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Cities of refuge Asylum and the politics of hospitality

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CITIES OF REFUGE

ASYLUM AND THE POLITICS OF HOSPITALITY

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This thesis is submitted in accordance with the regulations

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Durham University,

Department of Geography, 17th December 2008.

For Rebecca and Jessica

'I do not know whether it was under the influence of the illness or of a change that was already under way, as yet unnoticed, in my outlook, but I was increasingly possessed from day to day by a passionate, nagging desire for the ordinary life of an ordinary person'
Anton Chekhov

Declaration

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ABSTRACT

CITIES OF REFUGE

ASYLUM AND THE POLITICS OF HOSPITALITY

This thesis draws upon ethnographic work in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, to interrogate asylum as a *spatial* experience. Arguing that the routine framing of asylum as either an issue of national securitisation or cosmopolitan and humanitarian ethics serves to overlook the visceral and prosaic practices of living asylum in contemporary Britain, this thesis develops an account of responding to asylum seekers through everyday life which is immersed in the tacit sociality, and spatiality, of the city. Through detailing the complex negotiations which emerge as asylum seekers encounter and create an array of spaces within the city, this thesis considers how accounts of sovereignty, welcome, charity and generosity are actively performed, worked upon and fractured within daily practices of hospitality. Here national accounts of 'domopolitics' and 'secure borders' intermingle and conflict with emergent modes of ethical sensibility, as individuals respond to asylum seekers through a series of shared spaces of encounter and accomplishment. Of central importance throughout these chapters is the need to take seriously both the unique and fragile experiences of space which form part of asylum as a lived experience, and the inherently negotiated, tentative and contextual nature of these spaces of asylum, riven as they are by differing visions of asylum, ethics and politics.

Five chapters seek to document and approach these spaces of asylum as sites of affective belonging, and each draws together a range of accounts from social and political theory in order to engage with Sheffield's diverse politics of asylum. In doing so these chapters fuse a series of research encounters, engagements and events with an account of politics, ethics

and social theory which is emergent from the contextual negotiations of the present. A chapter on Sheffield's past illustrates how national accounts of asylum as a begrudging act of welcome infuse the negotiations of the city with asylum seekers in the present. This is then counterposed in the following chapter by an account of Sheffield as a 'City of Sanctuary', built upon a micropolitics of cultural change and a recognition of the city's relational responsibilities. Three chapters then focus on specific spaces within the city. The first of these examines the spatial negotiations of two weekly drop-in centres for asylum seekers, suggesting that these may act as sites of ethical improvisation and tacit learning. The second extends these ethical developments into the public spaces of Sheffield, arguing that a minimal politics of access and 'small achievements' arises from the particular fusion of encounter, material and memory thrown up by being among others in the city. The third of these chapters considers the varied spaces of accommodation for asylum seekers in Sheffield, arguing that these act as key constraints on an affective connection to the city and to others. These chapters develop an account of asylum as a lived, practiced and felt experience not simply occurring in Sheffield, but occurring *through* Sheffield. Through these chapters I then develop a possible 'politics of becoming' for asylum seekers, grounded in the opportunity for mutual and generous encounters with others, a reassertion of sanctuary as a public good and a recognition of the relational responsibilities asylum as a spatial connection throws up.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
THE CONTEMPORARY POLITICS OF ASYLUM

Early afternoon, I place a set of headphones tentatively over my head and press play on the attached CD player, a voice tells me to walk forward into the maze of rooms constructed from thin sheets of wood laid out in front of me. I enter a room bisected by a torn sheet of wire with a large hole crudely cut through it. The voice tells me this is the border, the place where refugees are made, while the sound of gunfire and chaotic white noise fills my ears. I move through the wire to the next room, here I am confined to a narrow passage of boxes, freight and the sound of a distant engine. The claustrophobia of confinement and airlessness, of an emotive suffocation, jolts me as the voice tells stories of the continental travels of these enclosed spaces of human trafficking, of tragedy, exploitation and death. From here I move to a desk, and the voice begins to accuse, asking my name, my nationality, my reason for daring to arrive in the UK, while a bewildering array of forms are thrust into my field of vision, each posing the question, why should we believe you? The questions and accusations of Croydon become a cacophony of protest as I move on to a room of stark grey walls, punctuated by blood-red lettering, crudely marking the words 'Go Home, Refugees Out'. As I look around the walls into the dank black cell of detention, my ears are jostled for attention by shouts of 'go home' and jeers at my 'bogus' and 'scrounging' status. These voices fade as I move onwards into a sparse, far lighter room. The walls are decorated in a paisley patterned beige wallpaper, and the voice informs me that this is now my room and that I will share this house with five others until a decision has been made. Looking around I see a small, uncomfortable looking single bed, a bedside table and lamp, and a functional, grey moulded plastic chair which reminds me of the discomfort of school assemblies. I move on and step out of this constructed world as the voice begins to recount the many and varied contributions which asylum seekers and refugees have made to the UK. I step back and peer once again into this series of wooden spaces considering as I do so the non-representational nature of asylum itself, of how those people and places which comprise the journeys of asylum may never be fully accounted for, fully articulated through a collage of voices, spray paint, wooden walls and barbed wire. Asylum escapes and exceeds. I step beyond the frame of 'experiencing asylum' and into the streets of a city created, in part, from the excessive multitude of asylum as an experience.

Asylum, encountered here through the 'Moving Here' exhibition,[1] is a claim for space. From the often torturous journey to the UK through to the establishment of a new life with refugee status, all are shot through with the spatial. Traversing the plywood construction of such spaces in a community centre in Sheffield, from the confinement of a lorry to the isolation of an empty bedroom, highlighted the ways in which asylum is itself a prism through which space is experienced. 'Moving Here' was designed as a 'moving towards', a means for others to begin to appreciate what it is to be an asylum seeker within the UK. Above all else, 'Moving Here' is an experience, of space, dislocation and discomfort and it is these relationships to different spaces which pattern the lives of asylum seekers. I want to argue through this thesis that such experiences matter, and that in detailing and examining them we might begin to envisage different ways of relating to asylum as an issue which ties together not only concerns with ethics and politics, but also the very responsibilities which accrue through simply being 'here'.

From the turn of the century to the present, the asylum seeker, itself a legal categorization invented in the 1990s to define and order more effectively this miasmic presence within international politics (see Dillon 1999; Gibney 2004), has always presented to the nation the central question of its founding myths. Whether that be in highlighting the permeability of our 'secure' national borders, the limits of supposedly universal rights which are acquired and employed in national, citizen centred, frames (Arendt 1973; Balibar 2004; Benhabib 2004), or the ever present danger that we all stand on the precipice of becoming refugees (Diken and Laustsen 2002, 2005), asylum seekers unsettle our routines, question our privileges and force us to consider the rights we enjoy. Consequently, the question of how to respond to such challenges, and to the 11.4 million refugees currently displaced across the world (UNHCR 2008), is a fundamental one for governments (Dummett 2001). Yet, despite the acknowledgement from most liberal democracies that asylum should be a fundamental right, the abstract, undifferentiated, figure of the asylum seeker has become, as Tyler (2006) and Kushner (2003) suggest, the archetypal scapegoat of our times, the derided hate figure of a nation not only anxious over its place within the world (Gilroy

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[1] The 'Moving Here' exhibition was a travelling exhibition designed to simulate the refugee experience for school children and the general public in Sheffield. I experienced this encounter during Sheffield's 2007 'Refugee Week' celebrations.

2004), but increasingly concerned by perceived threats to its security, borders and 'integrity' (Hughes 2007). As Bauman (2004, p.66-67, original emphasis) argues;

> 'In addition to representing the 'great unknown' which all 'strangers in our midst' embody, these particular outsiders, the refugees, bring home distant noises of war and the stench of gutted homes and scorched villages that cannot but remind the settled how easily the cocoon of their safe and familiar (safe *because* familiar) routine may be pierced or crushed and how deceptive the security of their settlement must be'.

It is within the context of increasing concerns to secure and harden that 'cocoon' of the 'safe and familiar' that this study seeks to examine the contemporary politics of urban asylum in one UK city. I argue that if we look in detail at the political negotiations which daily mark, perform and articulate asylum as a spatial process, we might see more than simply the story of a hardening, cocoon like, public hostility towards asylum driving ever more repressive governmental modes of social and spatial ordering. This story does undoubtedly exist, and it will inform many of these pages, however I want to argue that there is more than this alone, that there may be minor, yet important, moments of resilience, enchantment and engagement from which a different kind of politics of asylum could be envisaged. This would be a politics that takes seriously the challenges of asylum to dominant visions of nationhood, security and community, yet one which is orientated around a different set of reference points, of hospitality, agonism and above all else a sense of generous responsibility towards other people and other places.[2] This research examines these orientations towards an ethical politics in two ways, firstly through asking how these visions might emerge in the dispositions, encounters and transgressions of everyday life (see McCormack 2003; Varela 1999), and secondly, how these visions might come to construct, in part, a series of spaces of asylum, spaces where ideals of openness and conviviality come into contact, tension and conflict with demands for fixity, sovereign rights and exclusionary politics. In taking seriously the sensory, visceral and experiential relationships of asylum seekers to spaces of the home, the drop-in centre, the park and the city square, I argue that we can view the daily negotiations of politics, ethics and space

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[2] A number of social theorists have begun to sketch such a politics imbued, from the very start, with an ethical orientation of generous engagement with the world. Many of these thinkers will be examined and taken as allies in the pages to come, however to briefly highlight just a few we might think of William Connolly's (1995, 2002) concerns with pluralism and micropolitics, Doreen Massey's (2004, 2005) work on the outward responsibilities of place, Chantal Mouffe's (1995, 2005) elaboration of an agonistic politics and Jacques Derrida's (1995, 1999, 2001a) work on responsibility and hospitality.

which condition the lives of asylum seekers as sites through which plural political responses might emerge. Before considering such pluralism however, I want to consider the story so often told of asylum in the UK, of its repressive tendencies and its media inflammation, in order to illustrate how asylum is constructed as a 'problem' of national space which excludes the mundane practices through which asylum is actually lived. I shall approach this issue through two trajectories, firstly those government policies and media responses which have narrated asylum in the UK over the last ten years, and secondly, those academic responses which have sought to critique and interrogate the geographical imaginations of asylum policy.

Asylum in the UK: An Anxiety Inducing 'Problem'

The UK, as Winder (2004) argues, has a fractious history of relations to asylum, with governments seemingly caught between a desire to appear benevolent towards those deemed to be 'worthy refugees' and a wish to be seen as 'hard line' upon those whose legitimacy to 'be here' is placed in question. Squire (2005, p.53) notes that entry to the UK began to be limited at the turn of the century, evident in the 1905 Aliens Act, which targeted Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe. This was followed by a series of moves to restrict immigration and concurrent public fears over influxes of 'foreign aliens', most notably reflected in responses to post-war migration from former British colonies, as issues of race, nation and the need to secure and defend the symbolic and cultural boundaries of the UK became entwined in discussions of immigration and assimilation (Gilroy 1987). The issue of asylum grew in political prominence throughout the 1990s, as asylum seekers came to be viewed as the most troubling, and politically sensitive, archetype over concerns with immigration, race and nation following the end of the cold war, while with increasing media attention, presentations of asylum seekers began to impact upon the British public's daily life. In general, as Kushner (2003) notes, the response here was not sympathetic, and with the occasional exception, such as the 1999 Kosovan refugee crisis examined more thoroughly in Chapter Three, public responses pushed political parties towards ever more repressive and restrictive regimes of response. With fears of immigration clear within an anxious nation, Zetter and Pearl (1999a, p.235) note that the 'growing restrictionism of European countries towards asylum seekers and refugees has nowhere been more evident

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than in the UK'. Here, policy shifted throughout the 1990s from "regulated' sanctuary to outright restrictionism and deterrence' (ibid, p.239).

From 1999 onwards, the story of Britain's relation to asylum has largely been one of increasing restrictions, controls and the experimentation with various means of detention, dispersal and, above all, deterrence. In 2002, the Government published the White Paper *'Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain'* (Home Office 2002), which announced a series of measures to both speed up and tighten the existing asylum system. These measures included the introduction of a legal resettlement scheme through the UNHCR Gateway Protection Programme, a streamlining of the asylum appeals process to allow for only one right to appeal, an increase in removals of those whose applications for asylum fail, the introduction of asylum registration and identity cards to provide 'more secure and certain evidence of identity and nationality' (ibid, p.52), and a 'managed system of induction, accommodation, reporting and removal centres to secure a seamless asylum process' (ibid). This series of measures to 'secure' the borders of the nation were predicated upon the need 'to send out a signal around the world that we are neither open to abuse nor a 'Fortress Britain'' as the then Home Secretary David Blunkett (in Home Office 2002, p.4) commented.

These measures emerged within a political context of tension over asylum as an electoral issue and an emotive public political debate, for as Sales (2005, p.459) writes, despite its wider focus on immigration and issues of diversity, the public debate following the 2002 White Paper's publication was 'dominated by asylum' as the 'notion of a safe haven has been eclipsed by the agenda of securing borders'. New Labour's approach to asylum and immigration, exemplified by this White Paper, has been widely critiqued from a range of positions, most notably for their perpetuation of modes of social exclusion and destitution (see McGhee 2005; Sales 2005; Squire 2005; Yuval-Davis *et al.* 2005), and concerns over a return to an assimilationist rhetoric on race, nation and citizenship (Back *et al.* 2002a, 2002b; Fekete 2005; Kundnani 2001; McGhee 2006). Similarly, the effectiveness of dispersal as a response to asylum influxes, outlined initially in the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, has been subject to a wide range of criticism (see Boswell 2001; Griffiths *et al.* 2006; Pearl and Zetter 2002; Robinson *et al.* 2003), arguing that this socially divisive policy has been used to act as a deterrent to perceived future asylum seekers. Thus, in

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reviewing Britain's approach to asylum, Winder (2004, p.419) argues that historically, 'the British authorities sought to make the life of asylum-seekers as uncomfortable as possible, partly to discourage others and partly to pacify those who accused the government of being a 'soft touch''.

Such accusations continued to arise despite New Labour's best efforts to 'appear tough' on asylum and immigration, and the issue came to the fore during the 2005 general election as both the Conservative and Labour parties attempted to out-maneuver one another on immigration. Tony Blair claimed that he would 'detain more failed asylum seekers and use electronic tagging to keep tabs on others' (*The Daily Mail* 22/04/05). While in response, the Conservative leader, Michael Howard, claimed that he would 'turn back all asylum seekers' using 'new armed squads of security guards on duty 24 hours a day' (*The Daily Mail* 23/01/05), as both major parties lurched to the right.[3] The political purchase of asylum is made clearer still when we consider that asylum seekers are increasingly presented as the most abstract and undetermined form of stranger, a figure onto which the fears and anxieties of the modern nation might be projected as Bauman (1998) argues (see also Kearney 2003). Thus over the last five years in the UK press, asylum seekers have been linked to an array of threats to British society, including the spread of HIV infections and other contagious diseases calling for compulsory health screening and detention (*The Daily Mail* 06/07/04), rising crime rates through an influx of foreign 'criminal gangs' (*The Daily Mail* 06/01/06), a near constant drain on public resources and housing (*The Daily Mail* 28/08/07), and even accusations of killing and eating the nations swans (*The Sun* 04/07/03). Alongside these perceived threats it is also notable that the events of September 11th 2001 provoked the 'widespread feeling that asylum-seekers were all potential terrorists' (Winder 2004, p.437). The increasing intolerance towards difference noted in the wake of the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks impacted asylum seekers as a group already demonized within the popular imagination, here Cohen (2003, p.54) argues that today "asylum seeker', which once meant 'scrounger', now means 'terrorist''. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 present examples of this form of

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[3] Not to be outdone, the far right also sought to take advantage of a mood of public hostility towards asylum seekers cast as welfare cheats and potential terrorists. Thus in 2003, in Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, the British National Party (BNP) won a council seat with asylum figuring heavily in their campaign. The party claimed that 'parts of Broxbourne were 'filling up' with asylum-seekers', yet, as *The Observer* reported at the time, 'there are no asylum-seekers at all in Broxbourne. Not a single one, according to local council figures' (*The Observer* 11/05/03).

rhetorical imagery, as asylum acts as a performative conduit for a range of anxieties over terror and welfare 'cheats'.

Figure 1.1. 'Oh Grandmamma! What big teeth you have!' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 16/01/03).

Figure 1.2. 'Get Asylum Here' (*The Sun*, 19/05/03).

More recently, asylum has again been prominent in the public imaginary through media presentations of an 'asylum backlog'. In 2006 the Home Office faced accusations of mismanagement over the discovery of 450,000 backlog cases dating back to the mid-1990s, and a number of newspapers reacted angrily to the suggestion that some of these cases would be offered the right to remain in the country. *The Daily Mail* branded such a move a 'stealth amnesty' under the headline 'Shambolic Home Office grants another 100,000 asylum seekers amnesty to stay in Britain' (*The Daily Mail* 21/12/07). This incident, and its media response, crystallized two central themes within asylum coverage, a fear over resources and the vision of the shady, illegal immigrant benefiting from Britain's welfare traditions,[4] and a fear of numbers, a fear that the UK might be 'swamped' by a 'tide' of failed asylum seekers beyond the control of a disorganized and 'unfit for purpose' Home Office. The discursive construction of asylum as a 'problem' for the nation, presenting a continual struggle for security, is also supplemented in many media accounts through the use of images of asylum seekers as either 'breaking into' the country, through scaling fences and concealment in vehicles (see Figures 1.3 and 1.4), which act to associate asylum with deviancy, disorder and illegality, or images of asylum seekers forming a crowd of undifferentiated need as the 'bogus' and the 'legitimate' together await the opportunity to claim Britain's welfare (see Figures 1.5 and 1.6). These images from the British press thus serve to perpetuate a popular imaginary of the asylum seeker as a figure whose ambiguity and mobility signifies a level of deviancy to which we should feel suspicion, not empathy, resentment, not charity.

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[4] This fear was exemplified in *The Daily Mail's* coverage of the issue, claiming that; '[a]s many as 165,000 asylum seekers are to be granted an amnesty to live in Britain'. Yet the key discourse to emerge from this outrage was the ominous statement that 'All will now be free to bring their relatives to Britain – and claim the full range of benefits' (*The Daily Mail* 18/12/07), illustrating the prevalence of welfare discussions to asylum fears.

Figure 1.3. 'Looking for a way in' (*The Sunday Times* 26/01/03).

Figure 1.4. 'Thousands of asylum seekers could be allowed to stay in Britain in an 'effective amnesty'' (*The Daily Mail* 25/07/08).

Figure 1.5. 'UK fifth most popular asylum destination' (*The Daily Mail* 21/09/07).

Figure 1.6. 'Asylum seekers to get 'amnesty'' (*The Daily Mail* 18/12/07).

In response to political and popular demands to 'get tough' on Britain's (self)perceived image as a 'soft touch' on asylum, the Home Office introduced plans for the New Asylum Model (NAM) in February 2005. This model has been in force since March 2007 and aims

to 'introduce a faster, more tightly managed asylum process with an emphasis on rapid integration or removal' (Refugee Council 2007, p.1). The main objective of NAM is to conclude cases in six months leading to integration or removal, through faster processing and one stop case ownership with individual case workers (Refugee Council 2007). The expectation under NAM is that asylum cases will generally be served within 30 working days, as the 'aim is to ensure genuine refugees have their claims settled quickly and accurately and are then granted leave to remain in the UK, while those whose claims fail are quickly removed' (Home Office 2006a). NAM also puts in place tighter reporting arrangements for those who claim asylum with 'some applicants required to report on a daily basis' (ibid), more widespread detention measures for failed asylum seekers, such that 'we move towards the point where it becomes the norm that those who fail can be detained' (Home Office 2005a, p.10), and the reintroduction of a 'safe' list of countries, where '[u]nless the applicant can prove otherwise, we treat asylum claims from nationals of these countries as unfounded' (ibid, p.18). This raft of measures to speed up the asylum system have been met with a mixed response, as the reduction in processing times is welcomed, yet the focus upon the speed of decision making not only hampers the ability of applicants to collate necessary evidence, but may also mean that Home Office officials are now focused on the efficiency, rather than the accuracy, of their decisions (Refugee Council 2007).

The changes outlined in this brief review reflect a toughening of the government's stance towards asylum in recent years, and have resulted in some clear outcomes. In 2006 the UK hit a potential milestone in its recent asylum history, for that year applications for asylum fell to their lowest level since 1993, the year's 23,610 applicants being a far cry from the 84,130 individuals who applied just four years earlier (Bennett et al. 2007, p.1). This fall was attributed by Home Office Minister Tony McNulty to 'stronger border controls' and would in turn lead to a 'speeding up [of] plans to tighten border security still further' (McNulty cited in Attewill, 2007). Such a fall was continued into 2007, as Liam Bryne (cited in Home Office 2007a) suggests, again linking the need for ever greater control to perceived current successes; 'stronger border controls have helped make sure the number of unfounded asylum seekers continues to fall. There are now fewer people than ever coming to the UK and making unfounded claims for asylum'. An example of such strengthening might be seen in the increasing rate of removals, as since '1997 the removal of principal

applicants has risen by 127 per cent' (Home Office, 2007b), with the Home Office (2008) claiming that in 2007 the government 'deported someone every eight minutes'.

Britain's recent history of relations to asylum illustrates how the discursive presentation of asylum is constituted through an interweaving of media and governmental accounts which serve to both justify 'tough' measures of response to asylum and act to continually create asylum as a 'problem' for the nation (Nyers 1999). What we see through these accounts, representations and images is the perpetuation of an imaginary in which asylum is not only a threat to national 'integrity', but also poses a constant state of 'emergency' as the Home Office apparently lurches from one crisis to the next. Perceptions of asylum, fuelled partly by media representations of Home Office 'bungling', as a crisis point, a ceaseless cause for concern, have important implications for the way in which asylum policy is generated. Indeed as Zetter and Pearl (1999a, p.252) comment of legislation within the UK;

> 'These outcomes [increasing destitution and social exclusion] are all the more ironic and disturbing since past experience shows that when the challenge has been conceptualized in terms of long-term refugee resettlement, rather than a crisis of asylum seeking, the policies have been reasonably benign, if not particularly proactive, in Britain...In its own White Paper, the government recognizes the contribution made by earlier cohorts of refugees. This experience has been ignored...the policy agenda has been conceptualized not in terms of refugee resettlement, but a short-term crisis of asylum seekers'.

In the context of this apparently perpetual sense of short-term asylum crisis, fears over terrorism, welfare cheats and abuses of 'our hospitality' work alongside one another to create a climate of suspicion, fear and loathing. Here increasingly harsh measures of social control and spatial ordering appear not only legitimate, but necessary, and hysteria rises over the thought of an 'invasion' in rural England through detention centres and dispersal policies (Grillo 2005; Hubbard 2005a, 2005b; Millington 2005). The spatiality of the asylum 'problem' creates a vicious feedback loop of hatred, of orderly expectations and desires, and if, in the end, this creates violence and brutality, Kundanani (2001) argues that we should not be surprised. This is not to suggest however that this is the only account of asylum present within the UK, rather various media outlets have actively campaigned

against the increasing use of force and violence in detention and deportation actions,[5] and Lupton (2006) notes that while the national press is often hostile to asylum seekers, local press coverage has been more positive and has been crucial in organising anti-deportation campaigns. It is clear however that such positive accounts do not hold a dominant relationship to national moods, these accounts have been less influential on government policies as a sense of short-term restrictionism, regulation and control has been extended over the last ten years. Before considering the shortcomings of such an account more fully, I want to briefly consider the ways in which academic narratives have sought to respond to this story of hostility and repression, for the argument I wish to present here, for a more prosaic spatial politics of asylum, emerges in response to both of these prevalent discourses.

Accounting for Asylum: Representation and Repression

Responses to asylum policy within academia have largely centred around three frames of reference. The first of these arises directly from the increasingly hostile context within which asylum is viewed within the UK and seeks to interrogate the presentation of asylum seekers within both media accounts and government policy, drawing from this the importance of articulating alternative accounts of asylum as a strange presence constitutive of nation and identity (Morley 2000; Sibley 1995; Tyler 2006). Here Hughes (2007, p.934) argues that 'the asylum seeker/refugee in countries like the UK…remains represented in dominant discourses as the stranger coded as the dangerous and polluting 'outsider' of the established 'host' communities', while Kushner (2003, p.262) concurs that; '[r]ather than representing any real threat, asylum-seekers have become scapegoats for those anxious about the world around them, about contemporary concerns such as health provision and job security'. In this area of work, contemporary connections between detention, deportation and the criminalization of asylum seekers throughout Europe have been highlighted (Bauman 2004; Tackas 1999; Zylinska 2004) as the narratives which identify asylum seekers within Europe are taken to task. These are linked also to concerns over the renewed construction and maintenance of both literal and symbolic borders that rely upon

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[5] For example, *The Guardian* (13/06/08) recently ran an article titled 'Land of No Return', which highlighted the work of a series of anti-deportation movements across the country, while *The Independent* (31/08/08) has run a high profile campaign to reveal the alarming levels of abuse, self-harm and suicide within British asylum detention centres.

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the exclusion of asylum seekers (Bosworth 2008; Flynn 2005; Squire 2008). Alongside these policy-centred narrations, work has focused on the discursive construction of asylum seekers within the media (Coole 2002; Klocker and Dunn 2003; Kushner 2003), with Lynn and Lea (2003) going as far as to suggest, alongside Balibar (2004), that we are witnessing a 'new apartheid' within Europe, as the continents borders are ever more forcefully delimited and modes of securitization and segregation act to increase inequality within (Bauman 2005). This range of work is therefore concerned with examining the current rights afforded to asylum seekers within Europe, and how representations of both asylum seekers and the nation actively produce and legitimate moments of exclusion and rightlessness in order to project a vision of 'orderly' national space.

The second area that I wish to highlight is that of a concern with the pragmatics of asylum as a legal and managerial system. Here while the government's dispersal policies have been heavily criticized (Bloch and Schuster 2005; Boswell 2001; Robinson *et al.* 2003), other research has sought to examine the practicalities attendant to asylum as a process. Thus Lassalle (2000), White (2002), Einfeld (2000) and Joly (1998) have all examined the legal dimensions of asylum as a question of international law and politics, with Dillon (1999) arguing that asylum itself provides one of the key political exclusions of international politics. On a more prosaic basis, Koser (1997) and Winstone (1996) have considered the managerial implications of asylum dispersals on local authorities, while the demands of asylum on health care provision across the UK have been considered by Allan and Clarke (2005) and Sinnerbrink *et al.* (1996). Throughout these varied accounts it is not the discursive presentation of asylum seekers which is central, but rather the implications which altering government policies have for the process of actually providing, in differing ways, a sense of asylum itself.

The final area I wish to note is that of a range of accounts that seek to consider asylum from an international, cosmopolitan, position, as an issue which demands that states (re)consider their political and moral obligations to others (Dummett 2001; Chakrabarti 2005). Here a tradition of cosmopolitan thought is brought to bear on the political present, advocating a universal series of rights and responsibilities towards others both within and beyond the nation-state (Appiah 2006; Beck 2002; Benhabib 2004; Cheah and Robbins 1998). The focus of such accounts is often upon the role which empathy and recognition must play in

orientating responses, as a Kantian tradition of (limited) hospitality is placed at the centre of calls for a universal ethics of responding to asylum which transcends the divisions of nation-states (Derrida 2001a; Shapiro 1998). The broadly cosmopolitan outlook recounted here is concerned with articulating alternative modes of responding to asylum as a political demand for sanctuary within a world of borders, and it is here that I would suggest this thesis offers a different approach to those outlined above, and where it seeks to break from an account of asylum as a national 'problem', for both of these stances overlook the real possibilities of different political and ethical confluences emergent within the materiality of everyday life. Hughes (2007, p.940) argues that while it is vital to interrogate the demonisation of asylum seekers as many studies do; 'these dystopian narratives may underplay the contested character of these processes in the lived experiences of different communities'. It is to these 'lived experiences' that I want to turn, in order to contend with Hughes' (ibid, p.941) claim that there is an urgent demand for 'new possibilities and spaces for progressive interventions'.

Spaces of Everyday Asylum

I want to argue that such possibilities and interventions do not arise solely from the forms of discursive examination which have been prevalent to date, and it is for this reason that I suggest a break from this form of work alone. Considering the narration of asylum in this way is useful, yet it does little to shed light upon the fleshy, visceral, (non)human dimensions of asylum as a lived process, experience and series of encounters with space. Within the social sciences there has been a recent turn towards considering linked concepts of practice, performance and the everyday as sites of both spatial accomplishment and political action (see Dewsbury 2003; Lefebvre 1991; de Certeau 1984; Gardiner 2000; Nash 2000; Thrift 1996, 2000, 2007), and it is these resources that I want to mobilize within this study. Through these accounts, the everyday becomes a meeting ground for the discursive, the practical and creative impulses, where 'the reality of everyday life – the sum total of all our relations – is built on the ground, in daily activities and transactions' (Burkitt 2004, p.212). Therefore we might view the everyday as a space created through the convergence of narratives of asylum with the embodied practices and performances of spaces and individuals, in part, constituted through their relation to these narratives, thus as Haldrup *et al.* (2006, p.183) note, the 'borders between 'them' and 'us' are redrawn, reproduced and

enacted', not simply in discursive frames, but also through a myriad of gestures, glances and actions. Such an embodied, prosaic appreciation of politics and its role as constantly enacting and remoulding discourses of belonging, has begun to orientate a range of studies concerned with the prosaic negotiations of race and citizenship within contemporary Britain, asking how everyday urban multicultures are formed (see Amin 2002a; Back 1996; Back and Nayak 1999; Swanton 2006). However, with the exception of the recent work of Alison Mountz on 'illegal' immigrants (2003; Mountz *et al.* 2002), such insights have not been employed to interrogate the spatial experiences of asylum seekers.

The assertion of such a position within this research seeks to respond to a number of key exclusions performed through both a policy orientation towards a national framing of asylum and an academic concern with deconstructing policy and articulating, often dehumanised, ethical alternatives. The first of these is that presenting asylum as an issue of borders, nations and narratives alone, as this confluence of government policy and academic critique achieves, means that the diversity of actual spatial experience which conditions the lives of asylum seekers is overlooked. Within the White Papers of the Home Office, and the studies which deconstruct these, national space becomes an undifferentiated plane of dispersals and detentions, inputs and outward flows, yet the actual matter of asylum, as more than simply a process occurring to those categorized as asylum seekers, is strangely absent. Asylum encompasses a whole array of spaces, experiences and relations between these affective sites, not simply the dialectic between 'host' and 'home' countries, and I argue it is important to not simply recognize, but also to examine, these spaces of everyday politics. My second concern arises from this position, for in not truly engaging the banal spatiality of asylum we run the risk of perpetuating an impoverished spatial imaginary, one in which dominant accounts of asylum seekers as bogus and fearful security threats are simply replaced by cosmopolitan ideals of hospitality and engagement. While these ideals are admirable, to suggest that they can be instilled while wedded to a national framing overlooks the far more messy practices through which ethics come to impact upon dispositions and spatial politics. In short, there is a need to take seriously the way cosmopolitan notions of hospitality and generosity are actually felt, practiced, contested and hijacked in the continual creation of spaces of asylum. This then leads to my final point, that this intersection of ethical ideals, prosaic practices and spaces of encounter, all themselves co-constitutive, is the terrain through which new imaginings of spatial politics

might come to be articulated. Thus through denying other experiences and other spaces within accounts of asylum we have all too easily taken away the scope for ethical dispositions of generosity and hospitality to actually ground emergent and negotiated politics of response. As Burkitt (2004, p.244) notes 'the unofficial sphere of everyday life often forms the basis for political opposition', and represents the sphere in which situational and hybrid accounts of ethics and responsibility come into view (McCormack 2003; Thrift 2003a; Varela 1999). In this sense, 'to challenge the 'big' regimes of knowledge and the grand strategies of geopolitics does not work without at the same time challenging the 'small' imaginations and affects constructed in intercorporeal encounters in everyday life. The one presupposes and legitimizes the other' (Haldrup *et al.* 2006, p.183).

What many current accounts of asylum within the UK lack therefore is an appreciation of asylum as a spatial *experience*. It is this which I want to foreground throughout this thesis, in order to generate an account of a distinctly *spatial* politics of asylum as an engagement with, and through, urban space. I want to take those discursive patterns considered by others as an inflection towards asylum as a daily, performed, encounter with spaces of the city, the nation and modes of governance. I do not seek to jettison the important deconstructive work on narrating asylum undertaken by the likes of Sales (2002), Squire (2005) and Tyler (2006), but rather I want to feed such work through an ontology of encounter within the urban (Amin and Thrift 2002). This means appreciating urban space as the accumulation of 'billions of happy and unhappy encounters' (Thrift 1999, p.302) which variously emerge, resonate and shrink from view as space is itself experienced as a negotiation of bodies, materials, images, affects and emotions. Discourses of asylum, be they governmental, academic, or media based, offer one of these areas of daily negotiation. However, as I have suggested, asylum does not end here. Rather the city offers not only experiences of asylum which question these dominant narratives, but also experiences which exceed the ability of these discourses to represent and make sense of them. Asylum might therefore be articulated through its 'more-than-representational' (Lorimer 2005, 2008) character as a sensate experience of space.

Encountering diverse spaces of asylum provides an account of how moments of aversion, intolerance and derision intermingle with gestures of welcome, generosity and care throughout the practice of living asylum. Approaching spaces of asylum as sites of political

negotiation in this manner acknowledges the fact that those narratives of detention and criminality, measures of surveillance and modalities of orderly governance, and popular presentations of 'bogus' claimants, will undoubtedly condition and infuse these sites. Yet it is also to leave open a place for accounts of different relationships, of those of hospitality, welcome and responsibility, which share a place within this story of on-going spatial negotiation. The key site of negotiation which orientates this study is that of the city, and I want to now consider the city as a space of encountering asylum, and more precisely, the city of Sheffield as the site of my research.

The City as a Refuge

Examining the prosaic spatial politics of asylum through the city arose therefore from two central qualities of the urban. Firstly, the city has been described as the archetypal site of diversity and difference, a space of prosaic encounters and moments of intercultural contact and creativity (see Amin 2002a, 2008; Amin and Thrift 2002, 2005; Sandercock 2003; Valentine 2008), and as such represents an important space through which to consider the politics of relating to strangers. Within geography the city has been viewed as a space of multiple and competing demands over the constitution of political publics and spaces (Dikeç 2007; Iveson 2006; Warner 2002; Watson 2006), and has begun to be seen as the exemplar of a relational account of space in which place is continuously constituted anew through the emergence of a dizzying array of influences, from the human and non-human to the material, technological and affective (Anderson and Holden 2008; Amin 2008; Crang 2000; Thrift 2005). Indeed, as Osborne and Rose (1999, p.758) suggest, 'cities are complex multiplicities of interests, antagonisms, flows of capital, spatial constructions, moral topographies, forms of authority, and ethical stylisations'. Here the city does not merely present a 'difference machine' as Isin (2002) terms it, but cities also 'operate as huge machines for sorting their populations and organizing opportunities for face-to-face encounter and exchange' (Mitchell 2005, p.7). Spaces of the city for Mitchell (2005) therefore act to channel, orientate and dictate moments of engagement as spaces are created and traversed through both encountering, and avoiding, others in daily life. It is this emergent appreciation of the city itself, grounded in an ontology of sensate practice, which presents the stance from which this study approaches asylum. Here the city is seen as a lived multiplicity of trajectories which pattern everyday life and continuously create

affective responses of anger, irritation, hope and indifference among those who encounter the city.

Examining the city as a space of asylum, welcome and refuge, also has a second, interrelated rationale. That being that the city is the site chosen by Derrida (2001a) to envisage an alternative form of relating to asylum, to gesture towards a politics of hospitality. Derrida (2001a, p.4) argues that in the current context of European asylum and immigration policies which discuss the 'abuse of hospitality' by asylum seekers, there is a need for cities themselves to 'reorient the politics of the state'. Discussing the work of the International Parliament of Writers and their 'Cities of Refuge' initiative, Derrida (ibid, p.6) notes that '[i]f we look to the city, rather than the state, it is because we have given up hope that the state might create a new image for the city'. For Derrida (2001a, 2002), the state, though still central within the politics of hospitality, offers little hope of reinvigorating such a politics towards a more cosmopolitan, egalitarian model of rights and ethical responsibility towards others. The state, for Derrida, remains wedded to that notion of national citizenship and rights which Arendt (1973) argues fails precisely those who are most in need of protection, those beyond the bounds of the state. Rather, Derrida returns to the city as a foundational site of citizenship itself in order to open a series of questions about the nature of contemporary refuge.[6]

Derrida (2001a, p.7-8) asks of the city, and the state, whether 'the right to asylum [can] be redefined and developed without repatriation and without naturalisation? Could the City...open up new horizons of possibility previously undreamt of by international state law'? Could the city ever live up to the promise of refuge? Derrida (ibid, p.8) continues;

> 'This is not to suggest that we ought to restore an essentially classical concept of the city by giving it new attributes and powers; neither would it be simply a matter of endowing the old subject we call 'the city' with new predicates. No, we are dreaming of another concept, of another set of rights for the city, of another politics of the city'.

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[6] This form of political questioning around citizenship has also been elaborated by Derrida (1992a), Balibar (2004) and Amin (2004a), who seek to consider how Europe might offer a renewed sense of politically engaged citizenship premised upon rights inferred through residency.

What comes to the fore here is the sense of a renewed appreciation of the urban as a space of political, and ethical, engagement with asylum, as a space which might offer 'another' form of politics. Not through simply ascribing greater powers to the city or allowing it further autonomy, but through considering how the city itself might be harnessed as that political space of rupture within state politics which Rancière (1999) argues defines the political and inscribes moments of equality (see Badiou 2005). It is Derrida's vision that the city might be taken to offer an account of refuge which casts into doubt national certainties of spatial integrity, citizenship and belonging and which opens out these seemingly fixed categorizations to difference, alterity and an ethics of response. It is precisely this response to which this study is orientated, for in approaching the politics of urban refuge, and appreciating how spaces of everyday asylum work within the city, how they emerge, throw up affective engagements and weave together discourses of security, detention, deportation and terror, we might begin to ask what opportunities the urban offers in developing a hopeful, cosmopolitan, future.

Examining Sheffield as a Sanctuary

Sheffield is a city of 530,300 people (Office of National Statistics 2008) located in South Yorkshire, neighbouring the Peak District national park. As a city, Sheffield came to prominence due to a period of rapid industrial and financial growth throughout the 19th century. Such growth was built upon the city's production of steel and during the 19th and early 20th centuries Sheffield's name became globally synonymous with cutlery and metalwork as its links with empire brought immigration from the Commonwealth. The steel industry began to decline during the 1970s and 1980s and, alongside that of declining neighbouring coal industries, the city experienced an economic downturn as unemployment rose, industries closed and the city lost a sense of its collective purpose and identity, so often associated with its proud heritage of production.[7] Today few steel industries survive in the city, although the markings of an industrial past are ever present in the urban landscape. Since the late 1990s however, the city has experienced a series of regeneration strategies which have seen the economy and the population of the city grow steadily as a

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[7] The city's industrial decline created the backdrop for the 1997 comedy *The Full Monty* which depicted the economic and social struggles of six steel workers to redefine their lives, relationships and identities in the wake of deindustrialisation.

range of new service sector employers and cultural industries have relocated to Sheffield. Exemplifying this change are a series of major regeneration initiatives planned to reinvent and transform the city centre from 1994 onwards. Since then a number of flagship projects have been completed including the creation of two new public spaces in The Peace Gardens and The Town Hall Square in 1999, a new arts complex named The Millennium Galleries in 2001 and the creation of a public series of temperate greenhouses in The Winter Gardens in 2002 (Sheffield City Council 2004). With these urban regeneration schemes in place, Sheffield has developed a renewed cultural status around a series of key industries which has been crucial to the successful redirection of the city and its marketing as an attractive destination for newcomers. In particular, a range of galleries have emerged throughout the city in the last eight years, 1999 saw the opening of The National Centre for Popular Music, and the city's musical heritage has been cemented through the success of a distinctly 'Sheffield sound' among a range of bands such as Pulp and The Arctic Monkeys, giving Sheffield a renewed sense of identity wedded to popular culture and creativity.

Sheffield's history also tells a distinct story of relating to asylum seekers and refugees, and although I shall examine this narrative more fully in Chapter Three, it is important to note here that Sheffield is seen to have a 'long tradition of offering a welcome to refugees' (Wainwright 2003), with the city's contribution to the 'Kosovan Humanitarian Evacuation Programme' in 1999 being seen as a particularly proud example of such a tradition. Sheffield was the first UK city to join the Gateway Protection Programme, a partnership between the UK government, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), local authorities and eight national NGO's (Refugee Council 2004), designed to create a 'legal gateway for the most vulnerable refugees to enter the UK' (Home Office 2005b, p.10). Sheffield joined this scheme in April 2003 and received its first refugees under the programme in March 2004, at a time when many cities across the UK were seeking to reduce the numbers of dispersal cases. It is this out of the ordinary aspect of Sheffield's decision to join this scheme which partly orientates my discussion of Sheffield as a space of refuge. Sheffield consciously chose to, and continues to as I examine in Chapter Three, offer refuge at a point when others were reluctant to do so and it is for this reason that I chose to focus upon Sheffield as a potential site for that kind of hospitable politics which Derrida (2001a) envisages in a 'city of refuge'.

Sheffield also holds an important position within the national politics of dispersal as the second key city, behind Leeds, within the Yorkshire and Humberside dispersal zone, the zone with the highest number of annual dispersals for the last four years (Home Office 2008). At the end of June 2008, Sheffield was home to 630 asylum seekers supported through the National Asylum Support Service's (NASS) dispersal policies, while nationally 30,555 asylum seekers were supported. As Figure 1.7 shows this number is down considerably from a peak of 1850 at the end of December 2002. These statistics also suggest that Sheffield's asylum dispersals have mirrored national trends on asylum support.
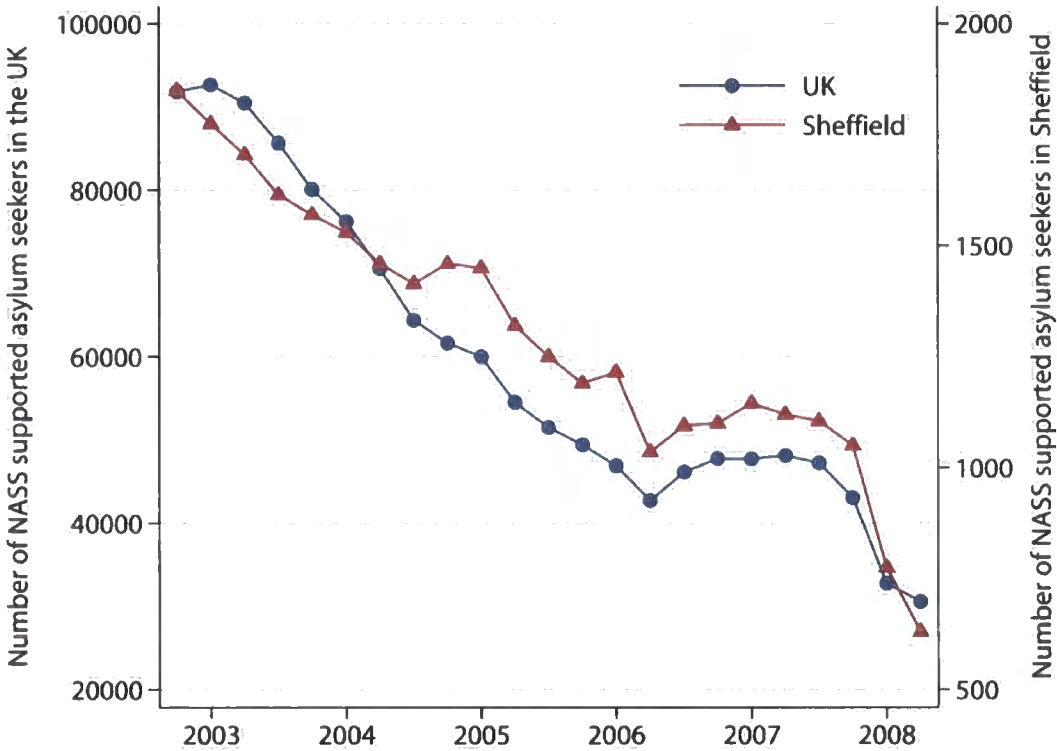
Figure 1.7. Table showing the trend in NASS supported asylum seekers in Sheffield and the UK, from December 2002 to June 2008 (Source: Home Office Quarterly Asylum Statistics 2002-2008).

Like many other local authorities, Sheffield City Council have signed a contract with NASS to accommodate and support asylum seekers dispersed to the city under the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act and have subsequently renewed this contract a number of times. In 2003, following rising levels of asylum dispersals, the council expanded its 'Asylum Seeker Team' to help meet the demands of the city's asylum seeker and refugee populations (Wainwright 2003). This team provides practical advice, interagency

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signposting, orientation guides and information. The team also take newcomers to accommodation arranged through a number of housing providers, the largest being the Refugee Housing Association and the city's three 'Safehaven' low-cost housing projects. Recent research into the experiences of asylum seekers in Sheffield (Craig *et al.* 2004), suggests that racial harassment of asylum seekers does take place, but is not widespread. Craig *et al.* (2004) also report that the people of Sheffield and the environment of the city were cited as the 'best things' about being in Sheffield, as many asylum seekers felt that the size of other visible minority communities within the city allowed them to reduce their own 'visibility' and feel safer, emphasising the kindness of local people as a key factor in this response also.

Sheffield therefore represents in many ways a typical British city attempting to deal with the demands placed upon it by both national attempts to situate, order and deal with an asylum 'problem' and a concurrent will to be seen as doing 'the right thing' within its response to refugees. Sheffield's story of post-industrial regeneration is not unlike other former manufacturing centres such as Leeds and Liverpool, and its history of multicultural engagement has parallels in those of other British cities, notably Birmingham (Sandercock 2003) and Leicester (Winstone 1996). However, despite these commonalities Sheffield has presented itself as a space of refuge on the issue of asylum, as occasionally out of step with the national mood, present here in that kindness and friendliness afforded asylum seekers in Craig *et al.*'s (2004) report. It is this sense of a city which is attempting, albeit minutely, to hold a different relation to asylum which I wish to interrogate here, to consider how Sheffield might question dominant narratives of asylum as a troubling, and troublesome, presence within the nation, and how such narratives contest any idea of the city as a progressive site of sanctuary. In order to undertake this account it is necessary to present an engaged ethnography of a range of spaces of asylum within the city, and it is to the methodological resources employed to develop such an account to which I now wish to turn.

Approaching Sheffield

In approaching Sheffield as a city constituted through diverse and interrelated spaces of asylum, I undertook a range of methods which sought to engage both the discursive

framing of the city and the concerns of practice, performance and contextual 'becoming' which are at the heart of current discussions over the importance of the sensate, practiced dimensions of spatial experience (see Thrift 2000; Crang 2003; Lorimer 2005; Harrison 2000). In this sense, just as my conceptual turn to the prosaic performance of asylum breaks with previous discursive framings of asylum research, so the methodological resources deployed here attempt to move beyond the focus upon textual frames of reference and representation alone (see for example, Kelly and Morton 2004), and into the realm of sensuous and embodied practices of engaging different spaces of the city (Latham 1999). With such a focus upon practice in mind I engaged in a multi-method approach, concerning discursive methods of document and interview analysis as a means to access narratives of asylum as a social and spatial process, ethnographic approaches as a means to consider the embodied and performed nature of space and finally, diary-interview methods in order to consider the interplay between narrations of personal experience and everyday practices of living asylum in Sheffield.

The blend of methods deployed here was thus constructed as a response to this thesis' overarching concerns with the practice, and experience, of spacing asylum itself. Like Laurier (2003, p.1523), I would argue that geography's dependence upon modes of representation and discursive signification have blinded us to 'a rich variety of human activities, possibilities, matters, and concerns', from the possibilities of embodiment and movement itself as a mode of research (Radley 1995; McCormack 2002), to the active, and affective accomplishment of different spaces, a textual focus has rendered 'inert all that ought to be most lively' (Lorimer 2005, p.84-85; Thrift and Dewsbury 2000). The mixture of methods I propose here thus attempts to 'situate the understanding that representation brings alongside the understandings that it denies' (Dewsbury 2003, p.1927), in response to Lorimer's (2003, p.282) call for the need to 'fuse text, context, and embodied practice' within social research. Such a fusion is undertaken throughout this thesis via an account of practice, performance and discourse as interlocking elements of the everyday, as interwoven strands which continually construct, deform and (re)create banal spaces of asylum. The mixture of methods undertaken in forming this account therefore each attempt a sensitivity to such an ontological position and attempt to draw out, and draw together, some of these disparate, and partial strands of spatial, and political, constitution. As noted above, this approach had three main components.

Firstly, my discursive framing took two central forms, that of a series of interviews and documentary analysis. I interviewed a total of 12 asylum seekers and refugees, 4 city councillors, 4 charity volunteers from various drop-in centres and organisations, the head of a refugee housing organisation within the city, the director of a theatre group which produced awareness raising plays on the issues facing refugees, the two co-founders of a charity focused on challenging the ethos of the city in relation to asylum seekers and the head of a regional refugee integration organisation.[8] Alongside these interviews I also collected a range of documentary evidence from those charities with which I worked, from the city council, the Home Office and local media reports, all of which were combined with these interview accounts in an attempt to gain a sense of the ways in which asylum was being narrated within the city. Thus while in my interviews with asylum seekers I sought to focus upon drawing out their experiences of the city and the ways in which its spaces may perform different sensibilities of welcome or aversion, with those individuals from charities and local organisations I sought to access more readily their sense of what asylum meant to Sheffield, how they related to these individuals and spaces of asylum, and their impressions of how asylum has been presented in the city. These representational forms of analysis worked to gain not only a sense of the context of asylum in Sheffield, its tensions, politics and localised issues, but also provided a means to listen to the ways in which ideas of space and asylum were tangentially reproduced through a series of assumed ideas of where people could be placed, where was safe, and how life as an asylum seeker was, and perhaps should be, experienced.

