being as a priority throughout most state agencies (Giner 2007).

[11] The reservation had previously meant that the arms of government dealing with Immigration and Nationality were not under the obligation under Article 3 of the CRC 1989 to put 'the best interests of the child first'.

The 'vulnerable victim' image is particularly pervasive in relation to displaced young people, and thus infantalised as well as feminised. There has been significant critique of work on refugee youth portraying young people as irreparably damaged through their exposure to political violence, implicitly seen as unnatural to a Western ideal of childhood (Boyden and De Berry 2004, Boyden and Hart 2007, Hart 2008). The tendency to pathologise and individualise refugee experiences through the notion of 'trauma' is particularly prominent[12] in academic work on displaced children (Boyden and Hart, 2007). Although displaced young people face many harsh challenges, it is possible to take a more nuanced view that vulnerability is mediated through relational, cultural and social environments, and acknowledge that children often display great adaptability and capacity in exercising their own multiple strategies of resilience (Boyden and Hart 2007, Maegusuku-Hewett et al. 2007, Miller et al. 2008).

Older children may also suffer from the problematic notions of children's rights in refugee advocacy. Ascribing victimhood to children in the context of children's rights moves from being merely an assumption of certain characteristics to becoming a template which young people have to fit if they are to obtain certain rights and benefits. There is a divergence between images of the 'child' of children's rights as younger and innocent, and that of the 'bogus asylum seeker'. An adolescent boy, technically a 'child' by legal age, may not fit the imagined embodiment of a 'child' and seem less 'innocent' through his adoption of 'adult' responsibilities. His display of skill and tenacity in reaching the UK alone is at a potentially damaging dissonance with the ideal subject of child rights, the vulnerable child victim deeply embedded in our imaginations. This is testified to in the fact that in 2004 only 2% of unaccompanied children were granted asylum on first decision (Bhabha and Finch 2007).

The deep ambivalence between the emphasis on child refugees as 'children first and foremost' and the overarching 'culture of disbelief' in determination procedures and the use of detention and forced removal leads to some strange consequences. Those privileged to act upon the extreme moral imperative to protect displaced children are those, in state or society, concerned with 'welfare'. One way in which the government acted to simultaneously protect and criminalise was the piloted 'Section 9',[13] which made families of 'failed' asylum seekers ineligible for a range of social support and benefits as an incentive to leave the UK. However, Local Authorities were still obliged to support under 18s if their welfare was compromised, which meant families made destitute by the government could then face their children being taken into foster care (Giner 2007).

In the ideal of children's rights, there is a tension between children as rights holders and the premise that they do not have the capacity to assert their right (unlike other civil and political rights movements), which empowers those other than the children themselves to act (Linden and Rusten 2007, Pupavac 2001). This creates reliance on certain actors, such

[12] A 2005 review showed 80% of articles on refugee children were still published in medical or health sciences, psychology or psychiatry, with just 12% in social science journals (Chatty et al. 2005).

[13] The 'Section 9' addition to the Immigration and Asylum Act 2004 was proposed by the government, but vehemently opposed, not least by children's rights campaigners. This led to it being piloted with 161 families, and having been shown to be ineffective (less than 5% returned), it was not implemented, though it has yet to be fully repealed and can be used at the discretion of asylum claim case holders.

as NGOs and UK local authorities, giving them powers over and above families of children or the young people themselves. The façade of universalism in ideals such as children's rights can easily lead to us accepting them as a consensus between equal actors in a benevolent human rights regime (Donnelly 1999, Hurrell 1999, Keeley 1990), but 'soft' visions of human rights may create dependency. The lack of recognition of refugee young people's agency implicit in the children's rights discourse conditions interventions to be based on a certain relationship between the aider and the aided.

In this section I have explored how the refugee children's rights discourses tend to set up their subject as helpless and victimised. However, this has also been shown to leave adults and those on the borders of adulthood in precarious positions. Where the infantalised vision of the refugee subject in these discourses has strong parallels with the feminised subject of the trauma model, I now turn to explore the ways in which children and childhood have been conceived other than as 'innocence enshrined', including a negatively gendered young masculinity.

Young Men: Still Threats

Whilst the mainstream figure of the child is seen as passive and innocent, negative constructions of youth can be seen in concerns with the adolescent male. Valentine (1996) explores how over the last several centuries, the dominant Western constructions of childhood have oscillated on the oppositional significations of angel/devil. She argues that although the 'angel' figure has been dominant this century, during the 1990s demonised understandings of childhood have been re-engaged, propelled by certain pivotal events such as the murder of Jamie Bulger by two ten year-olds in 1993. Current conceptions of childhood in Britain are dominated by the paradoxical argument that some children are out of control, and others are vulnerable to them, which both work to 'other' children. Male and older children are particularly likely to be constructed as dangerous and morally deviant by nature. There is a great concern to protect childhood as an institution and ideal, independent of concern for individual children. There has been a moral panic about the 'end of childhood', intersecting with anxiety about social breakdown in Britain (Valentine 1996).