Secondly, my ethnographic approach developed into a matter of diverse 'polymorphous engagements' (Hannerz 2003, p.212) with a range of sites, sources and activities all mobilised as I sought to follow the connections which constituted a series of everyday acts of 'welcome' in the city (Marcus 1995). Central to this multi-sited movement was the notion of maintaining a 'peopled ethnography' (Fine 2003), which focuses upon those places where people perform ongoing and active interactions. In particular, the space of the drop-in centre provided one such temporary and relational site of engagement, while the city's various public squares were also considered. Here spaces, such as a church hall and a

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[8] Further details on this fieldwork are shown in Appendix A.

community centre, were contingently and temporarily transformed into sites of multiple constituencies. It was these relations to both those individuals within these sites, their histories, lives and accounts, and these spaces themselves, which this ethnographic approach sought to consider through detailing the banal accomplishment of such spaces. Attuning oneself to the matter of everyday life, to clothing, glances, bodily comportment, accents and gestures, provided a means to explore not only 'the tissue of everyday life' which performatively creates, challenges and inscribes meaning in daily processes (Herbert 2003, p.551), but also the ways in which such creativity might be politically and ethically engaged. It was in these sites of banal togetherness that those ideals of ethical relating which Derrida (2001a) calls for might be witnessed as the raw materials for creating open spaces. Participant observation was thus deployed in an attempt to stress the context dependency of social and spatial practices as embodied and locally embedded experiences (Crang 1994), practices through which a mesh of ideas of hostility and hospitality come to be actualised, enacted and (re)considered.

The aim here was, as Fine (2003, p.46) puts it, to 'see people in action, or perhaps more precisely, to see people in interaction' and to examine what these spaces of relation and non-relation meant to those who inhabit them. To this end I attended two weekly drop-in centres in the centre of Sheffield for a ten month period, spending the time acting as a student volunteer in each, whilst being open as to the aims and methods of my research to those I spoke to. Over this time period I began to get to know those individuals who were 'regulars' at such sites and increasingly spoke to them regarding their experiences of the city. As my relationships here deepened I attended a range of events as a helper, student and researcher, from charity meetings, theatre productions and festivals through to public demonstrations and marches in support of individual asylum cases. Whilst concerned with embedding social practices within their context of momentary performance, my ethnographic observations set out to create a 'series of positioned responses that are contingent upon the fluidity of context situation' (Nayak 2003, p.12) and in this sense my research followed a number of urban ethnographies which have sought to develop a rich engagement with the contextual nature of urban encounters (Duneier 1992, 1999; Fleisher 1995; Laurier and Philo 2006; Swanton 2006). Like these accounts, my ethnography set out to work with a 'sense of a certain spatial plasticity, of being enfolded and engaged within the space around me' (Latham 1999, p.165), and in this manner my observations served to

highlight the diverse array of social interactions which course through these relational spaces, providing a repository from which an account of spacing asylum as a personal, political and relational process can be drawn.

My third approach was to use the diary-interview approach of Zimmerman and Wielder (1977), to provide an understanding of 'the topology of daily activity' (van Eerde *et al.* 2005, p.151) for asylum seekers and to encourage a reflexive engagement with the diary on the part of the respondent so that everyday events and practices can be recorded alongside the memories and emotions they induce. As with the ethnographic work I undertook, a sense of embedded context is vital here, for as Meth (2003, p.200) argues; '[d]iaries...offer the opportunity for the recording of events and emotions in their social context'. With this in mind I recruited two asylum seekers and two refugees from those I encountered at the drop-in centres to undertake the task of keeping a diary for me and gave each a blank book in which to narrate their daily lives for a two week period. I issued them with a broad set of guidelines on what I wished them to write about, focusing on their experiences of Sheffield as a space of welcome, both in the past and the present. The diary was employed as a medium to encourage reflexive thought as a space for writing and it was anticipated that those episodes and events narrated 'are remembered because they remain significant' (Thomson and Holland 2005, p.203). The diaries provided a means through which to acknowledge not only the emotive aspects of asylum experience,[9] but also the ways in which past ideas of space come to not only be altered through experience, but also act as 'virtual memories' to condition present views and expectations of both spaces and individuals (Swanton 2008). For most of the diarists their initial impressions upon arrival in Sheffield proved to maintain a longstanding hold over their interpretation of the city as a space of (im)possible refuge from that moment on. In this fashion the longitudinal and discontinuous nature of the research act allowed for a reflexive variation and continuous re-engagement with the text on the part of the diary writer (Crang 2005; Hislop *et al.* 2005), reflecting the manner in which thoughts, feelings and modes of expression may rework themselves over time.

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[9] All of the diary writers commented that it was far easier to narrate their experiences through a written form than it was to speak about them. Indeed Omar went as far as to comment that he found the process cathartic and would hope to continue with it.

Lying at the heart of this multi-method approach to the spatial politics of asylum is therefore 'the need to be responsive to different ways of self-representation...different 'ways of being'' (Parr 1998, p.30), which are at the centre of political contests over asylum. The manifold and partial accounts of practice, narrative and representation which emerged from this process never create a 'full' picture of practices themselves, but they go some way to documenting practices as performative, contextual and transitory, always open and yet always fleeting (Pratt 2000). They present therefore 'an interrelated mosaic of interpretative snapshots and vignettes of a particular social space and set of social practices *in the making*' (Latham 2003a, p.2005, original emphasis), from which we might draw a number of trajectories through the relations of 'throwntogetherness' which characterise the spatial (Massey 2005).

The modesty of such a claim to representation is intentional here as following a non-representational (Thrift 1996) ontology of the social I argue that any claim to fully understand, represent and account for the social, and indeed the spatial, will always fail. In this sense, this thesis draws inspiration from a range of work broadly described as 'non-representational' in its unwillingness to compromise to previous dogmas of what, and indeed where, social science is or should be (see Thrift and Dewsbury 2000; Dewsbury *et al.* 2002; Harrison 2000; Thrift 2000). The approach taken by this thesis is therefore one which seeks to be open and honest about the social, about its nuances, its contradictions and its unknowable nature. Yet it is also an approach which I believe highlights some of the failings of much non-representational work within geography. Such work, whilst admirable in its intent and direction, to free social enquiry from a textual and representational frame and to consider the lively and performative elements of lived experience, often fails to live up to such a promise. Inevitably there comes a point at which representation must return, at which words must be written, images developed and social contexts fixed, reduced and (re)framed. Here 'non-representational' concerns with dance, movement, liveliness and action still hold an important place in allowing us to approach and understand previously illusive performances, practices and relations (Thrift 2000; McCormack 2002, 2004), yet they fail to fully develop a methodology of the performative from which one might engage such practices within a truly 'non-representational' frame. This thesis draws upon a range of ethnographic methods and techniques which in many ways are not new, indeed they have been the basis of a great number of inspirational urban ethnographies (see Duneier

1992, 1999; Nayak 2003; Swanton 2006), yet they do offer a means to approach some of these questions of liveliness, experience and practice. It is a return to these techniques of carefully studied context, situation and encounter which I believe offers one means to approach the demands placed upon geography by a concern with the non-representational, however these techniques, and the approach of this thesis, are broader than the confines of such debate. Rather, what this thesis, and this methodology, hopes to attend to is the 'more-than-representational' (Lorimer 2005) nature of asylum, not simply its 'non' representational character. This means, above all else, not ruling ideas, encounters, perspectives or trajectories out, whether they be lively or inert, textual or practiced, momentary or archived. As I hope to demonstrate through the following pages, it is only through an engagement *between* modes of thought, representation, feeling, embodiment, perception and response that we might begin to appreciate the diverse, and ongoing, construction of the social and the spatial. The accounts presented here do not seek to foreclose the creativity of the spatial, but rather provide a series of moments which may orientate us within it, moments from which we might come to witness, albeit fleetingly, a politics of urban responsibility arising from daily negotiations of ethics, space and asylum.

Within these moments of witness however, it is important to be mindful of the issues which undertaking this research posed. Most significant here was the role that the negotiations of participant observation played in constructing this account of asylum. One of the great strengths of this form of research, yet also one of its concurrent weaknesses is, as Duneier (1999) points out, its ability to offer a direct involvement in social processes and respondents lives. As such, the focus of my ethnography offered me an outlook onto many of the prosaic aspects of asylum in the city which pattern the following chapters, however, it also proved a messy, demanding and at times emotionally fraught affair which highlights some of the central issues of refugee research. This was the case not least because as individuals we have very little control over the manner in which we are interpreted and viewed by the audience we perform for (Back and Solomos 1993), thus as Parr (2001, p.162) points out 'embodiment…[is] not always controllable', for despite our best efforts our bodies become marked with the meanings, interpretations and expectations of others, and as such attempting to define how my presence as a researcher was reacted to proved futile. One consequence of which was that whilst I had intentions of undertaking a largely overt ethnography within Sheffield's drop-in centres, the reality of this disclosure shifted

and altered throughout the research process, with the boundaries between overt and covert research becoming increasingly blurred and intertwined as research encounters occurred in an array of spaces, each differently positioned (Parr 1998). Thus 'the incompleteness and event-ness with which the whole research process is shot through' (Latham 2003a, p.2005), meant that whilst I made announcements of my status as a researcher, and gained consent forms from those I interviewed and photographed, I could never be completely certain that such disclosure was complete, that the role I was performing was, at least in part, that of the academic alongside that of the volunteer.

A second consequence of the messy and often chaotic nature of my ethnographic research encounters, was that perhaps inevitably, a range of emotional and personal ties and connections were forged during my ten months at the drop-in centre which have inevitably impacted this work.[10] As the accounts of Chapters Five, Six and Seven suggest, I developed relationships with a number of individual asylum seekers and refugees who came to, in part, constitute my own experience of Sheffield as a city and a home. Through my own engagements with campaigns, marches, demonstrations, deportation hearings and asylum decisions, I forged a connection akin to those recounted by a number of Sheffield's other volunteers. The tensions of attempting to traverse the different commitments, drives and impacts of such a position are emblematic of research on refugee and asylum groups in many ways, and I would not suggest that this study offers an answer to these dilemmas. However, my participant observation did offer me two reflections on such issues, firstly, there is a need to view research itself as an unpredictable, embodied and emotive process, one made up through responsive and temporary performances (Routledge 2002), which, in part, cannot be fully accounted for either before, or after, the event. My own research diary thus offered a chance to reflect upon these emotional connections, yet this could never fully account for what happened in its entirety (see Dewsbury *et al.* 2002). While secondly, and arising from this sense of the unexpected, and unaccountable, nature of research, I would suggest that there is a need to be cautious, and watchful, when attempting to account for one's research, for as Duneier (1999, p.14) usefully reminds us; '[t]hough participant observers often remark on the rapport they achieve and how they are seen by the people

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[10] The issue of emotion within research has become a recent focus of critical attention (see Anderson and Smith 2001; Wood and Smith 2004), examining in particular the importance of emotional responses to the ways in which research choices are made (Widdowfield 2000).

they write about, in the end it is best to be humble about such things, because one never really knows'.

The Thesis

With these foundations in place, through the following pages I want to make a number of interrelated claims which arise from the research outlined above. The first of these is a concern which resonates with each of these chapters, and it is that the way in which we conceptualise asylum as a relation to space itself matters. Not simply because in casting asylum as an issue of national security, borders and abstract difference we deny the importance of those banal spatialities which I argue centrally found and condition asylum as a lived experience, but also because in offering a more nuanced account of spacing asylum a second claim emerges from these negotiations of space, that in such relations and tensions we might witness the opening of a myriad of modalities of response to asylum which are not exhausted through a binary of acceptance or rejection. Rather, I argue that taking spaces of asylum seriously means shedding light upon the often overlooked tensions, antagonisms and momentary alliances of interest which are both inherent in the production of spaces of asylum in the city and which are witnessed in attempts to practice ideals of hospitality, generosity and welcome. Studying in depth how asylum seekers make, respond to, and are written out of, certain spaces within Sheffield, provides an account not only of asylum as a spatial experience, but also of how different ethical and political negotiations of interest and response, from hospitality to suspicion, are constantly interwoven, knotted and unraveled across these sites of interaction and aversion. In short, this thesis offers an account of asylum which takes space seriously, and that seeks to draw from the experiences, nuances and tensions of asylum an ethically infused account of what an urban politics of sanctuary might mean in the UK.

In doing so, the thesis proceeds in the following manner. Chapter Two frames the conceptual development of this study through considering the various ways in which the issue of asylum, and the question of the stranger more generally, has been posed. However, this does not present a unified account of 'theory' within this thesis, rather Chapter Two offers a starting point, an orientation, from which the spaces of engagement of subsequent chapters draw. Each of these subsequent chapters deploys a range of social and political

theory which emerges from within those contextualised, embedded, accounts produced during my research. I do not therefore pose a stark divide between 'theory' and 'practice', 'concepts' and 'empiricism', but rather present each as an interdependent lens through which to both come to a temporary, and limited, understanding of the social processes and conditions of the present, and to offer a series of orientations for research, politics and 'theory' into the future. With this fusion in mind, Chapter Two presents an engagement with a series of Home Office statements and policies and with academic literature which deals with the questions posed by contemporary asylum. Here I suggest that we may witness the continual (re)creation of a bounded vision of the nation as a space under threat. In contrast to this, I suggest the need to consider more clearly the implications which a relational approach to space might hold for accounts of asylum. It is within the negotiations of these different visions of space, of territorialized poles of encampment (Agamben 1998), and hospitality or sanctuary (Derrida 2001a), and a more networked, fluid appreciation of relational space, that the matter of experiencing asylum within the everyday is accomplished I argue, and it is these spatial tensions which I shall illustrate. With these negotiations in mind I move in Chapter Three to consider Sheffield's narration of asylum in order to suggest that the city, through a series of exemplary moments of refuge, has constructed a narrative of its own 'hospitable' nature. Placing this account of the city against a national 'domopolitics' (Walters 2004) of regulation and categorization, I demonstrate how Sheffield might be viewed as a city which presents a constant tension between doing asylum differently, and needing to fall within a range of 'acceptable' norms of governmental practice and policy. Chapter Four develops this narrative of the city by examining in detail a key attempt to reconsider Sheffield's relationship to asylum, through Sheffield's status as the UK's first 'City of Sanctuary'. Here I discuss how this status was achieved through a range of micropolitical modes of action (Connolly 2002), how such a move involved the recasting of the identity of the city as a space of outward looking responsibility, and what implications this counter narrative of refuge might have for the city through its tension with wider governmental discourses.

Having considered the tensions which emerge through differently narrating Sheffield's relation to asylum seekers, I move to consider three key spaces of encounter for asylum seekers in the city. Chapter Five presents an ethnography of an asylum drop-in centre and focuses upon two key elements of experiencing this environment. The first is to apprehend

the varied power relations of generosity and welcome which inflect this site, while the second is to suggest that such a space might generate an affective disposition of ethical openness and engagement within individuals which influences wider relations within the city. Chapter Six develops this dispositional ethics through examining asylum seekers' accounts and experiences of public spaces, focusing in particular on moments of generosity on the street and the therapeutic nature of walking the city. These accounts are tempered by an appreciation of the various ways in which asylum seekers' movements are ordered, monitored and conditioned. Chapter Seven moves to consider spaces of home and homelessness within Sheffield, and considers the rising number of destitute asylum seekers, arguing that current housing provision displays a stark division between the provision of accommodation and the making of a home. Finally, Chapter Eight offers some concluding thoughts on this study, and draws out some of the key implications of this work, suggesting a renewed engagement with the concept of 'sanctuary' and an urban ethical politics which might be responsive to such an ideal. In addressing urban geography, Latham (1999, p.166) argues that we should set out to consider 'more ordinary, less obviously notable spaces...To think about what is going on in such places is not to surrender to an urban romanticism. It is to explore the very possibilities and limits of living ethically within the city', and it is this exploration of living ethically in and through the city, which I hope to address, for as Derrida (2001a, p.23) argues, the 'city of refuge' represents; 'a place for reflection – for reflection on the questions of asylum and hospitality – and for a new order of law and democracy to come to be put to the test'. This thesis represents an opening of such a reflection, and a demand for politics to be put ever more rigorously to such a test.

CHAPTER TWO

SPACES OF ASYLUM
STRANGE PRESENCES, SECURE BORDERS

'Imagine the world as a theatre. The acts of the powerful and the official occupy center
stage. The traditional versions of history, the conventional sources of news encourage
us to fix our gaze on that stage. The limelights there are so bright that they blind you to
the shadowy spaces around you, make it hard to meet the gaze of the other people in the
seats, to see the way out of the audience, into the aisles, backstage, outside, in the dark,
where other powers are at work. A lot of the fate of the world is decided onstage, in the
limelight, and the actors there will tell you that all of it is, that there is no other
place...Turn your head. Learn to see in the dark. Pay attention to the inventive arenas
that exert political power outside that stage or change the contents of the drama onstage.
From the places that you have been instructed to ignore or rendered unable to see, come
the stories that change the world, and it is here that culture has the power to shape
politics and ordinary people have the power to change the world '
(Solnit 2004, p.33, 34-35).

Rebecca Solnit's (2004) rallying cry for an awakened appreciation of the micropolitical
encounters which shape not only our everyday politics, but also the discourses and
narratives through which we engage with so much of the world, presents a prescient
grounding for the engagement with the contemporary spacing of asylum which this
chapter seeks to address. Following engagements with governmental and media
narratives of asylum in Chapter One, I shall examine the ways in which asylum seekers,
and asylum itself, have been constructed through a series of spatial imaginaries.
Following Solnit's (2004) words I wish to suggest that too often such a spatial
sensibility has been foreclosed within a set of assumptions of bounded spaces and logics
of categorisation which act to subsume an array of nuanced, multiple spaces of asylum
behind dominant narratives of the nation, the border and the universal. In this chapter I
shall therefore interrogate recent means of spacing asylum, from governmental
narratives of control to examinations of the stranger, in order to highlight the spatial
assumptions they rely upon, arguing that they act to reproduce a limited spatial

vocabulary. I then suggest ways in which such a framework might undermine attempts to generate a pluralist politics of response to asylum, through fixing both individuals and political discourse in immobile, closed, spatial imaginaries. Such frames overlook the contextual and contested nature of an array of spaces of asylum, and it is to these necessary spatial negotiations which I move in considering a number of spacings of asylum, of sovereign abandonment, sanctuary, and thinking 'beyond place', as lenses through which to approach the prosaic negotiations which mark, condition and construct the city. I want to begin however by considering how the stranger more generally conceived has been approached through the social sciences in order to account, in part, for the spatial anxieties induced by relating to both proximate and distant difference.

Strange Presences: Approaching the Stranger

Contemporary discussions of asylum feed into a range of academic debates over, for example, the policing of ever more 'intelligent' borders within an anxious national sensibility (Diken 2004), the interplay between ideas of asylum and terrorism within popular presentations of the 'war on terror' (Butler 2004) and longer running discussions over national identity and living with diversity. Here in particular we have witnessed a revaluation of the role of multicultural narratives within the UK (Alibhai-Brown 1999; Wieviorka 1998), as Mitchell (2004, p.641) argues that 'state-sponsored multiculturalism is in retreat...assimilation is shedding its tarnished image and regaining its stature as a key conceptual and political tool' (see Back *et al.* 2002a). Here though I wish to focus on a particular consideration of the asylum seeker in such work, that of asylum as a relation to the stranger. I begin by looking to how the stranger has been viewed in social theory, before suggesting the links between this vision and ideas of asylum.

The idea of the stranger is one which permeates social theory, as a representative of fear, repulsion, and often exclusion, yet the stranger also presents a centrally constitutive notion for the social, helping to define the boundaries of the acceptable, and even the self. As Bauman (2001, p.115) argues, in the stranger our 'fears of uncertainty, founded in the totality of life experience, find their eagerly sought, and so welcomed, embodiment', through the stranger Bauman argues our contemporary 'scattered, free-floating anxieties acquire a hard nucleus' (ibid). A central way in which the stranger has been conceptualised, both socially and spatially, is through psychoanalysis, which

argues that behaviour cannot be fully understood outside of the way people resolve 'psychological conflicts experienced earlier in life' (Pile 1996, p.82), and seeks to demonstrate the way in which the structuring of the psyche is an inherently social process (Frosh 1987, p.47). Thus for Wilton (1998, p.174) 'a link between psyche and spatiality can help to explain the problematic nature of encounters with difference because moments of proximity represent challenges not only to an established spatial order, but also to the integrity of individual and collective identities', and it is this link I wish to consider as a way of viewing the asylum seeker.

For psychoanalysis the stranger emerges from the self, from the point of childhood relations to the world external to the individual and their subjectivity. Freud notes that the narcissistic self projects outwards what it experiences as unpleasant within itself, a process of 'projection' through which 'the child's self is constructed as a relationship between self and other objects, such that the boundaries between self and the external world become increasingly well demarcated' (Pile 1996, p.90). It is through this largely unconscious process that the very idea of 'the self' is developed; the self becomes separate from the world, bounded and yet permeable. Thus 'aversion and desire, repulsion and attraction, play against each other in defining the border which gives the self identity and, importantly, those opposed feelings are transferred to others during childhood' (Sibley 1995, p.125), that which is seen to be dangerous or threatening within the self is thrust outwards to the world and begins to define others, such that 'the strange appears as a defence put up by a distraught self' (Kristeva 1991, p.183).

The boundaries of the self, built and jealously guarded via projective processes, may however be blurred and questioned by the reinsertion of that which was thought to have been expelled. Freud here identifies the notion of the 'uncanny' as a regression to a 'time when the ego had not marked itself off from the external world and other people' (Freud 1919, p.236). The uncanny is therefore part of the process of projection, and yet shows the impossibility of complete separation, it is that which is expelled in the formation of the bounds of the self but which returns to perpetually remind the psyche of a point before its subjective delimitation (Royle 2003). The return of the different, the strange and yet the familiar, lies at the heart of the fear of the uncanny as it dissolves and questions the boundaries around which the self is constituted. A fear of the stranger henceforth becomes rooted in the very means through which our subjectivity is constituted, as Kearney (2003, p.75) asserts 'what we most fear in the demonised other

is our own mirror image', as the alien represents a figure through which we express and seek to extract not only the strangeness inherent within identity itself, but also the anxiety inducing ambiguity of the boundaries between the self and the world (Kristeva 1982). Ambiguity presents the central fear, both individual and collective, that 'without the known boundaries, everything will collapse into undifferentiated, miasmic chaos; that identity will disintegrate; that 'I' will be suffocated or swamped' (Donald 1993, cited in Robins 1995, p.54).

Bauman (1995, p.181) terms this fear 'proteophobia', an apprehension aroused by 'multiform phenomena which elude assignment', and argues that such a fear is central to the administration of social space, for measures of spatial order are not intended to eliminate such impulses, rather, they employ 'proteophobia'. In this sense to control social space is to select the objects on which proteophobic sentiments are targeted, to effectively define the 'other'. In the social processes which produce and reproduce space, power is imbued as a right to define and control that which is 'acceptable' and thus conversely that which is 'strange' (Wilton 1998). However such 'doxa' of social spacing and social embodiment are never without question, and consequently 'it is because the stranger threatens to expose the imaginary nature of the social order, that the social order works so hard to exclude his or her presence from it' (Robins 1995, p.55). Just as the individual seeks to reject and expel that which questions the self, so wider networks of 'socially ordered space' seek to exclude that which is ambivalent, for in the 'face of ambivalence the logic of order and identity is reasserted: "us" against "them." "We" must secure our centrality, and "they" must be pushed out from the centre' (ibid, p.54). Here Bauman (1995, p.128) writes of recurrent attempts to 'burn out the uncertainty in effigy' by focusing the abhorrence of indistinction on a series of selected groups, such as the asylum seeker, in the vain hope their elimination will 'instil the dreamt of routine'.

The Stranger and the Nation

Such targeting of proteophobia might be seen to exemplify relations to asylum as the asylum seeker is centrally cast as that strange presence which must be excluded for spatial order to be (re)asserted. I want to consider two spatial scales at which the asylum seeker, as a stranger, has been considered and conceptualised within geography, the first of these being the prevalence of the asylum seeker as a threatening contagion for the

nation. Studies here have highlighted the way in which ideals of spatial control and order have been applied to the strange. Thus Hage (1998, p.72) uses Lacan's notion of the 'fantasy', as a concept which 'has both to cause the subject to try to attain it and yet it has to be unattainable', to explain the politics of a nationalist social spacing which rejects the stranger. As Hage (1998, p.74, original emphasis) argues it is 'precisely the belief that this homely domesticated space *can* be achieved that drives them [the nationalist] to pursue it', the stranger therefore becomes indispensable not only to the constitution of the psyche, but also to the 'construction and maintenance of the fantasy' (ibid). A complex political and psychological relation to and with the stranger is created when we begin to attribute the bounds of the psyche to the social construction of space, a relation of both fear and revulsion, but also of pleasure and curiosity which conditions our collective relations (Robins 1995), for as Žižek (1991, p.203-204) asserts; 'what we conceal by imputing to the other the theft of enjoyment is the traumatic fact that we never possessed what was allegedly stolen from us'. From such a fantasy of projection we might see how a politics of national homeliness is perpetuated as 'modern political subjectification creates its own peculiar form of political abjection...the refugee is precisely the figure that identifies the political abjection of the modern age' (Dillon 1999, p.110). Political practices of removing and suppressing the ambiguous presence of the stranger thus invent and reinvent the abject human they seek to exercise 'in the process of continuously reinaugerating, as politics, a certain imperative of political unity and malleable uniformity' (ibid).

Following Dillon (1999), Tyler (2006, p.186) argues that 'the figure of the asylum seeker increasingly secures the imaginary borders of Britain today', as 'the identification of the figure of the asylum-seeker is increasingly constitutive of public articulations of national and ethnic belonging' (ibid, p.189). In this manner, and echoing Bauman's (2001) views on the stranger more generally, Tyler (2006, p.192) concludes that today 'the figure of the asylum-seeker is comforting, for the creation and exclusion of this imaginary bad object brings 'us' closer together. The mobilization of the asylum-seeker as 'our' national hate figure bestows 'us' with a collective identity and in doing so grants 'us' the pleasures of secure identification'. Similarly, Bauman (1995, p.136) argues that 'it is the declared presence of the stranger, of a stranger conspiring to trespass, to break in and invade, that makes the gate tangible'. The asylum seeker might therefore be viewed as precisely that strange presence who secures a sense of what and where the nation is, and crucially who has the right to be part of such a collective

imagining, for the other is centrally 'a by-product of social spacing; a left-over of spacing' (Bauman 1995, p.189). The stranger, cast as the vilified asylum seeker, is thereby presented as a figure to be ordered, controlled and regulated under governmental forms of reaction (see Fincher 2001; Mountz *et al.* 2002; Mountz 2003), as logics of discipline are applied to asylum seekers in an attempt to assert some form of spatial order over their ambiguous presence within national space.

The Distant Stranger

Counterposed to these national accounts are a series of concerns with asylum at a universal, global scale, centred around the conceptual ideal of a cosmopolitan, global sensibility, borne out of an emergent concern for ethics within geography (see Cloke 2002; Proctor 1998; Proctor and Smith 1999; Smith 1997, 1999, 2000). Within geography we have thus seen a concern with the development of an ethical sensibility which asks, as Smith (1998, p.15) terms it, 'how far should we care?' Here research has considered the role which ideas of distance come to play in moral partiality and the ways in which individuals come to negotiate ethical relationships in a world where images of distant suffering and appeals to our moral sensibilities are commonplace (Smith 2000; Sontag 2004; Barnett *et al.* 2008). Smith (1998, p.36) argues that 'the strength of partialist sentiments, including that of caring for close people, reveals abstract impartiality to be a cold, dispassionate project', and as such highlights the centrality of boundary-led thinking to not only conceptions of the stranger, but also notions of ethical responsibility towards others. Thus, as Appiah (2006, p.xv) asserts, cosmopolitanism contains two central themes, firstly, 'the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related', and secondly, 'that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance'. Much of this recent work has therefore sought to examine how these relationships of localised partiality and global impartiality are negotiated through ideas of generosity, aid and 'giving' (Barnett and Land 2007; Carter 2007; Korf 2007; Silk 2004).

However, while these accounts all seek to imbue relations to distant strangers with a sense of ethical concern, if not active political engagement, the distant stranger does not simply equate with a sense of ethical responsibility alone, rather the outsider might also be viewed in a less favourable light. While the proximate stranger represents a threat to

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the integrity and order of the nation, the distant stranger signifies a relationship beyond the nation which is to be maintained, as for an anxious nation the stranger is best kept at a distance as Hage (2003) argues. The distant stranger might also offer a canvas on which to project national fears as Bourke (2005) suggests, thus as the proximate stranger appears to typify the anxieties of social and spatial order within the nation (Sibley 1995), so those beyond the nation are not only symbolically used to maintain a sense of national boundaries through cultural 'othering' (Crang 1998), but also have projected onto them the hopes, fears and geographical imaginations which sustain a sense of Britain's role within the world (Gregory 2004; Gilroy 2004). From this perspective xenophobic sentiments and a hostile response to asylum seekers, both within the UK and abroad, are created through a mixture of (feared) proximity and abstract distance, as a fear of being 'swamped' by strangers combines with a sense of cultural and spatial distance from encountering those strangers themselves. The distant nature of many asylum seekers, witnessed only through media reports and UNHCR press releases, acts to dehumanise and objectify asylum seekers as an abstract social group, an undifferentiated mass of human suffering onto which media fears of terrorism, illegality and suspicion can be effectively imposed (Malkki 1996).

Relationships to distant strangers therefore go some way to explaining the complexities of responding to asylum, for the claims of those asylum seekers beyond the nation demand different forms of response. From a cosmopolitan perspective they compel a sense of ethical concern and the need to examine our own responsibilities towards others both in spite of, and partially because of, our distance from their plight. Thus Odysseos (2003, p.200) employs such a 'cosmopolitan political project' when presenting the case for a 'global ethics' around which normative rights of residency might be ascribed (Benhabib 2004). However, for those who would reject such a cosmopolitan stance, it is precisely the distance of such strangers which compels both indifference and antipathy (Smith 1998), as the appropriate response here would be to maintain such distance in order to establish the boundaries of the nation. The distant stranger from this perspective illustrates the importance of the boundary, for beyond this we may be indifferent as those beyond our immediate concern can be sketched as purely a 'needy' abstraction of world politics. The language of the 'distant stranger', at once an ethical demand and a political abstraction, is therefore a mixed and contentious one which may be taken to imply an ethical commitment to others beyond the nation and a desire to maintain such a distance, as new relations of proximity and distance are

constantly being produced (Robinson *et al.* 2008). Within contemporary Britain, asylum presents a case through which these approaches to ethics, politics, space and difference are negotiated through policy, narrative and everyday life, and in order to begin the process of deconstructing these negotiations more fully I want to consider in more detail the rhetoric of the Home Office's (2002) White Paper *'Secure Borders, Safe Haven'*.

(Re)Asserting the Nation: 'Our' Secure Borders

As I suggested in Chapter One, a narrative of asylum as a national problem exists within the UK which acts to deny a focus upon the everyday lives, and political struggles, of asylum seekers. I want to now extend this account by considering the spatial assumptions which underlie this representation of asylum seekers as a strange presence within the nation. In doing so I consider how we might view the Home Office's *'Secure Borders, Safe Haven'* White Paper (2002), as exemplifying a dualistic spatial politics of belonging and spatial association, before considering how the reality of this practice is made more complex by the relational and networked nature of asylum flows themselves, demanding a form of 'domopolitical' (Walters 2004) filtering and selective calculation.

The 2002 White Paper can be viewed as a device for the establishment of a series of spatial and political boundaries woven together. As Billig (1995) argues, it is at times where there is a perceived sense of crisis that collective identities are reasserted and reimposed, and the political context of the 2002 election might be seen to represent one such occasion. As Hubbard (2005a, p.53) writes 'a combination of conservative electioneering and sensationalist media reporting…encouraged the view that asylum seekers pose a threat to 'British cultural distinctiveness' and, by implication, constitute a 'serious social problem'', and the White Paper represents a discursive response to such a perceived social problem. The *discursive* ordering presented here is enacted by being translated into a very real and practical *spatial* ordering. Therefore we might view dispersal policies taken on by the government as a means of spatial ordering, of giving the other a (known) location and in doing so asserting a sense of control over the chaos and disorder their presence suggests to the perceived integrity of the nation.

Throughout the paper we see a dualistic logic of 'compassionate repression' (Fassin 2005), exemplified in the following statement;

'The Government is determined that the UK should have a humanitarian asylum process which honours our obligations to those genuinely fleeing persecution while deterring those who have no right to asylum from travelling here' (Home Office, 2002, p.52).

Here a sense of inclusion is promoted, but within the limits of a narrative of legitimacy. As Sales (2005, p.445) argues, within the White Paper 'inclusion is reserved for those deemed "deserving" – by virtue of their skills or ability to meet strict criteria for refugee status – while more rigid exclusion is proposed for the "undeserving"'. The idea of the nation is thereby constructed around a logic of benevolence and fairness, of the meeting of obligations but within a series of bounds of legitimacy. As Lynn and Lea (2003, p.446) argue, here the 'integrity of the asylum-seeker or refugee' is the quality 'or more specifically the lack of it – which is used to justify and explain all else'. What I wish to draw from this idea is the way in which it produces asylum as a particular, grounded and dualistic, spatial relation. A categorisation of the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving', the legitimate and the illegal, is translated into spatialised frames of reference for asylum through the discourses which circulate this policy paper.

The following statement highlights this discursive linkage between notions of legitimacy, categorisation and the spacing of asylum and the nation;

'Countries offering refuge to those fleeing persecution and war…need to be confident in their identity and sense of belonging, and trust their immigration and asylum systems to work fairly and effectively. Strong civic and community foundations are necessary if people are to have the confidence to welcome asylum seekers and migrants. They must trust the systems their governments operate and believe they are fair and not abused. They must have a sense of their own community or civic identity – a sense of shared understanding which can both animate and give moral content to the benefits and duties of the citizenship to which new entrants aspire. Only then can integration with diversity be achieved' (Home Office, 2002, p.9).

Here we see a series of problematic socio-spatial constructions, of linking a sense of community and belonging to a given space, and of implying through this narrative that the community itself need not change, that it is only the 'new entrants' who should 'aspire' to become integrated, accepted and 'deserving'. Through these statements the White Paper acts as a means to (re)assert a sense of spatial and national ownership, of the need to both physically and discursively 'secure the borders' of the national imagined community.

The White Paper thus relies on two spatial images of asylum, of the nation and the border, which act to situate asylum seekers within an imagined geography of distinction and decision. Indeed this may be noted simply by considering the paper's title *'Secure Borders, Safe Haven'*, for it is key to assert a position whereby those offered a haven within the nation are cast as deserving, worthy new citizens, whilst those undeserving are to be kept at bay, distanced from the nation and met with the force of a 'secure border'. To a large extent what this paper suggests is not simply a reassertion of national imaginaries of space and security, but also a problematic vision of asylum as a social (and spatial) relation itself, a vision wherein the claimant is either legitimate or not. A spatial imaginary responsive to this demand is one which places the figure of the asylum seeker according to this logic of legitimacy, as either 'worthy' (albeit perhaps begrudgingly) of a place in the nation, or as cast outside the 'secure borders' of the UK.

This construction of asylum as a relation to national space serves to not only shore up a sense of the (legitimate) limits of our obligations as a nation, but also acts to reiterate those ideals around the citizens' role as a legitimate manager of national space (Hage 1998). Thus within the statement that people 'must have a sense of their own community or civic identity – a sense of shared understanding which can both animate and give moral content to the benefits and duties of the citizenship to which new entrants aspire' (Home Office, 2002, p.9), lies an assertion of those who have the right to this civic identity, and who have a stake in defining such a 'moral content', those who become the 'supervisors of integration' (Hage 1998, p.239). In short this serves to not only define the asylum seeker within an interwoven set of binaries of 'deserving' and 'undeserving', inside and outside, but it also establishes an overarching position of aristocratic belonging to the nation, both spatially through residence, and politically through reifying those whose legitimacy within national space affords them 'a sense of their own community' (Home Office, 2002, p.9).

The ways in which the British government have sought to frame their consideration of asylum is therefore in itself a telling political gesture, and one which has a distinct spacing of asylum at its heart. The 2002 White Paper is simply one example of a renewed focus on the interests and spatial integrity of the nation, and it draws upon a specific and bounded territorial imaginary, of fixity, borders and moorings. Similarly we see a series of renewed debates over what it might mean to be 'British', following in

particular the terrorist attacks of 7/7, which further draw upon calls to somehow return to a sense of the nation as a coherent and idealised object. For example, Gordon Brown has renewed calls for a popular notion of 'Britishness' and proposed the idea of a 'Britain Day' as an opportunity to engage in 'a more 'American' sense of national belonging, national assertiveness, national pride' (Hill *et al.* 2007). As Hill *et al.* (2007) state 'Brown's Britishness initiative reflects a belief that the nation has to find a way to sing with one voice. In the words of Liam Byrne…'Everyone should sit down once a year and think how lucky they are to be British''. Such a statement of valorised identity fits well with the assertive national rhetoric of David Blunkett five years earlier, stating that; 'we need to send out a signal around the world that we are neither open to abuse nor a 'Fortress Britain'' (in Home Office 2002, p.4).

Within a context where 'considerable confusion, ignorance and misinformation exists about asylum issues' (Finney, 2005, p.2), the presentation of asylum as a binary of spacing and categorising the 'other' does little to aid an understanding of difference. Rather as Lynn and Lea (2003) find within public accounts of asylum, we witness a popular (re)construction of the space of the nation in relation to asylum, of the nation as a *bounded* and *threatened* space of belonging. Envisioned as such, the nation grounds an anxiety towards otherness and difference, towards those strange presences one would rather not admit. The spatiality of this construction is therefore maintained and enforced precisely by media reports which talk of the 'swamping' of the nation by asylum seekers or which highlight the limited resources and 'capacity' of this 'island nation' to cope with asylum influxes (Jones 2005). However, while questioning the spacing of asylum presented through governmental narratives of controlling and ordering space as I have suggested is an important deconstructive step, we should not lose sight of the fact that presenting space in this way is highly politically productive for governments themselves. Not only does presenting the nation as a space of bounded territories and 'cohesive communities' construct support for the idea of a national community itself, alongside all the political support such an idea brings (Hage 1998; Morley 2000), but it also allows this space to be presented as manageable, monitored and contained. In this sense there is a bureaucratic logic of defining an object of management and maintenance at play here, through which the Home Office acts to define that over which it holds a spatial control and to which it has a responsibility. It makes sense from this perspective to construct the nation as an object of the mechanics of bureaucracy for this is how the Home Office must work in order to effectively manage different aspects of

national space. There is though a distinction to be drawn here between a vision of the nation defined through the mechanics of governance, and the manner in which it becomes tied to the political ideologies of governments. For the government, the 2002 White Paper represents an example of statecraft, of the necessity to balance and negotiate varied interests which impact upon, and make demands of, the ability of the Home Office to deal with asylum as a national 'problem'. Yet there is, I would argue, a two fold denial here, firstly of the importance of these modes of negotiation themselves, and secondly of the implications of such moments of negotiation, namely, their productive nature of both modes of governance, and new spaces of asylum themselves. It is to these responses that I now turn through reapproaching the '*Secure Borders, Safe Haven*' White Paper as an example of 'domopolitics' (Walters 2004).

Filtering and Calculation

The dualistic vision of asylum presented here, of the 'deserving refugee' and the 'undeserving asylum seeker', is itself productive of a range of modes of power, identification and spacing within the national imaginary, and within Sheffield as I shall examine more fully in Chapter Three. In order to consider these political constructions, we might turn to Walters' (2004) articulation of the '*Secure Borders, Safe Haven*', White Paper as indicative of a new form of 'domopolitics' of the nation, a politics which 'implies a reconfiguring of the relations between citizenship, state, and territory. At its heart is a fateful conjunction of home, land and security' (ibid, p.241). In the domain of 'domopolitics' the national imaginary is cast as one of a homely, safe space of secure belonging, citizenship and the right to secure and defend such a bounded space against those who may be perceived to threaten it (see also Hage 1996). A vision of 'domopolitics' therefore reflects many of those accounts of nation, territory and security noted previously (Hage 1998; Squire 2005; Tyler 2006), however, 'domopolitics' also extends beyond these accounts to suggest the fractured and tense relationship which spatial control holds with spatial articulation, and it is here that new spaces of governance emerge.

As Balibar (2004) notes, the dualistic relation between interiority and exteriority established through a domopolitical vision of the border is increasingly placed in question by conflicting desires to be at once open (to certain forms of citizen and sovereign association) and closed (to unwanted strangers and political influences).

Walters (2004) thus notes that the domopolitics of the UK is caught between a desire to embrace flows of mobility for economic advantage, and a desire to control and order such flows ever more minutely. In doing so we witness the production of 'a particular politics of mobility whose dream is not to arrest mobility but to tame it; not to build walls, but systems capable of utilizing mobilities, tapping their energies and in certain cases deploying them against the sedentary and ossified elements within society' (Walters 2004, p.248). Taming mobility in this manner is predicated upon the need to organise and control the flows of global connections, so that the UK might more effectively take advantage of such flows, we witness this logic through the Home Office's accounts of its own 'selective' nature;

> 'Each year there are millions of visitors to our shores. We have global communications, global economies and global movement of people. We have to adapt to these developments, not by putting up the shutters, but by managing, controlling and selecting' (Charles Clarke, cited in Home Office 2005c).

The politics of mobility which is instigated through this vision of domopolitics is a form of governmentality which holds a central place for modes of distinction and division, categorisation and sorting. Within a spatial framing of the nation as a container subject to diverse flows, the need to differentiate and to assert order through knowledge and classification comes to the fore. Walters (2004, p.255, original emphasis) thus goes on to characterise contemporary immigration controls as 'antivirus software';

> 'The image is of the state/home as a computer terminal located in a proliferating network which is both a space of resources and risks. The asylum system is a core element of this scanning infrastructure regulating the passage of flows which traverse the state/home. Properly organized it is to work in the background, effectively and silently. It blocks malicious incoming traffic, while the non-malicious can smoothly cross its threshold. Crucially, it allows us to work with materials in confidence that we are not at significant risk; that they are not 'abusing' the welfare or the asylum systems. It confers a kind of safety mark upon the elements which circulate within the system: they have been checked; you can *trust* them'.

The system outlined here, of dividing claims into 'trustworthy' and 'abusive', presents one means to order the social space of the nation as a home, and also reflects those moments of decision and spatial control which are undertaken through the Home Office. Here the figure of the 'deserving' refugee becomes one category within this process of

organisation and classification, as Tony Blair highlights in comments on the 2002 White Paper;

> 'While making the rules strict and workable, we will make sure we don't slam the door on those genuine refugees fleeing death and persecution' (Tony Blair in Home Office 2005a, p.6).

Balibar (2004, p.111) argues that for many individuals today the most significant frontiers are no longer represented by simple borders, but rather take the form of 'detention zones and filtering systems', for what a contemporary politics of 'national preference' means is that 'immigrants, beginning with foreigners in irregular situations or who can easily be rendered illegal, are deprived of fundamental social rights and can be expelled as a function of "thresholds of tolerance" or, "capacities of reception and integration" that are arbitrarily established' (ibid, p.37). The governmentality of distinction and division which lies at the heart of 'domopolitics' is therefore productive of not only 'filtering systems' of discipline through which identities are assigned, through the definition of some 'home countries' as 'safe' and the application of identity cards and different forms of status, but also of a series of spaces of such filtering. A politics of distinction relies upon spaces of detention, tribunal and appeals, welfare applications, and, fundamentally, spaces of waiting. A domopolitical framing of deciding upon strangers, of establishing their 'worthiness' for belonging within the UK, produces a series of spaces of accommodation and waiting, spaces which I shall interrogate more fully in Chapter Seven. However, for now it is important to note that this politics of governing bodies, of assigning identities and ordering 'case files', produces a distinct spatial dimension through the establishment of asylum dispersal 'zones' and 'regions' of relocation. The language of dispersal, of clustering, zoning and 'burdening' different regions and cities, is a distinctly spatial one, and one which suggests a logic of order, control and a sense of homogenous spaces of relocation, spaces of assignment where asylum seekers might be placed, between the nation and the border, to await a decision on their status. Yet it is precisely this lack of status, this indeterminacy, which is productive of new spaces of asylum, spaces not accounted for purely in a binary of the nation and the border, the deserving and the undeserving, for these are categories of assignment, of decision and determination, yet to seek asylum is to wait, to be subject to the checking and filtering of a 'domopolitical' system. The spaces created here, the detention centre, the temporary accommodation, the drop-in centre and so on, are sites of hiatus, spaces inside the nation yet occupied by those not

yet fully 'within' the nation itself as a political and social community. The continued definition and categorisation of asylum acts to order the indeterminacy of a filtering system which on average takes nine months to complete, thus those who 'seek' asylum are cast as 'undeserving' precisely due to the apparent lack (yet) of evidence of their deserving nature (Sales 2002).

Rhetorically, and literally, the filtering system of asylum works to keep those who have yet to prove their legitimacy to the nation at a distance, to keep them held at the threshold of acceptance, at the threshold between nation and border. It is the spatial negotiations of this threshold, as a liminal zone of indistinction, which presenting the nation as defined either as a 'safe haven' or via its 'secure borders', conceals, for these are the negotiations and spaces which most trouble bounded, coherent (and cohesive), managerial visions of national space and a 'firm but fair' response to asylum. These are the spaces and negotiations which make up that story of responding to asylum as a matter of sovereign statecraft and internal management, these spaces construct asylum in Britain on a daily basis. While the need to balance Britain's interests in economic migration, trade flows and the transmission of ideas and commerce, with a desire to 'secure' the UK's territorial and cultural 'integrity' defines the government's response to globalisation and increasingly international flows of goods and people, the more prosaic negotiations of creating and controlling spaces of asylum as sites of indistinction and exception are less readily seen. Over the course of the next five chapters I want to focus on these spaces as sites of productive negotiations between different visions of space, politics and ethics. Before doing so however, I shall propose three central 'spacings of asylum', as political and ethical orientations which emerge throughout these accounts. These 'spacings' condition how spaces of asylum are constructed as they vie for attention, performance and identification within the city, and they shall act as central orientation points for the discussions of ethical and political responses to follow.

Spacing Asylum

In attempting to expand the appreciation of spaces of asylum, we might look to a number of ways in which issues of spatial mobility and politics have been conceptualised. For example, Biemann's (2002) work on the trafficking of female sex workers follows the bodies of women as traceable commodities within a globalised

system of international migration, through which the body itself is marked, policed and ordered. This again feeds into current debates over the role of biometric security measures in the wake of recent terror attacks (Amoore 2006), as the body comes to be viewed as a marker of both status, spatial belonging and legitimacy. Through such a lens we might argue that for 'the asylum seeker, the first and most critical stage moment in this process is being identified as an asylum-seeker' (Tyler 2006, p.188), as in a society of digital control the body itself now becomes a password (Lyon 2001). We might also consider work which highlights the sedentarised spatial politics of detention and confinement as a relation to asylum. Here research has sought to move away from viewing detention as simply another spatial category of exclusion, but rather sought to illustrate the complex and contingent power relations which saturate such spaces as never fully oppressive, degrading and hopeless (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2002; Pugliese 2002). Finally, there might also be scope for considering asylum and its diverse spatial relations through the kind of lens being advocated in actor-network theory (Mol and Law 1994; Murdoch 1998), where networks of asylum, human trafficking, conflict and mobility all intersect in the articulation of new spaces of response. Of particular saliency here might be the ability to track those 'immutable mobiles' (Latour 1987) of asylum which come to condition relations across space, for example, the role of Home Office documents, identity cards, passports and other material inflections of asylum as a global network of flow, connection and sedimentation.

Whilst these approaches speak to the renewed sense of spatial awareness that I advocate, I wish to draw in this work on a more specific recent consideration of spatial politics, on debates which focus upon the political, performative, and above all relational nature of space, as a site of constant becoming, multiplicity and political enactment. Through this lens asylum might be viewed as the coming together of a multiplicity of spatial experiences, of actions and ideals performed in those liminal moments of existing in uncertain space, between places and between lives. It is in these liminal moments and negotiated spaces that the minutiae of daily life can take on massive significance, and from which political and ethical acts might be seen to erupt into life (Dewsbury 2000, 2003; McCormack 2003; Thrift 2004a). I propose three forms of spacing asylum through which everyday spaces are negotiated, lived and encountered, these are the differently territorial inflections of firstly, spatial liminality and indistinction through social space as an exclusionary 'camp' (Agamben 1998), and secondly, a politics of welcome and hospitality through the notion of a 'sanctuary'

(Derrida 1999). While finally, I turn to recent considerations of space as a relational performative production (Gregson and Rose 2000; Massey 2005; Rose 1999), in order to highlight the need for a negotiation of political stances within the performance of space itself.

The Camp

My first spacing of asylum reflects the concerns of statecraft, of nation and territory, which we have seen previously. Drawing on the work of Agamben (1998) the idea of the camp has come to assume a central position within much contemporary social theory, as a space of exception, security and social aversion, linked increasingly to debates around the war on terror, citizenship and the biopolitical control of populations (Diken and Laustsen 2006; Gregory 2006; Minca 2005, 2006; Perera 2002). Agamben's work seeks to demonstrate how the figure denied the rights of the politicised citizen, living a life constituted only as 'bare life', acts to assert the authority of the sovereign through their exclusion from politicised life. For Agamben 'the originary relation of the law to life is not application, but abandonment' (Mills 2004, p.42), and such sovereign abandonment acts as a violent force to refuse 'those whose lives it controls any politically valid response, it operates as a form of technologised administration' (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2005, p.23). Sovereign power for Agamben does not produce political subjects, as in Foucauldian power relations, but rather produces exclusions as bare life, and in doing so acts to rule out the very possibility of resistance. The sovereign decision thereby 'denies a political voice to the form of life it has produced' (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2005, p.23).

A key aspect of this biopolitical decision is the establishment of a 'state of exception' by the sovereign, in which the figure of the *homo sacer* may be placed (Agamben 2005). The state of exception represents a suspension of the rule of law and 'creation of a zone of anomy in which all legal determinations find themselves inactivated' (Agamben 2005, p.4). A crucial development of this view of the suspended law is that of the 'camp', defined as '*the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule.* In the camp, the state of exception…is now given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order' (Agamben 1998, p.168-169, original emphasis). The camp represents the point at which the exception becomes a spatialised rule, a space in which the normal order is *de facto*

suspended as a means to affirm and continue such a 'normal order' elsewhere. Within such a space, exception and rule become one and conceptions of subjective right and juridical protection 'no longer make any sense' (Agamben 1997, p.110). For Agamben the camp represents a wholly new form of ethical space, a 'gray, incessant alchemy in which good and evil and, along with them, all the metals of traditional ethics reach their points of fusion' (Agamben 2002, p.21). Within the camp; 'every distinction between proper and improper, between possible and impossible, radically disappears' (Agamben 2002, p.75-76) and 'whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on law but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily act as sovereign' (Agamben 1998, p.174).

The idea of the camp might be taken most obviously to examine the detention centre as a space of asylum. For example, Diken (2004, p.86) writes of Woomera detention centre in Australia, as an encamped zone of indistinction; 'detainees are legally abandoned outside the legal system through exceptional practices that hold them under their ban'. Diken (2004, p.88) furthers asserts that within the 'detention center the human and the inhuman enter into a biopolitical zone of indistinction, and the detainees can be subjected to all sorts of physical and symbolic violence without legal consequences'. The detention centre provides a clear exemplar of the camp within contemporary society, alongside those shadowy spaces of detention and torture which saturate the politics of the 'war on terror' (Butler 2004; Gregory 2006), as a site through which the stranger might be pushed away from the nation, kept at arms length, for the camp is 'symptomatic of the fields of both security and terror' (Diken and Laustsen 2002, p.303). The camp is therefore a space of non-relation, a space of avoidance and aversion, of not only pushing the asylum seeker away from a legitimate presence within the nation, but also seeking to deny this presence altogether, to forget about this 'other' who so fundamentally questions our notions of belonging. For this reason these spaces might be seen as what Augé (1995) terms 'non-places', for they do not integrate other meanings, places or traditions within them but simply seek to remain as abstract, ignored and hidden spaces of indistinction.

However, I wish to consider the logic of encampment present in the work of Agamben beyond the bounds of detention, and rather view it as a socio-spatial (non)relation which permeates the experience of asylum itself. I follow the work of Diken and Laustsen (2005, p.5) who argue that today 'the production of bare life is extended beyond the

walls of the concentration camp...today, the logic of the camp is generalized; the exception is normalized'. The central claim of Diken and Laustsen's work is that the camp is no longer strictly bound to a spatial location of discipline, indistinction and containment, but rather that the logic of exceptionalism on which the camp is built is now prevalent in a range of social forms, with 'unbounding' becoming a dominant form of social relation. The basis of the camp as a site of, firstly, the assertion of a particular sense of order, and secondly, as productive of certain forms of life (whether that be the *homo sacer* or the tourist), has allowed Diken and Laustsen (2005, p.9) to also consider acts of 'voluntary 'camping', which increasingly signify a new dream of community or belonging' in which the spatial ideology of the camp is represented in social forms ranging from the gated community to the theme park. Diken (2004, p.99) argues that whilst aiming 'no longer toward disciplinary confinement but also exclusion, our society seems to be producing two kinds of camps...those voluntary camps where the entry is blocked but the exit is free, and those where the entry is free but the exit is blocked', a point which contains notable parallels to Bauman's (2001, p.119) consideration of the 'ghetto' as a dualisitic social and spatial process of exclusion, wherein the 'choosers of the ghetto-like gated communities may experience their 'safety of sameness' as home; people confined to the real ghettos live in prisons'.

It is through this sensibility of the camp as a particular social relation, a particular logic of spacing, of distance, non-relation and legal indeterminancy, wedded to an ever expansive ideal of control, order and containment that I wish to deploy the notion of the camp as a relation to space for asylum seekers. Encampment comes to represent a position of liminality and indistinction within space for asylum seekers, of being constantly in-between, and often outside, regimes of legal and political regulation, and as a result cast outside a legitimate right to spaces of political discourse or representation (Ticktin 2006). It is these points of indistinction and ambiguity, legally and politically, which come to the fore in those spaces of asylum I argue combine to construct an idea of a managed, and manageable, national space of orderly response. The camp represents a spacing of asylum which attempts to territorialise and fix the ambiguity of asylum, to place asylum seekers 'out there', both socially and politically, beyond the bounds of inclusion within the nation. Alongside this post-political impulse of stranger aversion, however, there is also a concurrent and linked logic of territorialised ethical response which we might look towards as a counterpoint, and as

the second spacing of asylum I wish to consider, that of creating a 'sanctuary' in the face of the camp's political and ethical oppression.

The Sanctuary

Diken and Laustsen (2005, p.177) conclude their account by asserting that the logic of the camp necessitates an ethics which takes the rightless, bare life of a common humanity as its point of departure. They argue that an ethics of hospitality is demanded by the configuration of the camp, which asserts the need to relate differently 'without following the path of sovereignty and abandonment' (ibid, p.184). Such an idea of a relation of hospitality takes a spatial expression through the notion of sanctuary, of a space opened and offered as a refuge for asylum seekers, a space of welcome. This would represent a spatial sensibility which seeks to 'construct and institute what one calls the structure of welcoming, a welcoming apparatus' (Derrida 2002, p.360-361) within the present. Derrida (2002, p.134) exemplifies this call for a welcome, for sanctuary, in his writing on the sans-papiers in France, arguing that whilst conditions of encampment may be prevalent, spaces of opportunity still present themselves, for today;

> 'Borders are no longer places of passage; they are places of interdiction, thresholds one regrets having crossed, boundaries back toward which one urgently escorts, threatening figures of ostracism, of expulsion, of banishment, of persecution. Henceforth we live in shelters that are under high surveillance, in high security neighbourhoods – and, without forgetting the legitimacy of this or that instinct of protection or need for security more and more of us suffocate and feel ashamed to live like this, to become the hostages of phobics who mix everything up, who cynically exploit the confusion toward political ends, who no longer know, or no longer want to distinguish between, the definition of hearth and hatred or fear of the foreigner – and who no longer know that the hearth of a home, a culture, a society also presupposes a hospitable opening'.

Such a hospitable opening would represent a space of sanctuary, or as Derrida (2001a) has considered, a 'city of refuge'. The idea of a space of sanctuary is therefore contained within a conceptualisation of hospitality as an ethical relation to difference, indeed as Smith (2005, p.70) asserts hospitality 'is not one kind of ethical thing to do, 'not simply one ethics amongst others'; it is, rather, the condition of possibility for ethics'.

To briefly consider the nature of such a response, Derrida's work on hospitality notes a critical tension at the heart of the concept which makes it a 'contradictory concept and experience in itself' being 'possible only on the condition of its impossibility, producing itself as impossible' (Derrida 1999, p.20). Derrida (2000a) argues that such impossibility springs from the fact that giving is also always a taking, as 'gift-giving turns out to negate its own principle' (Barnett 2005, p.13; Derrida 1992b). Hospitality is thereby based upon the prerequisite 'that the host...remains the *patron*, the master of the household, on the condition that he maintains his own authority *in his own house*' (Derrida 2000a, p.4, original emphasis). Thus hospitality itself becomes formalised and conditional, a limit is placed upon the idea of hospitality and as such ownership becomes implied. Ultimately for Derrida (2000a, p.14); 'it does not seem to me that I am able to open up or offer hospitality...without reaffirming: this is mine', as we see 'an axiom of self-limitation or self-contradiction in the law of hospitality' (ibid), in which hospitality only becomes offered conditionally 'out of a secure sense of self-possession' (Barnett 2005, p.13).

Derrida (1999) expands this contradiction to note a tension between the laws of hospitality, which make any gesture of welcome conditioned, political and pragmatic, and the Law of hospitality as an unconditional ethical ideal, as such a tension presents a distinction between 'invitation and visitation' (Derrida 2000b, p.17). Unconditional hospitality is that which is not invited, sought or expected, for 'if there is to be hospitality, there must be surprise: the host must be surprised by that which is encountered as other within the home' (Ahmed 2000, p.151), pure hospitality in this form therefore consists of a 'welcome extended without condition to an unanticipated guest' (Barnett 2005, p.14). An ethics of hospitality represents an unconditional visitation, an impossible decoupling of the threshold from the mastery it implies. For Derrida a political imperative is drawn from such an ethico-political impasse, as 'responsible political action and decision making consists in the negotiation between these two irreconcilable yet indissolvable demands...Justice must be restlessly negotiated in the conflict between these two imperatives' (Critchley and Kearney 2001, p.xi-xii).

In this fashion I wish to view the idea of sanctuary, and of the hospitable on which such an idea rests, as an ethically charged vision of response to the demands of asylum. As opposed to the aversion and political distancing of the camp, spacing asylum through a

logic of the sanctuary is defined by virtues of openness, response and relating, for as Dikeç (2002, p.236) argues of hospitality; 'keeping spaces open does not simply refer to opening the doors to a stranger. It goes beyond that...and refers to the act of engaging with the stranger'. Spaces of sanctuary might be viewed as sites of engagement through which the 'place in question' becomes a 'place that would originally belong neither to the host nor to the guest, but to the gesture by which one gives welcome to the other' (Dufourmantelle 2000, p.60-62). The sanctuary however must be limited, bound and territorially defined, for since Kant's (1972) account of hospitality as a right to visitation, Derrida (2001a) argues that the very limitation of hospitality is at once its condition of (im)possibility. Hospitality articulates a sovereign right to open space, to welcome, and as such it relies upon a sovereign delimitation of that space within which power is exercised. For Derrida (2001a), as I argued in Chapter One, this space becomes the city, as hospitality might be presented as a virtue of response and political orientation bound to a particular, defined and contained territory of engagement. Asylum seekers through this spacing are still placed and positioned within a bounded, territorial sense of power as in the camp, but the purpose and result of such power is radically different, for welcome and relation are valorised over abandonment and aversion.

The Threshold and the City

The point of the threshold, as a site of indeterminacy and decisionism, a site of those filtering mechanisms noted by Walters (2004), is the point at which these spacings of asylum converge and their similarities are highlighted. While responses of hospitality and those of sovereign abandonment may offer an opening and closing of the point of threshold respectively, they both share two spatial assumptions. Firstly, that the space onto which the threshold may open is in some sense bounded and contained, and secondly, that within such a bounded and defined space the rule of sovereign power is upheld by the very decision, to be either hospitable or to avoid relating all together. For Derrida (2000b) the space which is opened and offered in any gesture of welcome must be both limited and demarcated, and, in the process of demarcation be asserted as 'mine'. While for Agamben (1998) the sovereign power to abandon bare life beyond law and state represents the ultimate assertion of sovereign power itself, of the biopolitical right to decide on life and death. Both of these spacings therefore represent a response in relation to those at the threshold, those seeking entry, either their

conditional and limited entrance or a positioning beyond recourse to the state. In responding they assert a right to a particular form of space, as a bounded, contained object over which their decisions hold sway, and into which strangers may be placed, moved and positioned. In this sense both of these responses offer a territorial response to asylum claims. Both hospitality and abandonment therefore mutually recreate an ideal of spatial sovereignty, of a contained, and containable, relation to difference, albeit with radically different results.

The sovereign assertions of spaces of encampment and sanctuary reflect to some extent that territorial imaginary of the nation seen through governmental accounts of responding to asylum, wherein sovereign decisions of filtering, sorting and spacing are taken over the lives of those at the threshold. The camp and the sanctuary offer different responses to the demands of asylum, yet both maintain a right to decide, and in doing so create different spaces of asylum in the process. It is the negotiation between these modes of spacing that I want to consider in more detail through the following chapters, but first I want to suggest a third spatial imaginary here, one which arises from a consideration of the city as a space of asylum. The city, as I have suggested, grounds Derrida's (2001a) call for an ethics of hospitality, and is also central to Diken's (2004) claims that encampment might be viewed as a social (non)relation played out through increasing securitisation and fear within the city, culminating in the gated community as a camp of choice (Bauman 2005). However, recent accounts of the urban have begun to suggest a different take on the city, one which views the urban as a space of multiple becomings, a relational production, constantly in the process of being made through the myriad of connections that stretch beyond the city and the dense array of flows into the urban (Amin 2004b; Amin and Thrift 2005; Massey 2007; Thrift 2005). Through these accounts the city becomes a node within wider networks of affiliation, commerce and communication, as a mechinic geography of interconnections and temporary orderings situates and defines urban space. The city becomes a space constantly in motion, forever being made anew through unique actions, multiple trajectories and the shifting materiality of the urban itself (Amin and Thrift 2002; Latham and McCormack 2004). Viewing the city as such a creative, emergent, space of political force, opens the account of Sheffield I want to provide to a third form of spacing asylum, that of viewing spaces of asylum as not purely sovereign sites of (in)hospitable decisions, but possibly as emergent, relational spaces in the process of being made through connections to

spaces, and people, beyond their immediate bounds. It is this relational account which comprises my third spacing of asylum.

Relational Connections

Amin (2002b, p.389) argues that within recent geographical and social theory, 'space, place, and time have come to be seen in relational terms, as: co-constituted, folded together, produced through practices, situated, multiple, and mobile'. Such an assertion has largely emerged from a concern with 'simplistic concepts of space and place', and has called for the 'need to reject the extremely resilient 'Euclidean' notions...that treat spaces and places as simply bounded areas...embedded within some wider, objective framework of time-space' (Graham 1998, p.181).[1] A relational sense of space is fundamentally wedded to the demand to move away from a geography focused upon 'seeing space as a surface' (Massey 2001, p.16) of dominant social inscription, but rather advocates an appreciation that space is 'also a doing...it does not pre-exist its doing, and...its doing is the articulation of relational performances' (Rose 1999, p.248). Massey (2005) argues that space might be viewed along three intersecting lines of thought; firstly space must be viewed as the product of interrelations and is constituted through these diverse interactions, performances and events. Secondly, space presents the sphere of the possibility of multiplicity, space is thus centrally the continually creative and improvisational arena of coexisting heterogeneity. While thirdly, space is always under construction, always a product of on-going relations and performances, thus for Massey (2005, p.9) space is 'always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far'.[2]

Viewing space as a relational production might present a number of ways to consider asylum as a spatial experience. Relational thought draws together a multitude of different actors, actions and influences in making different spaces of the city, and as such we might deploy spatial notions of networks of connection and affiliation, flows of

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[1] Such a critique of Euclidean space is also evident in Doel's (1999) concern to move away from a focus upon surfaces and points in the examination of space. For Doel (1999, p.32) 'in geography the fundamental illusion is the autonomy and primacy of the point', as the discipline 'clings to the surface of what actually takes place' (ibid, p.121-122). Doel (2000, p.125) argues in response that '[s]pacing is an action, an event, a way of being'.

[2] This form of topological spacing also has resonances with Mol and Law's (1994) account of 'fluid spaces', as spaces which are constantly in a state of becoming (see Murdoch 1998, 2006).

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people and ideas, and the central role which material geographies might play in the active creation of space (Clark *et al.* 2008; Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004; Lees 2002). This is not however to suggest that this account of space, and its various connections, is entirely new or beyond the realm of governmental concern, rather those negotiations of 'domopolitics' noted by Walters (2004) in part attempt to respond to a relational account of global connections and flows. The filtering and selection of newcomers to the nation undertaken by the Home Office presents a response to a certain reading of relational spatialities, of the demands placed upon the nation by the diversity of influences which act upon the nation. However, this is only part of the story for as we shall see part of the political purchase of this form of thought is in its engagement with a sense of spatially extensive political responsibility beyond the immediate. Before turning to this political concern with space, it is worth noting that a relational account of space is not only productive of new forms of thought, but also new modes of governance, as global flows are ordered, placed and tracked. Here we might think of the assertion of biometric borders (Amoore 2006) and biometric tracking as a means of tracing the relational connections of individuals, alongside current moves to electronically tag asylum seekers in the UK. Tracing movements and mobilities in this manner represents one means to place, condition and locate difference, yet there is also a sense in which these modes of surveillance construct new 'code spaces' understood primarily through their convergence of diverse elements and relationships (Dodge and Kitchin 2004). With these technologies of spacing in mind I want to focus upon the political implications of thinking 'beyond place' and of political responsibilities which extend 'beyond the local' (Massey 2006; Barnett *et al.* 2008), for it is these which I argue allow us a more vibrant, and coherent, account of the ongoing construction of spaces of asylum within the city.

Reading space relationally is both based upon, and generative of, a sense of the political as a relational realm of action, for as Massey (2005, p.13) argues of this project;

> 'What is needed, I think, is to uproot 'space' from that constellation of concepts in which it has so unquestioningly so often been embedded (stasis; closure; representation) and to settle it among another set of ideas (heterogeneity; relationality; coevalness...liveliness indeed) where it releases a more challenging political landscape'.

A relational project is always already interwoven into a political claim to space, and to a certain view of space as a political and performative production. As Massey (2005,

p.10) argues, rather 'than accepting and working with already-constituted entities/identities, this politics lays its stress upon the relational constructedness of things...it proposes a relational understanding of the world, and a politics which responds to that'. From this explicit spatial politics I think we can draw a number of lines of flight from which our view of not only asylum, but also a politics of asylum as a relationship to space, might travel.

Firstly, if space presents a continual and multiple production then this works to undermine any sense of primordial or 'natural' right to space or processes of spatial ordering and imposition. As Massey (2001, p.16) argues 'seeing space as a surface precisely deprives others of their own histories', as they become simply figures to be placed within national space as seen earlier. However, if we take forward a relational view of space as 'a configuration of a multiplicity of histories all in the process of being made' (Massey 2000, p.229), then the right to define and ascribe those stories and histories which are 'legitimate' becomes contested, and space itself becomes a product of not only dominant inscriptions, but also all those other histories, narratives and performances which emerge. Space becomes a site of continual negotiation, struggle and agonistic contestation, never fully wedded to particular visions of what a space is or should be, rather those narratives which hegemonically code space 'can be strategically contested and subverted by a multiplicity of everyday actors' (Rose 2002, p.383). Space is not only always in the process of being made, but the right to space itself is always open, always possible.

Secondly this 'spatial imaginary grounded in intersubjectivity [and] relationality' (Popke 2003, p.309), questions not only space as a source of stable, primordial and unquestionable belonging, but also throws into doubt those ideas of unproblematic identity which are built upon such ideas. In this sense Massey (1995) draws parallels to Mouffe's (1995) project of 'radical democracy', one which challenges essentialist ideals of identification and argues that 'responsibility...derives from those relations through which identity is constructed' (Massey, 2004, p.10). The creation of identity is itself a spatial, and on-going, accomplishment, co-constitutive with the creation of a sense of those spaces within which we identify ourselves. Asylum seekers are therefore continually recreated and repositioned through their interactions with an array of spaces, while these spaces themselves are also undergoing a concurrent series of creative processes as asylum seekers perform the streets of the city and the nation anew with

each passing encounter. It is this creative sensibility which means that space is created by far more than simply the sovereign decisions of abandonment and hospitality alone.

Finally, a relational reading not only emphasises the mutual construction of personal and spatial identities, but also highlights the radical heterogeneity that defines space and from this emerges a distinct spatial politics of plurality and multiplicity. Amin (2004b, p.37, original emphasis) identifies a '*heterotopic sense of place* that is no longer reducible to regional moorings or to a territorially confined public sphere, but is made up of influences that fold together the culturally plural and the geographically proximate and distant', as defining spatial engagements today, a sense of place which demands an emergent politics of 'propinquity' and 'connectivity'. A politics of propinquity is one in which 'all one may be sure of is to take spatial juxtaposition seriously as a *field of agonistic engagement*. This means seeing the local political arena as an arena of claims and counter-claims, agreements and coalitions that are always temporary and fragile, always the product of negotiation' (ibid, p.39, original emphasis). Such a spatial politics though, 'has to be fashioned through the varied spatialities of connectivity and transitivity that cross a given region, such that the inside and the outside are no longer locationally defined' (ibid, p.41), as spaces become sites of 'engagement in plural politics and multiple spatialities of involvement' (Amin 2002b, p.397). This spatial politics makes a number of demands, most clearly for a sense of responsibility, for as Massey (2004, p.16) argues a relational account is predicated upon the fact that we are 'responsible to areas beyond the bounds of place not because of what we have done, but because of what we are'.

Massey (2004) draws here upon a relational sense of ethical responsibility to ground this spatial politics, for, as Popke (2003, p.304) notes, in an ethics of relationality, 'responsibility is unconditional, and holds equally to those who are 'distant' as those who are near'. Thus 'the responsibility for others is not only absolute and unconditional, but it also is the very condition of possibility for subjectivity and identity: prior to being, one is hostage to the other' (Ahmed 2000, p.146). Here our responsibility towards the other is an infinite virtue that 'exceeds reciprocal obligations' (Barnett 2005, p.9), as the very fact of our 'being-in-the-world' is predicated upon 'the usurpation of spaces belonging to the other man' (Levinas 1989, p.82). For Levinas our actions and responses are centrally contained 'in the context of an irrecusable responsibility toward others' (Popke 2003, p.298), and it is from this ethical demand

that we might view the spatial responsibilities for a politics of openness, agonism and connectivity which a relational reading of space calls forth.

In this fashion a relational sense of spatial politics is one which is always unique and improvised, as spaces and places emerge through continuous convergences of multiple narratives and performances. The ethics and politics which may come from such an appreciation of relation is a negotiation of necessary invention, for 'there will be a need for judgement, learning, improvisation; there will be no simple portable rules' (Massey 2005, p.162). Rather, we might look instead towards political practice as embedded within situated and responsive ethical practices, of spaces and acts which perform a momentary response to others. As Massey (2005, p.154, original emphasis) reminds us;

> '[Places are]...formed through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation; practices, moreover, through which the constituent 'identities' are also themselves continually moulded. Place, in other words does – as many argue – change us, not through some visceral belonging (some barely changing rootedness, as so many would have it) but through the *practising* of place, the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us'

This study examines the practicing of place, this negotiation of trajectories which pattern and dictate the interweaving of political, ethical and transformative moments in everyday lives. It seeks to look towards the potentialities for change which saturate spaces of asylum, not only as imposed arenas of exclusion, but also as performed, relational sites of possible openings to difference.

A key dimension to emerge from such an engagement with relational thought is precisely Massey's (2005, p.154) focus on place as 'an arena where negotiation is forced upon us', for in considering the spaces of asylum that emerge through the city of Sheffield, it is these forms of spatial negotiation, of traversing different interests, ethics, positions of power and so on, that shall condition and dictate the way in which the city, as a space of potential refuge, is experienced. The negotiations I wish to foreground throughout this study are therefore those between different visions of response to asylum, different accounts of space, as spaces of abandonment come into contact with demands for bounded spaces of hospitality and relational calls for a wider sense of responsibility beyond the bounds of the city itself. Practicing these diverse spaces of asylum involves the performance of, and conflict between, these three different modes

of spacing, as the spaces of asylum which emerge are by necessity hybrid forms and alliances of interests, for as Macleod and Jones (2007) argue, relational and territorial accounts of spatial politics and power are tightly interwoven through their on-going negotiation. I want to therefore gesture beyond a 'debilitating binary division between territorial and relational geography', in order to, as Morgan (2007, p.1248, original emphasis) puts it; 'recognise that political space is bounded *and* porous'. Considering the construction and experience of different spaces of urban asylum is therefore about attempting to communicate some of the ways in which spaces are both bounded and porous, and how their creation and political potential arises precisely from this intersection of interests. This sense of negotiation will centrally be taken forward in the encounters which construct the following chapters, for they represent sites of contest and agonism where political possibility emerges, for as Massey (2005, p.175) argues; '[b]oth the romance of bounded place and the romance of free flow hinder serious address to the necessary negotiations of real politics', and as such we 'come to each place with the necessity, the responsibility, to examine anew and to invent' (ibid, p.169).

The Possibilities of Spacing Asylum

In this chapter I have set out to provide an overview of the contemporary debates which surround the figure of the asylum seeker as a liminal projection of the outsider, a figure to whom reactions of fear and aversion are common, and a figure who represents a 'scandal' for the modern geopolitical imagination of the sovereign state (Dillon 1999). Throughout this discussion I highlighted the central role which a spatial sensibility plays in not only defining and categorising the asylum seeker, but in narrating and actualising asylum as a process itself. Thus from the discussions of the asylum seeker as a contemporary 'stranger' figure with which I opened, through to the filtering and calculation of 'domopolitics' as a modality of responding to such 'strangers', space has acted as a central touchstone for imagining, creating and continuing popular imaginaries of the nation, the asylum seeker as stranger, and those governmental responses which emerge to 'secure' the borders of the nation and the 'integrity' of such an ideal. Presenting the asylum seeker as a stranger serves to highlight how a fear of that which is ambiguous, undecided and held in tension, both within and outside the nation, is created precisely through, and projected onto, spatial categorisations of distance and proximity, such that the very notion of the stranger, and the fear they invoke, is one of

spatial boundaries and demarcations, of being 'in' or 'out' of place (Cresswell 1996; Sibley 1995; Wilton 1998). The fear and loathing which circulates contemporary asylum as a political and popular issue, as we saw in Chapter One, is thus partially due to the spatial ambiguity which asylum represents. Asylum seekers are undecided, waiting and ambiguous, held at the point of a domopolitical decision, and as such they stand outside normal spatial categorisations, limits and knowledge. It is this position which makes asylum seekers ever stranger, and which directs the fear, and anger of a nation which seeks 'integrity' and 'secure borders'.

Asylum then, as I have argued throughout this chapter is, at its core, a *relation to space*. From the varying array of perspectives which have approached the issue so far through these pages, negotiations of space and spatiality have never been far from the surface. From this starting point, I examined a number of spacings of asylum, lenses through which the ethical and political negotiations which construct spaces of asylum might be viewed. These orientations towards asylum as a spatial issue, of the camp, the sanctuary and a relational reading of the city, offer three points of contact in considering how asylum is constructed, and experienced in contemporary Britain. They are by no means mutually exclusive, nor fully complementary, rather they come into contact, and conflict, in performing and narrating the varied spaces of the city which mark the following chapters. With these contests in mind, my approach to rethinking asylum's spatial nature is centred upon the notion that;

> 'Space can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established, and in which everywhere is already linked with everywhere else. A space, then, which is neither a container for always-already constituted identities nor a completed closure of holism. This is a space of loose ends and missing links. *For* the future to be open, space must be open too' (Massey 2005, p.11-12, original emphasis).

Such a gesture of openness and of potentiality, of the possibilities which lie within everyday spaces of contest and comfort, is that which orientates the following chapters as they weave a path through a series of contextualised and momentary spatial relations of asylum in Sheffield. Relations of encampment, sanctuary and responsibilities 'beyond place' intermingling, and relations in which the idea of something different, of the new, and the pressing demand to improvise, reconsider and respond, interact to mould the on-going, prosaic performances of spacing asylum in the city.

CHAPTER THREE

"THOSE IN REAL NEED..."
CONSTRUCTING SHEFFIELD'S HOSPITALITY

'[T]he overwhelming aim of 'managed migration' is the suppression of all irregular migration and the increased control over political and economic migration. The dominating impulse amidst this frenzy is no more evident than in the fact that the only asylum seekers New Labour would seem to 'welcome' are those who do not apply for asylum but who enter Britain through an officially designated route' (Squire 2005, p.62).

'The label 'refugee' and related labels are increasingly used to marginalize, exclude, differentiate and to restrict humanitarianism. The processes of labelling increasingly limit eligibility for the privileged status 'refugee'' (Zetter 2000, p.353).

Relationships to particular visions of the past are central to the establishment and maintenance of both a sense of place and place identity itself. From the invented traditions which bind together national imaginaries (Anderson 1983; Billig 1995), to the nostalgia evoked by those who perceive their place in the world to be threatened (Hage 1998; May 1996), contests over the articulation and presentation of a place's history present fundamental sites of conflict over the very nature of place (Cresswell 2004). In this chapter I wish to focus not upon the contestations which are inherent within assertions of urban identity (see instead Cresswell and Hoskins 2008; Della Dora 2006; Landzelius 2003; Legg 2006, 2005; Rose-Redwood 2008), but rather upon the role which dominant narratives of Sheffield's relationship to asylum may play in forming and contextualizing the current politics of asylum in the city. Reflecting upon those national narratives of domopolitics and hospitality outlined in Chapter Two, I want to begin to consider how Sheffield reflects and attempts to question these accepted ways of presenting asylum. In examining Sheffield's recent history of asylum through a series of refugee groups, I argue that Sheffield emerges as both a city which has stood at the forefront of attempts to welcome asylum seekers and

refugees, a city which has sought to actualise a vision of hospitality, yet in the very process of doing so Sheffield has also been unable to fully escape the bonds of that domopolitical language of filtering, selection and identification which dominates debate and policy at the national level. Before moving on to consider a series of spaces of asylum within the city in the following chapters, I argue that it is crucial to consider the way in which Sheffield has been presented as a city of welcome, for it is in this consideration that we may see the city attempting to negotiate the tensions which define hospitality, as a virtue by its very nature finite, limited and negotiated. We will see these negotiations arising through various spaces within the city, but it is important to suggest that the city itself is subject to the tensions of hospitality as a way of narrating Sheffield, a way of representing space, from which those performances take some of their cues.

The chapter proceeds in four main sections, the first of these traces the narrative construction of Sheffield's exceptional response to asylum through examining four events within the city's history which are today held as exemplars of Sheffield's welcoming spirit, most notably the response to the Kosovan refugee crisis of 1999 and the decision to join the UNHCR Gateway refugee resettlement programme in 2004. With such events in mind I move to consider how the city might be viewed as a welcoming and hospitable place, a place which contests and questions dominant accounts of domopolitics and the creation of 'worthy' refugees and has been a pioneer in trialing new asylum policies. I then contest this vision of the city by considering how these moments of welcome are themselves conditioned and controlled by a logic of acceptability and order, suggesting that Sheffield can never fully escape a language of domopolitics. Finally, I argue that such filtering of response is inherent within hospitality itself and as such the negotiations which structure Sheffield's response to asylum should not be viewed as a failure, but rather a political opportunity to do more in the name of hospitality. The tensions which arise through Sheffield's narrative of asylum therefore offer the hope of a different future through their openness to political and ethical potential, and in turning to the negotiations of different spaces of asylum in later chapters, I argue we might see moments, and spaces, through which different ways of being hospitable might emerge. Sheffield's history is one of negotiating languages of domopolitics and hospitality, as they intersect and constitute one another, legitimate one another even, and I want to now consider this convergence through an account of Sheffield's varied responses to different refugee and asylum groups.

The Vietnamese

During my conversations with refugee organizations and charity workers, the arrival of a series of Vietnamese 'boat people' throughout the 1970s and 1980s was presented as a first memorable example of the city openly accepting, and promoting, the arrival of refugees. The Sheffield Star reports that in 1978 Sheffield went into negotiations to take a total of 100 South-East Asian Vietnamese refugees, the city being chosen as 'Sheffield has gained a reputation as a refugees' refuge in recent years, notably because of its acceptance of about 100 Chileans a few years ago' (*The Sheffield Star*, 17/10/78). Upon their arrival in 1979 however, the group were met with mixed reactions and limited hospitality as *The Star* again reports; 'It is good that Darnall has been able to offer this welcome – and it is a pity that the city, despite its housing and other problems, has not been able to make a more positive gesture of hospitality at an official level' (*The Sheffield Star*, 28/09/79). However, despite this apparent lack of formal support and celebration, it is these moments of refuge which help to maintain a sense of the city's heritage as a place of welcome, and which were drawn upon both then and now to approach the city's wider response to asylum, thus in July 1979 Councillor Golding commented in reference to the Vietnamese group that '[w]e have always tried to help people of this kind who are exiles from their land for a variety of reasons' (*The Sheffield Star*, 30/07/79). Following the successful integration of this first group of Vietnamese refugees, the Sheffield Star reported that in 1982 the city was to become a temporary 'haven' for 100 more 'boat people' as they awaited housing in other sites across the country (*The Sheffield Star*, 23/07/82). This group eventually arrived in September 1983 and was accommodated initially in a special reception centre in the city before being moved into more permanent housing in Sheffield, Leeds and Doncaster (*The Sheffield Telegraph*, 28/09/83). Despite the small numbers involved in this resettlement process, the arrival and acceptance of the Vietnamese marks a significant point in Sheffield's narrative of asylum response, partly because it marked one of the first groups to arrive in the city as refugees, but also because their arrival was met with widespread council and media support and a groundswell of public support. I want to now move on to consider how a similar case arose in Sheffield's response to the 1999 Kosovo refugee crisis.

The Kosovan Refugee Crisis

In March 1999 the Serbian and Yugoslav response to the NATO bombing campaign of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as an intervention into the Kosovo war was to expel Kosovan Albanians from Kosovo, resulting in a mass movement of refugees into Albania, Montenegro and Macedonia (Gibney 1999a). With the conflict itself, and the subsequent refugee crisis, generating widespread media attention, European governments felt compelled to act upon the sight of refugee camps so close to the traditional heart of Europe (Bloch 1999). With this media attention in mind the British government airlifted groups of Kosovan refugees from camps in Macedonia and offered them Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) in the UK for a period of one year or until the point at which they could safely return to Kosovo (Gibney 1999a).

In Sheffield the crisis was met with reports of cross-party political support to help these refugees and to offer them accommodation. In April the Sheffield Star reported that the city council had discussed offering a 'temporary home in the city' as '[l]eader's of Sheffield's three main parties have put aside their political differences to pledge help to the Kosovan refugees' (*The Sheffield Star*, 07/04/99). While some accounts of Sheffield's potential role in the refugee crisis displayed an anxiety over the numbers to arrive, Ward (1999) writing that '[t]hree hundred Kosovan refugees could be housed in a Sheffield suburb within the next few weeks…up to triple the number expected', the majority of press accounts from this period suggest a widespread support for the council's decision to offer accommodation to the Kosovans and a public response of sympathy and concern. With the backing of public opinion, the council began working to adapt a disused school to initially house the refugee group and began to take in furniture which had been donated by local residents, as it was reported that '[c]ity-wide, a small army of people are doing their upmost to give our Kosovan guests a special Sheffield welcome' (*The Sheffield Star*, 07/05/99). Over the coming weeks a series of campaigns to gain funds for the Kosovan cause were run and at the end of May it was announced that the school would be ready three weeks earlier than planned thanks to an 'overwhelming response from the Sheffield community' (*The Sheffield Star*, 21/05/99), as the Kosovo appeal had raised a total of £5,281 (*The Sheffield Star*, 20/08/99). On the 28th May 144 Kosovan refugees arrived in Sheffield to stay at the temporary reception centre, with Councillor Moore telling *The Sheffield Star* (28/05/99)

that 'Sheffielders have always been prepared to help those in need. We have all seen on television the terrible conditions the Kosovans have had to endure. I am proud that the people of Sheffield are playing a full part in this humanitarian exercise'.

Sheffield's response to the Kosovo refugee crisis was by no means exceptional within the UK, as other cities also offered temporary refuge to those granted ELR status by the government, while Gibney (1999b) reports that across Europe there was widespread public support for this group of refugees. However, this episode presents exactly the form of humanitarian response which is valorised through accounts of the city's, and Britain's, history of welcome and tolerance. Councillor Moore's comments that 'Sheffielders have always been prepared to help those in need' are in part built upon a history of past responses to the Chilean and Vietnamese refugees of the 1970s and 1980s, and also may be carried forward into the present as the city's response to the Kosovo crisis itself becomes further evidence of this humanitarian virtue within the city. In this fashion moments of refuge are presented as evidence of a track record of welcome and yet within the wider asylum politics of the UK they are often exceptional and uncharacteristic moments of hospitality. I now want to consider a very different case of Sheffield's relation to asylum, that of its response to the initiation of asylum dispersals to the city in 1999, to suggest that though this presents a far more mixed response to asylum, it nonetheless displays a political will to be welcoming.

The Rise of Dispersal Politics

Before the government's decision to aid Kosovan refugees in April 1999, the Home Office was itself establishing a series of measures to shore up and 'toughen' the asylum process, in particular through the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. A central facet of this act was the imposition of a dispersal policy through which asylum seekers would be offered accommodation on a 'no choice' basis in a number of dispersal zones across the country in an effort to both discourage future claimants and reduce a perceived drain on the resources of the south east of England (Phillips 2006; Robinson *et al.* 2003). One of the key areas of dispersal outlined was to be the Yorkshire and Humberside region, with the central cities for dispersals being Leeds, Sheffield and Hull. In Sheffield such a proposal was met with suspicion, as *The Sheffield Star* (10/02/99) reported that 'Sheffield could face a flood of

asylum seekers under a new government plan', as the city would be asked to 'share the 40,000 asylum seeker burden' with other cities in the region. Later in the year, following the successful resettlement of the Kosovan refugees, fears were expressed that the conversion of old housing stock into accommodation for asylum seekers would risk the formation of 'ghettos' across the city (*The Sheffield Star*, 17/11/99), as Sheffield prepared to 'receive its first batch of asylum seekers'. The language used here, of a 'flood' and 'batch' of asylum seekers not only offers that dehumanized vision of strangers threatening to overwhelm the city noted in Chapter One (Coole 2002; Jenkins 2002; Sebestyen 2000; Schlunke 2002; Tyler 2006), but also suggests a series of fears which were largely absent from the response to the Kosovo refugee crisis.

However, despite the fact that initially the Government's move towards a dispersal scheme was greeted with suspicion by the council, who feared both increasing pressure on services and a potential rise in social tensions, the council began to put together a series of services to accommodate newcomers. By March 2000 it was reported that the city had volunteered to take further dispersal asylum seekers, as 'Sheffield's welcome to asylum seekers met with cross-party approval this week. Liberal Democrat's and Labour councillors unanimously agreed that the city should support the Government's appeal for local authorities to offer places to asylum seekers' (*The Sheffield Star*, 20/03/00). Sheffield therefore offered to support the dispersal policy at a point at which many other local authorities were attempting to decrease their dispersal levels or to opt out of the policy altogether amid fears of rising racial tensions surrounding asylum (Phillips 2006; Zetter and Pearl 1999a). The city was not immune to such fears, and in September 2001 *The Sheffield Star* reported that tenants of a local council estate had protested to the council over proposed plans to house asylum seekers on their estate. However, their claims that flats for asylum seekers would be 'fitted out with mod cons' and that their arrival would bring an increase in crime to the estate were 'dismissed by councillors, who say Sheffield's tradition of offering help to overseas people in need will continue'. The council took a firm stance in support of asylum, stating that they 'deplore the action by a small minority of people who appear to resist the integration of asylum seekers and refugees into local communities' (*The Sheffield Star*, 06/09/01). Sheffield City Council, despite being initially anxious over the level of asylum dispersals expected, have therefore displayed a willingness to accept the perceived need for asylum dispersals and to accommodate such populations in the city

within the limits of national policy. While it is clear that this gesture has not always met with widespread public support, the council's history of relations to asylum dispersals, including its decision to volunteer space for asylum seekers, suggests a political will to present the city as a welcoming place within the restraints established through national asylum legislation. For the city's politicians, media and public, the support of dispersal asylum seekers is clearly a far more complex political and moral case than the unequivocal support offered to the Kosovan refugees of the same period (see Bloch 1999), and this is a point I shall return to consider in more detail shortly, however it is central to Sheffield's narrative of 'welcome' that the practical and symbolic gestures of accepting dispersals are included within this vision. A final element of this account is presented through the council's decision to join a recent UNHCR scheme for refugee resettlement, the Gateway Protection Programme, which runs alongside current dispersals and has often mirrored the levels of public and political support offered to the Kosovan refugees of 1999.

The Gateway Protection Programme

Announced in the Government's 2001 White Paper "*Secure Borders, Safe Haven*" (Home Office 2002), the decision to sign up to the Gateway scheme received 'wide all-party support within the UK' (UNHCR 2006). The Home Office (2005d, p.10) state that the 'Gateway Protection Programme, launched in April 2003, creates a legal gateway for the most vulnerable refugees to enter the UK following determination of their cases by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Home Office', and are quick to suggest that the 'programme is testimony to the United Kingdom's continuing commitment to the protection of the most vulnerable refugees in the modern world' (Home Office 2005d, p.3). The programme itself is run through UNHCR who refer applicants for resettlement to the Home Office who then interview all applicants and make decisions upon their needs on a case by case basis, the central difference to the contemporary asylum system being that individuals referred to the UK through this channel are 'considered by UNHCR to be eligible for recognition as refugees according to the 1951 Refugee Convention' (Refugee Council 2004). If individuals are accepted by the Home Office their refugee status is confirmed and the government takes on the full resettlement cost of each refugee for their first 12 months in the country.

At present the Government has committed through this scheme to resettle 500 refugees in Britain annually, working alongside the present asylum system. In May 2005 UNHCR reported that a recent resettlement of 51 Myanmarese refugees took to 'more than 200 the number of people brought into the UK under the joint Government/UNHCR Gateway Protection Programme' (Momoh 2005). Gateway refugees are given an 'Introduction to British Life Course', English lessons and health checks, while the national charity Refugee Action take the role of managing their ongoing care and aiding individuals in finding training, further education and employment (Home Office 2005b). The government have reportedly been keen to expand this scheme, one described at the time as the government's 'flagship resettlement scheme' (BBC 2004). In 2004 the BBC reported that the Gateway scheme was 'a key plank' of Home Secretary David Blunkett's planned asylum reforms, suggesting that he 'believes the scheme can provide safe haven and rebuild confidence in the refugee protection system amid continued concern over unmanaged asylum arrivals' (BBC 2004). However while central government has been keen to highlight the humanitarian ethos of this project, and its marketable nature, local authorities, who have to sign up themselves to take on the task of resettling groups, have been far less enthusiastic, as Travis (2005) reports 'the hostile political climate over immigration and asylum has meant that only two councils – Sheffield and Bolton – have so far agreed to take part'. Bury, Norwich and Motherwell have since added their names to that list but this nonetheless does not represent the kind of widespread support that the government would have hoped for a scheme they view as potentially providing a workable solution to 'the asylum problem' (Shimo 2007; Benjamin 2005).

Sheffield City Council were the first council in the UK to sign up to the Gateway programme and received the first group of Liberian refugees in 2004, who were followed by a group of 51 Burmese refugees in May 2005 (*The Sheffield Star*, 18/05/05). The coverage of this latter group was significantly greater than that of the Liberian group, presumably in an effort to highlight the successes of integration achieved thus far through the scheme. The programme itself was warmly received in both the local and national press (see Wainwright 2005), and as Lupton (2006) argues such 'positive reporting in regional media, has...been instrumental in helping the integration and resettlement of people fleeing oppressive regimes via the government's Gateway project'. In conversations across Sheffield it became clear that the Gateway scheme was viewed as a positive moral and

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political project, and one which was spoken of in the same humanitarian tones as the city's response to the Kosovan refugee crisis. There was a pride in not only being able to 'do the right thing', but also in being the first UK city to have done so, Sheffield was again presented as leading the way. For example, in March 2004, following the arrival of the first Liberian group to the city, Council Leader Jan Wilson stated that;

> 'I hope the people of Sheffield will welcome these refugees, as we have a history of doing. We are the first in the country to receive these new arrivals. Other towns and cities will also be welcoming refugees under the resettlement programme, so I'm pleased that we're in a position to set the example of welcoming these people' (*The Sheffield Star*, 18/04/04).

Sheffield's presentation as setting an 'example of welcoming' for other cities across the UK presents a commitment to the Gateway programme which is certainly refreshing in the context of the increasing vilification of asylum seekers (Greenslade 2005; Lewis 2005). The Gateway programme is presented by the city as the latest addition to a long history of welcoming refugees to Sheffield, and this brief overview has sought to consider some of the central moments of this history. I now want to consider how this story of welcome reflects that national framing of domopolitics noted in Chapter Two, as the nation is cast as a home secured, in part, through a series of filtering and sorting measures designed to keep out the 'bogus' and the 'unsafe', before suggesting how Sheffield might also represent, or at least attempt to represent, more than this.

An "Avant-garde" City

How are we to view this history of asylum in Sheffield? How does it relate to those accounts of a national framing of asylum centred upon sorting, filtering and distinction as modes of deterrence and control witnessed in Chapter Two? I want to argue here that Sheffield's relation to asylum, exemplified through a series of high profile events of welcome, is one which has been caught in a tension between the demands of a nationally framed domopolitics, of identifying the 'deserving' and 'worthy' refugee, and a will to be hospitable as a civic virtue which extends beyond the limits of those whose status is determined and accepted. Partially these two accounts fold out of one another as they contest the politics of asylum within the city, but in their tensions they also offer a different

sense of where the city might be heading, albeit in a slow and fractured manner. Firstly, I want to consider how Sheffield has gone beyond the distinctions of domopolitics in its response to asylum, before arguing that the city's humanitarianism has never fully escaped a politics of the exception and the 'deserving'. Indeed, the very articulation of hospitality which we witness in the city is itself mired in the conditionality of distinction. However, in representing a tension between these drives towards asylum I argue that Sheffield opens the possibility for alternative responses to asylum in the future, responses which will be taken up in Chapters Four and Five.

In what ways then has Sheffield gone beyond a simple framing of domopolitics? Firstly, Sheffield maintains a history of progressive politics on asylum, from those initial welcomes to Vietnamese and Chilean refugees through to the decision to be the first city to join the Gateway Protection Programme. Phillip, a Sheffield City Councillor who was in charge of asylum services within the city, articulated this sense of a progressive will to respond to asylum in the following exchange;

> *Interviewer*: Do you think that there's anything unique about Sheffield in the way it's gone about this, in the way it's approached asylum?
>
> *Phillip*: Well, we did, I suppose we did set the standard and the manner in which it was done, we set, we've been avant-garde I suppose in that sense and I do hope that people can use us as an exemplar of how to, how to do it (Phillip Interview, 2006).

Phillip's pride in Sheffield's reputation as a frontrunner in progressive asylum approaches is obvious here, and rightly so, Sheffield's recent history suggests that it has been at the forefront of many positive innovations for asylum seekers and refugees. Thus the city not only has a past of welcoming different groups, but has also displayed the political will to aid asylum seekers where possible. Sheffield continues to take a large number of dispersal asylum seekers under NASS, and was a supporter of doing so from the start of such a policy. Sheffield City Council established a specialised asylum seeker team to accommodate the needs of newcomers to the city following dispersals and also helps to fund a series of charities which work with asylum seekers, most notably the regional Northern Refugee Centre which is based in the city. Sheffield was also the site chosen to pilot a new refugee resettlement initiative called Sunrise, through which refugees receive a

single case worker and help moving into council accommodation and accessing health services and employment. With these initiatives all combining in the city, many respondents presented Sheffield as Phillip does, as a place which was working to set the standard on responding to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. There was a common feeling among those I spoke to that Sheffield was in some way different, some attributed this to the city's multicultural heritage from steel production and others to the city's progressive political past,[1] with most agreeing that the atmosphere of the city and its people were key to this distinction. We should not however lose sight of the political will which must lie behind many of these moves. Thus Phillip and Jill, both city councillors, agreed that the decision to join the Gateway scheme had been unanimous and that the city was, broadly, committed to helping asylum seekers where possible. Jill told me that;

> We always want to do more as a council, but of course there are real constraints, with government policy and so on, but yes, we try to do what we can and look for new ideas like Gateway as it's important to be forward looking on these issues (Jill Interview, 2006).

Sheffield's record is therefore one of both a commitment to engagement with asylum seekers and a political will to innovate, to take risks on new ideas and to be seen as an exemplar in doing so. As we shall see, Sheffield does not fully escape the divisions and distinctions of a nationally framed domopolitics, indeed this would be largely impossible for a city to achieve, yet it doesn't fit this model fully either. Rather, the city's acceptance of dispersal asylum seekers speaks of a will to welcome those not yet defined by the distinctions of domopolitical filtering and classification, those still ambiguous and troubling to the nation as we saw in Chapter Two. Furthermore, the filtering of domopolitics Walters (2004) observes in government policy is one through which those allowed into the nation, those screened and checked, offer a financial benefit to the UK, indeed this is their reason for admittance, yet the refugee resettlement schemes Sheffield was at the forefront of establishing do not represent such an economic logic of immediate benefits. Sheffield will undoubtedly benefit from those resettled there, yet this is not the reason they have passed the screening of domopolitics, for that we have to look instead to Sheffield's position as a city with a will to welcome.

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[1] For the majority of its history Sheffield City Council has been controlled by the Labour Party and has been known for its leftist political leanings. Under David Blunkett in the 1980s Sheffield was dubbed the 'People's Republic of South Yorkshire' due to its left wing tendencies.

The second manner in which Sheffield sits outside a national narrative of domopolitics is in often directly opposing this politics of distinction. Politically this manifested itself in a number of Sheffield councillors, most notably from the Liberal Democrat and Green parties, lobbying against Labour and the government's policies on asylum, and the Sheffield MP Nick Clegg directly calling for a reworked approach to asylum. Such political calls were undoubtedly influenced by wider party political interests, with Nick Clegg subsequently rising to lead the Liberal Democrats, however, it is significant that opposition was centred here around the issue of asylum. Partly this arose from the range of charities within the city which supported asylum seekers and which called the council, and the government, to account for their responses to asylum, through anti-deportation movements and local demonstrations. For example, Lynn, a charity worker, spoke about her unease over the government's approach to asylum and how this impacted upon those asylum seekers she worked with in Sheffield;

> There is a terrible unreality about the way in which government manages its conscience in this situation, the British government does not send anyone back who is in danger of torture or persecution etc, and they believe it, they have to believe it or they would not be able to sleep easy in their beds. There is a language, a governmental language, which manages to remove the rights, the human rights, of people who are regarded as illegal immigrants and that language is very very dangerous. I would really like to undo that language because it obfuscates our morality, it means that everything has become a mess morally because of this language, which is so clear, it's so plain, and it works for the government, it works for the media and it works for the uninformed, but what it does to the asylum seeker who is now regarded as an illegal immigrant means that that person really doesn't exist anymore (Lynn Interview, 2007).

The language which Lynn refers to is that of domopolitics, of selecting those to be admitted and those to be deterred through detention and destitution. It is not only the political opposition of people like Lynn to the current asylum system which typifies how Sheffield cannot be fully accounted for through a narrative of domopolitics, but also their commitment to creating and sustaining spaces which act to subvert and contest such a logic by their very presence. Thus the drop-in centres I shall consider further in Chapter Five and the offices of local asylum charities, established and staffed by people like Lynn, represent spaces where the distinctions of domopolitics are held in check briefly, where status and

legitimacy certainly matter, but they do not provide the sole basis for identification, for presence. Through this opposition and these spaces then, which I shall consider in more detail in the following chapters, Sheffield shows itself to be more than simply a city held in check by domopolitics, a city of welcoming the accepted and 'genuine' face of the refugee.

Sheffield's Proud Record

This is not to suggest however that the city fully evades the language and logic of domopolitical filtering which patterns national concerns with asylum. Rather a series of distinctions and divisions, often originating from Home Office policies and rhetoric, embed themselves within Sheffield's account of its own benevolent history such that even at points of apparent welcome there still remains a shadow of that selective, orderly process sought after in national framings of asylum. This becomes evident when we consider how Sheffield's recent history of asylum has been utilized in order to present and maintain a sense of the city as a welcoming place through an idea of hospitality. This history of hospitality is foregrounded through statements made on behalf of the city by its politicians, councillors and press;

> 'Sheffield has a proud record of providing sanctuary to those in need of protection' (Immigration Minister Tony McNulty on the Gateway programme, quoted in *The Sheffield Telegraph*, 20/05/05).