These understandings about young people, especially adolescent males, as having a certain 'potency' predisposing them to violence and depravity are also evident in writings about youth, conflict and displacement and the debates around young people's participation in political violence. One position might see all under 18 as a homogeneous group of 'children', with the accompanying notions of passivity and depoliticisation, making any role they play in political violence one of a coerced victim (for criticism see Hart 2008). On the other hand, there can be a simplistic and deterministic relationship between youth and violence implied by ideas such as the 'youth bulge', where civil conflict is linked to the demographic profiles of countries with a high proportion of youth, seen as inherently linked to instability, disorder and conflict. Whether we conceive of young people as moral agents can have serious effects on the processes of justice or injustice we subject them to (Mawson 2004). Both ideas of adolescence or 'youth' as a time of turmoil and rebellion, and 'childhood' as unequivocally innocent are culturally specific to modern western society. Displaced 'youth' may be in a liminal position between two powerful norms - that of children as 'special', encoded in law, and that of asylum seekers potentially

'bogus' and threatening. This is seen in age disputes, highlighted by the controversy over the case in the opening article from the *Sun*. Young people on the boundaries are caught between being able to claim human (read children's) rights, and being locked up without having committed a crime.

Children's Rights and Biopolitics

In the conceptions of childhood we can see this same binary image of vulnerable victim/dangerous criminal. Whilst concern with children's special nature of purity, innocence and vulnerability frames some displaced young people as especially needy of care from adults and the state (Pupavac 2001, Valentine 1996), others, particularly adolescent males, may be demonised in the elision of several 'moral panics' about juvenile delinquency, bogus asylum seekers and the breakdown of society (Valentine 1996). Again we have seen a biopolitical concern with the 'real' victim, the genuine refugee, the idealised child that is the moral figure of our time in the secular international human rights 'order of things' that leaves those beyond these discourses criminalised. Governmentality works through concerns with refugee welfare that shape bodies into docility, and the dynamics of asylum include the 'differentiation of the "other"' (Lynn and Lea 2003), where exclusion seeks to filter out 'the bogus' as a threat not to only to 'us' but to the genuine and idealised 'them'.

Age disputes point us towards concepts of subjectification and self-presentation and how young men may need to perform their identity when in such an uneasy position. The young body necessary to obtain the benefits of a privileged children's refugeehood is subject to determination of age by medical examination (e.g. by X-ray) in age disputes, but young people may also learn and internalise culturally specific markers of childhood. There is a danger that for the displaced person to be recognised they must adopt a damaged subjectivity. As Fassin puts it: 'the narrative relationship to one's own history and body, created by the repetition of self-justifying accounts to state authorities, generates a pathetic self-image' (Fassin 2001: 5). There is a problem then with the child rights discourse, which potentially for displaced adolescent males involves either constraints as they 'become' children, or the risk of a degraded subjectivity of problematic (racialised) masculinity and demonised youth (Alexander 2004, Bigo 2006, Fassin 2001, Valentine 1996).

Children's rights are a particularly interesting example of how refugee advocacy can seem an appealing and attractive 'answer' to restrictive state action, but involve a loss of agency for the protected, serving moral welfare managers rather than calling for greater equality before the law for displaced people to speak and act (Rajaram, 2002). In the next chapter I analyse two advocacy reports, attempting to ground the theory I have outlined in empirical data but also to open it up with some further questions that the theory does not entirely encapsulate.

4 'Children First and Asylum Seekers Second' – Case Studies

This section will use the analysis of two reports by children's rights organisations working for refugee rights in order examine some of the limitations of refugee advocacy at work; its 'counter-stereotypes' and biopolitical logic that I have discussed in previous chapters. The reports are 'awareness raising' reports, drawing attention to particular issues and making policy recommendations: 'Like any other child? Children and families in the asylum process' (Reacroft 2008) and 'Living on the edge of despair: destitution amongst asylum seeking and refugee children' (The Children's Society 2008). These were chosen as recent examples of substantial pieces of work on refugee children from member organisations of the Refugee Children's Consortium. The impetus behind a close examination of texts is the premise that the social construction of asylum seekers takes place through dialogical and discursive processes (Lynn and Lea 2003). Textual dynamics help construct certain relations between different actors, although discourses are not static and totalising but open to change (Lynn and Lea 2003). Thus I ask two sets of questions. Firstly, what are the strategies that construct an overarching narrative or sense of reality in these texts, and what are the consequences of the story and the subjects that it produces? Secondly, are there moments in the text where we might see other narratives emerge? This is especially interesting given the inclusion of various 'real life stories' in both reports. These 'refugee voices' are at once immediate and indicative of individual subjectivity, yet also mediated in the context of the report, and I will be looking closely at possible tensions between the two.

The Endurance of Abject Refugeehood despite 'Refugee Voices'

Displaced children are portrayed as victims in both reports. The reports conform to the dominant notions of both the refugee as abject and the child and their developmental progress as universal and vulnerable to disruption (Prout and James 1997). Both reports have striking cover images showing pictures of individual children (for the Children's Society report cover refer back to Figure 1, for the Barnardo's cover see below, Figure 6). The choice of individual children as cover pictures can be read as confirmation of the importance of the body in defining refugeehood. Both children look directly at the viewer with dejected expressions. Their defensive postures give the impression of a need for protection, and eye contact becomes an imploring gaze towards the reader to help them.

The covers illustrate that the displaced young person who is the subject of children's rights is a victimised younger child. The title of the Children's Society report works in a fairly explicit way to convey the abjection of destitute refugee children: 'Living on the edge of despair'. The Barnardo's title works in a subtler way. The title is phrased as a question: 'Like any other child?', and the following page shows a quote in the first person powerfully expressing dehumanising suffering against the background of a degraded landscape.