> 'I am very proud of the way that Sheffield residents have made refugees feel welcome, over many years. From those who arrived here during and soon after the Second World War, to the Kosovans who came here 10 years ago, and groups of people from war-torn countries who are escaping horrendous torture and persecution, Sheffield has become home to people who are genuinely in need' (Councillor Mick Rooney commenting at the 2004 Sheffield Refugee Week celebrations, quoted in *The Sheffield Star*, 18/05/04).

In statements such as these the city's relation to its past is presented as one which is homogenous, clear and benevolent. For Councillor Rooney, Sheffield will continue to provide a welcome to refugees as this is what it has always done, while for McNulty the city's past enables it to join the Gateway programme as a morally virtuous place. Increasingly this form of historical place presentation, of asserting a virtuous relation to the past, is framed nationally by the statements of the Home Office and their desire to present

the UK as a 'welcoming' nation, one by necessity treading a fine line between the acceptance of 'genuine' refugees and the need to 'clamp down' on 'abuses' of the asylum system as we saw in Chapter Two. In particular the Home Office regularly present the same stock statement with reference to Britain's asylum past, arguing that;

'Britain has a proud tradition of welcoming those fleeing persecution and refugees have for many generations enriched our communities both culturally and economically' (Home Office 2005b).

The links here to the presentation of Sheffield as a welcoming city through its past engagements with refugee groups are clear, and what both types of statement seek to achieve is the articulation of a place bound to certain ideals and values. Sheffield and the UK become spaces where those 'fleeing persecution' can expect a 'welcome', and this idea is held together by reference to the treatment of particular refugee groups in the past, from the Jewish refugees of the Second World War, through the Kosovan refugee crisis and increasingly now with the presentation of the Gateway programme as an example of Britain's commitment to humanitarian causes. Through these statements particular identifications of place are made, for as Massey (1995, p.186, original emphasis) argues '[t]he identity of places is very much bound up with the *histories* which are told of them, *how* those histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant', as the 'invention of tradition is here about the invention of the coherence of place, about defining and naming it as a 'place' at all' (ibid, p.188). The tradition of 'welcome' which is celebrated in these statements is one invented from these exceptional moments of hospitality, cast outside the wider politics of asylum as an ongoing and continuous task of regulation and classification. Within the politics of asylum, these moments of welcome are elevated to represent the best of British values of tolerance, respect and humanitarianism, forming a repository of images of 'British hospitality', and in this case a sense of Sheffield as a space which embodies such virtues.

What such invented traditions achieve is the articulation of an identity of place which is seemingly natural, timeless and tied to a particular vision of the past. Thus the presentation of the city as a space of welcome not only suggests that we have the right to welcome others as 'hosts' within such a bounded space, but also naturalises this right by projecting it into the past and demonstrating how we have always held such virtues. The creation of

Sheffield's identity as a 'welcoming' city in this manner is, by necessity, one which works to valorise and naturalise certain visions of the past at the expense of others, and it works to close off the identity of the city from alternative accounts of the past. The timeless nature of 'welcome' that is articulated here draws a line under the multiple forms of identification with the past which Sheffield may possess, asserting in their place a singular, authoritative, account of the city's past as one of welcome and progressive politics. Yet it is clear that Sheffield's acceptance of certain refugee groups is predicated upon a national logic of filtering and ordering asylum seekers, so that those to be welcomed in this manner are those deemed safe and 'worthy'. For Kundnani (2001, p.55), the kinds of timeless welcome articulated in statements over a places' 'welcoming past' in fact conceal a far more conflictual history;

> 'In tabloid-speak, Britain has a 'proud tradition of tolerance'; 'Britain is not a racist society, as our long and humane record of accepting genuine refugees proves.' Naturally, no mention is made of the impediments placed on Jews seeking refuge in the 1900s and 1930s, nor the restrictions on Vietnamese and Cypriots in the 1970s nor Tamils in the 1980s'.

This less celebrated account of Britain's relation to asylum, one which draws reference to the hostility met by Jewish refugees in the 1930s (Winder 2004), and the long standing nature of opposition to the majority of refugee groups in the popular press (Kushner 2003; Kushner and Knox 1999), throws into doubt the neat, timeless identities of cities like Sheffield as 'welcoming' places. Ian, a refugee community worker, noted this more fractured history of refugee reception during our interview;

> To some extent Britain has been hospitable in the past and I think British people would like to see themselves as very open minded and tolerant, but if you look back historically that's not necessarily the case, I mean around the time of the Second World War for example when Jews were trying to escape persecution Britain was pretty much a closed border to them really, so I think you have to look back historically and it's not the case that we have always been tolerant and open to refugees, and that's been reflected in the way Sheffield has reacted to different groups, with some it's been fine, but less so with others (Ian Interview, 2007).

Ian's reflections on Sheffield's past suggest two readings of these celebratory statements. Firstly, that they necessarily valorize certain groups of refugees, and certain examples of welcome, and from these construct a vision of the past, and the city, which is grounded in

these moments of welcome. Secondly, Ian points to a logic of differentiation, for what is implicit in many of these statements is the need to differentiate between the 'genuine' refugees of Kosovo and the Gateway programme and those less trustworthy asylum seekers who arrive in the city through dispersal routes. By highlighting particular cases of refugee welcome, the implication is that Sheffield is welcoming to those who are deemed 'deserving' of such a welcome, and in this sense these 'histories of the past…are constructed so as to confirm the views and convictions of the present' (Massey 1995, p.186), for they allow for the continued distinction between different classifications of asylum seekers and refugees as a means to police and control both the practice, and the idea, of welcome. The hospitality of Sheffield presented through these past events is therefore reliant upon a national domopolitics which defines and sorts those deemed to be 'good' refugees from those deemed to be suspicious (Gibney 1999a). With the secure knowledge that Gateway refugees are checked by both the Home Office and UNHCR and that the Kosovan refugees of the past held widespread public support, Sheffield could afford to be welcoming, as this gesture of hospitality was a safe and secure one through which the city could perpetuate an account of its own benevolence.

A Domopolitics of the City

The language of domopolitics which persists here might be seen most readily through the example of the city's most recent gesture of welcome, that of the Gateway Protection Programme. In an interview Paul, a charity worker and former civil servant, highlighted the role which the Gateway scheme played in the city, as I asked him what he thought of the programme;

> Well, living in Netheredge some of the Burmese are there and there was a very nice little piece about them in the neighbourhood group newsletter a few months ago, very positive about them and, yeah it's, I suppose it's the ideal way of dealing with refugee problems actually, organised by the UNHCR and it's not happening through traffickers or agents in lorries or things like that, but organised between governments and it's a safe process…and the Burmese and Liberians who've come through this different process do not suffer from [the same] stresses [as other asylum seekers] because they come here as accepted and so they're not going through years of uncertainty, they're here as accepted and the city council makes sure they have safe housing. So there's a quite different sort of mood

about the whole project, I do think that it's very good. I also think it's significant that Sheffield has been involved from the start when other places may not have wanted to be.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Paul: Well it's a basic prejudice and the feeling by local politicians that ever since the, well the dispersals throughout the country is a fairly recent thing, only ten years or so, and so local politicians will be feeling that their populations have got enough and they don't want to take the risks of supporting this kind of thing (Paul Interview, 2006).

Whilst Paul is in favour of the scheme and its undoubted benefits for those refugees involved, he also points out the central position which distinction holds in this scheme. There is inevitably a selective element to this programme, individuals are chosen over others, and those within the various Gateway groups are described by Paul as not necessarily suffering the same stresses as other asylum seekers. For Paul there is a 'different mood' around this scheme to other modes of dispersal and it is largely due to the fact that individuals here are 'accepted' at the point of entry into the programme, they are UN certified 'genuine' refugees and as such should not face the same levels of suspicion, anxiety and stress that other asylum seekers do. This point is further highlighted by Paul's suggestion that politicians may be reluctant to join the Gateway scheme due to their experiences of NASS dispersals, a point which Phillip spoke about in relation to his position;

I actually gave a speech at the LGA probably three or four months ago now, about our experience of the Gateway scheme and people were reluctant because of their experiences of NASS and I just basically said to them, put that to one side and think about what your moral obligations are to this country you know...and that's why I have no problem, provided obviously that the infrastructure's there and the finance to back it is too, signing up to as many Gateway waves as we can sensibly take, it's a very simple decision for me really, it's a moral and a political one and I'm quite happy as long as they keep funding it we'll keep taking it (Phillip Interview, 2006).

In both of these accounts the Gateway programme becomes an example of domopolitics, of filtering, selection and the identification of those seen to be acceptable. Thus while the Kosovan refugees of 1999 were welcomed in Sheffield partly due to their cultural similarities to British residents (Gibney 1999a), Gateway refugees are presented as the

'safe' and positive outcome of a domopolitical system of decision making. The Gateway programme in this case represents precisely that screened, checked and legitimate route into the UK which the Home Office envisaged, placed in contrast by Phillip to the more complex isssues associated with NASS dispersals. In this distinction, Gateway refugees become supported through their legitimate and certain nature, their exceptional nature. Thus the Home Office assert that the 'Gateway Protection Programme is part of a balanced immigration strategy, offering a legal route for genuinely deserving cases will help to ensure that we are offering protection to those who need it. This goes hand in hand with the tough action we have taken to stop abuse of the system by those who are not genuine refugees' (Home Office, 2005d, p.3). The Gateway programme plays a central part in a domopolitics of sorting, as it represents the ultimate culmination of this logic, an annual increment of refugees defined, classified and ordered as safe, secure and certain. Sheffield's welcome to the Gateway refugees therefore exemplifies a conditional hospitality of acceptance and accommodation dependent upon identification as a 'worthy' case.

In doing so, the scheme also highlights the tensions and divisions which accompany a desire to be hospitable, for the welcome offered here is mired in a series of classifications and conditions which have serious consequences for all asylum seekers in the city. Thus, while the scheme was supported in Sheffield, worries arose that Gateway was, firstly, creating divisions between groups of asylum seekers and refugees in terms of services and public perceptions, and secondly, that Gateway was drawing attention and funding away from the issues which faced more regular dispersal asylum seekers in the city who, after all, made up the majority of the city's refugee and asylum seeker population. These fears were put to me by Mark, the director of a regional refugee organization;

> I support Gateway as a concept entirely, I think that the principle of already being given refugee status and then having an ordinary transition here which enables schools and benefits and other services and support to be sorted for arrival is absolutely crucial and that's a civilised way in which this should go. However, it does become divisive, because partly I think it introduces a kind of sense of potentially deserving and non deserving asylum seekers, if you're deserving under Gateway and the same person arriving under a different route is not seen to be so deserving (Mark Interview, 2006).

While Adam, the director of a refugee housing association, made a similar point;

For a lot of the time it [the Gateway Programme] is doing what we have already been doing anyway, with the housing it's what we've been doing for fifty years now, the only difference is that people here are coming with status. Now it creates a problem because you get two classes of refugees, one with a guarantee in terms of support and with a whole kind of press around legitimate, that they are very legitimate, the others are then all suspicious. The one group has everything that can be provided for them and the others have to find their own way and it's a dangerous situation to be running it in this two track way. My view is that it's right because we have to help people and rescue people who are in bad situations, but it has to be a standard in terms of sources, in terms of services, in terms of coverage for that (Adam Interview, 2006).

For Mark and Adam, Gateway, though a positive gesture, was also a potentially divisive one for the city's refugee communities. The Gateway programme establishes, as Adam terms it, a 'two track' system of asylum within Sheffield, with services and, perhaps as importantly, public support being offered to the refugees with the status of the Gateway scheme, while those outside this scheme are deemed to be 'all suspicious'. The Gateway scheme is undoubtedly a positive approach to refugee resettlement, however, its practical implications within Sheffield highlight not only the continuing influence which notions of the 'deserving' and the 'genuine' hold over the city, but also the tensions which arise precisely through attempts to practice and perform an urban project of hospitality (Derrida 2001a), for hospitality itself is practiced partly through these very moments of identification, ordering and conditionality.

Moments of Hospitality, Moments of Identification

The links here between Sheffield's continued construction as a space of welcome and hospitality and the domopolitical language of filtering, selection and screening which underpin this impact the very nature of hospitality itself as an opening to difference. Hospitality will always predicate a reliance upon screening and identification as it enacts a response to those placed at the threshold. Therefore what those benevolent moments narrated in Sheffield amount to are points at which the threshold of securitisation Walters (2004) refers to is crossed, as those seen to have been 'checked' by the screening of the asylum system are deemed worthy of a welcome. For Naas (2003) hospitality is centrally about these decisions taken at the threshold, and in particular about two threshold concepts,

that of the name and the border, as these both crystallise forms of demarcation and legitimacy (de Vries 2001). Following Derrida, Naas (2003, p.157) argues that it is on the threshold that the decision of hospitality is taken, and through this that identification and distinction are negotiated, thus '[t]here on the border, names are requested, and if one has the right name, the right origin, one is allowed to come and go freely, but if not, one must sneak in and out'. The threshold is therefore the site of both hospitality and distinction, for hospitality within the state means that 'conditions are *always* stipulated' (ibid, original emphasis), and one such condition is that of identification. Hospitality takes place in a specific context, and is extended towards particular individuals and not simply strangers in general, however, as Naas (2003, p.159) notes;

> '[I]dentification always risks negating the hospitality that is extended; for in inviting, recognizing, or identifying the stranger, in subjecting him or her to our suppositions or our knowledge if not our prejudices, the stranger always risks becoming a relative nonstranger so that hospitality, which should be granted only to strangers, would then be granted only to relative relatives, to those who look, sound, and smell like us, to those who share our tastes'.

The conditional nature of hospitality therefore always opens itself to the risk of representing a position of tolerance in which that which is valorized is that which is seen to be safe 'like us' (see Derrida 2003; Jenkins 2002; Žižek 1999).

The centrality of naming and classification to the finite nature of hospitality therefore allows us to view those celebrated responses of welcome witnessed in Sheffield, and performed precisely through the classifications of national domopolitics, as examples of a hospitable politics, for here a welcome is offered, but one which is both dependent upon, and acts to reassert, a gesture of naming and classification. In the act of welcome the 'genuine' refugee of domopolitics is both welcomed because of their status and has this status further legitimated via their welcome, while this gesture serves to (re)assert the sovereign position of those who decide upon both welcome and categorization. Thus for Derrida;

> 'A gesture of welcoming, of open arms, takes place always on the threshold, between the unconditional welcome and the conditioned one. It takes place always on the threshold of the home...on the threshold of what is one's own

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– country, island, state, city, home, cave, whatever one calls and identifies as home' (Naas 2003, p.166).

A welcome is therefore a gesture of spatial power for the host in two senses, firstly in the ability to assert a level of control and authority over that space into which one is welcomed, and secondly, in the act of identifying, categorizing and defining that individual to whom one has offered a welcome. Hospitality is partly made possible, made practical, through the very identifications, categorisations and decisions of a domopolitical language.

The establishment of a distinction between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' refugee within national policy is clear as I suggested in Chapter Two (see Gibney 2004; Sales 2002; Schlunke 2000; Squire 2005; Ticktin 2006), yet examining Sheffield's representation of its recent asylum history illustrates that not only does this discursive construction of identities as 'genuine' or 'bogus' permeate throughout the decisions made around asylum (Mountz 2003), but that such divisions are in fact heightened at moments of apparent hospitality to those classed as 'deserving' of such a welcome. In this manner we witness not simply the rise of a political rhetoric of distinction, but also its practical implementation into measures which seek to 'make us believe that the only ones who come under legitimate repression are the ones who do not have a right to the recognition of their *dignity* simply because they have shown themselves *unworthy* of our hospitality' (Derrida 2002, p.137, original emphasis). Nationally, the language of hospitality has, as Derrida (2003) notes, become infused with a language of domopolitics, of categorisations and decisions, such that hospitality has become not an ethic itself, but rather a good to be used, offered and abused according to the distinctions of asylum as a filtering system. Sheffield's history of asylum does not escape this trend despite its claims to be an exceptional space of welcome. Rather, what we see here is a city in which the confluence of domopolitics and hospitality seen nationally through Home Office rhetoric has partly defined the way asylum is narrated. The very welcome which Sheffield proudly promotes is founded upon the distinctions which structure the asylum process as a sorting device. This is because firstly, Sheffield is a city which responds to, and answers to, the demands of that national language of dispersal, filtering and legitimacy, and secondly, such a call for identification and classification is inherent in the very character of a hospitable response as Naas (2003) argues. Sheffield could not begin to be hospitable were it not for the distinctions it draws between individuals

and groups. Therefore, the humanitarianism of Sheffield's past cannot fully escape the politics of the exception which mark a domopolitical hospitality, as the city shares a national language of exceptions and decisions witnessed throughout the choice to be hospitable to some refugees, and to employ such hospitality as evidence of a long-standing tradition of welcome.

Sheffield's Spaces of Asylum

What might we then take forward from this engagement with Sheffield's account of its own welcome to asylum seekers and refugees? Firstly, we must note that the story often told of Sheffield and asylum, though not trouble-free, is largely a positive one. Sheffield's account of its own past, despite its exclusions and divisions, tells of a city which has been at the forefront of many positive gestures of hospitality towards diverse refugee groups, and this welcome has partly been built upon the political campaigning and questioning of a series of committed individuals and groups. Sheffield, in this sense, has some right to be considered as an exemplar of a city which has attempted to be, albeit imperfectly, a refuge for others viewed to be in need of sanctuary. However, it is the perception of this need, and the decisions which accompany its definition, which draw Sheffield back into a national language of domopolitics, of classifications, questions and ordering. Sheffield's past reflects a city which has attempted to be hospitable, and has in many (conditional) senses succeeded, yet it is the tensions at the very heart of hospitality itself, the demand for identification, knowledge and sovereignty, which not only make an unconditional gesture of welcome impossible as Derrida (2000a) argues, but which also make the practical action of offering a welcome through the city an issue of attempting to negotiate this language of legitimacy, distinction and decision.

The recent history of asylum narrated through Sheffield is therefore one of a series of moments of negotiation, moments at which a relationship between a will to define, categorise and order asylum seekers and a will to welcome them is constantly undertaken. The politics of asylum in Sheffield noted throughout this chapter is therefore one of attempting to chart a course through these moments of tension and juxtaposition, as a welcome is itself partly grounded upon defining those to be welcomed. These are the negotiations which are placed upon the city in the very act of attempting to respond to the

demands of asylum seekers. Sheffield is not any different in this sense to many other dispersal cities across the UK, however, Sheffield's record of attempting to do more, to welcome more effectively and to be at the forefront of resettlement schemes, does indeed suggest a different take on asylum. In a language of hospitality, the response which Sheffield's past recalls is one which attempts, albeit failingly at times, to 'render [hospitable engagement] as effective as possible, to invent the best arrangements...the most just legislation' (Derrida 2005, p.6). For Derrida, hospitality will never evade its conditional nature, yet this is no reason to stop efforts to become hospitable, rather Derrida takes the relationship which such impossibility recalls as a driving force behind attempts to become hospitable, thus 'it is necessary to deduce a politics and a law from ethics' (Derrida 1999, p.115). What such a deduction gestures towards is a means to 'determine the "better" or the "less bad"' (Keating 2004, p.36), thus those 'best arrangements' which Derrida (2005) envisions are by necessity produced precisely by this relation to an unconditional account of hospitality. As Derrida (2000b, p.79) argues 'conditional laws of hospitality would cease to be laws of hospitality if they were not guided, given inspiration, given aspiration, required, even, by the law of unconditional hospitality'. Sheffield could never be entirely hospitable and it can never fully purge itself of a language of domopolitics and decision, however it is precisely because of this fact that we can argue that Sheffield is moving towards, always towards and never reaching, a sense of hospitality as a city. Those resettlement schemes of the past and present enacted in Sheffield are imperfect, they are divisive and force distinctions, yet these are the inevitable consequences of attempting to welcome, of attempting to negotiate the hiatus between hospitality as an ethical injunction, and hospitality as a practical, political response.

Sheffield's history of asylum is therefore partially an account of the impossibility of hospitality, no matter how well meaning the city in question. There is however an implication of reading the politics of asylum in this manner, and it arises through the ethical reading of hospitality offered by Derrida and Levinas. For Derrida, ethics itself represents unconditional hospitality as a form of 'infinite responsibility' towards the other, a responsibility beyond debt, repayment or subjectivity, and as such this is an inexhaustible, unending, responsibility which will always make demands of us (Critchley 2000; Caputo 2003). As Derrida (1997, p.86) argues 'if you give up the infinitude of responsibility, there is no responsibility. It is because we act and we live in infinitude that the responsibility

with regard to the other is irreducible...There are only moral and political problems, and everything that follows from this, from the moment when responsibility is not limitable'. The consequence of such infinite responsibility are those 'moral and political problems' of hospitality, justice and forgiveness that Derrida (1992b, 1995, 2001a) has been concerned with, yet here they frame the particular issue of responding to the demands of asylum seekers as 'the other'. Precisely because this responsibility is infinite, is irreducible, so there is a demand to continue to work at hospitality, to seek "better" conditions and deduce anew laws and politics of welcome from an ethics of unconditional hospitality. The task of welcoming is therefore never over, and as such those welcomes offered by Sheffield, both past and present, will always need to be supplemented, altered and renewed in order to be effective. The hospitality of the city is imperfect as we have seen, but it also requires constant work to maintained, to be renewed and to be made more effective.

The account of Sheffield I have presented throughout this chapter is one in which the tensions of hospitality, as a responsibility never fully reached, pattern the city's response to asylum. Sheffield has been shown to be both embedded within, and at times at odds with, a national language of domopolitics and distinction. The negotiations which characterise the city's attempt to offer a welcome are by necessity ongoing and in the following chapters I want to consider in more detail a number of spaces through which these tensions are performed in everyday life, as ideas of hospitality come to enact and condition the creation of fragile and temporary spaces of refuge. For Derrida (1999) this opposition between 'the unconditional ideal and the conditions of reality, does not issue in either complacency or despair; rather, he finds in this disparity a call and a challenge: to make laws more hospitable' (Smith 2005, p.70). It is this challenge which I want to examine through a series of spaces where we might see hospitality itself being negotiated, reformed and at times avoided. The challenge posed here is therefore to continuously negotiate the terms of hospitality, for;

> 'Hospitality consists in doing everything to address oneself to the other; it consists in granting him, indeed in asking him, his name, all the while trying to prevent this question from becoming a "condition," a police interrogation, an inquest or an investigation, or a simple border check. The difference is subtle and yet fundamental, a question that is asked on the threshold of one's home' (Naas 2003, p.160).

These subtle differences are the keys to a potentially new vision of the city's relation to asylum itself, and it is to this vision that the rest of this thesis is addressed, in the hope of suggesting that while the history of Sheffield is indeed in parts hospitable, its present holds political possibilities to extend such hospitality further. I begin this task in the next chapter by turning towards a different vision of the city itself, a vision of the city as a space of 'sanctuary' articulated around a relational reading of urban space as a node within networks of affiliation and responsibility (Massey 2007; Amin 2004b). Sheffield's hospitality here is not simply taken to gravitate around the boundaries of the city itself, but also articulates a series of responsibilities to those wider political issues which bring asylum seekers to Sheffield. In the following chapter therefore I argue that the story of Sheffield's asylum past has been radically supplemented by an account of hospitality which attempts to extend the responsibilities of the city outwards and in doing so poses a series of questions for the spatial assumptions of both domopolitics and sovereign assertions of hospitality.

CHAPTER FOUR

A CITY OF SANCTUARY
MICROPOLITICS AND URBAN RESPONSIBILITIES

'My being-in-the-world or my "place in the sun," my being at home, have these not also been the usurpation of spaces of belonging to the other man whom I have already oppressed or starved, or driven out into a third world; are they not acts of repulsing, excluding, exiling, stripping, killing?' (Levinas 1989, p.82).

'[I]t is not the signs of power that count, nor exemplary lives, but what a conviction is capable of, here, now, and forever' (Badiou 2003a, p.30).

Following my concern in the previous chapter with the spatial negotiations of domopolitics and hospitality within Sheffield, I now want to consider an alternative spacing of asylum in the city, one which draws upon that relational account of space presented in Chapter Two in order to pose the question of Sheffield's relation to those 'strangers within' the city and those responsibilities which extend 'beyond the bounds of place' (Massey 2007). Throughout the chapter I shall examine the work of Sheffield's City of Sanctuary movement in order to consider the complex negotiations of ethical demands and political responses which emerge through attempting to reimagine the city as a sanctuary. I shall argue that what City of Sanctuary achieved is fleeting and ephemeral yet crucial to Sheffield's outward orientation towards the world. Their focus has primarily been upon building a micropolitical affective charge of welcome within the city, of circulating ideas of responsibility, empathy and hope (Anderson and Holden 2008; Connolly 1999a), and whilst it is easy to dismiss such an affective politics, I argue that in doing so we lose a sense of the problematic, yet irreducible, nature of political questioning which is inspired through these acts, a political questioning which is tied to a presentation of space as an open, multiple and ongoing accomplishment.

The chapter opens by introducing the work of City of Sanctuary before framing the movement as an example of a prosaic micropolitics of attitudinal alteration through which everyday ethical sensibilities are worked upon (Connolly 2002). I then draw on this work to demonstrate how City of Sanctuary articulated a re-imagining of the city as a space of relational politics and responsibilities to proximate and distant others. While critiquing the political openness of a relational approach, I engage with the work of Žižek and Rancière to consider whether this movement acts to foreclose, rather than truly interrupt, the politics of the city. With such a critique in mind I return to the micropolitical labours of the movement to suggest that rather than foreclosing political opportunities, this account of space itself acts to radically open sites of dissensus and political challenge. A city of sanctuary in this account would represent a space open to political interruption and disagreement as Rancière (1999) suggests, and in doing so casts into doubt some of the spatial and political certainties of domopolitics. For Sheffield, the City of Sanctuary movement represents an intervention into those negotiations of space, domopolitics and hospitality, examined in Chapter Three, an intervention which seeks to promote ever more hospitable responses in a Derridean sense, and opens all three of these domains to political questioning and challenge.

Cities of Refuge and a City of Sanctuary

The Sheffield City of Sanctuary movement was born in September 2005 as the brainchild of a Methodist Minister and a local Quaker experienced in working with refugee and asylum charities. Both of these individuals felt that within the UK the attitude and ethos which surround issues of asylum was something which could be, and needed to be, challenged, altered and transformed. In these early exchanges, as Inderjit one of the co-founders put it, the idea of seeking to bring about change within one's local environment became prevalent as a means to potentially address wider concerns;

> We talked quite a lot about sanctuary and started talking about creating a movement in our own city for sanctuary, um, I was aware that in scripture in the Bible there is, there's an idea about cities of refuge as in ancient Hebrew history there was an idea that they had six cities which were called cities of refuge and anybody who was, felt their life was threatened because they had committed some crime and thought this was unjust or unfair, you could go to seek refuge in these cities. I talked about this with Craig and we thought it

would be great if we could create Sheffield into a city of refuge if you like (Inderjit Interview, 2007).

The idea of six 'cities of refuge' arises at various points in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 19; Joshua 20), but is most clearly described in Numbers chapter 35;

'Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment...These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Isreal, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them' (Numbers, 35, 11-15).

For Inderjit and Craig, the two founders of the movement, this idea of a city which provided a refuge to both citizens and foreigners appeared as a compelling one within the context of national discussions of asylum, and also reflected Derrida's (2001a) call for the return to a welcoming urban politics of contemporary refuge. Derrida's work with the International Parliament of Writers (IPW) focused upon establishing cities across the globe where writers could seek refuge when under threat. The IPW dissolved in 2003 into two separate organizations of urban refuge, Cities of Refuge North America and the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) based in Europe.[1] These organizations present an example of what the City of Sanctuary movement sought to become, for as Derrida (2001a, p.4, original emphasis) writes of the IPW;

'Ever since our first meeting, we have been calling for the opening of such refuge cities across the world. That, in effect, very much resembles a new cosmo*politics*. We have undertaken to bring about the proclaimation and institution of numerous and, above all, autonomous 'cities of refuge', each as independent from the other and from the state as possible, but, nevertheless, allied to each other according to forms of solidarity yet to be invented'.

Within a tradition of Biblical refuge to the stranger, Derrida situates the 'city of refuge' as a space of a 'certain sovereignty' wherein 'the city itself could determine the laws of hospitality' (Derrida 2001a, p.18). Thus, as I suggested in Chapter One, for Derrida the city

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[1] In February 2007 Norwich became the UK's first 'City of Refuge' by signing up to house ICORN exiled writers (*The Norwich Evening News*, 16/02/07).

might become not only a refuge itself through this process, but might also offer a new image for the state, of a hospitable and welcoming 'cosmopolitics'.

Within this context of gestures towards urban refuge the City of Sanctuary movement presents an ethical desire to welcome strangers and a political drive to attempt a transformation of relations of asylum through the city. Craig commented that;

> I think that it's very difficult to influence national policy and legislation with regard to asylum seekers because of the enormous political forces against asylum seekers and the media and so on. But at a local level I think perhaps there's more leverage to try to influence local organisations, local community groups, uh, the local authority and local media to have a slightly different agenda and to see it as part of their identity as a city. So that's really the aim of City of Sanctuary, to try to create a mainstream movement in support of asylum seekers in a similar way to the Fairtrade cities movement (Craig Interview, 2006).

With this desire to alter both a vision of the city and its relations to strangers, City of Sanctuary set about a series of events and awareness raising moves in order to promote a more welcoming ethos within Sheffield. In June 2007 'with the support of Sheffield City Council, Sheffield became the UK's first 'City of Sanctuary' for asylum-seekers and refugees – a city that takes pride in the welcome it offers to people in need of safety' (Sheffield City Council 2007a), and this declaration represented the culmination of the work put into rethinking the city's approach to asylum issues. Alongside this, the movement itself has grown both in terms of members and supporting organizations and in February 2008 received funding from both the Refugee Council and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust to 'support local groups throughout the UK in developing their own Cities of Sanctuary' (Barnett 2008). To date, groups have been established in Bradford, Bristol, Coventry, Leicester, London, Nottingham and Oxford, and Barnett (2008) writes that 'in 2008 we aim to see a growing national City of Sanctuary movement that can start to influence policy-makers and public attitudes throughout the country'. The City of Sanctuary movement has grown rapidly from a focus solely upon Sheffield two years ago to a wider concern to address the urban politics of asylum more generally, and in the rest of this chapter I want to consider exactly how this has occurred, and also what we might politically, and ethically, draw from such a move.

The Micropolitics of Sanctuary

The first outlook on City of Sanctuary is taken from the work of William Connolly (1995; 2005) who argues for a radical pluralism within the political, founded in a vision of ethical sensibilities and political actions as grounded within affective dispositions and 'techniques of thought'. For Connolly (1999b, p.22) a 'technique of thought might be an exercise or other intervention that alters the direction of thinking or the mood in which it is set', such that thought, and subsequent action is attuned differently or considered in a different light. The sensibilities which we bring to bear on our actions, in the most prosaic of senses, are therefore formed in and through these everyday moments of thought, action and response, for as Connolly (1999b, p.28) suggests;

> 'Thinking is periodically inspired by unexpected encounters that jar it into motion out of stupor or that call into question chunks in the conventional store-house of thought. Changes in thinking affect, over time, the shape and quality of the ethical sensibility from which one acts. And tactical interventions into sensibilities installed at several layers of being can make a significant difference to the quality of thought and action'.

Such modalities of 'tactical intervention' within everyday lives represent what Connolly (2002) terms 'micropolitical practices'. Micropolitics works to continually alter the disposition and sensibility of both the individual and the affective mood of wider macropolitics of government, law and sovereign states. As Connolly (2002, p.110) argues 'each time a new advance is made in the domains of ecology, race relations...[and so on] it is supported and enabled by micropolitical actions that create resonances across several constituencies...micropolitics persistently invades and pervades macropolitics'. For Connolly a 'deep pluralism' of agonistic respect for others is necessarily built upon the political possibilities and negotiations inherent within the micropolitical realm of daily attunement to modes of thought, feeling and response to difference. Connolly (2005, p.66) draws on films which display the prosaic negotiations of everyday life as a means of considering this political pluralism, thus;

> '[A] pluralism of everyday collage feeds into the larger politics of public pluralism, showing each participant that one's faith, sexuality, language, cooking habits, and temperament, while pertinent in different degrees...do not exhaust everything pertinent to living together across multiple modes of

difference. Europe is being recreated through such micropolitical, layered practices of connection across multiple differences'.

The attunements of micropolitics are therefore centrally about this 'everyday collage' of narratives, actions, responses and thoughts which condition the ways in which we live and how such negotiations come to influence wider practices of macropolitics. With this situational vision of political alteration in mind I want to suggest that the work of City of Sanctuary provides an example of this form of 'tactical intervention' into the 'sensibilities' of the city, focused upon working on the ethical dispositions of individuals in an effort to engender a civic virtue of 'critical responsiveness' (Connolly 1999a).[2]

As their manifesto states, 'City of Sanctuary is a movement to build a culture of hospitality for asylum-seekers and refugees in Sheffield. We are working to make Sheffield a city that takes pride in the welcome it offers to people in need of safety, and that enables asylum-seekers and refugees to contribute fully to the life of our communities' (City of Sanctuary 2008), and this vision was materialized across three key areas of political activity. Firstly, the group aimed at establishing a series of links and networks through which to articulate a message of welcome within the city. It was therefore crucially important for the movement to develop and maintain contacts with other refugee and asylum organizations, other charities and campaigns and the council's asylum team itself.[3] One of the ways this was achieved was through contacting organizations, businesses and the universities of Sheffield to sign a public declaration of support for the movement and its ideals. This process of support was viewed as a key means to achieve two of the movement's stated aims. Firstly, building a broad network of links and supporters meant that the message of City of Sanctuary, as a prosaic movement to alter attitudes, was presented to a far wider audience, as committee members were invited to speak at events and formally present the message of a 'welcoming city' to a diverse array of social groups. Secondly, this process of slowly building a base of supporters also allowed for a different political engagement with the

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[2] Here we might also consider a range of work which has focused upon the political purchase inscribed in the 'mood' or affectivity of the urban itself. For example, Pile's (2005) consideration of the city as a site of a 'phantasmagoria' of emotional connections, memories and resonances and Donald's (1999) concern with the urban as a 'structure of feeling', both highlight the vast political potential within the intersection between urban experiences and the 'non-representational' aspects of political practice.
[3] Here City of Sanctuary developed strong links with a range of other asylum campaigns whose work is not fully explored here. Of particular note was the Church Action on Poverty group's 'Living Ghosts' campaign against asylum destitution, the Sheffield ASSIST group and the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns.

macropolitics of the council to be undertaken. It meant that the movement, which might previously have been dismissed as a utopian group divorced from the 'real politics' of the city, had to be taken seriously for what it was, a well supported challenge to the way in which asylum was presented, and treated, within Sheffield and beyond. The development of links and supporters across the city allowed the movement to present itself as a political force.

Figure 4.1. A City of Sanctuary Welcome Sign (Source: Author's Photograph).

The second key area of activity was in attempts to visually, and materially, mark the city as a space of welcome. This mode of action took two main forms, firstly, those organizations which declared their support for City of Sanctuary were encouraged to display signs of support on their premises which read 'We welcome asylum-seekers and refugees' (Figure 4.1). Often these signs were to be seen on the outside of Churches and community centres within the city, however after the 2006 AGM of the group the Mayor agreed to place one in the Town Hall itself. The second visual medium was that of a more prosaic set of images, as the group had commissioned two postcards to promote Sheffield's multicultural heritage, with images of the Castle Market area of the city (Figures 4.2) and the Peace Gardens (Figure 4.3) represented. On the back of each card were details of City of Sanctuary and of how one could pledge support to the movement.

Figure 4.2. The Castle Market (Source: City of Sanctuary).
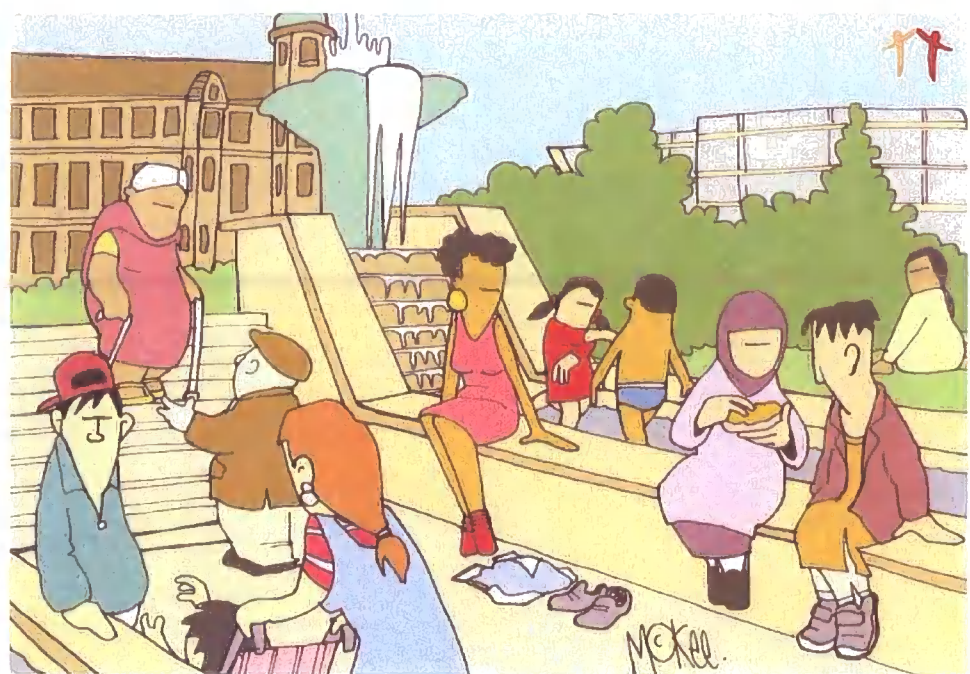
Figure 4.3. The Peace Gardens (Source: City of Sanctuary).

Alongside these were a set of beermats designed to question myths surrounding asylum seekers (see Figures 4.4 and 4.5), each of which posed a question to the reader, as detailed below;

Figure 4.4. 'Thinking of Emigrating?' (Source: City of Sanctuary).
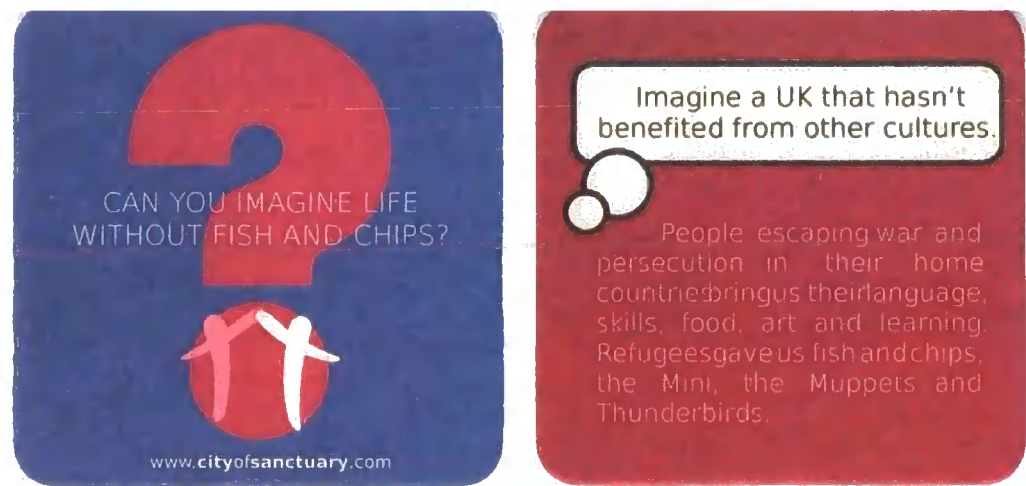
Figure 4.5. 'Can you imagine life without fish and chips?' (Source: City of Sanctuary).

Both these postcards and beermats were widely distributed around the city, in council buildings, churches, organizations which had pledged their support and some pubs. The work they proposed to achieve was that of influencing, and questioning, dominant 'chunks in the conventional store-house of thought' on asylum which Connolly (1999b, p.28)

argues is central to processes of micropolitical alteration. Their presence within the city and that of the visual marking of space achieved through the 'welcome signs' acted to continually open a dialogue with individuals over their response to this demand for refuge. Their presence posed the ongoing and open question of 'what does a city of sanctuary mean?' and 'how am I to *relate* to it?', 'how do I *feel* about it?' The everyday nature of these items acts to emphasize the movement's key concern to alter the ethos of relating to difference in the city, to crucially *open* a dialogue over asylum as a spatial relation. This was not to suggest that a consensual agreement on asylum should necessarily be made, but it was to open the question of a response to asylum which had previously been viewed as closed. The opening of this question for both the individual and the city came across in Craig's concerns to present an 'alternative discourse' on asylum;

> It's a shared public discourse about asylum and I think part of the problem at the moment is the fact that there is only one discourse about asylum really which is that we're being 'swamped' by you know scroungers and we need to get rid of them. Most people never hear an alternative discourse about asylum, so part of the aim of City of Sanctuary is to at least create in the public realm an alternative discourse which is about being able to be proud of being welcoming…I think if people are hearing two discourses on asylum it gives them an option, because most people's attitudes on an abstract subject will be influenced purely by what they hear and if everyone's saying the same thing then they're going to say the same thing (Craig Interview, 2006).

The third main area which City of Sanctuary focused upon feeds into Craig's comments on abstraction as the group set about organising and running a series of events to encourage asylum seekers and members of the 'local community' to meet, exchange views and encounter one another. These events took the form of a ceilidh dance, a dinner and the organisation of a concert of music from asylum seekers and refugees at Sheffield University (see Figure 4.6). Here the central gesture was one of encouraging thought, encounter and interaction as a means to both develop friendships across difference and tackle some of the myths readily associated with asylum seekers, and I shall consider these relations of proximity in more detail in Chapter Five.

Figure 4.6. A City of Sanctuary Ceildh (Source: Author's Photograph).

Throughout these three modes of action City of Sanctuary mobilized a highly strategic sense of micropolitical alteration, for as charity director Mark stated 'it's about selecting what kind of pressure points to really work on' (Mark Interview, 2006). Thus the build up of a range of supporters, the development and advertisement of different events in the media and the visual marking of everyday life with the City of Sanctuary logo, all combined to influence the ways in which asylum was both viewed in the city on an individual level, through questioning attitudes, and on a more macropolitical level in the council's decision to support the movement itself. In this sense the work of City of Sanctuary reflected what Ilya, an asylum seeker, mentioned as his dissatisfaction with asylum campaigns;

> I think we need something kind of constant, rather than just another campaign, I don't like this style of campaigning, when if you want to change something really it can't be one day or one week and you should recognise that it's hard work and you should have a routine rather than just one day. To build step by step something serious and something solid, it's a slow process and a gradual process, everything needs time (Ilya Interview, 2007).

The work of City of Sanctuary reflected such a 'slow process', a gradual building of support and action, and for me the words of Ilya are also reflected in that sense of a micropolitical 'politics of becoming' which Connolly (1999a) examines, as bringing forward the position of different, formerly politically excluded groups, through gradual processes of affective alteration. With such micropolitical work in mind I want to consider exactly what kinds of alterations we can see being sought in Sheffield, and how a virtue of 'critical responsiveness' is being called for.

Inspiring Critical Responsiveness

Connolly (2005) argues that civic virtues should be promoted at both the level of a politics of public pluralism, based upon the right to challenge and question political identities and constituencies, and at the level of an emergent everyday collage of living together, as a 'pluralizing culture' embodies, among other things, 'a *micropolitics* of action by the self on itself and the small-scale assemblage upon itself, [and] a *politics of disturbance* through which sedimented identities and moralities are rendered more alert to the deleterious effects of their naturalizations upon difference' (Connolly 1995 p.xxi, original emphasis). Such a focus upon prosaic and yet challenging moments of disturbance speaks to the methods which City of Sanctuary applied to altering the ethos of Sheffield. As I have suggested those methods of micropolitical alteration and attunement to difference outlined above were crucially targeted at allowing individuals to redefine their relations to difference within the city and in this sense what the movement sought to inspire was a pluralist virtue of 'critical responsiveness' to (a certain form of) difference.

The idea of 'critical responsiveness' is inextricably tied to a 'politics of becoming' as the assertion of a right to a legitimate political role within debate and agonistic political contestation. Connolly (1999a, p.51) thus argues that the 'politics of becoming occurs when a culturally marked constituency, suffering under its negative constitution in an established institutional matrix, strives to reconfigure itself by moving the cultural constellation of identity/difference then in place'. Such a constituency enacts a move towards political recognition which itself destabilises the present political order, questioning the certainties of political categorisation and challenging the perceived orthodoxy of the past, in this sense it is a move to 'become political' and be viewed as a legitimate partner in democratic

discussion (Isin 2002). A 'politics of becoming' marks the gradual process of bringing a new cultural identity to bear on a given political field. The work of City of Sanctuary, and of a large number of other organisations across both Sheffield and the country, might be seen as an attempt to instill such a form of political becoming for asylum seekers within the UK, to assert a plural identity which should hold a rightful ability to voice concerns within moments of agonistic confrontation (Mouffe 2005). Nationally, the drive to bring forth rights for those resident within the UK, albeit temporarily, is reflective of a process of political struggle towards 'becoming', a process in which micropolitical and macropolitical registers of thought, attitude, law and sovereign decision making are worked upon in the hope that they might at least be pushed towards a consideration of those 'better' conditions we noted arising through an ideal of unconditional hospitality in Chapter Three. City of Sanctuary's role within such a political nexus can only ever be a limited one, at least until recently, yet its focus upon a localised micropolitics of action lays the ground work which is required to accept, and even support, such a 'politics of becoming'.

Movements of political becoming are, for Connolly, supported and maintained by this virtue of critical responsiveness, which takes 'the form of *careful listening and presumptive generosity* to constituencies struggling to move from an obscure or degraded subsistence below the field of recognition, justice, obligation, rights, or legitimacy to a place on one or more of those registers' (Connolly 2005, p.126, original emphasis). An outlook of critical responsiveness is one through which individuals are opened to a relationship of 'agonistic respect' with those engaged in a politics of becoming, it is about being open to these claims of political right, being able to be critical of them, but not to dismiss them out of hand as illegitimate, unworthy or unpolitical. It is to listen to such claims and respect their position as an agonistic partner in politics and thus critical responsiveness takes work, it is part of that micropolitical sense of attunement and alteration which City of Sanctuary sought as it stands at the interplay between micropolitical movements and the ethical sensibility one brings to bear on the present, thus the 'cultivation of critical responsiveness...involves considerable work on the visceral register of the responding constituency. To cultivate critical responsiveness to a new movement in the politics of becoming is at once to work tactically on gut feelings already sedimented into you' (Connolly 2005, p.126-127). This is the work of City of Sanctuary, the cultivation of an openness to asylum beyond those 'gut feelings' which were previously held. City of Sanctuary presents an opening of the present,

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in which the virtue of critical responsiveness, as an opening to other political claims is promoted as a pluralist virtue to be aspired to in the city, a virtue which may be taken to impact the wider macropolitics of campaigns for political becoming nationally.

I want to conclude this first reading of City of Sanctuary with one final thought on such a politics of civic virtue. That which is promoted in Sheffield is more than simply a facile tolerance of asylum seekers, for 'where tolerance implies benevolence towards others amid stability of ourselves, critical responsiveness involves active work on our current identities in order to modify the terms of relation between us and them' (Connolly 1999a, p.62). What is sought through a City of Sanctuary is an ethos which places into question not only the political rights and demands of others, but also our own position within such a political constituency. An ethos which articulates an open response to the 'throwntogetherness' of space (Massey 2005). From such a relational lens we might view this politics as one of 'propinquity' (Amin 2004b), as I suggested in Chapter Two. Such a politics presents the spatial as a field of agonistic engagement, and highlights the importance of temporary and fragile claims and coalitions which do not necessarily hold to a sense of proximate primacy. A 'politics of propinquity' highlights the open and agonistic nature of Connolly's (1999a) reading of a plural critical responsiveness. However, it also points to an alternative, relational reading of the movement itself in which the political constituency of Sheffield is brought into being by relations running both into, and beyond, the bounds of the city, it is to this reading of City of Sanctuary to which I now wish to turn.

An 'Outwardlooking' Sanctuary

In their proud declaration of Sheffield as the UK's first 'City of Sanctuary' in June 2007, Sheffield City Council presented the movement, and its inauguration within the city, in the following terms;

> 'A City of Sanctuary is a place that welcomes and includes asylum-seekers and refugees, and enables them to contribute fully to the life of the city. It is not about encouraging more asylum-seekers to come to Sheffield – most asylum-seekers don't have any choice about where they live. But in a City of Sanctuary these new arrivals are treated with understanding and respect, in a way that local people can be proud of' (Sheffield City Council 2007a).

Thus far I have focused upon the micropolitics of City of Sanctuary as one which aimed to look inwards within the city, and to consider how individuals might attune their responses to asylum differently, however, as Amin (2004b) notes such a 'politics of propinquity' must also be accompanied by a 'politics of connectivity' through which the relational connections which construct the city are addressed and politically accounted for. Thus as Massey (2006, p.93, original emphasis) argues 'there is another side to the geography of the relational construction of identity, of a global sense of place. This concerns the relations that run *outwards* from that identity. And that in turn raises the question of a wider, distanciated, ethics and politics'. Just as the city brings together demands and trajectories from a far wider geography than its traditional boundaries, so too does the city spread outwards beyond these points of convergence and constitution, impacting a geography of global networks and flows (Amin and Thrift 2002; Graham 1998). As Massey (2007, p.7) phrases it;

> '[W]orld cities, as indeed all places, also have lines that run out from them: trade routes, investments, political and cultural influences, the outward connections of the internal multiplicity itself; power relations of all sorts that run around the globe...For each place this geography, this tentacular stretching of power relations, will be particular'.

This politics has a dual focus, to 'both meet the challenges of a space of flows and addresses head-on the responsibilities of 'powerful places'...What is needed is a politics *of* place *beyond* place' (ibid, p.15, original emphasis). In this second reading the work of City of Sanctuary actively seeks to engage a politics of connectivity through the re-imagining of the city as a relational product, and it is from this re-imagination of Sheffield that 'political responsibility' is realized. The council's desire to create a welcome that 'local people can be proud of' (Sheffield City Council 2007a), reflects not only a re-casting of the city as a site of relational welcome, but also grounds a sense of those responsibilities Massey (2004) suggests are bound into the very spatial constitution of our present. I proceed then by first considering City of Sanctuary as a relational re-imagining of the city, before suggesting how this extends outwards into a sense of distant responsibility.

The Relational Re-Imagining of Sheffield

City of Sanctuary was initially based upon the model of the Fairtrade movement, and their vision of establishing 'Fairtrade cities', which aimed to 'contribute to the Fairtrade Foundation's aim of tackling poverty by enabling disadvantaged producers from poor countries to receive a better deal, through encouraging support for the Fairtrade Mark' (Fairtrade Foundation 2002). City of Sanctuary followed the success of the Fairtrade Foundation (see Barnett *et al.* 2005) and in a number of ways sought to mirror their work, in particular through targeting the council to pass a resolution of support declaring the city a space of sanctuary and through a series of grass root moves aimed at raising both an awareness of asylum and an opening of attitudes towards asylum seekers. As Inderjit (Interview, 2007) commented;

> There are people who've been doing it for years and they're the ones who are actually doing the real work of welcoming and hospitality. City of Sanctuary is about being an umbrella organisation that will move all of those together to encourage them to celebrate what they're doing. If we can work together then you recognise that you're all part of making the city into a place of welcome and hospitality.

While Craig referred to this aim in the following terms;

> The idea of City of Sanctuary was to try to influence the culture of a local city in a more positive direction towards asylum. So to try to concentrate on a positive vision of what we would like Sheffield to be seen as, so a welcoming, hospitable city, and to emphasize those positive aspects as something for Sheffield people to be proud of (Craig Interview, 2006).

In both of these accounts the role of creating an ethos in the city, and a vision of the city itself, which people can 'be proud of', proved central to the aims of City of Sanctuary. Malpass *et al.* (2007) examine the campaign to make Bristol a 'Fairtrade city' in a similar sense, and view this as a movement to both re-imagine the city through its connections to other places, and to instill within this vision a sense of pride in the achievements of the city. Thus;

> 'By connecting place imagination to fair-trade, the local authority gains a sense of worthiness. By bringing together previously disparate sets of

interests, the city gains a sense of unity, with people perhaps beginning to realize that they have something in common with the council...Most obviously, the FTC idea enrolls numbers of people in the sense that the entire city can be counted as 'for' fairtrade. As such, the local authority can be seen as selling the political virtue of fairness to its constituents' (ibid, p.639).

In a similar sense the decision of Sheffield City Council to declare the city one of sanctuary proved to be a beneficial political move, one which allowed the council, and the city, to present a sense of unity behind virtues of welcome and hospitality. In Sheffield this move was predicated upon a series of contextual political opportunities, for the resolution to support City of Sanctuary arose just before local council elections in 2007 with the council split between Labour and Liberal Democrat representatives and with no party holding overall control. This situation presented a range of 'temporally resonating 'political opportunity structures'' (Malpass *et al.* 2007, p.636), in which 'different scales of opportunity are open at different times' (ibid) and to which the micropolitics of City of Sanctuary were attuned through their network of contacts and organisational links. The desire to push forward the agenda of City of Sanctuary was therefore met with the opportunities presented by a city council that wanted to present itself as united around a common issue, and a common set of civic virtues.

The development of a sense of pride within the city, of a pride in being a sanctuary, speaks to an attempt to re-imagine the city itself as a space of virtue and welcome, and it is here that we may draw a further parallel with Malpass *et al.*'s (2007) study of Bristol, for they argue that this campaign reflected Massey's (2007) call for a 'politics beyond place', 'so as to bring about a re-imagination of place from the perspective of looking from the inside out' (Malpass *et al.* 2007, p.634). The Fair Trade campaign thus worked to recast both Bristol's 'external and internal relations' which construct a sense of the city's identity (ibid, p.635) and presented a series of solidarities with groups beyond the city as relations of trade were altered outside the city and attitudes and consumption patterns were targeted within the city. Through this relational grounding of Fair Trade, Bristol becomes re-imagined as by adopting 'identity signifiers associated with fairness and justice, Bristol has begun to be reframed formally in terms of relational connections elsewhere. The 'within' of Bristol is impacted by fairtrade responsibilities with elsewhere, and part of its character lies beyond its jurisdiction' (ibid, p.643). The commitment to fair-trade is therefore a commitment to an

'outwardlookingness' of responsible relations (Massey 2007), of acknowledging those connections which allow Bristol to survive as a city and of attempting to do justice to those relations.

We see such a sense of relational connections in Sheffield also, for while City of Sanctuary may have attempted to develop an ethos of critical responsiveness to asylum within Sheffield, this was also fundamentally wedded to a critical reappraisal of the city itself and its constituent relations, for '[t]o alter your recognition of difference…is to revise your own terms of self-recognition as well. Critical responsiveness thus moves on two registers: to redefine its relation to others a constituency must also modify the shape of its own identity' (Connolly 1995, p.xvi). Presenting Sheffield as a sanctuary thus implied an active re-imagining of the city's identity, such that a sense of responsibility to distant others, and for sanctuary itself, became cast as 'an integral part of wider practices of good local citizenship and place belonging' (Malpass *et al.* 2007, p.638). City of Sanctuary in this sense worked upon a re-branding of the city as a space of relational responsibility, a space in which the campaign might 'act as a vehicle for challenging, and even changing, both the external and internal relations which construct the identity of a place' (ibid, p.635). Sheffield became presented as a space in which relations to the outside, to distant conflicts and proximate strangers, came to form the city itself. Thus the contributions which asylum seekers and refugees may make to the city were foregrounded, as the following beermat claims;

> 'Can you imagine a life without fish and chips? Imagine a UK that hasn't benefited from other cultures. People escaping war and persecution in their home countries bring us their language, skills, food, art and learning. Refugees gave us fish and chips, the Mini, the Muppets and Thunderbirds' (City of Sanctuary 2006).

The city was therefore recast as a space made in and through its connections to both asylum seekers and the conflicts which continue to create them. Similarly, the City of Sanctuary movement was involved, along with the council and other charities, in pushing forward the agenda of a city wide 'Refugee Week' as a means of celebrating both the contribution refugees have made to Sheffield, and the role the city has played as a refuge. In particular, the slogan of the 2007 'Refugee Week'; "Ever wanted to travel the world, but not quite got round to leaving Sheffield? Refugee Week is the festival for you!" (Sheffield City Council

2007b), highlights the construction of Sheffield as a space produced in and through the diversity of connections and people who feed into the city. The promotion of this series of events (see Figure 4.7) utilizes such a relational imagery of mixing, diversity and connection to suggest that it is these links and relations that constitute the new and in Sheffield come to, partly, constitute the city.
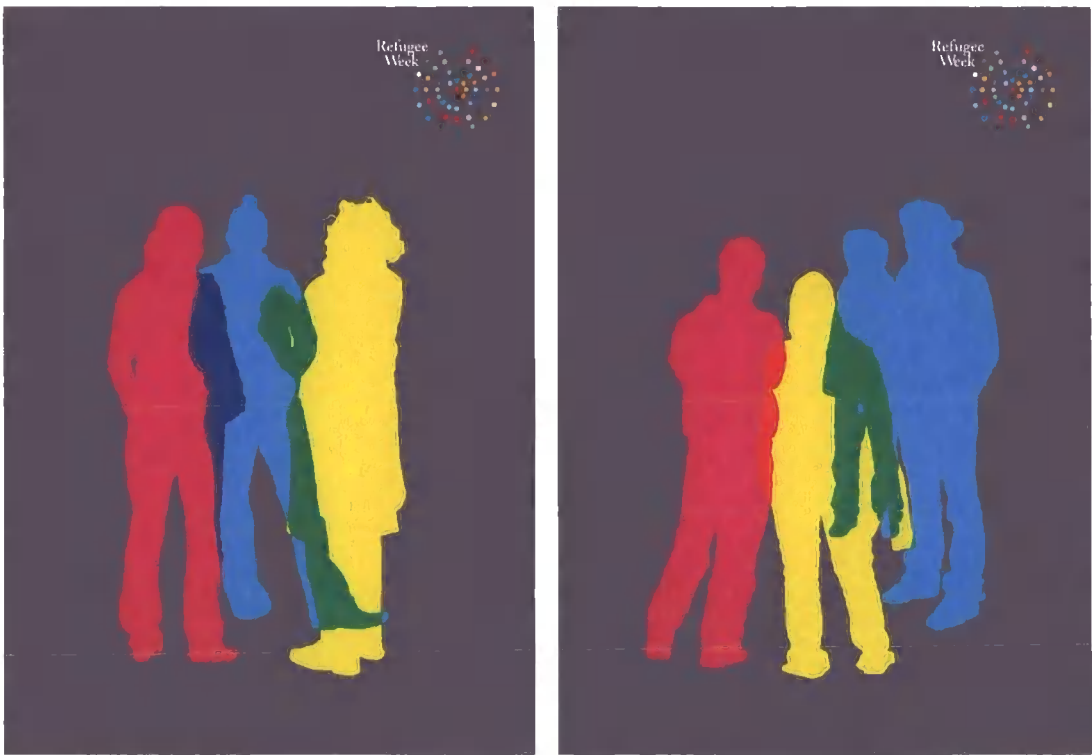
Figure 4.7. Refugee Week Promotional Posters (Source: The Refugee Council).

Through presenting the city in this manner, Sheffield's vision of itself became one intimately tied into wider networks of deportation, human trafficking, far flung conflicts and government decisions. Sheffield became hardwired into a new spatial geography of what Nyers (2003, p.1070) describes as a 'deportaspora', while the desire to consider these relational ties was presented by City of Sanctuary as 'an instigator for a re-examintion of responsibilities closer to home' (Malpass *et al.* 2007, p.634). The campaign thus 'prised open a more relational construction of place, developing identity around external relations of responsibility and justice' (ibid, p.642), whilst also casting that consideration inwards to the relations of (in)justice at play within the city. Thus whilst these connections and ties

were highlighted as a means to allow individuals to consider the exclusions and connections which perpetuated their current positions, they were also cast outwards, as a means of approaching Sheffield's role within a national framework of deportation, detention and 'compassionate repression' (Fassin 2005).

Extending Connectivity

In our interview, Craig summed up much of City of Sanctuary's relational re-imagining of Sheffield through highlighting not only how the city might become proud of its response to asylum, but also how the city might have a far wider impact within the spatial politics of asylum more generally. I asked him what he thought the benefits for Sheffield would be of becoming a 'city of sanctuary';

> Well, I suppose if you mean at the level of totally one hundred percent successful, in which Sheffield was nationally known as a place which promoted itself in this way, or was seen as a model of good practice in asylum and so on. Well I think it would benefit in a number of ways, I think it would benefit the city in terms of its sense of self image and pride and its identity, because I think something like that a lot of people could be actually supportive of the idea and it can give a sense of real, you know, pride in the city...and then I think the benefits really are national potentially because other cities could see that Sheffield is leading the way on this and it could be an incentive to them to try to work towards that model or in that direction as well, and in that way potentially it could influence the sort of the national debate and discourse around asylum (Craig Interview, 2006).

Craig here foresees the success of the movement, and its ability to spread to other cities across the UK, and in this suggests that the idea of this movement might come to influence the macropolitics of national debates. In each of the cities to which the movement has spread it has been impressed upon campaigners that this has to be a grassroots movement attuned to the particular context of each city, thus those diverse influences that came together within Sheffield and which continue to define the city will differ in other places. However, what is retained of this relational outlook is its focus upon developing a sense of responsibility not only to those relations within the city, but also those which flow beyond it. Here we are returned to the micropolitics at the heart of this movement as being about the slow alteration of thought, affect and mood, concerns put forward by Inderjit when attempting to summarise the values of a City of Sanctuary;

In the end it's about being good neighbours, but I want to go a bit further than being good neighbours, you know a neighbour is somebody you know, who lives around the corner, next door, across the street, so it is important to encourage good relationships across neighbours but we also live in a culture in which you're advised to be careful of the stranger. Because strangers are drawn in dark outlines they're seen as dangerous and you shouldn't have anything to do with them...but I would talk about strangers in the Biblical sense of the word, there a stranger is someone who is an outsider, a stranger is someone who is different from you...so a stranger is someone who we don't particularly want to be with, yes love your neighbour but people wouldn't say love the stranger, but I think sanctuary is about seeing in the stranger someone who is part of you (Inderjit Interview, 2007).

The relational sense of 'seeing in the stranger someone who is part of you' is clear here, for the city of sanctuary would be one in which, as I have suggested, the city itself is created through the relational connections and networks of selves and strangers, proximate and distant in a continuing negotiation of propinquity. However, there is also a wider sense of relational ethos here, for what Inderjit and Craig gesture towards in their accounts is 'a stance in relation to the world...an openness to a wider engagement with the world; an outwardlookingness', a stance of 'throwing oneself into space' (Massey 2006, p.93). Thus while City of Sanctuary is undoubtedly about re-imagining the city as a welcoming space, it is also about developing an ethos of responsibility towards those networks and relations which extend beyond the city, be they to the nation and its asylum debates as Craig suggests, or to those diverse, and possibly distant, strangers that Inderjit places within his account of sanctuary. It is here that we get a sense of that 'politics of connectivity' which Amin (2004b) argues must accompany the negotiations of spatial propinquity, for it is not enough as a city of sanctuary to simply attempt to welcome those who arrive, rather such an ethos is also about actively attempting to rework and contest the political situations through which the current politics of asylum works. A second, relational virtue of political responsibility to those relations beyond the bounds of place is therefore also required here.

Inspiring Political Responsibility

From a relational perspective Massey (2007, p.179) argues that we have often focused on the responsibilities attendant to 'the strangers within the gate', something which City of Sanctuary certainly does, however we must also consider those 'relations that run *outwards*,

the wider geographies through which identities are constituted. The strangers that remain without the gates' (ibid, original emphasis). Here asylum might be thought of as not simply a spatial relation to those multiple differences and individuals within the city, but also a relation to the very networks, narratives and spaces which construct Sheffield's position within the politics of asylum. A relational responsibility thus derives from Sheffield's position, 'it derives from our constitutive relations with others...a responsibility that has the characteristic of extension implies that it is not restricted to the immediate or local' (Massey 2006, p.93). Here Massey draws upon the work of Gatens and Lloyd (1999) who argue that identity is inherently relational and connected to wider senses of collective identification, to founding 'others' both past and present. For Gatens and Lloyd (1999) this process of identification confers a series of relational and extensive responsibilities, for they argue that we should not only feel responsible for our individual relations to others, but also for the social relations which define and delimit the identities of these collectives we are part of. Thus;

> 'The feeling of belonging to this or that family, clan or nation, confers upon us both benefits and burdens or obligations. One of these obligations is to take responsibility in the present for the manner in which one's constitutive identity harms, excludes or silences others' (ibid, p.143).

Gatens and Lloyd conceive of a responsibility which is both relational in its grounding within processes of ongoing identification and extensive in its desire to consider responsibilities beyond the immediate present. It is these two strands of thought which Massey (2004, p.16) takes forward to call for a spatially extensive sense of responsibility, arguing that we are 'responsible to areas beyond the bounds of place not because of what we have done, but because of what we are'. The continuing creation of Sheffield as a city of multiple demands, narratives and networks therefore calls for an ability to negotiate and respond to those extensive relations that move outwards from the city and which take some aspect of Sheffield with them. It is this sense of 'outwardlookingness' which Malpass et al. (2007) argue is instilled into relations around consumption through the Fair-trade movement. Through the concern for an impact beyond the city, on the national scale, and for distant others in promoting a reconsideration of the way individuals think about both asylum seekers themselves and the relational position of urban sanctuary as an ideal, City

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of Sanctuary also attempt to develop a re-framing of Sheffield as, at the very least, aware of its broader role (and responsibilities) within the spatial politics of asylum.

City of Sanctuary are therefore concerned to promote a virtue of spatially extensive political responsibility to work alongside that critical responsiveness to internal multiplicity noted earlier. Young (2003; 2004) elaborates such a sense of responsibility through a consideration of how our actions are implicated within a series of structures that directly and indirectly impact upon others. Thus;

> 'I share responsibility with the many others who also contribute by their actions to the processes that connect us. Just because I cannot disentangle my particular actions from the complex process in which some people are made particularly vulnerable to deprivation or domination, to identify which specific actions of mine affect which specific individuals in particular ways, I have a relation of responsibility to the process itself' (Young 2004, p.372; see also Allen 2008).

For Young (2004) simply being a part of Sheffield poses a series of responsibilities to those 'others' who contribute to this city, near and distant, and City of Sanctuary presents one means through which to work on those relations, to alter and challenge them in different ways. The movement was therefore not simply calling for an attitude change to actions within Sheffield, but also to re-consider ones actions beyond the city, through the groups links to a wide range of national asylum organisations. Thus supporters and others were encouraged to sign petitions against deportations, to demonstrate against the removal of ESOL classes for asylum seekers and to become politically active within campaigns both within Sheffield and beyond it. Young (2004, p.378) argues that a sense of political responsibility seeks to question 'the background conditions that ascriptions of blame or fault assume as normal', while Massey (2006, p.94, original emphasis) similarly states that 'in the case of political responsibility for *present* relations, it is precisely often 'normality' itself that must be challenged', and the spirit of contestation which City of Sanctuary propose poses such a challenge to both normal attitudes to asylum, and normal presentations of asylum as a political issue. In presenting the idea, and the opportunity, of a different view of asylum, City of Sanctuary crucially question the 'normality' of present relations of responsibility towards asylum seekers. It asks that the citizens of Sheffield take account of those relations they enter into through the city, to a national politics of detention,

dispersal and deportation to repressive regimes, and begins to pose the question of how one can begin to respond to this. A city of sanctuary thus poses the question of our position as a citizen, and calls us to account through a sense of political responsibility to others for the injustices and exclusions through which 'our' political rights are asserted (Diken and Laustsen 2002; Fassin 2005; Fekete 2005).

The city of sanctuary I have sketched throughout these first two accounts has therefore been one of a progressive micropolitical drive to address the ethical sensibilities through which asylum is constructed as a political issue. It has been a project to present an alternative mode of thought within the city. While the movement itself is still within its infancy I think we can note two key virtues which it has attempted to instil within Sheffield. The first of these was an inwardly orientated 'critical responsiveness' to political attempts to assert the rights of asylum seekers, while the second presented an outward looking 'political responsibility' to those relations which constitute Sheffield. Both of these virtues were tied together in a sense of what it meant to be a city of sanctuary, as both are crucial to developing an emergent 'politics of becoming' for asylum seekers more widely, through opening an appreciation of 'our' responsibilities as citizens. City of Sanctuary is about an ethos, about a mode of thought rather than a series of pragmatic and normative considerations, about building a sense of the plural responsibilities inherent in urban citizenship. It is therefore 'an engaged attempt to rearticulate relations. A way of encouraging a politics, and even more fundamentally a sensibility, that is outward-looking. A different kind of geographical imagination' (Massey 2007, p.206).

Responsible, All Too Responsible

An outward looking geographical imagination of embedded and extensive responsibilities is certainly an attractive model, and one which might adequately fit much of the work of City of Sanctuary at present, yet, it is important to note a number of tensions and failures within this area of thought, for in considering how City of Sanctuary might offer a different approach to the city and to asylum, we must address the considerable political questions its relational ethical stance leaves open. The first of these emerges through the particular nature of this form of political imagining around asylum and the opposition that arises on this issue. The recasting of Sheffield as a 'city of sanctuary' was by no means without

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contest or opposition, especially from those who felt that this would encourage asylum seekers to the city, a fear which prompted the council to state that this 'is not about encouraging more asylum-seekers to come to Sheffield – most asylum-seekers don't have any choice about where they live' (Sheffield City Council 2007a). However, such fears persisted and their claims might be summed up in an anonymous letter sent to *The Sheffield Star* in response to the council's decision to sign up to the City of Sanctuary movement. This letter, written in response to a letter suggesting that the experience of Sheffield's floods in July 2007 might encourage people to help refugees, and titled 'Priority should be Britain's own people', reads;

> [Anon]'s letter made me seethe. I wonder if he has opened his house up to asylum seekers and the like. Perhaps all the flood victims could go to Spain and get free housing, benefits etc. Don't think so.
> The priority of any government is to its own people. Why does he think asylum seekers bypass other countries? (*The Sheffield Star*, 28/07/07).

For this respondent the extended sense of responsibility which City of Sanctuary call for is something to be avoided, in the name instead of a territorialized prioritisation of Britain, and Sheffield's, 'own people'. The relational rethinking of Sheffield advocated by the City of Sanctuary movement is explicitly rejected in favour of the (re)assertion of a national logic of territorialized prioritisation and concern (Morley 2000; Smith 1998). It is for precisely this reason that asylum presents a good case for considering the issues that arise from advocating a relational spatial politics of interconnected networks of concern and responsibility, for asylum awakens a series of political challenges which an issue such as Fairtrade does not. Thus while Malpass *et al.* (2007) highlight the inculcation of fairtradeness into a range of spaces within the city through consumption, such that people 'took part' in fair trade without consciously doing so, the opposition to the City of Sanctuary movement present in Sheffield suggests we are dealing with very different, and very particular, political responsibilities here. While a city may present itself as holding responsibilities to relations 'beyond place' in accounts of trade reasonably successfully, it is far more problematic, and politically challenging, to do so in terms of asylum. Part of the reason for this, as I argued in Chapter One, is that asylum is an issue which is hardwired into a series of political and imaginary constructions over space and territory which cut to the core of relational thinking as a challenge to previous notions of space.

Arguing for the relational responsibilities of a city towards asylum seekers, both near and distant, is therefore a case which highlights the difficulties of politically enacting a spatially extensive sense of ethics for a number of reasons. Firstly, as seen through the opposition to asylum viewed in this manner, for many people in Sheffield a sense of responsibility beyond the city, could not be reconciled with the demands of those within the city. Thus May *et al.* (2007, p.164) argue that while Massey's spatial extension of responsibility beyond the city is useful in highlighting the obligations the city holds to distant others, 'it is less useful in helping to think through the rather more difficult question of how to address the needs of those previously distant others now 'here', without undermining the equally pressing needs of other[s]...many of whom were once migrants'. The question of how a responsibility towards distant others might be reconciled with the demands of internal and constitutive heterogeneity is therefore clear in the opposition which City of Sanctuary have faced. Put simply, the demands of those within Sheffield are presented as taking precedence over the city's outward looking responsibilities. However, in response, I would argue that a relational politics suggests that it is no longer possible, or indeed desirable, to separate the interrelated political concerns of propinquity and connectivity. 'Outwardlookingness' is an orientation to living with difference *and* everyday connectivity and as such does not pose a matter of opposing partiality to impartiality within ethical practice, rather this dual orientation necessitates a 'throwing oneself into space; into an awareness of the planet-wide configuration of trajectories, lives, practices...into which we are set and through which we are made. With this wider awareness, it is then possible to prioritise' (Massey 2006, p.93).

The priorities of living with difference, of local negotiations, have to be made in the sense that May *et al.* (2007) suggest, however such priorities arise through a broader consideration of both internal and external responsibilities, as these moments of propinquity are forever 'inflected by, and additional to, other spaces of affiliation and obligation' (Amin 2007b, p.107). Concerns of partiality, of the stresses of internal heterogeneity, may then be negotiated from a position focused upon both these demands and how such demands may impact other sites of responsibility. This is not to argue that there will not be, or indeed never should be, any sense of partiality in these decisions and responses, naturally at times Sheffield's bounded account of itself and its needs must come first, but it is to suggest that such partiality should not be assumed, nor should it be

presented as a given. The grounds of demands, both 'local' and 'distant', should be open to contestation and negotiation in equal measure, for the challenge of a relational account of spatial politics is not to undermine the claims of those strangers 'within' the city, but to cast into question the logics through which some may claim the city as unquestionably 'ours'. The relational ethos of City of Sanctuary is therefore one in which the demands of proximity and distance are negotiated through the city itself, that ethical responsibility to others, near and distant, which the movement promotes is therefore wedded to an account of the city as a space of continuing and constructive negotiation, agonism and becoming as I suggested in Chapter One. If the city can be viewed as such a generative space of politics, contestation and encounter, between networks, boundaries and different spaces and powers (Allen and Cochrane 2007), then a movement such as City of Sanctuary can hope to add a responsibility beyond place to this mixture of influences, ideas and negotiations. City of Sanctuary viewed as such becomes not simply a movement to influence attitudes, but also a movement to impact upon the negotiations of space which make the city.

However, the sense of political responsibility and influence articulated through a relational account of City of Sanctuary throws up a further set of challenges, for there is a pressing demand here, seen through the negotiations of the city outlined above, for this kind of responsibility and spatial imagining to become a politically engaged influence, for while presenting an outwardlooking orientation to the world may be attractive, it risks becoming a cosmopolitan luxury if it is not translated into political practice (Popke 2007; Beck and Sznaider 2006). A relational spatial politics of 'outwardlookingness' may thus be anything but 'progressive' as May (1996) notes in relation to gentrified attitudes which view the relational connections of place as a means to experience 'other' cultures and 'other' places as exotic, sanitised visions of diversity (see Huggan 2001; Parker 2000). Without a political drive there is a danger that such attitudes might present nothing better than a vision of 'boutique multiculturalism' (Fish 1997) through which the city views difference within prescribed limits of tolerance and that sense of 'pride' articulated through the City of Sanctuary movement is translated into nothing more than the ability to feel 'just' whilst keeping others at arms length (Žižek 1999, 2008).

Alongside such a concern to translate these ethical orientations into political practice within Sheffield, emerges a final challenge which asylum casts for relational accounts of

responsibility. As I have argued, considering the city as a relational product of outward and inward flows to which one is, in some way, responsible, casts a series of demands upon the city to prioritise, and to negotiate, however, there is a danger here of an ethical overload for the city, of a sense of demands which not only never end, but which multiply. In considering Levinas' account of the infinite and irreducible responsibility one holds towards others noted in Chapter Three, Critchley (2007, p.67) asks; '[d]oesn't Levinas leave us in a situation of sheer ethical overload where I must be responsible even for my persecutor, and where the more I am just the more I am guilty', and in calling for a responsibility to all those connections made through the city might we not also suggest the same of a relational politics of responsibility? To clarify, there is a sense of distinction and a will to prioritise here, indeed Massey (2007) suggests that we prioritise with a relational orientation in mind, however there exists here an uncertainty about how such decisions are made, how this orientation is translated practically, and effectively, into a political response. The danger of this uncertainty in the case of asylum, far more so than in other relational contexts such as Fair Trade, is that of a purely tolerant, indifferent response which effects very little real change. Viewing City of Sanctuary as an 'outwardlooking' spatial orientation is therefore an attractive ethical gesture, but one which may do little to challenge the political exclusions of asylum seekers in Sheffield noted in Chapter Three. I want to now consider a third reading of the work of City of Sanctuary which extends these concerns.

The Post-Politics of Consensus

My third reading of City of Sanctuary arises from a question which dogged me throughout my time in Sheffield, this was that while the movement had success, and achieved many of its stated aims, I found myself asking what difference this really made, to the city and to its politics. For as I have argued this kind of outward orientation may be ethically responsible, yet its political impact is far from clear. In order to consider this in more detail, I want to consider the work of Žižek (1999, 2000) and Badiou (2001, 2005) and their critique of a 'post-political' state of consensual politics associated with a 'new reign of ethics' (MacKenzie 2000). This position is based upon a particular account of the political itself, as an arena of necessary dissensus and contest. Such thought has most recently been sketched by Jacques Rancière (1995; 1999) for whom 'politics begins when those who have no share

begin to have one' (Rancière 1997, p.31). 'True politics' here is about contesting the prevailing logics through which individuals are assigned a (non)political place within the social, thus as Rancière (2001, p.19) argues '[p]olitical struggle is not a conflict between well defined interest groups; it is an opposition of logics that count the parties and parts of the community in different ways', and thus politics exists as 'a deviation from this normal order of things. It is this anomaly that is expressed in the nature of political subjects who are not social groups but rather forms of inscription of 'the (ac)count of the unaccounted-for'' (ibid, p.18). For Rancière (1999) it is the account of this group, the 'part with no part', around which politics itself is truly based, centred as it should be upon the 'very right to be heard and recognized as an equal participant in the debate' (Žižek 1998, p.989). Here the political represents a radical interruption into the normalized activity of previous social orders, and occurs at moments in which 'a space for contestatory speech is opened up' (Shapiro 2001, p.93). Thus politics 'makes an appearance in the form of events in which people become articulate political subjects by resisting structures of incommensurability that have denied them speaking parts within the order' (ibid). Politics occurs at points where the previously held order is thrown into doubt and an alternative perception of political subjectivities, of who can and cannot be heard is proposed, thus here 'the political...is a form of aesthetics, in that it produces a rearrangement of social reality for a renewed perception, where bodies and voices that were neither seen nor heard can be included in the communicative context' (Deranty 2003, p.8; Dikeç 2005).

From this account of the political I want to draw two main dimensions which might be used to consider the political nature of the City of Sanctuary movement. The first of these is that any political struggles are centrally based around disagreement, contestation and dispute, thus as Rancière (2001, p.24, original emphasis) observes;

> 'The essence of politics is *dissensus*. Dissensus is not the confrontation between interests or opinions. It is the manifestation of a distance of the sensible from itself. Politics makes visible that which had no reason to be seen, it lodges one world into another'

Political thinking must represent not only an interruption but a 'rupture with the dominant state of things...Political thinking demands a *displacement*' (Badiou 2003b, p.82-83, original emphasis). Žižek, Badiou and Rancière all suggest that it is exactly this sense of

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political antagonism, choice and dissensus which has been eradicated from contemporary political discourse as 'the entire history of European political thought is ultimately nothing but a series of disavowals of the political moment, of the proper logic of political antagonism' (Žižek 1998, p.991), through which the 'modern state aims solely at fulfilling certain functions, or at crafting a consensus of opinion' (Badiou 2003b, p.73). Contemporary politics for these writers represents simply the perpetuation of a series of consensual modes of thought which deny political choices, and deny political means to oppose this seemingly rational deliberative model (Mouffe 2000). Žižek (1998) thus argues that today we witness an assertive 'postpolitics' in which conflict and antagonism are replaced by a collaboration of technocrats and liberal multiculturalists who seek only political compromises and as such offer only limited and strictly defined choices to their electorates.[4]

If politics designates such a form of dissensus and the assertion of claims to speech and visibility, then Rancière (1997) argues it represents a rare event, an eruptive moment. Žižek (1998, p.1006) takes this slightly further to suggest that politics itself must always contain a revolutionary, and thus rare, dimension, for 'politics proper designates the moment at which a particular demand is not simply part of the negotiation of interests but aims at something more, that is, starts to function as the metaphoric condensation of the global restructuring of the entire social space'. Politics for Žižek is therefore articulated through fleeting and disruptive ethico-political 'acts' which not only question the prevailing logics of consensus, but also radically reform this political present, thus 'the political act (intervention) proper is not simply something that works well within the framework of existing relations, but something that *changes the very framework that determines how things work*' (Žižek 1999, p.199, original emphasis). The political itself is thereby structured around these moments of radical, dissensual, articulations of interests which restructure the coordinates of the political, they articulate the true nature of politics as a contestable terrain of conflict and seek to alter present logics of division, consensus and inequality. From this account the 'folly of the times is the wish to use consensus to cure the

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[4] A point made by Žižek (2006) in reference to both the French vote on the European constitution and the British elections of 2005 where 'in spite of the growing unpopularity of Tony Blair, there is no way for this discontent to find a politically effective expression' (p.568).

diseases of consensus. What we must do instead is repoliticize conflicts' (Rancière 1995, p.106).

A Sanctuary for the Same

I want to now consider this form of political theory in relation to the work of City of Sanctuary already outlined, and I do so along two intersecting axes, firstly, the movement's political import, and secondly, its positioning as an organisation of ethical demand. In the first case I fear that City of Sanctuary might be seen as a political means to perpetuate, and sustain, that consensual, tolerant politics of rational deliberation within the city which Žižek (2008) so opposes. Žižek (2004, p.508, original emphasis) argues that there are 'two topics that determine today's liberal tolerant attitude toward Others: the respect of Otherness, openness toward it, *and* the obsessive fear of harassment – in short, the Other is okay insofar as its presence is not intrusive, insofar as the Other is not really Other'. City of Sanctuary would thus be seen as a movement which allowed politics within Sheffield to maintain this 'liberal tolerant attitude' towards asylum seekers as it does not challenge the coordinates of a situation through which asylum seekers are dealt with in the city. City of Sanctuary never set out to determine different material conditions, rather it set out to change attitudes towards others, yet we might argue that this feeds precisely into that 'post-political' malaise of consensus that allows for the denial of properly political moments of transformation. Through this lens Sheffield City Council's decision to declare itself a 'city of sanctuary' not only changed very little in a material sense, rights, housing, benefits and employment opportunities were not radically altered in doing so, but also allowed the council to perpetuate a vision of itself as moral, virtuous and doing 'all that it can' for asylum seekers. The properly political act here would thus not have been to get the council to support this movement, for this works to a consensual mode of politics, but rather to radically challenge the council in political acts of opposition which seek to reclassify and repoliticise the position of asylum seekers within the city. It would be that revolutionary 'act' of dissensus that came to condition future relations to asylum, not simply attempting to modify those relations around the edges as the current movement does, but rather asserting in their place a different relation, one of radical and universal equality.

Clearly this would not be an easy task, and those in Sheffield would no doubt point to the national framework of highly restrictive asylum legislation within which they work as a critical factor of constraint. However, throughout my time in Sheffield, working with different charity volunteers and attending campaign meetings of various forms, it became clear to me that there was a political dissatisfaction within the city over its relations to this national political framework on asylum, as the following extract from my research diary illustrates;

> This evening I attended the AGM of the charity ASSIST and alongside the normal details of budgets and reports there are a number of speeches given by volunteers, councillors and supporters. There appeared to be two common themes across these talks, the first was a fear that the public were becoming desensitized to the continuing dehumanization and exclusion of asylum seekers as principles were 'being eroded'. The second was that it was felt that individuals may be welcoming but the state, and society more broadly, were not. All too often it was noted that MPs would be willing to support an individual, but not to make a statement on asylum as a moral issue more generally. Support was therefore always limited and for many of the speakers as long as this was the case not much 'real change' would be seen (Research Diary, 16th March 2007).

What is clear here is a sense of a political, and personal, frustration which is embodied through the very forms of consensual politics, deliberation and limitation which Žižek (1999) defines as the 'post-political'. Politics and politicians are cast as 'only doing so much', never fully challenging the status quo of a government and opposition which share many aspects of asylum policy. Politics, at least in the sense outlined above, is absent in these accounts. While City of Sanctuary was widely supported in this audience there was still a questioning of its political impact, what changes it could really effect, and whether it simply represented an opportunity for the council to buy into a sense of morality. I would suggest therefore that for this audience, and for Žižek, City of Sanctuary did not go far enough, it was not 'political' enough. Rather, the truly political would have been to challenge the council to redefine its relation to asylum seekers, to stand by an assertion that within the city 'no one is illegal' and that residency alone is enough to guarantee protection, for this would instill a moment of equality which Badiou (2005, p.98) argues is the foundation of any ideal, or practice, of justice. Such a move would certainly make Sheffield stand out, would cast it outside the normal politics of asylum within the UK and it is precisely such a gesture of disruption and interruption which challenges the political

coordinates of a national spatial politics of asylum. What such a political gesture may return us to is that original sense of a 'city of refuge' itself which Derrida (2001a, p.8) argues is founded on the autonomy of the polity, on the ability to decide for oneself a politics of welcome. This would be that 'other politics of the city' which Derrida seeks and would in turn represent a radical break from that which came before. Yet Sheffield's City of Sanctuary does not meet this political promise, it is precisely not that dissensual and eruptive moment of radical change which some would wish for. It is rather a project of ethics and I now wish to consider how this political reading might view such an ethical stance.

An Ethical Impasse

While Žižek may object to the political positioning of City of Sanctuary, the movement's position as a series of ethical demands for responsibility and civic virtue might also be seen to perpetuate this state of post-political consensus. Thus both Badiou (2001) and Žižek (2001) attack that strain of ethics which calls for an irreducible respect for alterity associated with Levinas and Derrida. Here the ethics of difference is criticized for asserting and continuing a gap between ethics and politics in the sense of 'some presupposed ethical demand/norm that precedes and sustains every concrete political intervention which is never able fully to live up to it' (Žižek 2001, p.159). What such a division poses for them is a relegation of 'politics to the domain of *doxa*, of pragmatic considerations and compromises which always and by definition fall short of the unconditional ethical demand' (Žižek 2001, p.1). Badiou thus claims that ethics 'have now come to displace politics, as a bogus humanitarian ideology of victimage, otherness and 'human rights' thrusts aside collective political projects' (Eagleton 2001, p.2). Those truly political gestures which Žižek and Badiou argue for are subsumed within a discourse in which 'the impasse of a responsibility to impossibly overwhelming (and impossibly incommensurable) obligations' (Hallward 2001, p.xxvi), means that the grounds for any finite, dissensual and transformative political action is undermined, as there is an unwillingness to take responsibility for political actions and their consequences in the present. Thus for Žižek (2001b, p.83, original emphasis);

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'The deconstructionist ethical edifice is based on the impossibility of the act: the act never happens, it is *impossible for it to occur*, it is always deferred, about to come, there is forever the gap that separates the impossible fullness of the Act from the limited dimension of our contingent pragmatic intervention (say, the unconditional ethical demand of the Other from the pragmatic political intervention with which we answer it)'.

Within this reading of City of Sanctuary its nature as an ethical demand for responsibility may be seen to sustain a tolerant consensual view. From this viewpoint what is demanded through City of Sanctuary is a tolerant response of responsibility and reflection upon one's own position within Sheffield and the broader politics of asylum, yet this does not amount to a more sustained demand to politically act, to effect change or to transform the present. Indeed, for Badiou (2001) it is precisely the fact that these demands are seen as impossible to fully meet which means that action is *not* taken in the present. What this ethical stance allows is the continuation of a politics of asylum which may be repressive and inhospitable, for by signing up to support a movement which calls us to responsibility as an abstract and unfulfillable response to others, we are able to largely 'carry on as normal', safe in the knowledge that the council is also now 'responsible' in the same way, without more fully addressing either our own political positions or engaging in the hard work of pursuing transformative acts which would disrupt both the city's politics, and, perhaps as importantly, our own lives.

From this position City of Sanctuary may be seen to have made very little impact on the politics of Sheffield. Certainly it has so far inspired no great shifts in the city's response to asylum seekers in terms of material conditions, service provisions or benefit rights, all things that a politically transformative act of urban sanctuary would surely target. In this sense the movement has acted to maintain the present state of the city through an ethical discourse of attitudinal focus which has failed to really challenge individuals to call for a stronger political response to the repression of asylum seekers. However, while Žižek and Badiou might seek in its place a more revolutionary political movement, in response I want to return to the two central aspects of the City of Sanctuary movement articulated above, its micropolitical methods and its concern to imbue space with responsibility, to suggest that City of Sanctuary might indeed offer a limited, but important, political opposition to visions of domopolitics and exclusion in relation to asylum seekers.

The (Necessary) Conditions of Politics

Firstly then, I wish to suggest that if we return to a sense of the micropolitical nature of City of Sanctuary's work outlined earlier through the pluralist accounts of Connolly, then we can view the work of City of Sanctuary as laying the very foundations, the conditions of possibility, for properly political acts. These may not be the revolutionary ruptures which Badiou (2005) calls for, but they do nonetheless attempt to enact a politics of radical equality within the present. I begin by considering how the anti-deportation movement studied by Nyers (2003) may reflect the politics of dissensus which Rancière (1999) pursues, before suggesting how City of Sanctuary may act to work alongside, and further, such a politics.

Nyers (2003) examines the politics of the anti-deportation movement within Canada as an example of Rancière's (2001) politics of 'the part of no part' within the social wherein the political is defined by the act of speech and a legitimate voice within the commons. Thus as Nyers (2003, p.1078) writes the 'first target of talking-subjects is, therefore, always speech, political speech. Our received traditions of politics tell us that political speech is an attribute belonging to the realm of citizenship' and as such foreigners 'have to interrupt the dominant political (speaking) order not just to be heard, but to be recognized as a speaking being as such' (ibid). Nyers (2003) takes such a struggle for speech and recognition as the starting point to examine movements which campaign against asylum deportations, and argues that the demonstrations, protests and disruptive tactics these groups employ work precisely as a form of political 'interruption'. As Nyers (2003, p.1089, original emphasis) argues;

> 'When speechless victims begin to speak about the politics of protection, this has the effect of putting the political into question. This is what makes 'no one is illegal' such a radical proclamation. Our received traditions of the political *require* that some human beings be illegal. To say that no human is illegal is to call into question the entire architecture of sovereignty, all its borders, locks and doors, internal hierarchies, etc'.

The act of anti-deportation opposition by asylum seekers works as a political act, for it throws into doubt the whole edifice of political normality previously in place, the political consensus of deportation is faced with a radical dissensus which denies the distinction

between 'legal' and 'illegal' immigrants. What Nyers (2003) presents is therefore an account of a 'properly' political act within the present, which interrupts the normal conditions of a consensual politics in order to assert the right to speech of those outside the social order. In this sense Nyers (2003) presents that form of a political act which I have so far argued City of Sanctuary does not, and this act challenges the very conditions upon which those national narratives of domopolitics noted in Chapter Two are constructed.

However, I think it would be too easy to accept this account on face value alone, for it places too great a burden on this political act. The fundament of the political and ethical act as Žižek (1998) views it is that it arises from a context which may only be understood retroactively, and instantaneously changes the conditions of its presence. It presents an unrepeatable moment of transformation. However, the work of anti-deportation groups do not meet this account of radical rupture, certainly they assert a political moment of dissensual interruption following Rancière (1999), through disrupting office practices, delaying flights and throwing 'normal' state practices into question, but they do so only gradually, only through a myriad of small acts, demonstrations, emails, faxes and phone calls which build a critical weight of support and dissensus behind them. The political gestures of anti-deportation would therefore far more adequately present a model of a 'politics of becoming' (Connolly 1999a) through which micropolitical progress is made towards these moments of political rupture. Here dissensual political intent may be carried forward on the back of prosaic political practices of agonism which allow such movements to exist in the first place. It is here that the role of City of Sanctuary as a political movement emerges, for its micropolitical intent of holding the council to account, and of pushing forward civic virtues of critical responsiveness and political responsibility all contribute to a context in which these political interruptions can occur. Far from denying the political then, City of Sanctuary itself helps to condition the present from which such political acts may be seen to arise. The director of a regional refugee charity, Mark, made such a suggestion when discussing the political impact and intent of the movement;

> City of Sanctuary are going to that smaller scale and recognising that the banner and the public signing is important, but it has to go hand in hand with influencing key strategies and city council bodies and policies. The problem people have in Sheffield at the moment is that we have no MP who will champion that cause, some of the MPs are sympathetic in private. Often

people are very sympathetic to causes but are not willing to lead them or to make a stand on them and that's something which needs to be worked on, it may just take one MP to actually make a stand on these issues but it won't be an easy path (Mark Interview, 2006).

In Mark's account the work of City of Sanctuary is not simply to influence a culture of welcome, but also to lay the foundations for political alteration. Mark presents City of Sanctuary as potentially playing a key role within the 'politics of becoming' of asylum seekers within Sheffield. To recall Connolly's (2002) argument, the very focus of micropolitics is to effect change within wider, macropolitical, modes of thought and practice, the attitudinal resonances of micropolitics are therefore wasted if they do not contribute, in some small way, to a wider agenda of change. In the case of City of Sanctuary, these practices of cultural change are orientated towards conditioning future responses to asylum which are politically different to those of the present. In response to Žižek and Badiou, Mouffe (2005, p.33) argues that 'the effective way to challenge power relations, [is] not on the mode of an abstract negation but...through a process of disarticulation of existing practices and creation of new discourses and institutions', and City of Sanctuary viewed in this manner represents exactly this attempt to articulate a new discourse on asylum within Sheffield.

Political Acts and Political Spaces

Representing the 'truly' political as purely a revolutionary and interruptive event as Žižek (2004) does therefore has two main consequences for our understanding of the political nature of City of Sanctuary. The first of these is that tying the political so firmly to rare and revolutionary events works to ignore the myriad of events, acts and gestures which perform a minor politics of dissensus in everyday life. These are acts which fit neither the revolutionary framing of the 'truly political act' (Žižek 2004), nor the reproduction of the post-political (Žižek 1999). What is missing here is therefore an appreciation of the political as a broader sphere of possible acts and events, acts which lie between these categories and neither redefine the social itself nor reproduce the present. It is here, in this ambiguous category of a minor politics of resistance, that the work of City of Sanctuary, in gesturing towards a relational account of the city and an ethical account of the

responsibilities arising from this, is actualised. What I am arguing for is thus an appreciation that, as Critchley (2007, p.131) suggests;

> 'Politics is now and many. The massive structural dislocations of our times can invite pessimism…but they can also invite militancy and optimism, an invitation for our capacity of political invention and imagination, an invitation, finally, for our ethical commitment and political resistance'.

The work of City of Sanctuary is inventive in just this political vein. City of Sanctuary's methods represent one form of politics amid a range of others, and in opposing the incursion of national domopolitics into Sheffield, this array of political acts interlocks with other movements, other causes and other methods, both within and beyond the city. City of Sanctuary thus becomes one political actor within a far wider network of national, and international, political challenges to the present exclusions of asylum, such a network represents the possibility of a 'politics of becoming' and such a network nestles between a binary account of political rupture *or* post-politics, working on existing political modalities whilst envisioning the possibility of new relations to difference.

The second consequence of strictly defining the political in this fashion, is to undermine the creative relationship developed between space and politics within the account put forward by City of Sanctuary. While a relational reading of spatial politics holds a number of challenges as I suggested earlier, not least its openness to less than 'progressive' articulations (May 1996) and its need to be tied more firmly to political practices, it is this openness which also defines its political potential as I argued in Chapter Two. Massey (2005) argues that a vision of an open and potential politics must be built upon a concurrent account of space as the realm of possibility and multiplicity and it is here that City of Sanctuary might offer a political interjection into the orderly domopolitics of the city. The micropolitics of City of Sanctuary act to not only work on those negotiations of hospitality underway in the city, but the relational reading of the city and its responsibilities which the movement articulates also open space within the city for political moments of dissensus and difference. A city of sanctuary is one wherein connections to difference are foregrounded as we have seen, and in this gesture of connectivity space is opened for political interventions which respond to alterity. Dikeç (2005) thus notes that within Rancière's account of the political, dissensual politics arises through the creation of spaces of contest;

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'Rancière's politics is made possible by a multiplicity of political subjects configuring, transforming, appropriating space for the manifestation of dissensus...becoming political subjects in and through space...Disclosure in and through space...makes politics possible' (Dikeç 2005, p.181).

Space for Rancière becomes central to the disruption of the 'normal' order of the social, space becomes political through this disruption, and Massey's (2005) account of space as a site of becoming, as an open relation of possibility, allows us to view space as a relational coming together of stories, networks and connections, which may, or may not, produce such a disruptive politics. The openness and possibility of space, its need to be negotiated and traversed anew with each encounter, is precisely what allows it to be the domain of the political itself. Dikeç (2005, p.185) thus suggests that the political 'implies inauguration of space in and through which the very structuring principles of the community, which is always in the making, are put into question'. Following this line of thought, politics, like space itself, becomes a perpetual project of contestation, negotiation and examination as politics 'implies an ongoing confrontation, not a definite project that starts and comes to an end once an ideal space (and time) is constituted. It implies multiplicities of space and time' (ibid, p.185-186).

Accounting for City of Sanctuary in this manner therefore has two consequences, firstly, as I have argued, the movement's micropolitical work on attitudes within the city aims to influence the ongoing negotiations of hospitality towards difference in Sheffield and to a wider macropolitics of asylum beyond the city. Yet secondly, this political influence may be seen to arise as strongly from the very account of space given here. In promoting a sense of relational responsibilities for Sheffield, City of Sanctuary articulate an identity for the city associated with plurality, multiplicity and political possibility. Spaces here are presented as open, multiple and constantly becoming, made anew through the coming together of a multitude of elements, and in this presentation spaces for political interruption, dissensus and challenge can potentially be seen. Practically then, this account of space gives anti-deportation groups and others a vision of the city to work with, for in an open account of the responsibilities that arise from space as a 'meeting place' of diversity, there is considerable scope to question and challenge the political certainties of current forms of government and current modes of social order, and it is this questioning which

Rancière (1999) views as defining the political itself. The relational spatial imaginary of a City of Sanctuary therefore leaves open the possibilities of dissensual politics. In arguing for a relational account of the city and asylum, City of Sanctuary oppose the language of domopolitics and division which pattern national accounts of asylum, in its place, they suggest a site of responsibilities extended beyond the city, and the 'domo' of domopolitics. The decoupling of spatial proximity from political prominence here is therefore suggestive of a spatial imaginary which works to question and undermine primordial and assumed rights to space. In doing so, this relational account argues not only for the need to negotiate the juxtapositions and negotiations of 'propinquity' and 'connectivity' within everyday life from a perspective of 'outwardlookingness', but also for the need to create space, and keep space open, for agonistic and political challenges to the present (Mouffe 2000; Dikeç 2002). In Sheffield, such a relational account was put forward by City of Sanctuary and its political purchase, its potential, was in opening spaces and discussions that cast into doubt the assumed legitimacy of representing asylum as a form of urban domopolitics.

An Orientation to Sanctuary

City of Sanctuary does not pose a revolutionary political intent. It does not call for the dissolution of all borders, or the removal of all asylum controls. In these senses it does not politically offer that challenge to the very basis of the present which Žižek (2008) argues is demanded by contemporary politics. Rather, it seeks to present an account of space which is open, responsible and contested, an account which tries to avoid closing down political options and in doing so City of Sanctuary attempt to make possible a politics which challenges domopolitics. City of Sanctuary therefore creates what Critchley (2007, p.113, original emphasis) terms an 'interstitial distance'; 'this distance from the state is *within* the state, that is, within and upon the state's territory. It is…an internal distance that has to be opened from the inside'. It is within this distance that political possibilities lie, and from which moments of interruption and dissensus emerge, thus Critchley (ibid, p.114) claims that '[o]ne works within the state against the state in a political articulation that attempts to open a space of opposition' as 'resistance begins by occupying and controlling the terrain upon which one stands, where one lives, works, acts and thinks'. The City of Sanctuary movement points to an account of politics which, like space, is multiple, ongoing and situated, just as spaces must be approached anew through each encounter and engagement,

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so too must the political negotiations of asylum within the city, as notions of rights, ethics, positions and the partitioning of the social, are called into question, reasserted and redefined. Within Sheffield, City of Sanctuary provided just one case of this political confluence, simply one assemblage of multiple micropolitical modes of thought and engagement vying for attention, space and the right to be heard. The multiple manifestations of this politics means that it does not represent a radical break or distancing from the state, or from domopolitics itself as I argued in Chapter Three, however the importance of negotiating space as a relational product is in creating, perhaps fleetingly, spaces of opening, spaces of responsibility, and spaces through which the political play of contestation, dissensus, protest and resistance might be situated.