The rhetorical device of the question is often used to introduce an argument and as 'a means of postulating what one wishes to prove' (Lynn and Lea 2003: 441). In this case the assertion is that children in the asylum process are not like any other children – in that they are 'reduced to nothing', although the question further points to the answer – that

perhaps they should be seen 'like any other child' according to the vision of universal child rights and welfare. The title and its use of contrast between displaced children and an ideal childhood is thus evidence of the paradoxical tendency to emphasise the exceptionality of the displaced at the same time as promoting and reinforcing human rights ideals supposedly based on ideas of universality (Nyers 2006, Way 2009).

Figure 6: Front cover and following page of Barnardo's report 'Like Any Other Child?...' (Reacroft 2008) © Barnardo's.

Notions of trauma and mental ill-health appear fairly prominently in both reports, mostly regarding mothers and young children. This is in line with the 'extreme case formulation' (Lynn and Lea 2003) of stories selected to line up with feminised or infantalised notions of deserving victims that is the mainstay of both reports. The case of 'Maria' in the Barnardo's report shows how advocacy discourses ascribe 'trauma' to the challenging experiences of women and children through framing 'refugee voices'. A narrator's voice frames blocks of direct quotation, working forward, summing up in the third person the story about to be read, placing certain statements in the reader's mind as assumed facts:

> 'The asylum process was *traumatic* for both mother and daughter and took no account of Maria's needs as a child' … 'the interview was *traumatic* for Maria.' … 'Some serious problems remain'. (Reacroft 2008: 26-30, emphasis mine)

This image of 'trauma' is also bolstered by the selection of a particular quote which is used to illustrate points twice earlier in the report, and is enlarged and highlighted:

> 'I was interviewed for two hours and asked about 80 questions. Maria was sitting there and it was horrible, horrible. I felt like I was in custody, like I have killed someone. Maria was five and a half at the time. She didn't understand what was happening. She was crying.' (Reacroft 2008: 27)

However, looking at the full script told by the refugee woman (included as an annex), it becomes doubtful that this incident, although extremely difficult, was 'traumatic'. The main source of stress and hardship in the story is not the isolated event of the interview, but rather the lack of legal status and waiting for their case to be determined. Buried in the middle of blocks of quotations framed with narration about the horror of the application process and 'serious problems remaining' we can see a desire by the mother to move on, while the young person proves adaptable:

> 'After a month... it was positive. I think we got indefinite leave to remain... that day I cried too, it was like happiness' …. 'Now we manage... Maria feels comfortable here. She doesn't want to go to the USA. She tells them they [the rest of the family] have to come here'. (Reacroft 2008: 29)

This example demonstrates that advocacy discourses heavily mediate the lived experience of refugees but the inclusion of 'refugee voices' can conceal this. 'Refugee voices' are now seen to be an important element of good advocacy. The process of 'listening' supposedly 'empowers' the refugee and their 'voice' provides a powerful, seemingly transparent and truthful account (Rajaram 2002). In both reports it is highlighted early on that the interviewers 'met with' displaced people who 'told their stories' which 'deserve to be listened to'. First names are used, and the Barnardo's report highlights quotes in a font that looks like handwriting. Such devices give the impression of individual human beings speaking directly to the reader in a natural and equal sharing of information. However, this makes invisible the experts' authorship, agenda and influence in producing the information (Rajaram 2002) and the alignment of voices with the overall analysis in their representation as text (Eastmond 2007). The above example reveals the 'voices' are received, digested and presented in an overall narrative of trauma. The decontextualisation of the poignant quotation highlighted, and its different meaning when re-contextualised, reveals this co-option of refugee speech.

'Womenandchildren' and Masculine Marginality

Adolescent males are marginal to both reports, which is simply illustrated through the tables below (Figure 8). Furthermore, striking things are revealed about gender and age when we examine how the central refugee subjects of the report are depicted. The ideas set out of abject refugeehood as either a young child or a feminised traumatised adult are complicated by the prominence of the composite figure 'womenandchildren' (Jaji 2009). In both reports, although the subject of concern is ostensibly children, 'personal stories' are of mothers (mostly single) with (young) children. This is particularly evident in the Children's Society report which makes prominent examples of young women forced into prostitution, depressed pregnant women and struggling mothers of babies. The reports' reliance on these images can be linked to the argument that children's rights are conceptualised by their advocates as a universal international morality, and the child is 'elevated as the integrative symbol for society' (Pupavac 2001: 97). The 'aura of the sacred' around the 'womanandchild' could be read as a quasi-religious dimension of asylum

(Bigo 2006). On the one hand the moral merit ascribed to discourses of the suffering woman may provide valuable protection to displaced women and be adopted as part of refugee subjectivity to provide meaning and resource (Eastmond 2007). On the other hand the portrayal of struggling femininity as inseparable from motherhood may further a depoliticised and bodily refugeehood[14] for both women and children, who become a hybridised figure of vulnerability.