City of Sanctuary therefore challenges the partitioning of domopolitics precisely through redefining Sheffield as a space that is open to alternatives, to anti-deportation movements, to campaigns for rights and so on. City of Sanctuary takes that domopolitical account of filtering and categorisation through which we might tease out the most 'worthy' of newcomers, and places upon it a responsibility to all those who are filtered and to those flows and connections which bring them here, but it also implies, through an account of space which rejects the bounded decisionism of domopolitics, that a different politics is possible. In this sense City of Sanctuary represents 'a matter of showing how the space of the possible is far larger than the one we are assigned – that something else is possible' (Badiou 2001, p.115). In the following three chapters I want to examine in detail three spaces of asylum in the city, the drop-in centre, public space and the home, in order to suggest not only how different spacings of asylum create an experience of the city as noted in Chapter Two, but also what this 'something else' of politics might represent when viewed as a situational sense of ethically responding to asylum seekers through encountering spaces of asylum themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE

"JUST BEING THERE..."
THE PROSAIC PERFORMANCE OF ETHICS

'Ethics is closer to wisdom than to reason, closer to understanding what is good than to correctly adjudicating particular situations' (Varela 1999, p.3).

'Without silence, without the hiatus, which is not the absence of rules but the necessity of a leap at the moment of ethical, political, or juridical decision, we could simply unfold knowledge into a program or course of action. Nothing could make us more irresponsible; nothing could be more totalitarian' (Derrida 1999, p.117).

Following Chapter Three and Four's focus upon the discursive presentation of Sheffield as a city negotiating a range of responses to asylum, I want to now consider a number of prosaic spaces of asylum in order to examine in more detail the lived experiences of asylum seekers in the city. In this chapter I shall tell the story of an asylum-seeker drop-in centre named the Talking Shop.[1] Within recent geographical research there has been a resurgent interest in ideas, and in particular, in spaces of care (see Conradson 2003a; Parr 2003; Silk 2000). Notably both Conradson (2003b; 2003c) and Parr (1998; 2000) have examined drop-in centres as spaces within which particular forms of identity and subjectivity are made possible. For them they represent stages onto which alternative spatial and social performances may be brought to life, or given 'license' as Parr (2000) terms it. Following these concerns, Cloke *et al.* (2005) have studied the motivations behind spaces of care for homeless people, again displaying an interest in how practices of care are 'implicated in the production of particular social spaces' (Conradson 2003a, p.451). In this chapter I argue that the drop-in centre draws together not only practices of care and relationships into the active production and practice of social space, but also those discourses of asylum noted in

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[1] The 'Talking Shop' is a synonym for two drop-in centres, yet one which reflects the nature of the space and ethos of conversation and exchange on which it was built.

previous chapters, those micropolitics of sensibility seen through the work of City of Sanctuary, and a range of material arrangements, to produce a space of temporary and fleeting ethical emergence. This is a space of constant tension and contest between visions of what charity is and how it should work, mediated by a range of social expectations and materials, into which situational ethical responses to events rise to the surface, affect individuals, relations and dispositions and then dissipate once more. There is therefore a certain excessive, intangible nature to these engagements, and through both interview extracts and my own ethnographic experiences of working, living and performing within these spaces of care for ten months, I shall sketch just some of these multiple entanglements of space, ethics and sensibility, in order to begin the task of documenting spaces through which asylum is lived and in which ethical responses to difference arise.

The chapter thus proceeds in two halves. In the first I set out to examine the drop-in centre following the work of Conradson and Parr by focusing upon drop-in spaces as sites of giving space, time and oneself to others. I consider how The Talking Shop is structured around an idea of generosity, both from volunteers' and asylum seekers' accounts. I then move to question this logic of giving by considering the exclusions and power relations which are enacted through both the spatial layout of the drop-in centre, and the very relations of generously 'giving' examined earlier. The second half of the chapter expands on these insights to suggest that presenting drop-in space solely in this fashion, as a coherent space of encounter and exchange, acts to conceal a great deal of the ethical work which occurs here. I examine moments of responding to demands within this space as a resource through which to attend to McCormack's (2003) desire to extend the field of the ethical in which geographers might move, to encompass spaces, and relations, of affective potential. The Talking Shop here becomes a space through which to focus upon 'connective sensibilities as *processually enactive*, as styles and modes of performative moving and relating rather than as sets of codified rules' (McCormack 2003, p.489, original emphasis). I propose that The Talking Shop might be seen as an ethical testing ground for the development of 'know-how', of expertise, and of a generous sensibility of momentary judgement in the face of decisions which can never be fully known or prepared for (Anderson 2005). I begin though by briefly sketching the relations at its heart.

The Talking Shop

I feel myself tense up as I push the door open, it opens out onto a long, drab, corridor. At the end I can see a door left ajar, voices are emanating from this portal and, with no other idea where to go, I walk towards it. On the way I pass a table, some toilets, doors off to my right all closed, and a large painted sign reading 'Welcome' in an array of languages. I reach the door and as I slowly make my way across this threshold I'm hit by the lightness of the room, a large skylight dominates the ceiling and is filtering the November sunshine in shards across the tables. For a moment it's difficult to see, I have to pause, to re-focus my eyes and to re-orientate myself. In this moment of hiatus a woman approaches me and says "Welcome" (Research Diary, 3rd November 2006).

I return home after my first visit to The Talking Shop and struggle to note down all that went on in the two and a half hours I spent there. The chaos of the environment was at times overwhelming, as people came and went, stopped to chat, made tea and coffee, re-arranged tables and chairs, spoke, listened, and occasionally played the piano. I was left wondering, amidst this miasmic scene, how was I to document the conversations I had, how was I to take it all in? (Research Diary, 3rd November 2006).

Through a sustained period of attending The Talking Shop I came to realise, like McCormack (2003, 2004), that my work here was not necessarily to 'take it all in', to rigorously document every passing gesture, but rather to let things happen, to allow this space to perform itself, and to perform me. My role was to witness this eventful space through doing, through being there, interacting and engaging, for this alone would make me a useful, if not competent, volunteer. It is the partial accounts of such practice, of living here on a weekly basis, on which this chapter is based in seeking to do justice to this chaotic site of engagement.

The Talking Shop comprised of two linked drop-in centres for asylum seekers and refugees in the centre of Sheffield. The first of these ran on a Wednesday for two hours and was housed in a church hall, while the second was on a Friday for three hours, also housed in a church hall. Both of these centres were run solely by volunteers and were partially self-funded through fundraising and partially through the regional charity the Northern Refugee Centre (NRC), who hold overall control of the centres and the services they provide.[2] At

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[2] Funding for services such as The Talking Shop is increasingly precarious, as noted by Fyfe and Milligan (2003). Thus while both the government increasingly views charitable action as a key means of 'civic

both centres 'service users' were welcome to come and go as they pleased, as were volunteers. Both sites provided a kitchen in which tea, coffee and biscuits were provided free of charge, spread out across a counter which connected the kitchen space to that of the halls themselves (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). The halls were arranged around a series of small tables, normally with four to five chairs which were designed to facilitate small group discussions, conversations and meetings.
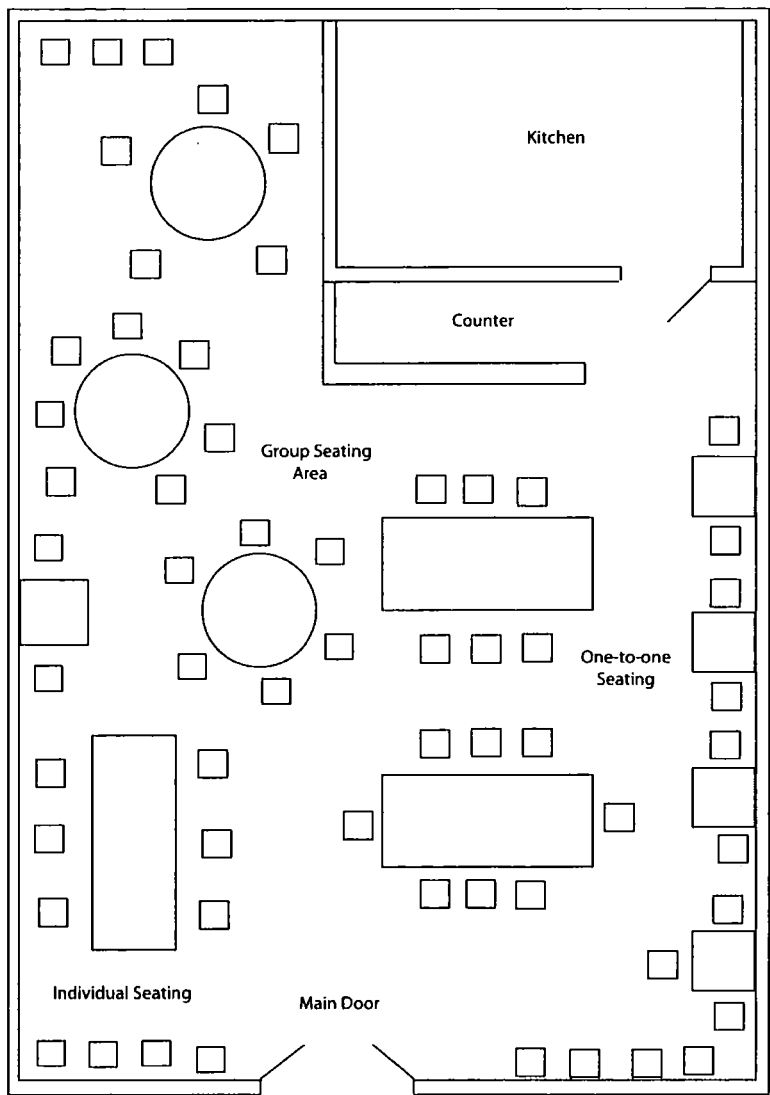
Figure 5.1. Plan of the Wednesday Talking Shop.

In my own experiences of attending The Talking Shop I found an array of different demands placed upon me, some wanted to talk about themselves and their past, some about me and mine, some wanted me to translate letters and newspaper articles, while others were happy to sit in silence. A significant difference between the Wednesday and Friday meetings was in their structure; the hall on Wednesdays not only held a space for conversation but also provided a series of service contacts as a drop-in advice centre. Adjoined to The Talking Shop was a waiting room where asylum seekers would wait to be seen by housing officials, employment advice services and the Salvation Army. The entrance to this space was mediated by an NRC worker who acted to signpost individuals to the service they required.

Figure 5.2. The Friday Talking Shop (Source: Author's Photograph).

Over my time at The Talking Shop it was clear that groups of regulars emerged and strong bonds of friendship developed through regular contact, between both asylum seekers and volunteers. Relationships were built upon, and around, the uncertainty of playing the

asylum 'waiting game'. Within the anxious isolation of awaiting a Home Office decision, The Talking Shop came to be viewed as a crucial resource for tackling isolation and for feeling a part of something. As Adil describes in the following interview extract;

> Places like [The Talking Shop] give you more of a chance to get in contact with other people, so you can make friends and afterwards this is a place where you can go and they care about you and you have some friends, it's about just people being there really (Adil Interview, 2007).

It is this idea of a space of contact, of 'just being there' which I wish to consider, as a space where offering proximity and care may be seen as an ethical relation to diverse strangers. I will therefore examine what 'being there' meant to those who make up this space through considering how The Talking Shop enacted a narrative of the generous gift.

Giving Space

The Talking Shop was predicated around an ideal of generosity, both in its existence and in the relations it sought to bring forth from its members. Mauss (1990) promotes generosity as a 'necessary and desirable ethic' (Raffel 2001, p.120), which is centrally concerned with 'the area of self-other relations' (ibid, p.125). Adil's account of The Talking Shop as a space to 'just be there' reflects precisely this form of generosity for, as Barnett and Land (2007, p.1070) argue, generosity represents a 'practice through which "the living together of people" is routinely sustained over time and space'. Here generosity might be cast as a virtue for engaging with others, for as Levinas (1985, p.50) argues an 'orientation toward the Other can lose the avidity proper to the gaze only by turning into generosity, incapable of approaching the Other with empty hands', for to 'recognize the Other is to give' (ibid, p.75). The Talking Shop was presented by some asylum seekers as a space of generosity, of receiving not only a space, but also a welcome. The very establishment of a space of conversation for asylum seekers in the city, and the on-going presence of volunteers at this site, might be thought of as such a gift, of providing a space in which people may feel a sense of belonging and construct a community of presence. The importance of having a (temporary) space to (co)exist should not be underestimated, for as Conradson (2003b, p.521) notes, within spaces of care there are 'few which seek to provide a place for people to relate to others and simply be'. In doing so The Talking Shop became a generous, and extraordinary, gesture in itself. Generosity was notable in two interwoven forms, as a space

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of welcome, and a space of humanity, both of which relied upon an idea of giving, and receiving, care, attention and consideration.

Giving Welcome

The first of these discourses of the generous emerged through the interview accounts of both asylum seekers and volunteers in the drop-in centre, as both attempted to articulate the often intangible dimensions of a 'welcome'. This might be seen in the following conversation with Naveed;

> *Interviewer*: So do you think [The Talking Shop] is a welcoming place?
>
> *Naveed*: A hundred percent yes otherwise I wouldn't go there so much.
>
> *Interviewer*: How do you think it achieves that?
>
> *Naveed*: Because the word hospitality it makes sense in there, because they help you from whatever way they can, if you go to a place and you feel that people around you are helping you in whatever way that they can therefore you feel that it's like a home, sometimes I just wait for the day that it comes and I just go to [The Talking Shop] because my best friends are there.
>
> *Interviewer*: So what's the best thing about it?
>
> *Naveed*: For instance when we speak with people there is a feeling of easiness and comfort, I can easily say whatever I want to say and it is a safe place (Naveed Interview, 2007).

For Naveed welcome is presented as firstly a key reason to attend this space twice a week, and secondly as structured around certain attributes. Welcome is about hospitality, it is about people helping in 'whatever way they can', as an ethos of care is seen to create a welcome. It is from this sense of welcome that Naveed presents The Talking Shop as a space of comfort, of safety and 'easiness'. Through the attributes of listening and being open to conversation, relationships are developed and friendships grow which Naveed argues perpetuates his involvement in this space. Crucially these friendships are sustained through routines of contact and proximity at the drop-in centre, and these intangible elements of contact feed back into sustaining that sense of welcome which Naveed argues 'makes sense' in these momentary spaces.

Naveed's views of The Talking Shop as a space of welcome are further in evidence in the terms which a volunteer, Rebecca, chooses to explain the role which this space plays within Sheffield;

> *Interviewer*: So looking at Sheffield as a whole, what do you think the role of things like [The Talking Shop] is?
>
> *Rebecca*: I'd say it's like a place for them to come where they're welcomed, because most of the time they're kind of invisible, they just walk around and people just, just people are just really horrible about them and if they go there they know that there's people that don't mind them being here, and want to have them here and it gives them something to do as well because obviously they're not working and they haven't got anything to do (Rebecca Interview, 2007).

For Rebecca, The Talking Shop is about providing for people, it's again presented as a space of safety and is counterposed spatially in this narrative to the 'outside'. Rebecca argues that the drop-in centre presents a welcome through its representation as distinct and different from the 'horrible' reactions asylum seekers may receive beyond this seemingly safe haven. The Talking Shop thus 'gives' service users a place to go and 'something to do', it provides a site through which those friendships which Naveed spoke of are able to be developed, and for Rebecca it 'gives' a space which is welcoming in contrast to the treatment asylum seekers may receive in the city as a whole.

The notion of The Talking Shop as a space of distinction, of a welcome set apart from the city, was also clear in the representation of the needs of asylum seekers by Jacob, a volunteer coordinator for NRC;

> *Interviewer*: In terms of tackling social isolation how important do you think the physical proximity of these sorts of relationships is?
>
> *Jacob*: Look at it this way, the asylum process when someone comes and claims asylum he is provided for housing and also some money to be able to go out and buy a few things, but that is not enough, people need to have human contact, if you just put me in a house and just give me some money and things I need somebody to talk to, because for some people they cannot talk about some of these things, but when they come in and get involved in a one to one relationship it becomes very easy for them to be

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able to talk about anything they want to talk about, so it is very important
for people to have some common touch (Jacob Interview, 2007).

Within the varied responses of Sheffield to asylum The Talking Shop provides a space
through which that 'common touch' of communication can come into being. Tackling
social isolation was therefore regularly cast as one of the aims of this space, alongside
building an awareness of asylum issues and aiding in the integration of individuals.

In these three presentations of The Talking Shop the spaces and relations which construct
this centre are defined as moments of welcome, of providing and caring through listening to
others, accepting others as different and simply *allowing others to be*. These are the
welcoming gestures which combine to make this space one of 'easiness and comfort' as
Naveed finds it, and these are, centrally, gifts which are given to service users. The space of
the drop-in centre itself is given, ears are placed to listen to others, time is taken to consider
and respond to questions, to translate Home Office letters and newspapers, to teach some
basic language skills. Whilst the space of the drop-in is given twice a week, so too are a
series of gifts of presence, of people coming together. My listening ear and responsive
gestures thus became gifts to others, and their words, thoughts and willingness to talk, a gift
to me.

Giving Humanity

The asylum seekers I spoke with pointed clearly to an outcome of such acts, that of being
made to 'feel human' and to have regained some control over one's life. Thus below,
Tinashe and Rubi speak about their experiences of The Talking Shop;

> In this case [The Talking Shop] is a big relief, it gives you something to
> do, to expend some energy, do some exercise and meet people once again.
> At these times you feel like life gets going again and by going there you
> make yourself useful and valuable again, you rediscover yourself again,
> and the person you find is often better for the experiences of having met
> some new people and opened up to many new and different perspectives
> (Tinashe Diary, Undated 2007).

> They help like you know, it's important for me to have some you know
> emotional support, like when somebody comes and they give you the time
> and they listening to you, and you know, support you with your problems

and that can help you, like when I got refused and they want to deport me back to Syria...and even if they took the accommodation from you and the benefits then we can support you, so from this time I knew that anything that happened they were able to help me (Rubi Interview, 2007).

In both of these accounts the moments of giving which The Talking Shop offers came to structure a renewed sense of self-worth and common humanity alongside those who volunteer. For Tinashe 'life gets going again' once one is able to contact others, form relationships and begin to feel part of something, while for Rubi the support that is offered through The Talking Shop proved vital in coping with the isolation and stress of the asylum process. This environment of generous acts offered more than just a sense of welcome, it acted as a supportive springboard from which to take a sense of comfort and support outwards into wider relations. As Ilya and Shariq observe, The Talking Shop became a space to develop a sense of value which can stretch beyond its bounds;

Because of the [Talking Shop] I started playing the piano again and yeah, it was like getting onto new levels and you know, started living rather than just existing (Ilya Interview, 2007).

They were willing to meet me and talk to me outside of college as well, and that made me feel, not important but more like a human being you know, being valued (Shariq Interview, 2007).

A sense of value is developed through those relationships of contact in The Talking Shop, feeling valued is for Shariq about knowing that people care for him, will give the time to listen to him, be attentive, and crucially *want* to do so. The Talking Shop was thus represented as a space of welcome, contact and friendship, which enabled asylum seekers to not only feel comfortable in a given space, but also to regain a certain sense of capacity to 'go on'. A sense of generosity was inherent in these offers which allow others to be empowered in various ways. Thus if we return to Barnett and Land's (2007, p.1070) consideration of generosity as a 'practice through which "the living together of people" is routinely sustained over time and space', The Talking Shop represents an 'extraordinary space' within which Cloke *et al.* (2007, p.1092) argue the 'ordinary ethics' of daily life, such as acts of giving, are heightened and performed. Cloke *et al.* (2007, p.1094) argue that ethics come to be enacted by volunteers through a process of identification with others, as

those moments of encounter, proximity and engagement which The Talking Shop promotes can transform 'an abstract issue into a concrete person'.

The Relations of an Anti-Camp

With this in mind I wish to briefly return to those registers of the spatial to which I turned in Chapter Two, sanctuary, or the hospitable, and encampment. Clearly a logic of the hospitable is at work here, albeit in a conditional manner, as the generosity of providing space for others is structured around an ethical ideal of hospitable response (Derrida 1999). While at the same time we can also detect a concurrent logic of encampment, for, returning to the comments of Rebecca and Jacob who both view The Talking Shop as a welcoming site, we witness a territorial logic of a contained, bounded space of welcome, through which an image of such a hospitable site is counterposed to an image of the 'outside' as a threatening and unsafe city. Following Parr (2000), what is 'given' in drop-in space might be precisely a 'license' to be oneself and to be with others as part of a collective group. While this doesn't present a case of encampment, I would rather suggest that it presents a vision of an anti-camp in direct opposition to Agamben's (1997, 1998) articulation of camp space.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Agamben's camp is a space of non-relation, a place in which those relations which do occur are conditioned, placed and controlled to the finest degree. The camp 'makes it impossible to confront others and to take moral/political choices' (Diken and Laustsen 2005, p.1). Camp space is therefore dedicated to avoiding the unprepared encounter of a hospitable ethics. Yet The Talking Shop described here presents a space which directly counters this view, a space presented as exceptional, through which 'ordinary' ethics of generosity are given a chance to be enacted (Cloke *et al.* 2007) and individuals are given an opportunity to respond in a concrete and material way to demands placed upon them by others. Just as the camp is traditionally viewed as a space of exception, so this anti-camp is itself an exceptional space, a space of relation and generosity set apart from the city. Returning to Rebecca's view of The Talking Shop it is notable that she describes it as welcoming through posing it in opposition to the rest of the city, where asylum seekers are 'invisible', while Lynn (Interview, 2007), a co-founder of The Talking Shop, commented that 'there really is nowhere else like this in the city'. Viewing the drop-in centre as an exceptional space of welcome aligns it not only with a notion of the anti-

camp, but also suggests that within this space ethical and political engagements, choices, and encounters are enabled and encouraged.

This is not however to suggest that posing such a space as an 'anti-camp' of exceptional generosity is in anyway unproblematic, or that such a socio-spatial configuration necessarily presents an ethical or political panacea to the very real difficulties of encountering difference (see Valentine 2008). But it is to argue that we need to further consider what ethical resources might be at play in this space, what sensibilities might be produced through this coming together of asylum seeker and citizen to actively co-construct a space of hospitality. Before more fully considering these implications I wish to question the nature of the claims made of The Talking Shop so far on two main bases, the first is to question the ideals of generosity on which giving is based, the second is to contest the extent to which we might view The Talking Shop as a space apart, a separate container of virtuous actions. I want to therefore consider in more detail just how hospitable, and just how exceptional, this anti-camp may be.

Reciprocity, Ownership and Mutual Giving

Through considering the role of reciprocity and ownership within the negotiations of shared presence which constructed The Talking Shop, I argue that these accounts of charity presuppose a series of positions of power and sovereign right over how giving works in the drop-in centre, and who has the right to give what. Reciprocity was key to the success of The Talking Shop in creating an environment of comfort for asylum seekers and volunteers, as both parties grew to find that they have something at stake, and crucially something to gain, from relating in this way. As Cloke *et al.* (2007) and others (Bloom and Kilgore 2003) have found in considering the motivations of volunteers, processes of giving and receiving are almost always inseparable. It is moments of giving and receiving which act to further communal senses of connection, relationship and engagement, thus Eckstein (2001, p.830) comments that such reciprocal moments produce a 'societal "glue".[As]...gift-giving helps unify groups', gifts thus affirm and shore up relationships and, to a certain extent, social formations (Mauss 1990, 1997). The Talking Shop is held together by these sustaining bonds of giving and receiving. This sense of reciprocity, and indeed of gratitude to those who were willing to give in response, was in evidence in the narratives of many of the volunteers at The Talking Shop. For example Anna stated that;

Anna: I love going [to The Talking Shop] it's one of my highlights of the week because I learn so much every time I go, even the most everyday details about peoples lives before they left their countries they're fascinating and it totally disseminates all the ridiculous stuff you read in the press about asylum seekers.

Interviewer: Do you think it's changed you as a person?

Anna: Oh definitely (Anna Interview, 2007).

While similarly, Rebecca comments;

Interviewer: So do you think it changes you as well?

Rebecca: Yeah like a reciprocal relationship really.

Interviewer: What do you get out of that then?

Rebecca: Well if I'm saying it from a selfish point of view it gives me experience for what I want to do, but I like doing it and I like meeting different people and helping them (Rebecca Interview, 2007).

Reciprocity is considered here as a transformative process, one through which we emerge from the drop-in centre altered in some way. Knowledge, experience and a sense of 'real' lives are given as gifts in return for the opportunity to be listened to. Hollands (2001) argues that such proximity to asylum seekers and refugees allows one to enhance self-knowledge for volunteers, as individuals become 'more aware of their own limitations as well as their qualities' (ibid, p.309). While Conradson (2003b, p.521) views such a moment of self-awareness as fundamentally tied into the continual construction of drop-in spaces themselves, as 'a shift in subjectivity emerges because the relations which constitute the drop-in space have, in some way, been productively folded into those of the evolving self'. We might view such moments of responsive change as emblematic of a sense of generosity as a communal value, as 'an action that really questions the self and welcomes the other' (Raffel 2001, p.126). Many volunteers were students who either wanted experience in a charitable field for job applications, or who were seeking to study asylum at some level. Not least in this series of reciprocal giving, and gaining, was my own position as a researcher, as someone engaged in these chains of exchange, economy and gratitude, as I received not only the knowledge and experience of others, but was also implicated in all

these moments of giving. This situation forced me to question these relationships of reciprocity, and to consider just who gained what from them.

The Impossible Gift

Considering my own reciprocity it became clear that a certain power relation, inherent in the research process, of my role as researcher, ultimately making fieldwork decisions and editorial choices (Routledge 2002), was at play here. I gave to people, in terms of time, listening, attention, translation and care, and received in return their attention, their care, but also the stories they constructed with me. Throughout these exchanges it was I who held the greater ability to direct such stories, to question these narratives and to draw the paths through which our relationships progressed.[3] From this reflective moment I want to consider how these shifting relations of power might be seen to infuse all those acts of giving which we have witnessed constructing the drop-in centre as a space of welcome.

The acts of giving which have thus far defined The Talking Shop are presented as self-evident, unconscious and equitable affairs. It is important though to consider how reciprocity itself acts to undermine giving and insert in its place a series of otherwise elided political negotiations over space, right and possession. Derrida (1992b, p.12, original emphasis) argues that '[f]or there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt. If the other *gives* me *back* or *owes* me or has to give me back what I give him or her, there will not have been a gift', rather 'reciprocity destroys gift by making it an item in an economy of exchange...There has been no gift, but rather an exchange' (Jennings Jr 2006, p.82). For Derrida, the true gift is an impossibility, for in any moment of giving we pass seamlessly into an economy of exchange, debt and obligation. Thus as asylum seekers spoke, giving me their thoughts, I was obliged to listen, to respond and to return this offer of contact. For Rebecca, as she attends The Talking Shop she concurrently benefits from such presence, through experience, knowledge and skills. Indeed the simple act of caring, of giving time to be here might be seen as an ethically questioned generosity, for volunteers receive through it a sense of their own giving, their own self-worth and good nature. Thus;

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[3] This is not to deny the agency of those with whom I worked, but rather to suggest, as Routledge (2002) does, that my capacity to attune these moments of reciprocal research production was inherently greater due to both my position as directing the research, but also due to my capacity as a 'national spatial manager' (Hage 1998), one whose right to 'be here' is not in question.

'The simple consciousness of the gift right away sends itself back the gratifying image of goodness or generosity, of the giving-being, who, knowing itself to be such, recognizes itself in a circular, specular fashion in a sort of auto-recognition, self-approval, and narcissistic gratitude' (Derrida 1992b, p.23).

Following Derrida we can note how moments of exchange serve to enact and perpetuate positions of power, sovereignty and thoughts of ownership. Gifts are dependent upon a notion of property, 'of the possession by a sovereign subject of its own self and of other objects' (Barnett and Land 2007, p.1072). Gift giving can therefore always serve the interests of the donor, whether those interests are in gaining knowledge, research materials, or simply a sense of self-worth and self-approval. Generosity can thus 'also be a means of reproducing inequality and dependence' (ibid), for its performance creates and sustains the right of some individuals and groups to give some properties (space, time, attention) to others. The responses of those asylum seekers who attended this centre were indicative of such a logic of exchange, many of them spoke of their gratitude for those who had set up this space, describing how they only wished to contribute to the city as a means to pay back this perceived debt. The danger becomes, as Chan (2005, p.22) notes, that 'migrants are caught in a position of continued indebtedness'. Deconstructing this ideal of giving may most usefully be applied to the notion of giving, and thereby owning, this space of care in the first place. For if it is through the gift that one knows what one owns, then the act of providing a welcoming space comes to be patterned by a series of political negotiations over that space, and that right to give. The Talking Shop therefore presents a key contest over the right to give, as space and the politics of belonging become entwined in moments of reciprocity and ownership.

Hosts and Guests in The Talking Shop

Moments of banal political negotiation were common at The Talking Shop, as claims to possession were continually being performed through a series of prosaic acts of giving. These acts did not simply involve the performance of a giving self, but rather they implicated that self as a sovereign, authoritative, subject. In the Talking Shop a central place where such practices occurred was the kitchen, pictured below (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3. The Talking Shop Kitchen (Source: Author's Photograph).

The kitchen presented a walled off sub-section of the main hall in both drop-in centres, connected through a serving hatch and counter (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). Its position as slightly separate from the main hall where conversations and exchanges largely took place allowed it to be a place of escape for some individuals, for volunteers who needed a break and for asylum seekers who were less comfortable with the more hectic, group orientated, atmosphere of the main hall. In this respect The Talking Shop differs from other drop-in centres studied by Cloke *et al.* (2005), Conradson (2003b) and Parr (2000), who all note that the kitchen was a site of refuge for staff as it was designated as 'staff only'. No such formal divisions of space existed here and this was described to me at a volunteer training meeting as a means to allow equality among group members. Within this ideal everyone should have access to the resources of the kitchen and both volunteers and asylum seekers should offer to make drinks for others, again promoting a sense of exchange and reciprocity built upon a vision of The Talking Shop as 'not owned by anyone' but 'made up by all the people together there' (Rebecca Interview, 2007).

However it was notable that some individuals did indeed take on the role of tea making. One asylum seeker in particular, Akan, was usually seen busying himself behind the counter, tidying up and laying out plates of biscuits. When I asked him why he did this each week, he told me that he wanted to do this, that this was 'his role' and he liked 'to feel useful'. Akan's desire to be 'useful' points to two motivations, firstly, a desire to keep busy, to have something, anything, to do. Within a life lived in limbo and with no right to work, boredom naturally became a massive factor in many people's lives as shall be discussed further in Chapter Six. This then fed into the second motivation, a desire to contribute. For Akan the simple act of making the tea became a matter of pride, the one thing he felt he could contribute towards this space. However, such contribution was necessarily temporary and fragile;

> I turn into the drop-in centre for the second time this week and as I enter am greeted by Omar who shakes my hand enthusiastically and offers to make me a drink. I accept his offer and ask for a cup of tea as I begin to take my coat off and place it over a nearby table. Omar walks to the kitchen and begins making the tea. As he is doing so we talk about what he has been doing over the last few days and as I watch him arranging cups and saucers for future guests I begin to think about how he appears to have almost naturally assumed the role of a host, to have asserted ownership over the kitchen, its resources and those commodities produced there which he hands to others as gifts from a grateful host, grateful for company and for conversation. Yet this performance is, and can only ever be, temporary, for in a few hours we will leave the hall, the kitchen lights will go out and Omar will no longer play the host here, rather other individuals, with their own performative repertories of activity, their own embodied habits and routines, will fill this space and create it once again with their own sense of purpose (Research Diary, 9th February 2007).

Through making tea, and contributing to the drop-in centre in this way, Akan and Omar assert a right to be here, a right to the kitchen as they temporarily make this space their own. Omar would briefly drift in and out of the kitchen, whereas Akan would remain there for most of the session chatting with those who came up to the counter. By taking this space of the drop-in centre on and by offering tea Akan performed the host, he performed a subject who was at home, albeit temporarily.

While Akan's right to the kitchen was temporally bound, it was also constrained by alternative, and competing claims to the kitchen, claims which themselves suggested a right to space which usurped his own;

> I'm at the Wednesday drop-in and after putting my bag down I go over to the kitchen to get a cup of tea. After a brief chat with Ilya and Shariq I reach the counter to see not Akan, but two elderly ladies stationed there. They ask me politely if I want tea or coffee, and saying tea they promptly pour me a cup. I turn to look around the room for Akan and note that he's sat talking with a few other men at a round table, none of them have a drink (Research Diary, 27th April 2007).

Following this incident I attend The Talking Shop on Friday, there Akan is back to his usual routine, and his usual place. While he arranges some saucers I ask him why he wasn't doing the teas on Wednesday, he tells me that the two ladies were there when he arrived, that they were volunteers from the church and that he didn't feel that he could say anything about the tea making being his 'role'. After this Akan stopped making the teas on Wednesday, and after a while stopped attending on Wednesdays all together, his role had been taken, his position of brief, and fragile, ownership had evaporated in the face of two volunteers who also want to 'give something back'.

Through these accounts the kitchen became a site of contested and competing claims, not only to the right to be in a certain space at a certain time, but also the right to contribute in a certain way. Faced with competing claims which Akan viewed as usurping his own, those more 'natural' claims, Akan relented. The political nature of giving is thus at its greatest when the right to give, as it was here, is placed in question by others. The temporary position of hosting which Omar and Akan displayed will always be temporary, for in the face of those seen as members of a 'cultural aristocracy' (Hage 1998, p.62), these claims to hosting will always appear fleeting and ill-founded, always reliant upon the good-willed and 'tolerant' response of those who possess the full cultural capital of the nation. Viewed as such, Akan was *allowed* to play the host, until those with a (seemingly) more valid claim to giving, a claim based upon citizenship, nationality, and established notions of who gives and who receives in relations of charity, made a more forceful counterclaim.

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What emerged in a number of accounts here was a sense of shifting positions within The Talking Shop and the city, as asylum seekers sought to navigate an indistinct place between the host and the guest. Thus Omar (Interview, 2007) commented that 'sometimes I feel not like a guest, like a host, because you are joined to this place…it's not that you are always a guest'. In this manner positions of 'hosting' and of giving were highly spatially and temporally variable. What emerged through the structures of giving which pattern The Talking Shop are a series of hierarchies of hosting and positioning. Akan's giving of tea, resources and access to the kitchen, is tolerated until the point at which a more normalised host, in this case a white, British, charity volunteer, arrives to take over this role, to (re)assert a right to give and (re)impose Akan's role as receiver. Yet as we have seen service users may also give, through knowledge, care and attention, to volunteers cast as hosts. However, what they offer is emblematic of the asymmetrical nature of reciprocity (Ahmed 2000). Service users can only ever offer that which they possess, their attention, their thoughts, while the host may offer these *and* those commodities which are brought together through a secure sense of self-belonging.

Owning Charity

Through this examination of modes of giving within The Talking Shop I have argued that giving is a reciprocal process of exchange, one structured by both volunteers and asylum seekers. Concurrently it appears that the boundaries of such giving, and of drop-in space itself, are brought into being through a collaboration of volunteers and 'service users' (Parr 2000). At the heart of these negotiations lies the assumption with which we opened this examination, that of a space of welcome. The idea of welcome acts as the final, overarching, assertion of ownership, for it is here that claims to space, both within the drop-in, and by extension within the nation, are intuitively and implicitly made.

Derrida's consideration of welcome in many ways mirrors his deconstruction of the gift, indeed for Derrida welcome itself might be viewed as a generous, assertive gift of self-possession, he argues that;

> 'To dare to say welcome is perhaps to insinuate that one is at home here,
> that one knows what it means to be at home, and that at home one

receives, invites, or offers hospitality, thus appropriating for oneself a place to *welcome* the other, or, worse, *welcoming* the other in order to appropriate for oneself a place' (Derrida 1999, p.15-16, original emphasis).

Through the act of welcoming the host, like the gift-giver, comes to know a space as their own, their possession arises from their generosity as 'the welcome to come is what makes possible the recollection of the at home with oneself' (Derrida 1999, p.28). In this manner all of those gifts which are presented in and through The Talking Shop, of listening, attention and care, of receiving in kind the thoughts and attention of others, are founded upon this moment of giving space as welcome, for without this these other relations could not take place. No matter how much the volunteer and the charity worker seeks to allow an equal access to resources, to give and receive, an asymmetry of giving underlies this still. What is given is a right to be at The Talking Shop, a right to exist in a space and yet this is a right owned and controlled by those who own this space. Opening the doors to The Talking Shop twice a week not only means that they may be closed, but that 'we' have the right to close them, that 'we' condition and maintain this space in order to give it to others.

We might though suggest that, yes, this space is owned and it must ultimately be controlled by some whose charitable actions serve to sustain their position as hosts. But as long as such a space of welcome exists where is the harm in that? Yet if we take this route we lose sight of Derrida's point in questioning this form of ethical generosity, that it necessarily reproduces a series of naturalised power relations, notions of sovereignty, right and ownership. If Derrida's project of deconstruction is to be seen as a political one, then it is about this very moment of uncovering, of questioning those apparently natural categories of political closure and assumption. For to allow such gestures to remain unconsidered is to allow the perpetuation of a naturalised role for the national, and in this case the localised, spatial manager, one who acts through a tolerant image of giving to assert an 'imaginary position of power within a nation imagined as 'theirs'' (Hage 1998, p.79). Thus as Hage (1998, p.87) argues tolerance is 'a strategy aimed at reproducing and disguising relationships of power in society, or being reproduced through that disguise. It is a form of symbolic violence in which a mode of domination is presented as a form of egalitarianism' (see also Žižek 2008). Tolerance 'always presupposes a control over what is tolerated. That is, tolerance presupposes that the object of the tolerance is just that: an object of the will of

the tolerator' (Hage 1998, p.89). Tolerance and welcome thus serve to maintain an image of the national manager, and here the localised manager, as somehow in control of space. As Hage (1998, p.95) argues of anti-racism strategies;

> 'It is here that the nature of tolerant 'anti-racism' reveals itself most: it is not about making the powerful less so, it is about inviting them not to exercise their power. It invites those who have been uncharitable to be charitable, but it does not remove from them the power to be uncharitable'.

Tolerance, and the will to be charitable, are thus predicated upon the capacity, the ability, indeed perhaps in some eyes the right, to be *in*tolerant and *un*charitable. It is here that the questioning of the welcome, of the gift and of a generous tolerance afforded those who visit The Talking Shop must be firmly placed, for to accept this space of charity as one of welcome alone is not only to deny those continual negotiations of power, right and position which structure this space, but also to maintain an image of primordial spatial ownership which valorises the gifts of some over those of others.

My argument is not to dismiss those gifts which were offered, for many they were central to finding a way to 'go on' with their lives, but it is to assert that the power relations which saturate such generosity be acknowledged and considered. Derrida's critique of the gift, as Barnett and Land (2007, p.1072) argue, is that 'a pure gift relation is not possible in practice, nor preferable in principle. It might therefore be a good idea to stop supposing that it should serve as the benchmark of critical judgement or normative evaluation'. Rather the generous as an act of giving becomes an on-going negotiation of positions of power, for generosity, as Chan (2005, p.13) notes, may be both 'a present and a poison'. In the relations which sustain The Talking Shop giving may be predicated upon a sense of ownership and may result in a feeling of indebtedness, however this does not mean that such gifts should no longer be offered, but should perhaps bring us to consider the position from which any such offer is made. In what follows I want to argue for an account of generosity which is more fully responsive to the needs of others (Coles 1997), which is aware of the asymmetry of giving and yet which takes responsibility for its finite nature by arising precisely from the practices and politics of encountering others through spaces such as The Talking Shop.

Viewing generosity in this fashion calls forth a more sustained appreciation of the contests and conflicts which both produce the space of the drop-in centre itself, as I have suggested here, and which connect those experiences noted here to the wider discourses and performances of asylum in the city as a whole, through the micropolitics of City of Sanctuary, the council's assertions of a hospitable past and so on. I therefore want to now return to those sensibilities of place and space gestured towards in Chapters One and Two, of space as a heterogeneous convergence of situated practices, events and performances (Dewsbury 2003; McCormack 2003), in order to draw out in more detail the full range of encounters and interactions between different places, people and materials, which combine in a shifting manner to create both The Talking Shop as a space of negotiated generosity and an account of ethics as a disposition of improvisational openness. As Parr (2000, p.233, original emphasis) notes, 'the norms of the drop-in are both constant *and* changing. The interactions between members are dynamic, and therefore the atmosphere, tolerance and performances within the drop-in are always different from one day to the next', and as such the continual becoming of this site, through encounters, events and materials, demands the situated *practice* of ethics as a sensibility towards others akin to those we saw being worked upon by City of Sanctuary in Chapter Four.

The Material Construction of Events

Drop-in centres are normally examined as bounded socio-spatial formations within which notions of care are performed, certain ideas of appropriate behaviour are enacted and volunteerism is valued. They are spaces associated with relationship and engagements, thus as Conradson (2003a, p.508) argues '[s]paces of care are shared accomplishments'. However, The Talking Shop was far more than this. It was a shared interpersonal accomplishment, but it was also a relation to a range of other elements, of practices, materials and objects which permeated and mediated the relationships which took place here. The Talking Shop cannot therefore be reduced to a series of moments of generosity and moments of power intertwined, or to a series of interpersonal encounters, rather I want to now examine how a series of other materials, practices and situated events came to construct this space anew. From this, I want to suggest how an account of such a mediated, situated, engagement with space is productive of certain forms of dispositional, generous ethics arising from those practices which form The Talking Shop, and which we saw being

worked upon previously through the micropolitics of the City of Sanctuary movement. I begin by considering two examples from The Talking Shop which illustrate the role different materials may play in the eventful creation of this space.

During my time at The Talking Shop it was clear that the broader political structure of the asylum system haunted the relationships which developed in this space. Asylum decisions, appeals and legislation were variously and commonly referred to as the asylum 'system', in a way which implied both an image of over-arching, bureaucratic power, but also a resigned acceptance that there was little that could be done in the face of government legislation. While 'the system' dictated many aspects of asylum seekers lives, their homes, their income and their weekly routine,[4] it also clearly came to pervade The Talking Shop. Here 'the system' was viewed as a malevolent force, something to be opposed and rallied against, eluded in whatever way possible, and yet while The Talking Shop proposed to present a space of comfort away from the anxieties of awaiting a government decision, asylum as a process saturated this space. The drop-in centre, whilst claiming to be apolitical, became a site through which to oppose 'the system' and individuals performed their roles within this space in the shadow of such an idea.

The relation to a broader asylum system viewed as unfair, unfeeling and unwieldy, became present in The Talking Shop through two material representations, one of which, the asylum letter, demonstrated the power of 'the system' to impose its will over space and sought to assert its power to manage space, while the second, the asylum petition, presented a means to 'talk back' to such power. My research diary illustrates encounters with both;

> A range of tasks are undertaken at The Talking Shop, with one of the most common being translation. Over the past weeks I've noticed that it is common for asylum seekers to come to the centre with Home Office documents and letters which they want people to read and explain to them. Lynn normally takes up this role, going to a table in the corner to do so, and while others cannot hear what is said, the reactions alone are enough. A smile and an embrace imply a letter of acceptance. Shrinking into the chair, crying and a series of frenzied calls to solicitors, means a failed case and the forthcoming removal of welfare, home and security (Research Diary, 24th November 2006).

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[4] Many asylum seekers in the UK are required to report to a police station once a week to ensure their whereabouts.

> Anna approached me at the drop-in centre today and asked if I would sign a petition for Iman, whose claim has been rejected and who faces deportation to Iran. I read the petition and sign it, the text explains Iman's situation, his persecution in Iran and what may face him if he returns. Anna thanks me and says that they are hoping to get a local MP to lobby the Home Office on his behalf (Research Diary, 12th January 2007).

The arrival of a letter and the formation of a petition present alternative relations to the asylum process. The former presents its ability to permeate this space of care, to impose an outside reality of risk and uncertainty onto those moments of giving in this space, while the latter seeks to contest that imposition. The letter acts as a spatial manager, it dictates the limits of acceptance through its arrival, reading and interpretation. By contrast the petition acts to 'speak back' to this assertion of spatial management by proposing an alternative vision of management, not one of a domopolitical exclusion but a claim to tolerant, conditioned, inclusion. These two written forms thus present the two sides of spatial management which Hage (1998, p.93) argues is structured around a 'difference of capacity of tolerance between people [and texts] who equally claim the capacity to manage national space'. The petition becomes just as much an object of spatial management as the Home Office letter, simply proposing a different threshold of what is acceptable and tolerable. As Hage (1998, p.94-95) asserts if 'the nationalist practices of exclusion emphasise a capacity to remove the other from national space, the nationalist practices of tolerance emphasise a capacity to position them in specific places so that they can be valued and tolerated'. What both of these texts do is not only place an individual within a broader negotiation of national belonging, but their presence in The Talking Shop alters this space, it places the drop-in centre in relation to the domopolitics of the nation at large. These objects alter and mediate the relations of space, belonging and charity which occur here, they give rise to new responses and new relations and as such they become events through which The Talking Shop itself is imagined and situated within national domopolitics.

The second example I want to draw upon is that of a particular international incident which came to momentarily dictate the way relations unfolded in The Talking Shop;

> During today's session I go and sit with Shariq and a few of the other Iranian men. They are all looking over today's copy of *The Guardian*,

whose headline is about the ensuing hostage crisis between the British navy and the Iranian government. As I sit down and look over Shariq catches me looking at the headline, he leans over and says "Don't worry, we will get your people back safely, I'm sure of it" (Research Diary, 23rd March, 2007).

Here the geopolitical relations between Britain and Iran come to be distilled into an encounter between Shariq and I, his assumption of 'your' people and the 'we' of the Iranian government again displays that positioning of a guest within the nation discussed earlier. I don't know quite how to respond and for a moment we sit in silence, in the end we discuss what we think might happen and move on to look further through the paper. The thing which made this relation initially awkward, disjointed almost, was Shariq's focus on our difference, on the distinction of 'your people' from a 'we' so distant and diasporic to Shariq. This was placed in sharp contrast to the language of The Talking Shop which was to be seen as one singular community, encompassing difference within the logic of a common humanity as Omar (Interview, 2007) describes; 'when you come in this place [The Talking Shop] you find that we are all the same, human, we all have got the same ideas, same goals in our lives, we are trying to achieve the best life'. What this newspaper headline had done was to allow for the reinsertion of difference as a division, politically and spatially, within the drop-in centre. Its placement on this table came to act upon those around it, and momentarily, to change the emphasis of their identity. I became more British than ever and Shariq asserted an affiliation to Iran I had not previously witnessed from him.

However, this engagement is also suggestive of those situated practices which actively produce spaces like The Talking Shop on a daily basis. The paper, like the letter and the petition, acts as an event with agency in the forming of this space, it draws us together around the table, it assigns us identities, relations and connections, to one another, to the space of the drop-in centre, to these materials and to the world beyond. In this case, the newspaper provided individuals with a multiple positioning, no longer was Shariq simply an 'asylum seeker' and nothing else, rather due to the material impact of the newspaper he possessed a connection and identification with multiple places, Iran, Britain, Sheffield and so on. The newspaper situated Shariq not simply as an asylum seeker but as an individual subject to multiplicities of space, identity and affiliation. In this sense the importance of this story was to allow Shariq to articulate those many identities which are inherent in all

subjectivity, and yet which being cast simply as an 'asylum seeker' acts to disavow. Thought of as such, the material agency of the newspaper was felt in its ability to present Shariq as a multiply affiliated and identified individual in this space just as I was, the varied position he took up thus flowed, in part, from a positioning on this story. Part of the openness of The Talking Shop as I discussed earlier, was in its freedom of exchange and reciprocal relationship, the ability to feel 'at ease', and here we have added to this a sense of positioning and identification which arises from the material culture of this space. The story represented an event for The Talking Shop as it performed space differently, it called to mind, and to the surface, multiple positions of subjectivity as a response, and in doing so opened a space through which a fuller appreciation of identity could be articulated.

Through these examples I have attempted to display how a range of material influences temporarily altered the constitution of drop-in space. These material influences flow through this space, and are themselves altered in their positioning within The Talking Shop.[5] The newspaper is thus imagined in a particular manner because it is placed on a table in The Talking Shop, the asylum letter prompts a political, and often visceral, response which spills out into other areas of life and politics, from the MP who is lobbied to the Home Office official who receives a petitioned plea to reconsider the management of national space. The Talking Shop is affected here, but it also has the capacity to affect, to flow into other lives, materials and contexts. Thrift (2004b, p.91) therefore argues that;

> '[S]pace-times almost never consist of a patchwork of contiguous territories but rather a set of energetic activations, lines of flight that may or may not be elaborated...These space-times constantly interfere with one another and these interferences can themselves be formative...space-times perform 'us' as much as we perform 'them', not least because so many of these space-times are fields of affect which, by their very nature, are im-, pre- or post-personal. They perform the 'individual''.

It is with this sense of 'energetic activations' that I wish to reconsider the ethics which arises in The Talking Shop as a space created through the multiple connections, mediations

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[5] In this sense, they might be seen as the 'immutable mobiles' of actor-network theory (Latour 1987). Here material artefacts play a central role in transmitting and carrying the power of the network centre out to diverse localities all connected through affiliation to a given network (Murdoch 2006). Thus the letter itself projects a spatial discipline and ordering from within a network of national spatial control over asylum and immigration.

and convergences of material objects, wider discourses and individual subjectivities. The space of The Talking Shop thus conceived represents a complex coming together of elements and momentary, situated practices, to generate a space of fleeting openness precisely through events such as those marshaled by these objects and interactions. The Talking Shop was not a fully bounded, impermeable space of belonging and charity, but neither was it a purely fluid or relational space of outward connections and responsibilities, rather, as suggested in Chapter Two, it represented a site of tension between these impulses and positions. However, The Talking Shop was never reducible to these forms of spatial, and human interaction alone, as the above accounts indicate, it was a site of diverse practices which arose in and of moments of encounter between individuals certainly, but also between individuals and objects, materials and moods. The Talking Shop took shape through these events of interaction and I now want to consider how viewing this space as such might inflect an account of the ethics which arose here. In short I want to argue that The Talking Shop, and its varied interactions, mediations and encounters, cultivated an ethical sensibility of generosity towards others associated with an opening of the self in relation to both other people and the material environment of this space itself. Those situated practices which construct this space as more than simply a site of interpersonal engagement therefore also orientate events of ethics, events through which ethical sensibilities are born, worked upon and refined.