WOMEN (21)	MEN (2)
Amina, Sally, Nehanda, Djany's, Msimba, Ramela, Nelly, Esther, Abigail, Madeleine, Jennifer, Naomi, Meiying, Mary, Ardiana, Serena, Barbara, Tina, Pauline, Carol, Olivia.	Amadou, Hamid

MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN or PREGNANT WOMEN (20)	ADOLESCENTS (3)
Amina, Sally, Nehanda, Djany's, Msimba, Nelly, Esther, Abigail, Madeleine, Jennifer, Naomi, Meiying, Mary, Ardiana, Serena, Barbara, Tina, Pauline, Carol, Olivia.	Ramela, Amadou, Hamid

Figure 7: Breakdown of 23 'Refugee Stories' featured in both reports.

Male figures are not entirely absent from the reports but portrayals of them are ambivalent. The Barnardo's report features no male 'voices'. References to men continue to be subsumed within the idea of trauma, for instance, examples of a husband and a son suffering depression are cited. The contrast between the mothers' struggles and the men in their lives portrayed as weak, damaged and dependent can be read as a further valorisation of the 'mother' figure and draws attention to the utter lack of 'strong' male figures of refugees in these reports. This tendency in advocacy can be linked to academic work which tends to see the upsetting of patriarchal norms that often accompanies displacement from more 'traditional' cultures to liberal western societies as inevitably producing non-productive, criminal or violent male behaviour. Whilst the interest in how culturally inscribed expectations of masculinity are challenged and transformed in the context of displacement is valuable, there is a danger of determinism in seeing the alternative masculinities that might arise as problematic (Jaji 2009). In the Barnardo's report one portrayal of masculinity does border on negative, with an example of the strain of refugeehood causing a husband to leave his family. Although there are evidently real issues with relational breakdown in the context of upheaval, it is worth noting that this image of refugee men as guilty of damage to refugee women and children does feature.

The Children's Society report does give some visibility to young men. It features two unaccompanied minors, young men of 16 and 18. Encouragingly, explicit attention is drawn to their difficulties with age disputes and the idea of a 'gap' or tension between child protection and adult legislation. However, this promising opening of visibility of

[14] It is interesting to note for further study that there are certain types of femininity which are valorised over others, and look into how a 'madonna and child' image might position displaced women who do not conform to this image.

adolescent males quickly becomes obscured. Neither of the young men have much 'voice' in the report, neither have their own emotive '[Amina's] Story' boxes, interspersed throughout the main body of the report, telling refugees stories more fully and with more direct quotations. Their concerns and personhood are skimmed over in favour of an overarching narrative. One of the major features of discourses is a production of unity that does not necessarily exist in reality (Eastmond 2007). In trying to understand the causes of destitution amongst displaced people, the report becomes rather disjointed and the authors attempt to draw together its analysis with a return in rhetorical focus to ideas of young children and women as particularly vulnerable, and asylum policies as detrimental to their development and emotional wellbeing.

Welfare and the Heroic NGO

The reports confirm that children's rights advocacy relies on a logic driven by concern with refugee welfare rather than the political aspects of asylum. In the Barnardo's report the form of refugee abjection is tied up not only with the internal factors of mental health, but with external conditions, particularly focusing on the state of accommodation and its inappropriateness for children. Although we should not downplay the reality of the harsh conditions that people face, it is questionable if this conceptualisation of the problem is evident in the testimonies of displaced people themselves. Rather we might see a contestation in the understanding of the problem of refugeehood expressed in the testimonies – that the uncertainty of gaining legal status in the 'culture of disbelief' underpinned all other problems. But in the main text of the reports, the 'villain' for the conditions suffered by asylum seeking families is obscure. Although specific government policies are denounced regarding children's rights, a concessionary view of the overarching asylum policy as benevolent and benign is taken, demonstrated in the language of moderation below in Figure 8 (such as 'does not challenge', 'welcomes' 'compassionate'). This acceptance of asylum policy and the unwillingness to acknowledge a need for protection for those other than children (adults just need to be 'respected') is shown below.

> 'Barnardo's does not challenge the reality that not all families applying for asylum can be allowed to stay, indeed – although some will be surprised at this – Barnardo's welcomes new procedures which mean many families will be returned to their country of origin more promptly. But when families are here awaiting decisions about their future they should be respected and their children protected and they should be treated with dignity. Most importantly, the children of asylum seekers should always be treated as children first and asylum seekers second.'
>
> 'Barnardo's welcomes the NAM procedures and believes they could provide a more compassionate approach... however, we do not think this will be enough to protect children's interests.'
> Reacroft 2008

Figure 8: Advocacy's concessionary view of government asylum policies.

The key message of the Refugee Children's Consortium that runs through these reports that 'these children should be treated as children first and asylum seekers or refugees second' has questionable effects. The reports outline potential or evident negative effects

of government policy towards asylum seekers in the New Asylum Model and then proceed to attempt to make each of these concerns specific to children. In setting the category of 'child' in a preferential order to other displaced people, these case studies show how advocacy plays into a binary where a certain embodiment of refugeehood is implicitly portrayed as 'real' and 'genuine' and is subject to welfare solutions, and teenagers and men who do not fit into images of vulnerability remain subject to the stigmatising politics of asylum.

What becomes clear with the focus on welfare and children's rights is that a significant purpose of both these reports is to flag up the hero of the story. The Children's Society declares in a list of its work that it is '...protecting their rights, campaigning on their behalf...', and ends with the heroic declaration 'We stand by children. We fight for their childhood. We never give up.' Barnardo's urges us to 'Believe in children' and proves the 'general problematic of improvement' (Li 2005) is alive and well with the statement 'We have a great opportunity now to improve life for children of asylum seekers, who are some of the most disadvantaged in the UK', reminiscent of its roots in the moralising child saving movement of the nineteenth century (Pupavac 2001). These solutions clearly show the attempt to establish a relation between the holder of children's rights and the empowered moral agent as the professionalised advocates who speak and act on behalf of their welfare (Pupavac 2001). They also give advocacy portrayals a potentially darker edge, pointing us to question whether refugee pain becomes fetishised and 'womenandchildren' victim figures commodified (Rajaram 2002) for instrumental use to serve the fundraising and marketing strategies of NGOs in an increasingly competitive third sector.

Subjectification: Agency and Constraint

The idea of children as 'children first and asylum seekers second' also conceals problematic conceptions about identity, and prompts us to look towards how identity and ideology interact. 'Ways of thinking about childhood fuse with institutional practices to produce self conscious subjects' (Prout and James 1997). Being a 'child first', living up to an idealised embodiment of western 'childhood', to become the subject of children's rights, may be particularly problematic for adolescent males who are simultaneously subjected to an imaginary of demonised youth (Sporton et al. 2006). In the negotiation of multiple and intersecting dominant discourses, displaced people may adopt certain elements of subjectivity and contest others. A detailed investigation of how we might see subjectification at work through refugee advocacy is beyond the scope of this dissertation, especially in view of the dearth of young people's voices in the case study reports. However, I will briefly examine two moments which hint at the power of advocacy to 'frame the discursive context within which subjectivities are constituted, reinforced and reconstituted' (Hay 1996: 261 in Lynn and Lea 2003: 429).

On the one hand we see that devices such as trauma, although part of constraining dominant discourses, may also be used as an instrument to oppose them (Calavita 2006). An example in the Barnardo's report shows the adoption of the humanitarian logic as a complement to political reasons for protection. A Zimbabwean refugee with a 14 year old daughter with cerebral palsy and brain damage explains:

> I was refused asylum but the High Court said that my case should be considered because of my child's special needs... I've filed for a new application still on medical conditions, and on the basis that I'm politically active, you know, I belong to the opposition party.'

This adoption of an understanding of the body as marker of legitimacy in asylum claims demonstrates that responses to challenges work within the metaphors of the discourses. This example reminds us, whilst interrogating the power of dominant discourses, that individuals are not 'controlled' by them but have agency and may present their stories strategically for a particular audience/context. Despite the deep problems of assuming 'trauma' we can qualify criticism by acknowledging that refugees may adopt certain tropes for their own use but point beyond them as a defining condition (Hedman 2009). A story of suffering can be used positively to understand self, collective identity and one's place in society through serving a testimonial purpose to validate the moral worth of what the individual has been through (Eastmond 2007)

However, representations of young men may often serve to constrain an understanding of them as subjects with agency, as the case of 'Amadou' in the Children's Society Report illustrates. On the one hand we have evidence that this 18 year old male is capable and active in seeking asylum for political reasons. We are told that he refused to sign Section 4, basic support for refused asylum seekers that is conditional on return when safe or possible to do so, 'because the problems that sent me here' and when unable to find legal representation filled out his forms himself using a French-English dictionary. However in another section of the report he is quoted under a section entitled 'Emotional Wellbeing'. The section opens with 'Parent's extreme stress and mental ill health has a strong impact on their children's emotional well-being.... Many were depressed and felt powerless...' and Amadou is added to a list of quotations, saying 'It's very difficult. To sleep is difficult. I am ill.' Despite evidence in their own account of Amadou's agentive subjectivity, the ability for him to be at once suffering as well as capable and resilient, the overall advocacy text sets boundaries for understanding identity that reduce identities to neediness (Rajaram 2002). Amadou's filling out of his forms alone sits uncomfortably with the motto 'we fight on their behalf'. The placing of his quotation under a section about emotional wellbeing of parents and children shows how the overarching paradigms of refugee as tragic and corporeal victim, and child as vulnerable to disruptions in 'normal' development, remain unquestioned (Prout and James 1997, Rajaram 2002).

These case studies have shown that the concerns that I outlined are not merely theoretical but evident in reports produced by children's rights organisations to advocate for young displaced people. The tension in the mediation of refugee voices exposes the biopolitical logic at work and points us to consider subjectification. The examples have also helped complicate my theories and I now move to further expand investigation beyond a focus on biopolitics, towards some sketches of different, possibly more equitable, directions in refugee advocacy.

5 Beyond

Throughout this piece I have portrayed advocacy as working upon a welfare logic that can easily become victimising. I believe this argument to be valid and worthwhile. However, the previous section began to open up this 'ideal type' argument to further nuances and I now take a cursory glance at some other examples of emerging advocacy which do not fit the confines of my argument, and ask what directions they point to for future investigation into refugee advocacy and its effects.