Emerging Spaces of Situated Ethics

To view The Talking Shop as a site of performance and practice is to feed into a series of debates over the tacitly accomplished nature of social spaces as suggested in Chapter One. Central in this turn towards practice has been Thrift's elaboration of a 'non-representational theory' (Thrift 1996, 2000, 2007) which seeks to consider the excessive elements of everyday encounters which allow life to 'go on' (Dewsbury et al. 2002; Lorimer 2005; McCormack 2004). Here we witness an emergent concern with the event, as an eruptive and unpredictable moment of transformation within the present, and with responses to encounters and materials as that which may pattern and prove centrally formative to future practices of both space and the political (Dewsbury 2000; McCormack 2003; Thrift 2004b). A focus upon 'unreflective, lived, culturally specific, bodily reactions to events' (Thrift 2000, p.274, cited Conradson 2003b, p.1984) is engaged in the belief that in 'responding to

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that which we are pressed up against, social life tumbles forward via moment-by-moment doings, unfolding in some directions and not others' (Conradson 2003b, p.1984). An element of surprise and possibility infuses this approach to the social and it is within these possibilities that Varela (1999) argues a particular form of ethics is present. It is here that I believe we might situate the miasmic relations of The Talking Shop, as uncertain and often confusing demands to adapt are made, demands which open individuals to the possibilities of responding differently and responding generously.

To return to the consideration of The Talking Shop as a generous space of encounter with which we began, we can start to think of generosity differently through such a responsive lens. Here Coles (1997) has argued for a reassessment of generosity as inherently receptive to the needs of the other. In this manner generosity might be 'recast as an embodied disposition that subsists in the practices and dispositions of attending and responding to others...generosity not as a regulative ideal, but as a constitutive practice of sociality, community, and being together' (Barnett and Land 2007, p.1073). What Coles (1997) proposes is an ethics grounded very firmly in the lived experience of situations, circumstances and agonistic engagements with difference. Generosity thus conceived approaches a conceptualisation of situated ethical practice that draws upon those 'practices and ethics of listening, talking...and contemplating' which Thrift (2004b, p.84) argues 'produce a feeling of being in a situation together'. The belief behind this generous sensibility, and I feel behind The Talking Shop, is therefore that 'caring action is motivated...by encounters with others' (Barnett and Land 2007, p.1069). A generous sensibility is enacted most forthrightly at moments of proximate encounter, when we are faced with difference in a very literal sense. This is the point at which ingrained ideas, dispositions and orientations come to the surface, when one is surprised, thrown off balance, and forced to make decisions in and of the moment. These are decisions and responses which fall back upon those dispositions which the City of Sanctuary movement and their micropolitical focus sought to alter as discussed in Chapter Four. Such a conceptualization of responsive generosity, and of a situated ethics, has I believe two main characteristics, firstly, it is inculcated through responsive reactions to events, and secondly it comes to be lived through the alteration, and often opening, of future dispositions towards encounter. I want to sketch the contours of this generous thought before examining how it may be seen to inflect the encounters which construct drop-in space.

Practical "Know-How"

A number of recent political and ethical claims have been made for an expansion of the arena in which we view 'politics' and 'ethics' as such (Connolly 2002; McCormack 2003; Thrift 2004b). Whilst these calls maintain a heterogeneous lineage, they all in some way draw upon recent reconsiderations of thought and practice within the field of cognitive science, most centrally work which has cast into doubt the centrality of rational deliberative judgement (Damasio 2000, 2004; Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1990; Varela *et al.* 1993). Here Varela (1999, p.6) poses a central distinction between 'know-how' and 'know-what', between 'spontaneous coping and rational judgment', and argues that it is within this former experience, of learned, experiential and embodied 'know-how' that the vast majority of human practice is achieved. Varela (1999, p.9) thus argues that we 'have a readiness-for-action proper to every specific lived situation. Moreover, we are constantly moving from one readiness-for-action to another', and this readiness-for-action is often a pre-cognitive state of perceptual preparedness for it is this 'perceptual guidance of action' which constructs our view of the world (Varela 1999, p.17). For Varela (ibid, original emphasis) we can only come to know the world through action, thus 'we can say that the world we know is not pre-given, it is, rather, *enacted*', any understanding of the world is therefore momentarily reached through our responses to our situation within it. Thus here;

> 'Actions...do not spring from judgment and reasoning, but from an *immediate coping* with what is confronting us. We can only say we do such things because the situation brought forth the actions from us. And yet these are true ethical actions; in fact, in our daily, normal life they represent the most common kind of ethical behavior' (ibid, p.5, original emphasis).

Within this framing of the ethical 'the practical activities of embodied human beings give priority to "know-how" over propositional knowledge' (Connolly 2002, p.92). This is not an insignificant claim, for it implies that ethics must be considered as about more than purely rational judgements and knowledge, rather ethics becomes an embodied, lived stance towards the world in which ethical *sensibilities* are *enacted*. Thrift (2004b, p.94) thus argues that 'what is needed is a pragmatics of human transformation. In particular, this

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must mean valuing to a greater extent the kind of behaviour we currently group under categories like 'intuition' and 'improvisation''.

Such an emergent, situational ethics, would be concerned with 'working on the faculty of judgement as it is actually exercised – in the immediate present' (Thrift 2004b, p.93), for it is in this immediate present that events and encounters have the capacity to surprise and to shock, to throw off guard previous ideals and open space for the new. This form of ethical thinking calls for experimentation, for working through encounters as a means to alter the manner in which one responds to the encounters of the future. For Connolly (2002, p.132-133);

> 'Ethical work is typically experimental, since it usually occurs in new contexts where established codes show themselves to be too blunt and crude and new patterns of visceral judgments have not yet been consolidated. You do not know what you are doing when you participate in it…we regularly develop strategies to work on ourselves in modest ways not incorporated into the intellectualist narratives of moral theory'.

While Connolly (1993, 2002) draws on those 'arts of the self' proposed by Foucualt (1986), and Thrift (2004a, 2004b) upon the ethics of Spinoza, Varela (1999, p.30-31) turns to the early Confucianist work of Mencius, to suggest that 'truly ethical behavior does not arise from mere habit or from obedience to patterns or rules. Truly expert people act from extended inclinations…and thus transcend the limitations inherent in a repertoire of purely habitual responses'. Despite their divergent influences however, these writers are united by a concern to focus upon the human capacity to flourish, and look to 'producing dispositions that are open to the moment' (Thrift 2004b, p.97). Being open to the moment is about practicing the ability to encounter others openly and thus to mould those pre-cognitive resources of 'immediate coping' which come to the fore in moments of eventful, and often impromptu, encounter. As McCormack (2003, p.503) argues;

> 'If ethics-as-rule following demands both that one knows in advance how to conduct oneself in particular situations, and that action is evaluated on the basis of moral codes, ethics as sensibility or ethos demands an openness to the uncertain affective potentiality of the eventful encounter as that from which new ways of going on in the world might emerge'.

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Ethics is a continual fine tuning of the sensibility or ethos of the individual towards others, so that this disposition might be usefully, and responsibly, brought to bear on future encounters. Through encountering we enact and constantly renew, revise and relearn our ethos towards others, as a 'virtual memory' of past engagements offers us ways to move forward (Connolly 2002; Swanton 2008).

To return to my central concern with this space of giving and asylum, Varela (1999, p.75) concludes that this 'skillful approach to living is based on a pragmatics of transformation that demands nothing less than a moment-to-moment awareness of the virtual nature of our selves. In its full unfolding it opens up openness as authentic caring', and I would suggest that such openness itself presents a return to Coles' (1997) belief in a receptive generosity which acts as a continual moment of questioning, a notion which demands of the self a 'suppleness and interrogative comportment' (Coles 1997, p.22) that has been clear throughout these contemporary readings of situated ethics. As Coles (1997, p.3) asserts;

> 'The most difficult and often the highest aspect of giving is receiving the other in agonistic dialogical engagements. Such engagement is not reducible to an a priori injunction to "let be". Rather, it is an effort to erode a priori closures so that the play of mutual transfigurations which are a condition of possibility for sense, intelligence, and well-being might thrive'.

Considerations of ethics as an immediate art of cultivating a generous sensibility towards the world present, in my view, an effort to work with these demands of generosity. I want to now consider how far we might see such prosaic ethics being enacted within The Talking Shop, not as a space of adherence to static, sedentary moral codes, but as a site of improvisational response.

The Ethical Expertise of The Talking Shop

Foucault's (1985, 1986) examination of arts of the self, from which some of this current strand of ethical thought arises, highlights such activity as fundamentally social, thus the 'care of the self – or the attention one devotes to the care that others should take of themselves – appears as an intensification of social relations' (Foucault 1986, p.53), such activity constitutes 'not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice' (ibid, p.51).

Similarly I suggest that it is through the social relations of the drop-in centre that we might see such care of the self and by extension for others, being practiced, worked at and embodied in individual's responses to one another. My argument proceeds in two halves, the first considers the outcome of such practices, most notably the ways in which this space was seen to foster an open orientation towards the world. I then examine how this might be achieved, through allowing for the not inconsiderable work that goes into attuning oneself to the unpredictable nature of these relationships to both others and the material nature of this space itself.

During my interviews with those who attended The Talking Shop a sense of responsive generosity became narrated through casting the self as open to contestation, to difference and to question. As Omar comments;

> The British people as well I thought after two months, three months, she is changed or he is changed, because it is the way it works, it changes me as well as he or she, it is a way in which both is changed it is not just one way. I found you become more open in mind about some things...and I think this is very important for both people (Omar Interview, 2006).

Thus for Omar;

> It is people coming together, and it is changing your view of things or becoming more soft not like this hard and rigid, in this moment unfortunately we don't have many of these places for people to come and talk to each other, just come to talk to each other and we can find we have much in common (Omar Interview, 2006).

In a similar fashion Ilya and I discussed these gestures towards opening in the following interview extract;

> *Interviewer*: What do you think binds the people who come here together?
>
> *Ilya*: I think there are two-way gains really, one way there are asylum seekers who needs the help and there are people who are willing to help them...just the interaction of cultures, interaction of nationalities it broadens them in that way, because you can have views on certain countries and people but when you meet them in person those stereotypes practically disappear and you give the other person the same feelings, the same impression, and you find a lot of these personal

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meetings can change a lot of things, your understanding and your views of others and all those things.

Interviewer: And do you think that's a fundamental part of [The Talking Shop]?

Ilya: Of course, sometimes it's very hard to admit if you're defending something and you don't want to kind of abandon your position, but it's in how you defend something and allowing someone else to comment and accept that they have a fair point, maybe not that time and that conversation but you take it on board and you think about it and maybe next time when you meet other person or in other situation you won't defends those stereotypes and practically you are changed in that way (Ilya Interview, 2007).

For both Ilya and Omar the relationships which emerge through The Talking Shop act to alter individuals, they push and pull at the bounds of self-constitution. The work of slow alteration which Ilya refers to generates a sense of that 'critical responsiveness' which we saw being advocated through the work of City of Sanctuary. Connolly (1999a) views such a disposition as a radicalised tolerance based around continual renegotiation of the boundaries of self-constituency, thus 'where tolerance implies benevolence towards others amid stability of ourselves, critical responsiveness involves active work on our current identities in order to modify the terms of relation between us and them' (ibid, p.62). This active work is represented through those moments of change which Ilya and Omar attest to, this active work is accomplished through The Talking Shop as a site in which ethical questioning comes into being. Similarly, Thrift (2004b, p.93) suggests that 'everyday moments of encounter can be cultivated to build an ethics of generosity by stimulating affective energy and by refining the perceptual toolkits necessary to build moral stances'. The encounters of The Talking Shop, of a weekly brushing against others, act as just such a means of cultivation, not always successful and not always positive, they continue to perform a series of openings to difference through which moments of critical responsiveness might potentially be taken forward to affect future encounters.

Responding and Attuning: An Ethics of the Impromptu

If we are to view The Talking Shop as a space of ethical production as much as one of sovereign self-assertion as I suggest, then what properties of such does it display? The key dimension comes in the unpredictable nature of this space, as an arena in which responses

of the moment are demanded, before the ability to fully deliberate. The Talking Shop demands an ethics of the impromptu, as Lynn comments;

> *Lynn*: This is something that's just so organic, it's just grown and we never know quite what will happen, on any particular day for instance, it all depends on who comes in, what they want to talk about, it depends on how people respond...
>
> *Interviewer*: So is there a sense of spontaneity there?
>
> *Lynn*: Absolutely, absolutely.
>
> *Interviewer*: Do you think that makes it an enjoyable place to be?
>
> *Lynn*: Yes, I do, it's the reality of it, it's an opportunity to be oneself and to discover new things, um, hence there's a spontaneity to it, and the openness from everybody to be able to respond to each other (Lynn Interview, 2007).

The Talking Shop presents a constantly demanding environment, one in which one's very presence is structured around an expectation of response. The demand to listen, the demand to talk and to translate all bombard you from an array of angles, yet it is in the moments of openness which responding to these offers, that those responsible ethical gestures which Thrift and Connolly elude to come to be actualised. A generosity of response meant for many volunteers an alteration of their orientation towards both those strangers they encountered and the spaces in which these encounters took place. The Talking Shop allowed for improvisational and responsive interactions to occur, for people to crucially find a way of getting along with one another, as here 'the cultivation of 'expertise' as judgement able to be fully attuned to each event rather than the application of set rules' (Thrift 2004b, p.93) was worked upon. Such work presents a generosity of going into these encounters each time anew, of being open to the unexpected. Here Lynn's account of The Talking Shop's openness and ability to respond fits well with Omar and Ilya's accounts of a perspective of critical responsiveness being generated within individuals through this space.

As Conradson (2003c) found volunteers were often trained to listen and to refer individuals to other services if they felt it appropriate. Drop-in centres, to a certain extent, train volunteers to show particular forms of care and empathy, as Conradson (2003b, p.512-513) notes 'in a sense such training seeks to cultivate a particular affective and ethical stance of

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care toward service users'. However this form of ethical cultivation alone is by no means exhaustive, rather the spontaneity of this site, its uncertain and excessive, eruptive nature meant that any form of ethical training could never be enough, rather at various unpredictable moments volunteers had to react beyond and before a series of trained judgement decisions took place. The centrality of (open) response to this space which Lynn highlights is therefore key to the main outcome she witnesses through the drop-in centre, the ability to discover new things about others and oneself. Such a process of embodied and tacit learning would not be accomplished if The Talking Shop relied purely upon a set of established moral codes and rules, for there would be no openness to the possibility of the new, either within oneself, or with others.

However, as I mentioned previously, the ethical cultivation offered through this space was not consigned purely to its unpredictable nature and the interpersonal encounters which took place here. In addition to this, we can see this technique of developing a generous sensibility at play within the negotiation of the space of the drop-in centre itself and its material accomplishment. The rooms in which The Talking Shop took place were both filled with a series of small tables, each with four or five chairs designed to facilitate small discussions and conversations. People could be social at some, private at others, some would be teaching, while others simply had a drink in silence. Part of the notable geography of these often chaotic, noisy, rooms was the way in which each of these tables became, albeit briefly, a world in itself, an affective island connected and yet separated from the rest of the room. When you sat down your attention was called for, you became drawn into the world of the table and the generosity of giving a listening ear, a smile and a welcoming word. The table, and the immediacy of those around you, demanded your full attention. The table acted to draw people together, to fix and link individuals in an engagement and in doing so it acted to mediate those moments of ethical response which arise through The Talking Shop. In the same way that the Home Office letter and the newspaper acted to define and delimit certain positions, relationships and intimacies with, and within, this space, so this series of tables provided the material basis, the facilitation, for moments of ethical response.

Figure 5.4. Responding across the table (Source: Author's Photograph).

Moving through the room, from table to table, thus became a matter of negotiating and traversing not only space, but also demands to respond;

> Today I moved around the room hectically as there were a number of people I wanted to talk to. As I moved from table to table, stopping at each for around twenty minutes to chat, I became aware that as I moved, each time my position changed, I also had to change, I was performing myself differently in these microworlds. I was responding to what I felt others wanted of me, Omar engaged me in a calm, friendly, chat about music, women and art, then I was sitting next to Tinashe as he forcefully made a case for why the British government had no sense of human rights, then Rubi was telling me how her children were getting on in a Sheffield school, then, finally, I was faced with Adil's account of his time in a detention centre (Research Diary, 3rd February 2007).

At each of these points I became slightly different, I attempted to attune myself to the affective charge of those around me and adjust my responses accordingly. I would certainly

not claim to have been successful in this and an array of awkward moments of misunderstanding, confusion and occasional annoyance came to the surface. However it is this sense of an environment which forces one to respond differently, to constantly adapt that, I feel is important here. The acknowledgment that one is continually under demand to be different, to respond with a generosity which does not hold the self in place but rather opens it to others, not only presents that sense of continual ethical learning which Varela (1999) and Thrift (2004b) argue needs to be examined and developed as a means to affect the politics of everyday life (Thrift 2004a, 2005), but also, perhaps as importantly, allows one to respond generously in the present to those one is faced with. I cannot claim success in this endeavor, and I would be suspicious of any who would, yet on this continual path of ethical expertise, of responding to each situation with responsibility, some volunteers clearly engaged in such practices, they reacted to all demands with a generous and open disposition 'illustrative of what might be described as an expanded subjectivity; that is a way of being and relating to others that extended beyond [their]...previous domain of being and affect' (Conradson 2003b, p.516).

Space and the Aura of Ethics

These microspaces, relations and events came together to form something unique, a space-time of momentary enaction, and a space-time which held a critical purchase on the ethical selves of those who performed it. The Talking Shop brought together not simply a space of ethical reflection, but a series of minor, fragile and fleeting spaces of giving and receiving, spaces wherein those micropolitics of sensibility worked on in the previous chapter by the City of Sanctuary movement are again in evidence as emergent and situational responses to others. Connolly (2002, p.19-20, original emphasis) argues that such 'relational techniques of the self', represent 'choreographed mixtures of word, gesture, image, sound, rhythm, smell, and touch that help to define the sensibility in which your perception, thinking, identity, beliefs, and judgment are set'. This myriad of connections, influences and mediators came together to not only create a unique and ever changing space of encounter between asylum seekers and volunteers, one where negotiations of belonging and the very nature of charity were played out, but the confluence of human and non-human connections also created a space in which ethical dispositions could be attuned, worked upon and practiced in that micropolitical sense noted in Chapter Four. The Talking Shop organized

attachments, it arranged people, objects and ideas into close proximity and allowed for the encounters which such proximity brought to be played out. For some The Talking Shop meant not only a different view of asylum, which was taken forth into other diverse engagements, but also an opening to the world, lived through an appreciation of what it meant to respond, simply and with care to a series of demands from others (see Barnett *et al.* 2008). Rekindling a sense of receptive generosity through this space is a reflection of one way this responsibility might be considered, for here 'volunteers give freely in and of the moment without the expectation that service users should respond in specific ways' (Johnson *et al.* 2005, p.334), as 'receptive generosity is most likely at the level of day-to-day performances' (Cloke *et al.* 2007, p.1090).

The ethics created through The Talking Shop developed alongside this space itself, as the relations between asylum seeker and letter, volunteer and newspaper, table, chair and kitchen, continuously made this space and forced the negotiations of belonging, right and ethics which I have sketched throughout this chapter. Moments of receptive generosity, moments of care and kindness, emerged from the demand to respond to this space and to others within it, yet so did moments of exclusion, sovereign assertion and tolerant charity. The unpredictability of The Talking Shop meant that individuals were forced to trace a path through these diverse events, a path that was in part mediated by a range of objects and spaces, such as the newspaper and the kitchen. These suggested particular ways of responding, particular channels to follow, and they also illustrate the role which discourses of Sheffield's wider relation to asylum play within this space, as ideas of what it meant to be charitable, and how one should respond to asylum seekers came to the fore. Within the social and material conditions of acceptable charity and expectations of distinct spatial, and social roles noted earlier, there emerged moments of generosity and openness which were fleeting, fragile and temporary, brief interventions into that normalised setting of power relations noted by Parr (2000). These momentary ethical interventions were born of the intimacies and materials of The Talking Shop itself, they represented responses to events, to demands and to objects which brought together both those accounts and expectations of asylum seen so far throughout this thesis, and the need to respond to those encountered in the here and now. The Talking Shop represented a space where those concurrent urges of sovereign power and welcome noted in Chapter Two, rub against a dizzying array of

connections, materials and relationships, in order to form a space of temporary responses to asylum within the present.

The Talking Shop therefore became a ground for the opening, and occasionally the closing, of selves. Its diverse array of individuals, relations, materials, performances and connections continually remade responses towards others. It was by no means simply a site of uncomplicated generosity, nor simply a demarcated arena in which spatial managers could stake their claims to offer charity to a victimised other. In some ways it was both of these and neither. It was a space of improvisation, of a series of impromptu ethical reactions which forced individuals to test themselves, their convictions and their capacities. Conradson (2003b, p.1980) argues that spaces of care often exhibit an 'affective aura' which 'eludes easy description and representation', and it is here that I wish to conclude, with a sense of that which I have failed to (re)present. Lynn chose to describe this intangible, lived, aspect of The Talking Shop as an ethos. The difficulty Lynn found in describing it came in the fact that The Talking Shop only ever 'made sense' through experience, touch, habit and contact. Lynn described The Talking Shop in the following words;

> I think it's about welcome, it's about a sort of warmth of feeling, if all sorts of different people with their different problems come in and somehow they manage to be absorbed, so that they can actually feel comfortable and I can think of quite a few people who have come in feeling shattered and very nervous and needing so much support and they couldn't get it anywhere else because it just wasn't going to happen for them, because they needed something like this warmth...and I can think of several people who have come here and flourished and started to live again because they have found something here that they couldn't find anywhere else (Lynn Interview, 2007).

In the following chapter I want to move to consider how these generous dispositions, this opening of the self, which may be temporarily accomplished through the situated practices of The Talking Shop, might influence encounters and engagements with the city's public spaces, through considering how asylum seekers discussed and used the common ground of Sheffield.

CHAPTER SIX

ENCOUNTERING WELCOME
PERFORMING ASYLUM IN PUBLIC

'City life is carried on by strangers among strangers' (Bauman 1995, p.126).

'There is no one story in these streets, but the continual struggle to write coherence, legibility, and (il)legitimacy over the top of other stories' (Keith and Pile 1996, p.382).

This chapter turns to the second key space of asylum within Sheffield, the city's public spaces, in order to examine how affective registers of welcome, aversion, comfort and fear are manifested in the ways asylum seekers experience the commons. Laurier and Philo (2006, p.193) argue that the 'city remains the place, above all, of living with others', as the city represents an imagining of 'not only the way we live, but above all the way we live together' (Donald 1999, p.xi). Living together is most often examined through the interactions which take place within the urban public sphere, indeed, as Amin (2007a, p.2, 2007b) argues, there has often been an assumed link between urban public space and urban citizenship, for 'we have come to expect that free and unfettered human mingling in public space encourages forbearance towards others, pleasure in the urban experience, and an interest in civic life'. A range of research has considered the ways in which cities may incorporate difference within the commons (see Young et al. 2006; Law 2002; Sandercock 2003; Wood and Landry 2007), however, as Latham (2003b, p.1702) notes, within such celebrations of heterogeneity, diversity is often 'mediated, engineered and packaged'. The role of urban public space is therefore far from simple, and as Amin (2007a, p.1) notes, we seem 'far removed from the times when the city's central public spaces were a prime political site', rather today '[u]rban public space has become one component in a variegated and distributed field of civic and political practice'. For asylum seekers this component

marked a central engagement with the city and with the spatiality of what it meant to experience asylum and as such this chapter builds upon a series of interview, diary and ethnographic accounts of the city to sketch those encounters, narratives and orderings which constructed a sense of Sheffield through its commons. Through the public spaces of Sheffield I argue that those diverse narratives of the city's relation to asylum as conditionally hospitable (Chapter Three) and those micropolitical accounts of openness to encounters and responsibilities (Chapters Four and Five), come to merge with the very materiality of the urban itself to produce an account of public space where regulation and ordering sit alongside welcome and hospitality and affective responses of comfort and fear are mediated both by these narratives and dispositions and by the physicality of urban spaces themselves.

The chapter thus proceeds in four main sections, the first of these considers those habitual responses to encounter we saw emerging at The Talking Shop in the previous chapter and how such responses are deployed in the 'prosaic negotiations' of the street. Encounters with individuals, acts of walking and in particular green spaces are viewed as positive affective engagements with both past and present in the city. I then move to consider the affective undercurrent of such moments as a mood of indifference and misanthropy constructs asylum seekers as suspicious and unwelcome 'guests'. In arguing that these two responses to asylum in public space intermingle and co-construct the spaces of the city, spaces of *both* welcome and suspicion, I consider the political implications of such thought through the example of a particular site, Sheffield's Peace Gardens. Here a space viewed as open and welcoming is also heavily regulated and ordered through modes of city centre 'management'. However, I argue that such regulation should not necessarily be seen as inherently exclusionary for Sheffield's asylum seekers, rather what emerges is a complex interplay between regulations and freedoms, such that these conditions become the very invitation of (conditional) hospitality we noted in Chapter Three. The chapter then turns to an event which seeks to display a collaborative ideal of the city as an 'oeuvre', Sharrow Lantern Festival. Through mobilising Lefebvre's (1996a) writings on the 'right to the city', this case suggests an emergent politics of 'small achievements' (Swanton 2008) based upon the right to residency and presence as a claim to space. In concluding I argue that the spatial experiences of asylum seekers developed through these accounts point to a dual orientation towards public space, combining a comfort and freedom in simply 'being there', with an

impulse to deploy those micropolitical and generous sensibilities noted previously to create moments of solidarity and collective belonging.

Encountering the City

I want to open by considering a series of encounters with public space which generated a sense of Sheffield as a welcoming place. In many accounts of the city asylum seekers and others described it as 'welcoming', as somehow more accepting of difference than other cities. Sheffield was seen to display a 'friendly' ethos, a mood within the public which made many asylum seekers feel comfortable, secure and, to a certain extent, 'at home'. Such narration can be viewed in the representations of the city by Omar, an asylum seeker, and Jacob, a charity worker and refugee;

> Sheffield is very nice I will travel to other cities I will find that Sheffield is more friendly and people is more kind. I've never seen this kind of hospitality in other cities. I've never faced any racism in this city, but I saw another city just for one hour, I found the people there just so stupid, yeah, really in this city I find it is easy to find nice people (Omar Interview, 2007).

> London is dog eat dog but in Sheffield actually people were welcoming it's very interesting, like when you get into a bus somebody will say hi to you and when they go they will say bye, and to me that is more than I had seen before, but when you go to London it's more dog eat dog and that put me off the place. I can say that Sheffield is more receptive compared to other places (Jacob Interview, 2007).

Both of these presentations view Sheffield as a 'receptive' and 'friendly' city, constructed through a contrast to other cities viewed as less welcoming. This was a common thread in my contact with asylum seekers in Sheffield, while similarly Rishbeth and Finney (2006, p.285), note in a study of asylum and refugee perceptions of public space in Sheffield that their participants 'seemed to enjoy living in Sheffield, and on a number of occasions volunteered comments on the friendliness of the city. Most had lived elsewhere in the UK for a number of months, and compared Sheffield favourably to these other places'. What such common accounts gesture towards is the intangible nature of what makes Sheffield 'welcoming'. Asylum seekers had difficulty pinning down exactly what achieved this urban sensibility, partially it was the help and support offered through spaces like the Talking Shop, but it was also performed through the general 'mood' and 'atmosphere' of the city. In

a number of accounts this 'mood' was distilled through a series of helpful encounters, moments in which communication and kindness came to the fore. Thus, as Amin and Thrift (2002, p.30, original emphasis) argue, 'encounter, and the reaction to it, is a formative element in the urban world. So places...are best thought of not so much as enduring sites but as *moments of encounter*'. These moments of encounter in Sheffield provided a means through which the city was constructed as a welcoming space.

The first of these accounts comes from an interview with Rubi;

> *Interviewer*: What do you like about Sheffield?
>
> *Rubi*: The first thing I like is the people you know, it's like all smiley faces you know, this is the first thing I saw was nice people, because when I came my English was not good and I have to ask people, and for everything I have to ask you know. When the first appointment with my solicitor in Rotherham I have to ask where it is, and they help me, really they are very nice the people, they very friendly, nice faces, helpful people...
>
> *Interviewer*: So these first people you met and spoke to in Sheffield...what were they like, did they make you feel welcome?
>
> *Rubi*: It was my first day in Sheffield and the first thing that has happened to me make me feel comfort, or that I am going to be you know alright in this country. Even those people I met on the first day, like I ask them and they give me directions, and the bus driver I never can forgot him. I didn't know about the money for the bus and just I took the money and realised it was £20 but I didn't know how much that was, but I give it to him and he understand and he say you're alright and didn't take any money, he gave me the trip for free and dropped me in the town and he showed me the place, and how I should go to the shops, and said when I finish I should go to that place to get the bus back home. So that made me feel it's alright and give me a big smile and you know the first impression I get of the people is they are nice, they are helpful and this has made me carry on from then.
>
> *Interviwer*: So do you think that bus driver who did that, do you think he's out of the ordinary for Sheffield or do think a lot of people are like him?
>
> *Rubi*: Um, yeah I think a lot of people are like that really...the good thing you know I haven't met any people who aren't helping (Rubi Interview, 2007).

In a similar vein Ilya highlights his first experience of Sheffield as a friendly and positive one;

Ilya: I have a solicitor in Sheffield and I couldn't find the address of where to get a bus, and I meet a guy, a stranger, I asked for the bus stop and so he did a u-turn and he walked me to a bus stop about three hundred metres and he made sure this bus was going there, and he asked the driver and I was amazed and a bit embarrassed, but it's like he gave me a very human impression and a very good impression.

Interviewer: And has that impression continued with other people you've met?

Ilya: Yeah, most of the time, for example maybe I'm going to the right places because those people are there like churches and the drop-in centres, but I haven't had any bad encounters with people in Sheffield, it's been positive, very positive (Ilya Interview, 2007).

For Rubi and Ilya these encounters, through which strangers displayed a sense of care and concern for them, are taken to reflect the more general attitude and ethos of Sheffield. Both comment that they haven't had any 'bad encounters' in Sheffield and that the individuals who helped them gave them a positive impression which has remained since. For Ilya this was a 'human impression', akin to that produced through the care of the Talking Shop in Chapter Five, and for Rubi such moments allowed her to 'carry on' through the early days of bewildering isolation in the city.

Alongside Rubi and Ilya many other asylum seekers seemed aware that the city and its public spaces could be a terrifying, isolating and confusing place. For those like Rubi who were dispersed to the city with little knowledge of English the simple act of 'getting by' on a daily basis, of finding a bus stop, finding the shops, of counting the appropriate amount of money and of tracing a root back home again, proved anything but simple. The public spaces of the city took on a challenging dimension for asylum seekers trying to navigate them, not only through the fear of getting lost, but also through the urban anxiety of facing strangers at every turn (Robins 1995). Within this context of everyday challenges the spaces of The Talking Shop and the generous sensibilities brought to bear within this site played a key role in alleviating some of these fears, as did schemes set up through the NRC to befriend and mentor refugees and asylum seekers. While these means of interaction and learning allowed individuals like Rubi and Ilya to develop language skills, build mental, and material, maps of the city and begin to understand how Sheffield worked, the

encounters they narrate, of unexpected acts of kindness, also work towards allowing them to feel more comfortable in the city, to lessen the anxiety felt through simply being there.

Testing 'Immediate Coping'

These encounters allow us to view Sheffield's streets in a different light with reference to asylum, for they become not only spaces through which urban life is negotiated as Bauman (2005) points out, but also spaces in and through which those dispositions of generosity and care which we saw being worked upon in The Talking Shop are played out and employed in the prosaic negotiations of the street. If we are to view The Talking Shop as a site of ethical and embodied learning (after Varela 1999 and Thrift 2004b), then we might view the street as a site where such 'generous sensibilities' are put to the test, in those unexpected encounters which call for a hospitality to the situation (Ahmed 2000; Dewsbury *et al.* 2002). As we saw in Chapter Five, in The Talking Shop although individuals are forced to respond to momentary and often unexpected demands, there is still an overarching mediation of ethics spatially. The Talking Shop is after all a space temporarily created through, and for, the giving of a specific form of care, there is an expectation that responses will be positive, welcoming and reciprocal here. The Talking Shop, as I have described it, allows for the cultivation of ethical sensibilities towards difference through engagement, yet the encounters which public space calls forth hold a host of different questions.

Encounters in the streets are largely the unexpected at its most unexpected. Here improvisation is taken to a different level, as individuals reach any encounter without an expectation of meeting. More often than not being asked for the bus route takes us by surprise and the reaction to such questioning reflects and influences those sensibilities towards the world which Connolly (2002) and others (Bennett 2001; Thrift 2004b) discuss. I think we can begin to note a turn to the street as a space for the improvisational testing of such ethics when we consider Derrida's consideration of what it means to be ethical, and what it means to make responsible judgements, he argues that;

> 'No responsibility is taken if at a given moment one could not decide *without knowing*, without knowledge, theoretical reflection, the *determinate* inquiry having encountered its limit or its suspension, its interruption. Without this interruption there would never be a decision or responsibility,

but only the deployment consequent to a *determinate* knowledge, the imperturbable application of rules, of rules known or knowable, the deployment of a program with full knowledge of the facts' (Derrida 2002, p. 298, original emphasis).

Thus;

'I would...say that it is to the extent that knowledge does not program everything in advance, to the extent that knowledge remains suspended and undecided as to action, to the extent that a responsible decision as such will never be measured by any form of knowledge, by a clear and distinct certainty or by a theoretical judgement, that there can and must be responsibility or decision' (ibid, p.178).

For Derrida the responsibility of the decision comes with its unknowable and instinctive qualities, with the fact that we are forced to decide in the moment of action, and any such action must be unique and 'constantly strategic' (ibid, p.180). Action and response must hence be 'elevated at each moment from standpoints that are finite' (ibid, p.181). This is a call to highlight a contextualized and situated concern with responding to others, the kind of situated sensibility which was illustrated through The Talking Shop in Chapter Five. The street, and its unpredictable sense of encounter, engagement and aversion, may be viewed as the natural space of negotiation for such a responsive sensibility. More than this, I would argue that these streets are constantly generated, and perpetuated, through such situated engagement. As Thrift (2005, p.140) asserts;

'Morality is not, of course, a purely cognitive process. It has strong affective components. It is quite clear that all kinds of situations are freighted with affective inputs and consequences that are central to their moral outcomes which come from affective histories that arise from complex histories of being victims and of victimization that produce a sense of fairness and concern that will build into a consensus in some situations and not in others.'

The 'affective histories' of Rubi and Ilya contributed not only to the ways in which they encountered others, how they asked for help, what words, gestures and signals they employed, but also how they responded to such assistance, what they took it to mean. For both parties in such an exchange the public space of this encounter is altered, constituted differently within that moment, and created anew in its wake. For Rubi and Ilya the

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knowledge they have gained allows them to see the spaces of the present with more potential and less fear, to know where they are going, yet it also does more than this. Through the linkage of such moments of situated response to the broader image of the city as a whole these streets, and possibly by extension other public spaces, cease to be such anxious places, they take on a memory of helpful and friendly individuals. Spaces come to be known and narrated partially through such encounters and I want to now consider how a willingness to encounter, to enter into such moments of communication, was viewed as fundamental to making Sheffield a 'welcoming' city.

A Disposition Towards Encounter

As I have already noted, many of the asylum seekers I met described Sheffield as a welcoming place through counterposing it with other cities variously imagined as 'less welcoming', 'racist' or 'unfriendly'. Part of the way in which such an ethos was narrated was through encounters of the kind Rubi and Ilya describe, but also through a generalised sense of willingness to encounter on the part of Sheffield's population. During an interview with Zada, an asylum seeker, and Anna, a student volunteer, I asked if Zada had lived anywhere else in the UK;

> *Zada*: Yeah, I used to live in the north east and in London for a time. In Middlesborough for a while, so I moved down here and I find it better than the north east, the people are more friendly and welcoming you know.

> *Interviwer*: How are they more welcoming to you?

> *Zada*: You can communicate with them you know, if you talk to them they will talk to you so it's no problem.

> *Anna*: Is that sort of on a day to day basis in shops and things or is that partly through things like [The Talking Shop]?

> *Zada*: Yeah kind of [The Talking Shop] and if you go to pub and public places people are nice to you, school, college, more than in the north east (Zada and Anna Interview, 2007).

In a similar way, Shariq, describes the differences between being dispersed to Manchester and subsequently being moved to Sheffield;

Shariq: ...apart from the people Manchester is bigger or feels bigger, but for the people Manchester, the people in Sheffield are more friendly than in Manchester.

Interviewer: How do you think they're more friendly?

Shariq: So, uh, when I try to get close to some English people they were uh, I don't know just, they seemed to look at me like stranger you know, whoever I try to talk to they make me feel stranger. But when I come here I feel they trust me and I can talk to people.

Interviewer: So did you feel uncomfortable in Manchester?

Shariq: Yes quite, in Manchester there was no communicating with English people (Shariq Interview, 2007).

Both Zada and Shariq highlight the importance of being able to communicate with 'English people', and comment that it is this which contributes greatly to a sense of being 'welcome' in the city. Zada remarks that such friendliness is seen through 'people being nice to you' in public spaces, parks and so on, while for Shariq the contrast to Manchester is based upon his inability to connect with people there, in particular his comment that 'they seemed to look at me like stranger' suggests unwelcoming gestures. Glances which, though they may not have been intentionally hostile, were at the very least not open to communication. In both of these accounts we can view Sheffield's public spaces as sites through which friendliness is lived out, created and continued, and these in turn help to create a mood for the city as a whole. Indeed, as Sercan commented;

Interviewer: Do you think you can see those small acts as examples of the city being welcoming?

Sercan: It's a part of it, it's not all of it like in the street if you find some person and you want to ask him about a place or something he will smile to you and help you if he can and, um, that kind of hospitality as well just helping people.

Interviewer: So the everyday does make a difference?

Sercan: Yes in everyday acts you find people you know, more and more hospitable and even now we know that if you need it, if you need some help...when you find a welcome in the person in front of you feel hospitality.

Interviewer: Do those things then add up to provide a sense of the city as a home?

Sercan: Until now yes, I found the other people more hospitable, but you know a while ago I go to Broomhill to go to a GP's and all the other people there were English and they start looking at me and to say what is this person doing here because there are no foreigners in that place. But even so I was waiting for bus after I finished and one old man come and he make a joke with me about the weather and so he was very welcoming you know, maybe he found me strange to be here but even so he didn't mind so I feel he was hospitable (Sercan Interview, 2007).

Sheffield was constructed for Sercan as a hospitable place, partially at least, through his encounters with people on the street, with the man at the bus stop, the smile from the stranger and in such 'everyday acts'. While welcome was never complete, a sense of foreignness still gripped him in the waiting room, the performative reiteration of gestures of friendliness, from smiles to directions and jokes among strangers, allowed many asylum seekers to feel, if not 'at home', then at least more comfortable in the present. These relations enact a generous sensibility which crucially gives those asylum seekers encountered a sense of feeling welcome, an intangible affective response of others being willing to help and not to simply glance in the other direction. Thus, as Latham and McCormack (2004, p.706) argue;

> 'The affective materiality of the urban is not therefore reducible to the emotional experience of the city. Rather, to speak of the affective materiality of the urban is to speak of the intensity of the relations in and through which it consists, relations that are always more than personal and are always playing out before the reflective event of thought kicks in'.

An affective materiality of relations within urban public space acts through these moments of encounter to provide an intensity of feeling for those with whom I spoke. While many asylum seekers described Sheffield as a 'welcoming' and 'friendly' place, very few felt able to communicate quite how this feeling came about, quite how the city achieved this sense of hospitality. I would suggest therefore that, among a range of other things, these situated encounters play a key role in the development of such an affective sensibility of the city. If this ethos is hard to communicate it is, partially at least, because much of its constituent work is done below the level of cognitive thought, before and between cognitive recognition as Latham and McCormack (2004) argue (Harrison 2000; Thrift and Dewsbury

2000). The construction of Sheffield as a welcoming city is a complex one, and one which is often highly individual, personal and situational, relying upon the interaction of multiple performances, narratives, encounters and histories as Chapter Three highlighted. However, I think we can begin to trace here how encounters in public space, such as those described above, act to draw together these strands of welcoming, solidify them into a moment of caring presence, and connect an affective encounter to an individual's sense of the city itself, and of their potential future within it. The experience of a space of asylum, be it a street, park or public square, is projected onto an image of Sheffield as a whole. With these encounters in mind I want to consider the ways in which asylum seekers described certain spaces as 'welcoming' and to examine the range of affective encounters which generated these intensities of feeling.

Walking the Streets: Occupation and Preoccupation

Throughout my time at The Talking Shop it struck me that there was an immense sense of boredom which filled asylum seekers' lives. Without the right to work and with access to English language classes reduced, asylum seekers in the city simply had very little to do, as my research diary notes;

> As The Talking Shop was winding down today I went over to speak with Zada, it's a Friday and so I ask, almost without thinking, 'what are you up to for the weekend?' His response is to laugh and simply say 'nothing much, everyday is a weekend for me'. I laugh in response, as I hope this is what he expects, and this reaction seems to go down well. Everyday for Zada becomes a routine of nothingness, occasionally punctuated with events, such as The Talking Shop and English classes, but these are exceptions within a norm of waiting, just waiting' (Research Diary, 26th January 2007).

Within this situation it became clear that many of the asylum seekers I met at the Talking Shop could be seen during the week walking through the streets and shops of the city centre;

> It's a Saturday and I have a few hours spare before meeting Ruth and Jen so I walk into the city centre. I wander through a number of shops and end up in The Forum on Division Street. As I'm absent mindedly looking through a rack of shirts the man next to me says hello, it's Hassan from The Talking Shop, I ask how he is and what he's up to, he tells me that he's bored, so

he's just walking around the shops, it's something he normally does even though he tells me he can never afford to buy anything in most of them (Research Diary 13th January 2007).

After this encounter I begin on subsequent visits to the city centre to notice asylum seekers wandering in this manner, this was not about consumerism but rather about occupation, about getting away from the isolation of asylum as a process of waiting and simply occupying oneself in the city. The act of walking around the streets allowed asylum seekers to escape the isolation of home and to feel, partially at least, as though they were part of the city, and of the prosaic nature of urban space shown in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1. Division Street (Source: Author's Photograph).

Walking therefore offered a brief means of escape within the city for asylum seekers, achieved in two main senses. The first of these follows the work of Michel de Certeau (1984) in arguing that walking offers a means through which one may temporarily elude the spatial orders that define the city's streets. Here the urban inhabitant becomes a spatial

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'inventor' who 'actualises some of the possibilities' within the city by means of the particular path taken (de Certeau 1984, p.98). While methods of spatial management seek to control and order the paths we take through the city, openings and possibilities within such paths will always emerge. These 'shrewd ways of moving around society' (Katz 2000, p.36, cited Thrift 2004a, p.47), represent a series of tacit skills for negotiating space, from knowing when to cross the road to the often unconsciously enacted responses of sidestepping obstacles and potential hazards. All of these pathways and actions offer a space of improvisation, freedom and potential, they offer a chance to perform spaces differently.

In this tactical fashion walking manifests a logic of spatial dislocation and subverts those means of control which seek to restrict the mobility of asylum seekers to a given house, street and neighbourhood. Within a context where spatial mobility is constrained, by having to report to the police once a week, and having a highly routinised series of pathways through the city, from home to The Talking Shop, college, and shops then back home again[1], the ability to simply wander, to go where one pleased, offered a certain level of freedom. Naturally such freedom was never complete, and always constrained within those 'strategies' (de Certeau 1984) of dominant spatial inscription which denied access to certain spaces. Yet for many individuals walking was all they had as an activity which was free, both financially and in their choice of pathways. Walking afforded the bare minimum of mobility, choice, and the faintest possibility of entering into those kinds of encounters witnessed earlier as one was never sure who one might meet on the street (see Figure 6.2).

The sense of encounter which may come about through walking the city presents the second means through which walking presents a form of escape for asylum seekers, that of a desire to feel part of 'the crowd'. Being present in the public spaces of Sheffield allowed some asylum seekers to feel like 'anyone else' and to grasp what it might mean to be a 'Sheffielder'[2]. Ideas of urban anonymity came across in my discussions with Shariq about his diary;

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[1] These routine pathways of daily practice reflect those found by Cloke et al. (2008) when discussing the spatial uses of the city by homeless people, who often circulate from spaces of care and provision to spaces to sleep and shelter.

[2] This ideal of 'being a Sheffielder' was seen as the successful result of a process of integration into the city by both asylum seekers themselves and a number of councillors I spoke with.

Interviewer: Reading your diary I noticed this bit about you not feeling like a stranger and feeling you could 'go on'; I wanted to ask how important is that sense of being able 'to go on'?

Shariq: I think what I was trying to say is all about again the hospitality of the people, you know it comes through them and through them you feel more relaxed.

Interviewer: So were you trying to say that when you're in the city and it's busy you feel...

Shariq: ...Yeah when I am in town and I see lots of people and walk around I feel like myself you know. I feel comfortable, like when I was in a crowd in Manchester I feel insecure and a bit lost you know and don't feel happy, but in Sheffield I feel better about it, safer, and it's a very strange feeling really.

Interviewer: So what is the difference between the two?

Shariq: I think it's inside me you know, I feel just right here and I see the people and the shops here and they just appeal to me more, it's an emotional attachment in a way and Manchester was totally different when I go to the town I didn't want to go inside the shops and people didn't help me you know and I feel kind of fed up with being there (Shariq Interview, 2007).

Shariq articulates not only a feeling of attachment to a place, but also how such an attachment is felt through being involved in this space. Comfort is linked to feeling safe within a crowd, a feeling which in part may relate back to Shariq's earlier statements about his encounters in both Sheffield and Manchester. In these accounts Manchester was unwelcoming as the people ignored him while in Sheffield they made an effort to smile and it is the memory of these engagements which Shariq relies upon to develop an 'emotional attachment' to the city. With this sense of safety in the commons Shariq was able to feel more 'relaxed' and connected to others. Shariq's past encounters had instilled within him a sense of comfort and the ability to walk through the city and enjoy its pleasures as others did. The comfort that he drew from being able to feel a part of the city, and of city life, was therefore a key means through which he negotiated the tensions of the asylum process.

Figure 6.2. Walking the City, Encountering Others (Source: Author's Photograph).

Finally, when considering the role of walking it is important to note not only the tactical aspects of this practice, but also its possible therapeutic nature (Anderson 2004). Walking was a method through which a number of asylum seekers talked about reconciling the memories of the past with their present situation, for, as Pile (2002, p.114) notes, 'walking the streets allows memories to flood in', thus here 'in a flash, the past, the present and the future are combined and recombined' (ibid, p.115). Naveed presented just such a case in his interview;

> Because of the problem I have I have to leave my country, Iran. I've always had a fear because of my memories and I'm always having to carry that fear and I lost everything, my family whatever I had, uh, so it was not anything else for which I come here expect to save me and my life, that was all I was

thinking about all that time. All those days all I used to do because I had these thoughts was about fifteen hours a day I would just walk, I would just walk, walk, walk, walk and I was just thinking about the problems that I had in my country (Naveed Interview, 2007).

For Naveed there was little else to do but walk. Accessing the city provided both an escape from the isolation of asylum accommodation, but also gave him the freedom and space to think through his current situation, to contemplate the past and his immediate future. Pinder (2001, p.9) argues that 'it is through walking that connections are made with stories that are interwoven in the space-times of the city' and thus through these walks 'new as well as old inscriptions of meaning could be created and...re-encountered' (Anderson 2004, p.258; see Morris 2004). The walks which Naveed took, like the encounters of public space we noted earlier, provide a means through which 'everyday experience *transcends* the here and now, as people weave previous knowledge and biography into immediate situated action' (Kusenbach 2003, p.478, original emphasis). The spaces of the city for Naveed were created through the interaction of narratives, memories and histories he brought to these spaces, and those responses which such engagements with the 'flesh and stone' (Amin and Thrift 2002, p.10) of Sheffield called forth.

Walking may have been all Naveed had at that time, and this was itself a fragile commodity, yet its importance as a mode of contemplation, relaxation and situating oneself should not be underestimated. The act of walking thus points towards one of the central spatial experiences of the city for asylum seekers, that of the right to simply be there, to access and interact with public space itself in a relatively free manner. What this suggests is that the meaning of public space is radically different for different social actors. Those walks narrated to me by a number of asylum seekers were therefore not about consumption or purpose themselves, but rather about occupation, freedom and the ability to encounter the city. Walking freely provided the bare minimum of contact and access to public space, however simply accessing this minimum engagement with public space was central to many individuals' lives as it allowed them to feel part of the city, to gain a sense of freedom and to contemplate their pasts as I have argued. This is not to valorise walking the streets of the city in itself, indeed many of the reasons for this activity arise from the inability to work in the UK, but it is to suggest that there was a bare minimum engagement with public space here which offered asylum seekers more through its presence than it may

do for Sheffield's other citizens, whose position allows them to demand more of the commons.

Within a situation of boredom and social isolation, accessing the city through walking offered a chance to meet others, orientate oneself and explore. With a relative freedom to move throughout the public spaces of the city in this manner, the minutiae of public spaces came to be more important to asylum seekers as they chose where to spend much of their free time. The environment, materials and aesthetics of different spaces came to dictate where individuals walked to and from, and is suggestive of a second key means through which engagements with public space generated a sense of welcome in Sheffield's asylum seekers, this being the role which the materiality of these environments, their mixture of stone, glass and grass, played in creating a sense of comfort within the city. The welcome felt by many asylum seekers in Sheffield was not simply one constructed through banal encounters with others on the street or in The Talking Shop, although these certainly played a part, but also through an engagement with the physicality of the city. I want to explore this spatial experience in more detail through considering a range of spaces which asylum seekers noted as positive and comforting, these being Sheffield's parks.

The Therapeutic Landscapes of Sheffield

Sheffield City Council (2006a) proudly assert that as 'the greenest city in England you are never far from one of more than 200 parks, woodlands and gardens', as a series of parks and gardens circle the city centre and stretch out into the Peak District. For many asylum seekers these green spaces provided an important resource, as Shariq's diary testifies;

> There's been a lot of good memories, such as going to the unique countryside around Sheffield which I believe is the most spectacular and extraordinary in the whole of England (Shariq Diary, Undated 2007).