Creativity, 'Contact' and Mediated Discourses

Advocacy that provides refreshing visibility for young men outside the logic of welfare of suffering victims exists. Refugee Week has a section on the website entitled 'Who are Refugees?' listing individual asylum seekers and refugees by occupation or interest, many of them young men. Displaced young men featured include a model, a boxer, a DJ and a flamenco guitarist. These portrayals make young men visible as creative, ambitious and achieving, and the examples of talent are attainable rather than exceptional. However, we might question what the effects might be of a romanticised view of refugees centring around creativity as a trope. Could an idea of refugees as 'creative genius' again have a depoliticising tendency, as 'natural' skill is favoured? Images of natural talent gloss over the need for formal education as a route to livelihoods which may be particularly important for young men to achieve a 'productive' masculinity (Jaji 2009). The profiles are set out in the form of celebrity culture with questions about how they attained or manage their particular success as 'guitarist' or 'model'. This points us to ask whether these portrayals risk becoming attractive surfaces that catch the eye but eschew engagement with the issues that face refugees and asylum seekers, and play into a commodification of the refugee as desirable, leaving questions of ethical duty aside?

Rather that promoting refugees as creative, other advocacy uses creative processes to advocate. Actors for Human Rights put on several productions concerning asylum: 'The Asylum Monologues', 'The Asylum Dialogues' and 'The Illegals'. These pieces are based on testimonies from displaced people and performed as readings in the first person. The result is a powerful sense of 'personal stories' with more nuance and complexity than written testimonies easily 'framed' and edited to serve key messages. Simultaneous senses of pathos, humour, resilience, vulnerability and injustice are conveyed and much sympathy with displaced people is created without heroising the displaced. The reading style of the pieces reminds the viewer that the actor is reading someone else's story not as 'drama' but 'testimony'. A further aim of the reading style is that a production can be put on quickly by volunteer actors, allowing the company to stage productions all around the country at short notice. This may be effective to tackle stigmatising attitudes. A powerful idea is that one of the most effective and lasting ways to tackle deep-seated prejudices and ingrained perceived grievances is 'contact', to let the parties meet face to face and listen to each other.[15] Could testimonial theatre create a kind of proxy 'contact' that can be brought to all sorts of sectors of British society, from meetings of MPs to working class

[15] There could be some interesting further questions about these contact methods and the importance of the body in refugee advocacy. Unfortunately I have neither the space nor capacity to follow them through here.

'abject whites' (Hubbard, 2004)?[16] Stories of individuals, be they young men or mothers, may stir compassion in other individuals that lead to attitudes more sympathetic and understanding of the needs and challenges faced by those seeking asylum. The portrayal of refugees as full human beings may suggest solutions of equality and inclusion rather than welfare. However, the theatre is a bounded space/time pocket where an audience comes expecting to be taken on an emotional journey. Is there a danger that such creative interventions slip into a romanticised voyeurism of refugee struggle without an impetus to change policy or fundamental attitudes towards actual displaced people? Might there be problems with some forms of 'contact' as catharsis or guilt-appeasement for one side, without really addressing the grievances of the other?

So we might question if either portraying refugees as 'creative', or using more creative processes for advocacy, although adding nuanced visibility to masculinities, really take us beyond the problems of mediated discourses and a depoliticisation of the refugee. However, the positive points of testimonial theatre do remind us that despite the problems with the co-option of 'refugee voices' in advocacy discourses, we must not reject the principle of listening and acting upon the opinions of refugees themselves as agentive beings (Eastmond 2007) and I now turn to explore what some 'refugee voices' might reveal.

Re-politicisation and its Limits

Despite the depoliticising logic of the Barnardo's report, through the inclusion of large sections of 'refugees voices' in the annex there is space for another logic to emerge. The narratives of asylum seekers are not absorbed into the framing of children's rights and welfare, and in fact, a very different narrative for advocacy could emerge from the same interviews, which I demonstrate below. It is a political logic about legal status, where refugees assert a desire to have their productive, not suffering, bodies recognised.

> The problem: the long waiting times for asylum decisions and the withholding of certain rights is detrimental to all asylum seekers, who seek protection from persecution.
>
> 'I will start by saying that I am in this position because as an asylum seeker because I face persecution... it has been so, so difficult for all these years to imagine that we could be sent home to die...' (I8)
>
> 'I was so stressed because this is not my country and I have no right to do anything. You have not right to work. You just sit at home waiting for benefits' (I5)
>
> 'Waiting was the worst thing' (I4)
>
> 'I was scared in the street when I saw the police … I was scared when someone rang the bell … every time I thought about this, until the day I got leave to remain' (I4)

[16] There are some very interesting questions around race, class alienation in British society and attitudes to asylum (Pupavac 2008) that would be fascinating to explore but unfortunately are beyond the scope of this paper.

The key actor: the government and its restrictive policies create a sense of fear and punishment

'The government tells some people they are lying and then when they reach back home, they die' (I5)

'It is like you have committed a crime by coming and seeking asylum. We came here for protection so we should be protected.' (I9)

'...the uncertainty of not knowing when they are going to come and get you. The fear that is installed in us asylum seekers...' (I9)

'We want the Government to consider that protection should be more important than reducing numbers' (I8)

The solution: asylum with full civil rights should be granted, the right to work as key to 'well being'

'We received the form to say we got to stay, oh my God, we were so happy' (I4)
'Now I have been allowed to stay in the UK... I am very happy… I am ready to move on' (I2)

'oh, that will be the day when we get the papers… the paper is driving everything' (I3)

'Things started getting better for me when my husband and I went to court. The judge believed us …. now I have been given British citizenship.' (I5)

'Getting employment would have been the natural way to let people heal from the issues that they suffered. I am poor because the Government wants me to be poor. I've been virtually made poor. It's difficult to imagine. It is terrible when your life depends of the power of someone else' (I8)

Reacroft 2008 (Interview numbers bracketed)

Figure 9: An alternative narrative for advocacy from emerging from refugee voices

There may be currency bringing the discussion of asylum in advocacy back to 'politics'. Whilst on the one hand a 'politicised' debate is often understood in negative terms, it is arguable that asylum in Britain has been 'securitised' in terms of being taken beyond the realm of open choice, debate and responsibility (Buzan et al. 1998). Underlying political premises, such as the idea of the volume of asylum applications as problematic, are little challenged and I have argued that this may be especially so in refugee advocacy that uses the theme of trauma, or the rhetoric of children's rights that works on a logic concerned with managing welfare. Re-politicisation foregrounds debate and challenge around what we perceive as threats or threatened, and brings calls for 'rights' back to concrete civil and political rights rather than the softer broad human rights based discourses that we have seen are easily amenable to a biopolitical logic (Pupavac 2001, 2008).

For instance, the 'Strangers into Citizens' campaign calls for a regularisation for all undocumented migrants who have been here for six years. Such a re-politicisation[17] may work to benefit young men. A focus on politics changes the criteria of refugee legitimacy beyond the body. Political problems and solutions means an advocacy logic that moves away from aid and care for dependent deserving victims, back to reinstating membership in a common political body and inclusion on the grounds of a commitment to a democratic political culture (Gibney 2004).

As the aforementioned campaign demonstrates very evidently, the ultimate answer is often citizenship and the restoration of displaced people to the other side of a refugee-citizen binary. Pupavac's (2001, 2008) condemnation of the depoliticising tendencies of advocacy sets very much suggests this sort of political approach to tackle exclusion. But does this in some ways still conform to the violent relation of sovereignty? Edkins and Pin Fat (2005) discuss whether some acts that seemingly oppose asylum policies merely work within the 'relation of violence' of the sovereign state. Furthermore there is a link between citizenship and an ideal masculinity (Jaji 2009). In highlighting the problems faced by young men as they lose citizenship and are denied an ideal masculinity by both hostile and advocacy discourses, we must be careful that solutions do not simply seek to reinforce asylum for a prototypical male subject persecuted for his politics, leaving dominant notions of gender and political subjectivity unquestioned. How might we attempt to imagine beyond the 'citizen can speak' solutions (Rajaram 2002)?

Transnational Imaginaries and Local Action?

The conundrum remains – even if advocacy moves away from representations reliant on the generic figure of a suffering victim, and towards an explicit engagement with politics, sovereignty still monopolises our conceptions of political space, identity and practice. The state is the legitimate authority and space, citizenship is the type of political subjectivity we possess (Nyers 2006). Is the 'national order of things' (Malkki 1995) just a pragmatic inevitability that advocacy must conform to? It is challenging and beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully address how critical understandings might translate into advocacy beyond the 'should nots'. But to end with, I very briefly introduce two potential pathways beyond the state to the importance of two other spatial scales – the global and the local (Smith 1994).

A participatory study of young refugees' media consumption and production revealed that although young people had stories that fit within the discourse of trauma, they did not wish to share these images of themselves as 'exoticised victims'. Instead they displayed playful explorations that drew on transnational youth culture and new belongings, in order to work towards social connections and status in their new local communities (De Block 2008). Through research such as this we can conceptualise identity in ways that are less bounded and binding. Whilst discourses and socio-spatial factors work in tandem to structure refugees' lives, at the same time a great deal of agency and creativity are also evident in youth identity building (Hart 2008).

[17] The campaign is in some ways still limited as it does not directly tackle current admission policies but in its focus on bringing people into equality with the law is markedly more political than other examples of advocacy.

Young people locate themselves and negotiate their position in relation to social narratives of what it means to be male, young, or an asylum seeker (Sporton 2006) but also form and transform hybrid identities beyond essentialised 'childhood' or 'refugeehood'. As we saw from the case studies of children's rights advocacy reports, participatory research with young people themselves was lacking in forming the reports. For victimhood not to be a 'given' there is a need for the opening of real 'voice' for young displaced people and their transnational imaginaries. Advocacy might open its concepts and awarenesses to diasporic senses of belonging, and engage with the modes of transnational cultural production and consumption to let young people tell stories that can be transformational towards the future (De Block 2008, Eastmond 2007).

The sub-national spaces of lived experience for both displaced people and British citizens are also important in order to transform attitudes to, and imaginaries of asylum. The location of displaced people in certain spaces of British society, such as low income housing estates, may play a part in sustaining negative stereotypes. Spaces where large groups of British citizens are marginalised and have real grievances may feed reassertions of boundaries along national and ethnic lines, which welfare-based discourses of refugee advocacy emanating from a moral middle class do not speak to. It may be worth asking whether advocacy could more effectively tackle the negative asylum attitudes and policies by supporting meaningful programmes of contact that create space for innovative local identity formations and transformations in the community (Camino 1994). The addressing of understandings of asylum by engaging with specific issues at the local level might be a basis from which to build towards transnational imaginaries.

6 Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to criticise refugee advocacy by scrutinising how a particular segment of the displaced population, young men, are marginalised by it. Advocacy's tropes of trauma and victimhood adhere to a wider biopolitical logic. A particular advocacy discourse, that of children's rights, also serves a management of refugee welfare for dependent 'womenandchildren' rather than challenging the political basis of exclusion. 'Refugee voices' in advocacy texts reveal both the adoption, imprinting and contestation of subjectivities that advocacy discourses produce. The problems of depoliticised conceptions of refugeehood are particularly pervasive even as advocacy moves beyond victim tropes. Each new mode of advocacy brings its own difficulties regarding addressing the violent relation of state sovereignty. Moving towards imagining and creating a sense of belonging beyond the state is the hinge upon which concern with the refugee rests and the answers to such grandiose questions lie beyond the scope of what I can address here, but I have suggested that we might begin to reinvigorate ideas for advocacy with an increased engagement with both global and local belongings.

There have been certain limits in the scope of this paper that have at times been frustrating. A concern with young men as invisible or problematically visible, despite being the majority of the demographic seeking asylum in the UK, prompted this avenue of inquiry. However, I have been aware throughout that the methodological approach

cannot do justice to the nuance of the diversity of these individuals and their multiple age and gendered identities. In a paper that is primarily concerned with a broad theorising of discourses and their effects, 'young men' has inevitably been used as a slightly crude category. Methodological limits have not allowed full exploration of questions around identity that would be possible by complementing discursive analysis with more nuanced ethnographic data (for example: Hampshire et al. 2008, Turner 2005). But these limits have been balanced with the advantage of using 'young men' as a provocation for criticising advocacy and to explore the theorisation of refugeehood. Similarly, we must acknowledge that the portrayal of advocacy is undoubtedly simplified, but that this has allowed the development of a clear analysis of the biopolitics of asylum. Overall this paper has attempted to demonstrate the currency in applying a Foucauldian analysis to refugee advocacy and linking notions of governmentality to critical work around conceptions of displaced young people. Despite its limits, it has opened up many areas ripe for further exploration. The rich data produced from merely a brief examination of two reports shows that a wider range of refugee advocacy could be much further explored, as indicated by the introduction of some emerging themes of advocacy beyond victimhood. Most notably a more substantial look at how we see subjectification at work and contested in the discourses of humanitarian universality and human rights would contribute to the field of forced migration. It would both keep it critical to seeming 'solutions', whilst pushing beyond totalising notions of 'control' that critical perspectives can often slip into, towards elucidating the ways agentive individuals are reforming discourses of what it means to be a refugee and act towards refugees.

Throughout the study of such a topic there are struggles with the ethical questions around taking a critical and relativist stance in relation to well-intentioned advocacy (Hastrup and Elsass 1990, Scheper-Hughes 1995). There is some sense in which current advocacy is of use in its normative nature, 'generating pity' for efficient resource donation (Rajaram 2002). But I believe a concern with who speaks on behalf of whom and with what effects is far from debilitating, rather a worthy exercise in order to move us beyond a comfortable attitude towards an asylum system that is deeply and damagingly exclusionary. In 2007 the Home Office granted 16% of initial decisions refugee status, and allowed 23% of appeals (Home Office 2008). Its reports are a stark reminder, in Figure 10 (below), of the predominance of the violent relation of state sovereignty (Arendt 1951) which resolves to exclude from the benefits of protection within Britain individual human beings who are perceived as a criminalised and dehumanised mass.

> ...we removed a record 4,200 foreign criminals from the United Kingdom, 80% more than the previous year...
>
> ….the public performance target to remove more failed asylum seekers than new anticipated unfounded claims (the tipping point target) was missed.... 13,705 asylum seekers, including dependants, were removed or departed voluntarily ….
>
> …. we're delivering the biggest shake-up of our immigration system for a generation, including the introduction of ID cards for foreign nationals locking them to one identity....

….we're deporting more offenders to countries like China and Vietnam than ever before....

….We are expanding our detention estate by 60% over the next few years in order to increase our capacity to remove more of those with no legal basis to be in the UK....

….Tougher border controls mean in 2007 the number of people claiming refugee status was at its lowest annual level since 1993....
(Home Office 2008)

Figure 10: The violent relation of state sovereignty

This gives an engagement with advocacy urgency. A final example from one of the reports show hows the lack of a true challenge from refugee advocacy to the biopolitical logic of asylum fast becomes complicit with the governmentality that 'manages' migration in an exclusionary manner. The quote below is deeply troubling because it eschews reference to the fact that lower numbers of asylum seekers are due to non-arrival policies rather than to less persecution, plays into a technocratic language and conforms to the violent paradox of sovereignty, where exclusion is permitted in order to better care for those 'inside' (Nyers, 2006):

'Fewer asylum seekers are applying.... and only a small proportion of these are families with children. The New Asylum Model will ensure that new asylum applicants are dealt with quickly... until now, policy makers have not given children seeking asylum with their parents the consideration they deserve. We can change this. Because there are fewer applicants we can give these more attention... we can treat children in asylum seeking families as children first and as asylum seekers second' (Reacroft 2008: 21)

This quote illustrates that an interrogation of whether refugee advocacy conforms to, or tackles, the overarching and damaging biopolitical logic towards refugees in contemporary Britain is urgent and necessary; and in particular, the conundrum and challenge of thinking beyond the state and towards transnational imaginaries remains a task in hand.

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