In a study of the use of urban green spaces by asylum seekers and refugees in Sheffield, Rishbeth and Finney (2006, p.286) note that in 'contrast to the mundane and dreary qualities of the participants' daily lives, green spaces provide experiences that are visually attractive and encourage a playful, carefree attitude'. The visual attraction of such spaces can be seen in Figure 6.3, while Rishbeth and Finney (ibid, p.285) go on to suggest that

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visits to such spaces 'contrasted with…[respondent's] fairly routine everyday experiences, and proved to be popular with most participants as relaxing, stimulating and social occasions'. Shariq's narration of his visits show a similar appreciation of these spaces as ones through which individuals could break away from the routines of asylum and engage in different encounters with their environment.

Figure 6.3. Endcliffe Park (Source: Author's Photograph).

With these 'good memories' in mind I want to argue that these spaces represent 'therapeutic landscapes' (Williams 1999, 2002), and encounters with them perform momentary and contemplative openings to both memories, hopes and above all instances of relaxation. Conradson (2005a, 2005b) argues that landscapes themselves are not intrinsically therapeutic, but rather they may be experienced as such through the ways in which self-landscape encounters occur. The relational construction of such landscapes is thus undertaken as multiple histories and memories come to dictate a response to the landscapes of the present (Wylie 2002, 2005, 2006). In this fashion 'positive experiences of

these places always derive from particular forms of socio-natural engagement. They are not in any sense pre-determined outcomes' (Conradson 2005b, p.338), rather, a 'therapeutic landscape experience might then be understood...as a positive physiological and psychological outcome deriving from a person's imbrication within a particular socio-natural-material setting' (ibid, p.339, see also Gesler 1992, 1993; Andrews 2004). I approached the issues such landscapes raise with Mustafa;

Interviewer: So do you go walking around the city much?

Mustafa: Yeah sometimes.

Interviewer: Do you like it?

Mustafa: Yeah I really like walking around here.

Interviewer: Are there any particular places?

Mustafa: Uh, yeah in Sheffield there are many parks and they are really nice for walking.

Interviewer: Do those places make you feel better?

Mustafa: Yes, yeah.

Interviewer: How do they do that?

Mustafa: Because they are nice places and when you go there and see the trees and flowers and see nature you know it's a nice place to go and relax and you feel better, everything is nice, you can think about everything better as your mind is now comfortable.

Interviewer: Do these places ever remind you of your home country?

Mustafa: Yeah that's nice some of the time, when I was in my country I always went out to the mountains walking out of the city and sometimes I stay there and see the stars, that was nice, and now when I go to the parks and the countryside I remember my place you know, my home (Mustafa Interview, 2007).

While in an interview following some of the issues raised in his dairy, Shariq and I discussed the role of Sheffield's green spaces;

> *Interviewer*: One thing I wanted to ask was the idea of Sheffield as a green city, do you think that's important?
>
> *Shariq*: Of course it is a good thing, the human being is always given inspiration by the green spaces you know, they make people quite different in terms of the feelings...All the time it makes you happy.
>
> *Interviewer*: Do you think that they give you a space to go and think and spend some time...
>
> *Shariq*: ...Yes that's quite important I think and it has a close connection with the feelings I think, very good.
>
> *Interviewer*: So do you think places like that help people deal with the stress and the problems...
>
> *Shariq*: ...Of course of course, I'm not sure about the English people but the foreigners I think yeah that's quite important for them.
>
> *Interviewer*: Do they bring back memories?
>
> *Shariq*: Of course yeah, when I was a child I used to go and study under the palm trees and it was very green but I don't see them here but it's just the green that makes a connection really (Shariq Interview, 2007).

Both of these accounts point to the role of such 'green' landscapes as therapeutic environments for Mustafa and Shariq. They are seen to make individuals 'feel better', to feel more relaxed, comfortable and able to think, in this sense they possess that intangible affective charge which Latham and McCormack (2004) write of as emergent from an ongoing negotiation of multiple elements of history, materiality and situation. Much of this comfort appeared to emerge from a repository of past spaces, environments and encounters which were drawn upon to understand, interpret and experience spaces of the present. The therapeutic pull of these green spaces was written into the relational construction of such sites, a relationality not simply between self and environment, as Conradson (2005b) argues, but also between self, environment and a whole host of past environments, encounters, images and narratives which were brought to bear in the moment of feeling connected to the landscape of the present (Wylie 2007).

As Rishbeth and Finney (2006) found memory and nostalgia provided a means for urban green spaces to be explored and understood by asylum seekers. Mustafa recounts the pleasures of being reminded of gazing at the stars in his native Iran, while Shariq spoke of

his childhood memories and how these forms of spatial connection were 'quite important' for 'foreigners' to deal with the stresses of the present. The impact of such environments as enabling and comforting is related to the ability to connect the experiences of the present to those of the past, for as Boym (2001) argues this relational nostalgia can present both a looking back and 'a means of integrating your past within a new future' (Rishbeth and Finney 2006, p.289). From such a viewpoint these spaces offer not only a site to contemplate the past, but also to come to terms with one's current situation. Visiting green spaces feeds back into the more prosaic routes asylum seekers take through the city and through daily life, for as Conradson (2005b, p.341) argues the dislocation here, the movement away from the often mundane spaces of everyday experience is vital, for;

> '[W]e can interpret the physiological and emotional effects of this relocation as the outcome of an individual becoming enmeshed within a different set of place relations. The relations which shape the self will of course never be comprehensively reworked through such movement; there will be relational continuity by virtue of an individual's ongoing internal connections with people and events in other places and times. But some of the more immediate influences and constraints, such as the demands of a home or work setting, will likely be subject to attenunation'.

For Conradson (2005b) this means that the otherness of unfamiliar landscapes allows a reflection upon one's situation in more general terms, and we can sense this in Shariq's accounts where green spaces come to represent a space to go to escape the city and reflect on the present. For Conradson (2005b, p.346) 'the attribute 'therapeutic' is often more precisely assigned to particular forms of self-landscape encounter rather than to the landscape itself', therefore while the encounters which Mustafa and Shariq entered into felt this way, for many others this may not have been the case. The importance of these reflections is that an engagement with Sheffield's many parks allowed some asylum seekers to feel connected both to the landscape of their present but also, through this, to the spaces of their past. In a situation in which everyday life is dominated by moments of spatial dislocation and ambiguity, such affective connection was vital in allowing individuals the chance to relax and forget oneself as we saw in the freedom afforded through simply walking the streets.

However, as I mentioned earlier, there is also another sense of connection here as the material attributes and characteristics of these spaces might be seen to inspire affective responses of comfort. In the previous chapter I discussed how engagements with The Talking Shop were mediated and conditioned by the materiality of this space, and we might note a similar relationship to these spaces of comfort. Mustafa thus highlights the trees, flowers and nature as contributing to the draw of the park as a potential location, while Shariq comments that the very greenness of these spaces, their colour and vibrancy, act to make people feel different and feel relaxed. These qualities might be noted in Figures 6.3 and 6.4 which show Sheffield's Endcliffe Park and illustrate the mixture of green spaces with wildlife and water, which make these spaces attractive destinations. These attributes are not purely about the memories and connections to other places which they illicit in individuals who visit them, alongside this they highlight the agency of the city itself, and its varied environments and aesthetics, to change peoples moods, outlook and orientation. Thus as in Chapter Five, we noted how the tables of The Talking Shop acted to mediate relations and create affective spaces of response, similarly here the attributes of Sheffield's parks, their colour, smell, feel and sound throw up environments in which asylum seekers felt safe, relaxed and at ease. The potentially therapeutic nature of these spaces was felt not simply through what occurred within them, the encounters and relations they threw up, but also through the attributes they brought together for asylum seekers, of open space, memories of the past, senses of health and well-being, breaks from routine and those feelings of freedom noted through walking.

Figure 6.4. Endcliffe Park (Source: Author's Photograph).

The accounts of urban public space within the city I have noted thus far, through walking the streets of Sheffield and choosing to visit the city's parks and green spaces, gesture towards two key attributes of asylum seekers' experiences of the city as a welcoming space. The first of these, as noted through the desire to walk the city and in the popularity of spaces such as The Talking Shop, is the importance of access to spaces of (relative) freedom and publicness, spaces of common ground. Simply being able to be a part of the city meant something for a great number of those I spoke with as a minimum level of engagement with public space both allowed individuals to feel involved in Sheffield and exposed asylum seekers to the kinds of positive encounters noted at the start of this chapter. The second outcome of these accounts, is to highlight the role which the non-human and material elements of these environments played in constructing and facilitating feelings of

relaxation, welcome and safety. These urban environments, whether of the street or the park, have not only an agency to dictate movement as de Certeau (1984) argues, but also the ability to throw up affects of sadness, joy and comfort as they draw together memories, emotions and the pure physicality of experiencing such sites (Conradson 2005b; Wylie 2005). What this suggests is that the city itself has the ability to orientate and to move us, within and beyond those interpersonal attachments and encounters which emerge through the propinquity of the street or the city square. For asylum seekers the ability to access these spaces, and to feel moved *by* the city in this way, was fundamental in developing an attachment to the city as a home, and to a brief sense of belonging through those interpersonal relations noted here and in Chapter Five. With such openings in mind I want to now consider how responses of aversion, indifference and hostility were also played out in Sheffield's public spaces, in order to more fully account for the political negotiations which occurred around visions of the 'cosmopolitan' city.

Urban Indifference, Urban Misanthropy

For Robins (1995, p.48) '[f]ear and anxiety is the other side of the stimulation and challenge associated with cosmopolitanism and the encounter of strangers'. Such anxiety suggests the 'wiliness, the aggression, and the everyday paranoia which are inescapable features of sharing urban turf' (Donald 1999, p.157). Similarly for Thrift (2005, p.134), 'the ubiquity of aggression is an inevitable by-product of living in cities', as 'sociality does not have to be the same thing as liking others. It includes all kinds of acts of kindness and compassion, certainly, but equally there are all the signs of active dislike being actively pursued' (ibid, p.140). What such an affective consideration of the aggression, fear and spite of urban living suggests is a far more complex image of the city and its public spaces than presented through purely reading off such spaces as either democratic entities or sites of political contest (Mitchell 2003). What this suggests is that urban public spaces are multiple and knotted sites of emotional and affective charge, experienced and encountered differently through differently positioned 'body-subjects' (Haldrup *et al.* 2006). The public spaces of the city present emergent spaces in which various visceral and emotional responses to difference come into being. Spaces where the 'swirl of the crowd can all too frequently result in pathologies of avoidance, self-preservation, intolerance and harm' (Amin 2007a, p.5). Therefore those positive encounters and freedoms of space considered

so far through the city, must also be supplemented by responses of indifference and suspicion towards asylum seekers as prosaic means of aversion (Brown 2006) also emerged through the interpersonal, and material, relations of public space in the city. Here I want to consider two affective responses to asylum, urban indifference and suspicion, before considering in detail how these came to permeate a seemingly open common ground within Sheffield.

What's Wrong with "Getting By"?

Pile (2002, p.122) argues that today if 'cities are characterised by any one mood, then maybe it is indifference', and this affective response was certainly clear in a number of accounts of Sheffield's response to asylum. The first of these came from an informal interview with Elizabeth, a student volunteer;

> Today I met Elizabeth at the students union. We talked about her role within various voluntary organizations in the city, and then spoke more generally about Sheffield's relationship to asylum. Elizabeth feels that there is an acceptance of different people in Sheffield, as long as they "play by the rules" of the city. She thinks that the local press is generally supportive in most cases. This for her plays into a general ethos of acceptance, but she's not sure how much this is just a case of getting on with things unconsciously rather than what she describes as a more general acceptance of a 'more progressive' asylum policy (Research Diary, 24th May 2007).

Mark, the director of a local refugee charity, also made a similar point;

> *Interviewer*: Drawing on your experiences how do you find asylum seekers and refugees react to Sheffield as a destination?
>
> *Mark*: I think that's varied really, I think I'm inevitable biased by being so identified with Sheffield myself really, so I want it to be welcoming, but I think on the whole whenever people have talked about it, it's this kind of indefinable bit of what makes a city welcoming and what makes a city itself really. I think that despite all the problems that people may face, I think people do find for want of a better word a friendly place. I think there's the same racism here and intolerance around these issues but I think as Sheffield has become somewhat more of a multicultural city, I think its just a more general friendliness in people finding their way around, um, so you may have more public hostility, but often in private you know people talk about the difference between public hostility and private friendliness really (Mark Interview, 2006).

Both Elizabeth and Mark present a complex reading of Sheffield's public responses to asylum, both are broadly positive and generous, yet at the same time qualified. Thus Mark spoke about the distinction between a 'public hostility' and a 'private friendliness', through which Sheffield was seen to be in general a friendly and welcoming place, but one in which welcome was limited to certain forms of action and response. For Elizabeth this distinction manifested itself in the notion of an urban population 'getting by', where a sense of friendliness did not necessarily translate into a political commitment to change. What we see here is a reticent daily negotiation of the position of 'throwntogetherness' which Massey (2005) views as defining spatial juxtapositions in practice, and as with the negotiations of politics noted in Chapter Four through the work of the City of Sanctuary movement, here again there is a tension between 'getting by' and a will to change. Thus the daily conviviality of 'getting by', did not necessarily stretch to consider the broader horizons of relational responsibility, or the rights of asylum seekers, which we saw City of Sanctuary articulating.

These accounts return us to the narrative negotiations of Chapter Three, between responses of domopolitics and hospitality. However, here these narrations are developed through highlighting the ambiguous and situational nature of these moments of response. Mark thus suggests that reactions may be friendly at one moment and hostile at the next as responses were structured around a limit which enabled individuals to 'get by' in daily life without a more thoughtful engagement with difference. Here people can get on, but this does not translate into any real engagement with others, as the filtering of domopolitics and the conditionality of hospitality both permeate into everyday contexts and perform the right to distinguish and qualify one's encounters through knowledge, sorting and the classification of others. Therefore, as Amin (2007a, p.5) argues, many of those spaces taken to represent public arenas of interaction and conviviality are in fact places of 'qualified interaction';

> 'These are spaces where people who already know each other meet in known corners, where there is a clear tactic of acknowledgement or avoidance between strangers, where familiarity takes time to build and comes from repetition...[these interactions] rarely transport people beyond the bounds of the familiar'.

In such spaces of indifference we are returned to Hage (1998) and Derrida's (2003) writings on tolerance as a gesture of limited and power infused acceptance so long as the other is seen to 'play by the rules' as Elizabeth termed it. More than this, an attitude of indifference portrays a tolerant attitude which contains its own negation in the form of a simultaneous assertion of the central right '*not to be harassed,* to be kept at a safe distance from others' (Žižek 2004, p.508, original emphasis). Thus Žižek (ibid, p.507) argues that 'today's tolerant liberal multiculturalism…[presents] an experience of Other deprived of its Otherness', for 'this celebrated 'other' is acceptable only if he is a *good* other - which is to say what, exactly, if not *the same as us*' (Badiou 2001, p.24, original emphasis). Indifference is therefore predicated upon that vision of Sheffield's past narrated in Chapter Three, one of an urban domopolitics of filtering and categorisation of difference, such that those within the city are deemed to be 'safe' and legitimate presences. Indifference is also the central emotional response of the 'cosmopolitan city' as a culturally productive commodity machine; it allows individuals to 'get along' without ever questioning the position of those one is tolerating, as the cosmopolitan image promoted here is one of secure and knowledgeable interactions, of difference kept at a safe distance.

Urban Suspicion and the 'Becoming Terrorist'

The second response towards asylum I wish to highlight is that of suspicion. Suspicion erupted in the city around particular events, again highlighting, as we saw in The Talking Shop, how the diverse geopolitics of other spaces, times and narratives, fuse into the present. This particular event took place in June 2007;

> At The Talking Shop today I approach the table I have become accustomed to and begin to hear the conversation as I get closer. The guys are discussing the week's events and in particular the failed terrorist attack on Glasgow airport. I sit down and start asking how they are, they say not bad but it is clear that something has upset them. I tentatively begin to ask what this might be and, over the coming hour, I manage to piece together their frustration. Since the news of the attack they tell me they haven't felt comfortable going into the city anymore. They tell me that 'something has changed', that people now look at them with suspicion in their eyes, that some of the smiles they used to see are now gone. They tell me that similar things have happened in the past with such events, and that things will 'return to normal' soon enough, but it still seems that it is at moments such

as this that their fragile claims to belonging are highlighted (Research Diary, 6th July 2007).

After this trip to The Talking Shop I decided to follow up this theme with Sercan during an interview, he told me that;

> *Sercan*: ...after what happened in Glasgow I was walking in the street and people were looking at me as if I was going to bomb them, but we should not forget that not all people are terrorists, just if I have black hair it does not mean I am a terrorist.
>
> *Interviewer*: So what do you think the repercussions of those recent attacks are likely to be?
>
> *Sercan*: In Sheffield you know people start to look in a strange way at us, but they're trying not to show it and you can see it in their eyes when you ask them for something, they are still polite with you, they are not trying to hurt you or even by word they are trying to be polite with you, but you can see the fear in their eyes, they have a right to do that, but we are not all the same.
>
> *Interviewer*: What do you think that is a fear of?
>
> *Sercan*: Fear that everybody that has black hair will try to kill us one day, maybe not today but one day, especially if you are carrying a bag they become hysterical with fear that you are carrying a bomb, and it's an uncomfortable feeling, but not all people are the same, so I would just ask that British people would look positively at the other side of asylum seekers as well (Sercan Interview, 2007).

The failed terror attack on Glasgow airport in June 2007 appeared to act as a catalyst for feelings of fear and suspicion to emerge and be directed towards those asylum seekers who walked the streets of Sheffield and 'looked different'. In Sercan's account his dark hair and rucksack came to combine with a series of media and anecdotal narratives to create an image of what Swanton (2006) terms the 'becoming terrorist', a racial assemblage which becomes fixed to the body of those viewed as 'out of place' in the city. At a point where a murderous transgression is feared, previously unspoken assertions of national belonging are starkly exposed, as questions of allegiance and integrity are asked in the blink of a suspicious eye. Within such a glance indifference is transformed into misanthropy, aggression, fear and aversion. Such action brings to the surface a series of implicit urges towards what Haldrup *et al.* (2006) term 'practical orientalism', an orientalism

'(re)produced and negotiated in banal, bodily and sensuous practices' (ibid, p.174). Thus through 'numerous small acts, comments, telling of anecdotes, corporeal attitudes and so on, borders between 'them' and 'us' are redrawn, reproduced and enacted' (ibid, p.183). This 'practical orientalism' is another form of that spatial management and allocation described by Hage (1998), and in the cases outlined above it acts to cast suspicion on those deemed as 'other'. The glances which Sercan mentions serve to not only make him uncomfortable, but also question his right to space, his right to be *there*, at that moment, just possibly threatening 'our' lives.

The Peace Gardens

Thus far I have presented two modes of response towards asylum seekers in public space, the first of these is an affective charge of welcome and comfort, felt through prosaic encounters on the streets of Sheffield, engagements with 'therapeutic landscapes', and the materiality of the city as a 'green' space. The second of these presented a misanthropic urge towards suspicion, fear and a pervading sense of indifference towards others. However, as Lees (1998, p.238) argues, it is important to move away from a 'singular understanding of the street, and of public space more generally, as either free and democratic or repressed and controlled. Public space is both at the same time'. In order to weave together these disparate elements of experiencing public space, I now examine in some detail one site within Sheffield which came to ground the tensions and issues raised so far. Sheffield's Peace Gardens represent this space and as I wish to argue they offer *both* an affectively charged environment of comfort for asylum seekers, *and* a tolerant space of regulated indifference. Indeed, I argue that part of this comfort arises precisely from these modes of regulation and control.

The Peace Gardens, together with The Winter Gardens and the newly built Millennium Square form the central public spaces of Sheffield city centre as mentioned in Chapter One (see Figure 6.5). Sheffield City Council (2006b) describe the Peace Gardens in the following way;

> 'Set against the backdrop of the Victorian Town Hall and with spectacular
> fountains, water features and lawns, the Peace Gardens have created an oasis

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for visitors. As well as a great place from which to enjoy Sheffield City Centre, the Peace Gardens are home to a number of historical markers and celebrations of Sheffield's great achievements'.

Figure 6.5. The Peace Gardens (Source: Author's Photograph).

The central location of the Peace Gardens made them a popular site for asylum seekers to meet one another between English classes, drop-in sessions and service appointments and as the following interview accounts suggest the mixture of 'fountains, water features and lawns' presented an environment in which asylum seekers felt safe and secure. Here I began by asking Ilya if there were any places in Sheffield that made him feel welcome;

Ilya: Uh, it's like there are a lot of things, for example if it is good weather you can go to the Peace Garden and sit and watch the fountains as it's a very relaxing place and you can go to the galleries and exhibitions.

Interviewer: What is it about the Peace Gardens that's positive?

Ilya: Probably just as much the name really, peace, from our lives we, for example it's a struggle to get to this country and you know a struggle to get permission to stay, and a lot of people unfortunately fail and to go there and it's like a very calm atmosphere, plus the water calms your nerves and makes you feel better, it's like psychological, a good place to be.

Interviewer: So those public spaces in Sheffield are positive then?

Ilya: Uh, it's like when you can go some places you can choose where you can go, and it depends on your mood as well, how you feel at a particular time and place, and so you fit in with the atmosphere and the atmosphere is influencing your state of mind (Ilya Interview, 2007).

Similarly, I asked Faheem what he thought of the Peace Gardens as a place to visit;

You know it is a good place, I believe if you have a kind of suffering deep in the heart and you come to the Peace Gardens you forget a little bit of that, at least you listen to the bubble of the water you know, it's nice, it's nice, you see new people and that's why a little bit you forget about the past and that was a nice place, I like it and usually I go there, yes I go there because I want to forget the past, I want to forget what's happened to me, I don't want to suffer more you know (Faheem Interview, 2007).

Both of these accounts support Rishbeth and Finney's (2006, p.290) research which found that the Peace Gardens were often cited by asylum seekers and refugees as 'a particularly good place for socialising' and 'possibly the only place in Sheffield where refugee and non-refugee communities are seen to fully share a public recreational facility'. The Peace Gardens offered a space of mixing with others, of that encountering of difference so valued on the street and at the same time they offered some of those affective, sensuous attributes associated with more therapeutic spaces. For Ilya and Faheem the Peace Gardens presented a reflective, contemplative space in which one could forget past suffering. For the Peace Gardens this was achieved through the combination of elements presented in this space, of a coming together of stone, flesh, water, air, laughter and conversation (see Figure 6.6), elements which themselves spoke to, and were organized by, Ilya and Faheem's own memories of place, security and encounter. As Ilya comments;

It depends on your mood as well, how you feel at a particular time and place, and so you fit in with the atmosphere and the atmosphere is influencing your state of mind (Ilya Interview, 2007).

Figure. 6.6. Materials of the Peace Gardens (Source: Author's Photograph).

The affective mood of this space was therefore a conduit for Ilya and Faheem's reflections upon their own lives, and also their reflections upon this space itself. The mood in which one approached this site worked to constitute how that space became perceived and cognitively ordered, yet the assemblage of any such space also held the ability to talk back to such a constitutive gesture, as the 'atmosphere' influenced one's 'state of mind'. Ilya and Faheem, among others I spoke with, ordered these encounters of atmosphere and affect largely in a positive light, as enabling and comforting engagements with space, the Peace Gardens became narrated as an open and enjoyable place to be, one free of some of the anxieties of the other spaces of daily life, the home, the drop-in centre, advice services and

so on. I want to now consider however whether we might also witness that tolerant indifference Elizabeth and Mark described in the city being played out here.

Linked to the Peace Gardens is the 'Millennium Square', a new development which provides the setting for a series of coffee shops and restaurants which overlook both the square's sculptures, and the Peace Gardens themselves (Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7. Cafes and restaurants overlooking the Peace Gardens (Source: Author's Photograph).

From the vantage point of Millennium Square's cafes onlookers can gaze down onto and across both the square and the hub of meetings, conversations and silences which characterise the Peace Gardens. While the asylum seekers I spoke to viewed the Peace Gardens as a welcoming site where individuals are free to act as they please, they are in fact regulated through a team of 'City Centre Ambassadors' who 'provide a service to visitors, residents, businesses and retailers in the City Centre. They are capable of responding to the needs of the public and have a highly visible pro-active presence on the street creating a

safe and welcoming environment' (Sheffield City Council 2007c). This visible presence is illustrated in Figure 6.8.

Figure 6.8. City Centre Ambassadors overlooking the Peace Gardens (Source: Author's Photograph).

The role of these ambassadors is manifold but includes preventing street crime through visible patrols and 'helping to reduce anti-social behaviour including begging' (ibid). For the leader of the city council the role of the ambassadors is to;

'[R]eassure people who shop, live and work in the city centre that it is a safe place to be. It's great that the public will have the ambassadors on hand to deal with any issues that the general public may have and provide a comforting presence' (Sheffield City Council 2008).

Here ideas of a public space as welcoming are necessarily bound to its nature as secure, safe and, as a result, open to diversity. Through such measures Sheffield city centre and its

public spaces of cafes, fountains, public art and visible 'ambassadors', becomes a 'cosmopolitan' image of space marked with 'a form of difference which is planned, legitimated, regulated and commodified as a part of the marketing of the city' (Young *et al.* 2006, p.1698). The diversity on display here is dependent on a series of measures of what is acceptable within the public realm. As Young *et al.* (2006, p.1704) argue 'the marketing of the city centre as 'cosmopolitan' implies that the prospective residents will possess the required cultural capital to allow them to perform that cosmopolitan identity, but that this process relies on the construction of an undesirable 'other' who is excluded from these spaces'. The cultural capital of this identity is manifest in the lifestyle of a consumerist logic of encountering difference in a static, sanitized space of the public square patrolled by 'ambassadors' to keep one secure and comfortable, it is manifest most readily in the gaze one has from the window of a café looking out over these spaces of regulated interaction, illustrated in Figure 6.7.

With such regulation in mind the Peace Gardens can be viewed not as some idealized arena of welcoming and harmonious interactions, but rather as an often exclusionary 'interdictory space' (Flusty 2001) through which distinct codes of conduct are enforced and monitored by the presence of those 'highly visible patrols' of 'ambassadors'. As Flusty (2001, p.659) argues;

> 'Interdictory space...is not just space that operates neutrally to intercept and filter would-be users. It does not cut all ways equally. It is commonly designed, built and administered by those affluent enough to do so, and with the wants and sensibilities of the similarly affluent in mind. By corollary, interdictory space functions to systematically exclude those adjudged unsuitable and even threatening...Interdictory space...is selectivity exclusionary space. Which is not to say, however, that 'the Others' making up the bulk of the city are forever banned from interdicted precincts. They are, in fact, often welcomed in. But only so long as they behave appropriately'.

The right to inhabit this space was therefore conditioned by the ability to present oneself as 'acceptable', and to perform the role of the cosmopolitan citizen. Flusty (2001, p.663-664) argues that the proliferation of interdictory space is 'a matter of those with the resources to control space excluding not crime, but the insecurity attendant upon unpredictable and potentially unsettling social encounters with difference', in this sense interdictory spaces

emerge out of that spatial logic of encampment which Diken and Laustsen (2005) examine with reference to gated communities (see also Low 2003). Social relations are kept to a mediated level of control and expectation, those moments of surprise and encounter on the street noted earlier are avoided at all costs as the work of encampment is to wear away the surprising nature of spatial juxtapositions within a framing of, if not the self-same, then the acceptably different. Here again a national narrative of domopolitics, of sorting difference and regulating safety, comes to infuse relations, and attitudes within the city.

Whilst this space may present itself as free, safe and open, its accessibility is reliant upon a series of conditional gestures of behaviour and action. However, it is notable that despite these modes of social control, asylum seekers maintained that this was a welcoming and comfortable place. Despite the indifference performed through visions of the cosmopolitan citizen, asylum seekers felt able to visit the Peace Gardens and experience them as open and relaxing. Part of the reason for this was that these modes of control, the ordering of this interdictory space, actually allowed asylum seekers to feel safe and secure here. To recall our discussion of the nature of hospitality in Chapter's Two and Three, a hospitable welcome is always by necessity a conditioned, and conditional, action, thus Sheffield's history of asylum is one constructed around moments of limited, yet meaningful, welcome as noted in Chapter Three. In this sense, the regulations of the Peace Gardens might act as conditions upon the hospitality of offering this as a public space for asylum seekers in the city. The invitation to visit and enjoy the Peace Gardens that is made through their public status is therefore one which at once undermines a true hospitality by imposing limits, order and conditions upon this access, yet it also creates a more limited hospitality structured precisely around these conditions, expectations and means of social control. Part of the appeal of the Peace Gardens might therefore be seen precisely in its hospitable nature as a public space, one created through regulation and invitation, and for asylum seekers the social expectations of this welcome were made clear. Thus a number of asylum seekers told me that they liked to visit the Peace Gardens because they knew exactly what they could and could not do there, the rules of social behaviour were seen to be more clearly demarcated in this space than in others and as such, both despite and because of its regulation and control, the Peace Gardens were viewed as a hospitable, welcoming place. The regulations and conditions of public space thus created the possibility of public presence for asylum seekers.

The negotiations of the Peace Gardens create a space of interaction and tension between spatial logics of encampment and hospitality, it is a site where desires for welcome and for security, for diversity and for coherence intersect, negotiate and brush against one another. Thus as the regulations of social order attempt to define and condition particular social relations, actively seeking to purge the unexpected (Bauman 1995), so these regulations themselves partially lay the conditions for welcome and hospitality and open spaces to the possibility of the unexpected through never being able to fully exclude the eventfulness of propinquity. The Peace Gardens exemplify those tensions which commanded so many spaces of the city, not between the acceptance or rejection of difference, but rather more complexly between situated practices of order, welcome, condition and freedom, practices which cast these public spaces as forever ambiguous towards asylum seekers, public and yet never completely so. The limitations and opportunities of these spaces therefore reflect Sheffield's collective narration of hospitality as we saw in Chapter Three. There the city was tied to a narrative of hospitable response yet one which was never hospitable enough, in this way the regulation of its common ground reflects precisely these forms of spatial contest, of an ongoing struggle to uphold an ideal of the hospitable. However, as I argued in Chapter Five, spaces of openness can and do exist within these tensions, in the drop-in centre and through encounters with individuals, streets, parks and squares whose material accomplishments have the capacity to inspire, and to perpetuate, moments of ethical opening and response. It is with a politics of these 'small achievements' that I want to conclude this chapter by examining how a public space might harness the energy of encounters with others and with the materiality of the city to create brief moments of respite and welcome.

A Politics of 'Small Achievements'

I want to conclude this chapter by looking to a number of possible paths of alternative narration for Sheffield's spatial engagements with asylum seekers, narratives which seek to move away from the naturalised rights of some, to fulfil a more collaborative right to the city as a part of dwelling, residency and involvement. As Thrift (2005, p.135) argues cities present 'a large reservoir of enmity but they also have a surplus of hope, an unconscious hunger for the future as well as the past'. Through such a 'hunger for the future' we can

consider how alternative claims to space are temporarily made in the city as an oeuvre, a collective and agonistic accomplishment. Such a concern is one to 'forge a critical politics of feeling which is inherently optimistic' (ibid, p.143) and this concern I feel can be understood if we briefly consider an alliance of Massey's (2004) thought on the responsibilities demanded in a relational reading of space, as discussed in Chapter Two, with Lefebvre's (1996a) vision of 'the right to the city'.

Lefebvre (1996a, p.158, original emphasis) writes that the '*right to the city* cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed *right to urban life*'. The right to the city 'manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom...to habitat and to inhabit. The right to the *oeuvre*, to participation and *appropriation*' (Lefebvre 1996b, p.173-174, original emphasis). Lefebvre argues that the city itself is an oeuvre, a continual and on-going creation by all those who inhabit and pass through it, such a relational role of all within the constituency of the urban thus demands recognition through the right to both use and enjoy urban space, as a partial creation of the self, and also a right to appropriate such spaces without claiming them as one's sole property. The right to 'habitat and to inhabit' is therefore not bound to notions of citizenship and national belonging, rather it is a right which arises simply from dwelling in the city. Here the right to access, enjoy, appropriate and engage with the public spaces of the city is one which all who have a stake in the city should enjoy equally, for within a relational topography of spatial construction all such narratives contribute to the event of spatial creation. Some may be more powerful than others, but the oeuvre of space emerges through the negotiations which are engendered through this convergence. I want to now reflect upon an example of this form of collective spatial claim to suggest the potential for a different vision of the city.

The example I use here is that of an annual Lantern Festival through the streets of Sharrow in Sheffield. Before the festival itself The Talking Shop had organised two lantern building sessions for asylum seekers and refugees to construct lanterns to take to the parade which culminated in a local park. I helped with making some of these and joined the procession shown in Figure 6.9.
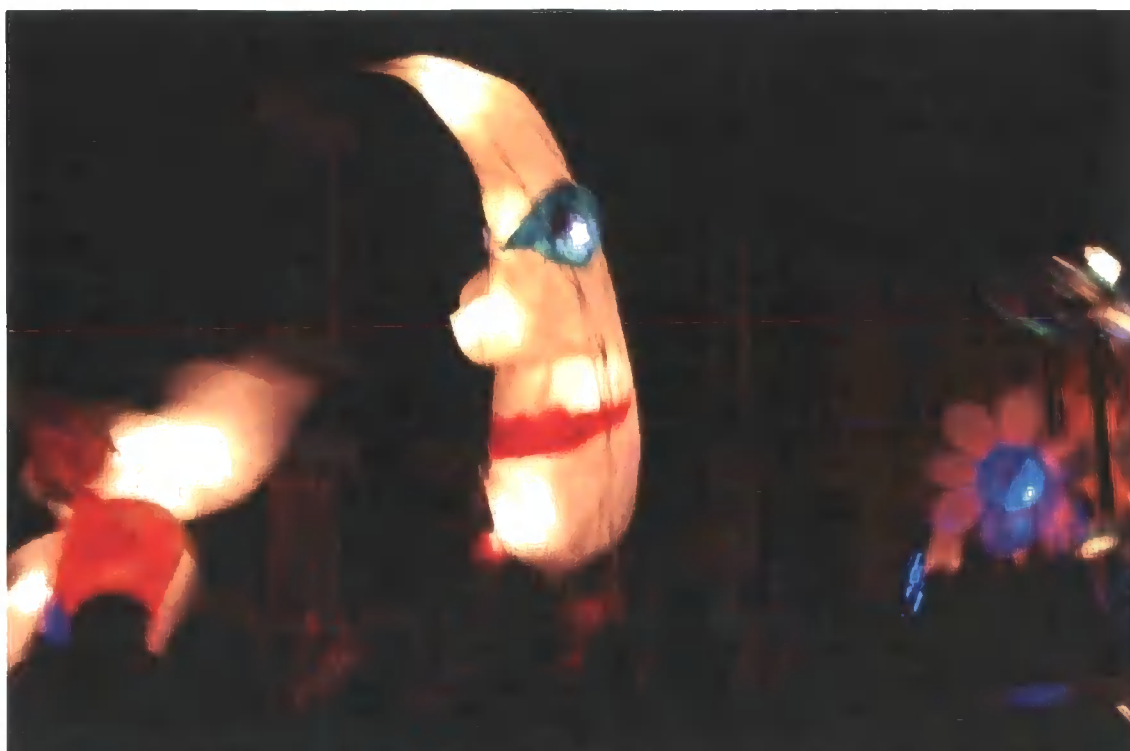
Figure 6.9. Sharrow Lantern Festival Procession (Source: Author's Photograph).

The walk took around an hour and as the sun set across the city the lanterns began to light the skyline, there were around 200 people in the procession and Omar had secured us, and our pyramid lanterns, a spot at the heart of this snake of people and lights. My research diary recounts this walk;

> As we walked there was a great sense of achievement among Omar, Mustafa and Adil, they felt not only part of something good, something creative, but that they had achieved something, been given the opportunity to contribute in a way that was often denied to them. As we approached the park Mustafa commented to me that this was a really happy occasion, and that it was good to see people 'coming together'. Similarly Adil later told me that he felt like this was an occasion when he could forget some of the problems he faced and feel part of the city (Research Diary 1st April 2007).

Sharrow Lantern Festival, though only an annual event, does offer a glimpse of the kind of 'light touch sociality' which Thrift (2005) advocates. Whilst not wishing to over romanticise the role of the 'carnival' as a mode of political resistance, I would suggest that it does provide an example of a space through which a sense of collective belonging, and

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collective achievement, was momentarily accomplished. In this event people came together to enact a vision of Sheffield where all were free to contribute, be visible, and feel a connection to others and to the city as a result. Such thought was clearly in the minds of others who attended the festival for following its opening in 2004 the counterculture website 'Indymedia' hosted a debate over the festival's role, whether it 'stood' for anything, and whether it sought to 'reclaim the streets' (see Fuller 1997; Sheller 2004). The debate was largely summed up with the following statement;

> A misconception I've heard is that we were reclaiming space, albeit temporarily. The streets were used for people instead of cars and profit. However the whole thing was organised with the permission of the police and such events are a perfectly legitimate use of the streets anyway. So we weren't reclaiming anything because we have these rights to begin with (Indymedia Sheffield 2004).

The point that there was little which was explicitly political about this event was true of my experiences in 2007, there were no speeches, rallying cries or electioneering in evidence. However, whilst I agree that for those citizens who took part this was in many ways simply asserting a right to the streets which one already possesses, I think for those asylum seekers I accompanied this event was very much a political claim. For Adil and others those rights 'we have to begin with' are not so self-evident, they are placed under question and suspicion and constantly have to be reaffirmed, thus the ability to claim a right to the streets in this manner, was political and it was creative. The creation was both of a space in which all those resident had the right, and ability, to perform differently, and of a collective sense of community and togetherness through which such a spatial politics of openness was accomplished.

Furthermore, what we might also note from this collective endeavour was its visceral, felt and affective nature. This was a sense of belonging within space which was brought about through precisely those kinds of engagements with other individuals, groups, spaces and the very material of the urban itself which I have argued help to form the spatial experience of the city for asylum seekers. Here the walking of the procession took in a range of different environments, from the shops of London Road to the dusk lit greenery of Sharrow park where the celebration came to a conclusion, and each of these spaces was encountered differently through a mixture of sights, sound, smells and connections to those around you.

The changing light of the fading day as we walked, the smell of burning candles and oil lamps, the crack of fireworks across a darkened park, all of these things combined with the visual starkness of fire in the night, to produce a unique space of experience and belonging. Some of these visual elements are thus captured, imperfectly, in Figures 6.9 and 6.10. Just as the natural environment of the parks discussed earlier played a role in allowing asylum seekers to feel comfortable, so here these diverse elements and their temporary mixture produced an event of space which brought people together, the shared experience of these sights, smells and sounds held their own agency over the collective sense of belonging which was being created here. While not explicitly political as noted above, at least for the citizens of Sheffield, this Lantern Festival performed a visceral politics of becoming for those asylum seekers who attended, it was a brief flash of belonging to the city and to the moment. Similarly to the City of Sanctuary movement considered in Chapter Four, this festival enacted a micropolitics, through creating a space of shared affective attunement, representing an appreciation that 'politics involves work on the complex cultural relays between argument, image, intensities, and feelings' (Connolly 1999c, p.49). Those feelings of urban public space which we have seen throughout this chapter oscillating between moments of kindness and care and those of aversion and misanthropy (Robins 1995; Ngai 2005), were therefore impacted through this event of space and moved towards a momentary glimpse of sociality as a collectively imagined possibility (Anderson and Holden 2008).

Figure 6.10. Sharrow Lantern Festival (Source: Author's Photograph).

The politics emergent from such a performance of spatial community is therefore one of what Berlant (2004) terms 'collective attachment'. These moments of coming together generate 'micropublics' of commonality which reflect the kinds of 'collaborative efforts' demanded in community gardening schemes where individuals 'can gather, network, and identify as residents of a neighbourhood' (Shinew *et al.* 2004, p.340; Schmelzkopf 1996; Armstrong 2000). What these creative, engaging interventions into the right to the city reflect are those 'lighter touch forms of sociality' which Thrift (2005, p.145) calls for, forms that seek to alter our perceptions and dispositions within the present, forms that therefore demand an 'expectation of *involvement*' (ibid, original emphasis). These interventions are testimony to the fact that 'the gains of interaction need to be worked at in local sites of everyday encounter' (Amin 2002a, p.969), on the streets of Sharrow as much as in the park. Through opening dialogues across space in this performative encounter however the ways in which such interactions are approached might be altered. The effects of the Lantern festival and its sense of community may not be immediate, may not be

transformative for all, yet it does hold the potential to spill outwards into the city and influence how public space is considered, in the same way that we saw micropolitical impulses working in Chapter Four and a range of situational ethics of generosity emerge through drop-in spaces in Chapter Five. Indeed the interweaving of these concerns might be seen as interlocking strands within a politics of urban pluralism wherein ethical responses of generosity, becoming and critical responsiveness are central to ensuring urban social justice (Connolly 2005).

The Minimal Offerings of Public Space

In this chapter I have sought to overview the relations between asylum seekers and public space within Sheffield. Traditionally urban public space has been read as indicative of the urban condition more generally and in this sense we might take from these accounts the fractured and often tense relations which asylum seekers have with the spaces of the city, fluctuating as they do between experiences of welcome and comfort, memories and reflections, and tension, aggression, fear and indifference. Within this series of moments of encounter, where spatial logics of encampment and hospitality may slide into one another, the context of these political and spatial negotiations becomes paramount, for public spaces 'should not be posed in terms of abstract spatial forms but in terms of the social relations through which the spaces, and that openness and closure, are constructed' (Massey 2005, p.166). However, I have also argued for the agency of these spaces themselves, for the often understated role which their materiality, their particular combinations of brick, glass, concrete and greenery, play in inspiring feelings of comfort, fear and togetherness with strangers. In this chapter I have argued that while some spaces and engagements can welcome and comfort asylum seekers in the city, often on an affective, embodied level, these spaces are simultaneously limited, regulated and underwritten by those assumptions of national belonging, rightful ownership and a form of cosmopolitan cultural capital that feeds political indifference towards the issue of asylum in the city, which we saw being narrated nationally in Chapter Two and in Sheffield throughout Chapter Three. In response to these narratives I looked to the Peace Gardens and the Sharrow Lantern Festival as spaces wherein a 'solidarity towards the emergent and always temporary settlements in public space' (Amin 2007a, p.10), might be seen to be negotiated in differing ways. In the Peace Gardens this meant accepting certain forms of regulation as the very basis for

hospitality within public space itself, while in Sharrow solidarity erupted through a visceral and affective encounter with spaces of collective engagement.

The contestations of the Peace Gardens and the Sharrow Lantern Festival thus highlight the ways in which a great many influences and imaginings are brought to bear upon the continual creation, ordering and questioning of public space. While it is tempting to view the kind of momentary freedom and solidarity afforded to asylum seekers through events such as the Lantern Festival as a disruptive political future, of rights asserted simply through the primacy of residency and of plural voices heard (Dikeç 2005), the regulation of the Peace Gardens and the indifference of the street remind us that there is much which binds this, much which holds back a more open access to public space for asylum seekers. Not least here are those assumptions of suspicion and fear which surround individuals at moments of unexpected contact, as the generous dispositions noted in The Talking Shop do not always translate into the city's streets. Here irritation may arise at being asked the time, avoidance and aversion pattern a desire to cross the street, and a series of prosaic materials and fears combine to create an image of the suspicious stranger (Swanton 2008; Watson 2006). What we might see through these spaces is asylum as an experience of the commons structured around the interplay of two distinct, yet related, accounts of public space. The first of these arises precisely through the freedom to simply access and enjoy public space itself, here the right to walk in the city, encounter others unexpectedly, and enjoy the material connections of nature, create a sense of comfort and belonging in the city simply through being there. This is an account of a minimum public, yet one which for asylum seekers proved crucial in coming to terms with the present. The second account is far more fleeting and calls to mind the solidarity of the Sharrow Lantern Festival, here we glimpse a right to the city detached more fully from notions of national belonging and domopolitics, and it is this second account which reflects that sense of pushing at the bounds of hospitality which has patterned many of the negotiations noted throughout this study.

For many of the asylum seekers I spoke with, this minimum public space of simply being there was a vital emotional support. This access to space might lead to further engagements and to feelings of belonging more deeply embedded, through those kinds of ethical encounter which arose in The Talking Shop and which were noted in accounts of the street, yet just as readily, it might not. It is therefore important to recognize the limitations of

public engagement through urban space (Valentine 2008) and how the commons are structured as much around relations of antipathy and fear as ones of openness and respect. For asylum seekers Sheffield represented a space which was open to presence, but not unquestioningly so, occasionally moments of solidarity and collective belonging would erupt and dissipate once more and yet, as with those ethical encounters of The Talking Shop, the importance of these moments was in their potential to orientate future events, encounters and responses. With this openness to presence in mind, I want to now move on to consider a presence less welcome in the city, that of asylum seekers who have been made destitute and the relations these and others articulated to spaces of accommodation in the city.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"AN ENGLISHMAN'S HOME AND ALL THAT..."
THE POLITICS OF ASYLUM ACCOMMODATION

'Essentially, success in resettlement is the establishment and maintenance of a home'
(Rivlin and Moore 2001, p.328).

'If one cannot offer hospitality, one has an address, not a home' (Rosello 2001, p.18).

Throughout the engagements with the public spaces and drop-in centres of Sheffield in the previous two chapters, I have highlighted some of the ways in which positive and generous responses to asylum might be foregrounded through emotive and affective links to the people, places and encounters which make up the city. Here moments of hospitality were mixed with open dispositions towards difference in order to promote ethical sensibilities of critical responsiveness, sensibilities which sought to alleviate some of the stresses of the asylum process and allow asylum seekers to feel comfortable in the city. In this chapter however, I build upon these insights by contrasting these generous sensibilities with a politics of discomfort and begrudging hospitality, one centred resolutely around the limits of domopolitics, through examining the everyday experiences of Sheffield's asylum seekers and their spaces of accommodation. Recent research has critically examined the home as a site of emotional resonance and power relations (see Blunt 2005; Easthope 2004; Moore 2000; Morley 2000) and as a site of exile and complex modes of transnational belonging (see Ahmed 1999; Ahmed *et al.* 2003; Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Rapport and Dawson 1998), however the lived experiences of housing, and of attempts at home-making for asylum seekers, its emotional and affective resonances, politics and practices, has largely been overlooked within a focus upon national policies of accommodation and dispersal (see Phillips 2006; Parkin 1999; Zetter and Pearl 1999b). In the following chapter I argue that we need to connect these concerns with the discursive framing of accommodation policy,

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with the practical and prosaic implications of such policy in the everyday lives of asylum seekers as housing presents a key spatial experience for asylum seekers in the UK and one, I argue, which currently acts to recreate the distinctions of a domopolitical reading of asylum itself as a 'problem' to be ordered and classified as noted in Chapter One. Moore (2000, p.213) argues that we 'need to focus on the ways in which home disappoints, aggravates, neglects, confines and contradicts as much as it inspires and comforts us', and through considering a series of positions of asylum housing I argue that we witness the emergence of not simply a politics of limited hospitality, where individuals are not allowed to feel 'too welcome', but an active politics of discomfort which undermines those positive gestures developed in the previous chapters towards asylum seekers in Sheffield.

In order to trace these relations with an idea, and a politics, of home, I want to consider three positions within that domopolitical reading of asylum considered at the national level in Chapters One and Two. The first of these positions is that of those who have failed the asylum process, who have been filtered out of this system and who are now made destitute by the state. Drawing here on Agamben's (1998) account of the *homo sacer* noted in Chapter Two, I argue that destitution represents a mode of sovereign abandonment for those who are seen to lie beyond the reach of domopolitics. I then move to consider the opposite side of this domopolitical coin, those who have been granted status by this mode of filtering and are viewed as checked and safe refugees. Here the importance of home-making as a material and emotional practice of placement and comfort is brought to the fore through encounters with Sheffield's refugees. With these two positions in mind, I argue that Sheffield's asylum seekers, still caught within the limbo of awaiting a decision, experience a policy of accommodation which integrates both of these experiences into a politics of discomfort. Here accommodation is provided but a series of prosaic modes of regulation impede the ability to make a home, while the spectre of potential destitution hangs heavy over these spaces and disciplines asylum seekers to be grateful guests within the city. From these varied engagements with a discourse of accommodation and its implementation in Sheffield, I argue that while a national logic of domopolitics and distinction has been noted in the city in Chapter Three, it is in the banal enaction of housing policy that we see such a modality of power most readily, as it sustains a politics of discomfort which places into question the ability of Sheffield itself to develop a more

welcoming stance towards asylum. I shall begin though by considering the rise of destitution politics within the UK.

The Sovereign Abandonment of Destitution Politics

Returning to the national framing of Chapter Two in considering recent asylum policies, a number of reports have accused the government of implementing policies which seek to perpetuate a situation of abject destitution among those failed asylum seekers expected to leave the country. Reports from Amnesty International (2006a), Refugee Action (2006) and the Joseph Rowntree Trust (Lewis 2007) suggest that current policies in the UK are 'leading to a new wave of widespread destitution' (Amnesty International 2006b). As Lewis (2007, p.6) explains, if asylum is refused to one seeking it then 'their accommodation and cash support are withdrawn within 21 days. The Home Office expects refused asylum seekers to leave the country, but many are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin. They remain in the UK without statutory support or the legal right to work, and lack the means to meet their basic needs: they are destitute'. The Home Office's response is to offer 'Section Four' or 'Hard Case' support, through which a refused asylum seeker can apply for basic accommodation and £35 a week in voucher support on the condition that they make arrangements for voluntary return to their country of origin, however 'the majority of refused asylum seekers do not sign up to section 4. Some are unaware that it is available, while others believe that if they sign up for voluntary return, the authorities who have let them down will deport them whether it is safe or not' (Lewis 2007, p.6). Refugee Action and the BBC suggest that the number of such unresolved cases could be between 400,000 and 450,000 as the government works to reduce this 'backlog' of unresolved claims by a projected target date of 2011 (BBC, 2006, cited in Refugee Action 2006, p.4).

The conclusions drawn from these various studies suggest that the government is 'deliberately using destitution in an attempt to drive refused asylum-seekers out of the country' (Amnesty International 2006b), a conclusion echoed by a recent investigation by the Joint Committee for Human Rights (JCHR, 2007a), who found that 'a deliberate policy of refusing benefits to some asylum seekers combined with a ban on legal working left many would-be refugees in "appalling" circumstances' (JCHR, 2007b). The committee

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states that they had 'been persuaded by the evidence that the government has indeed been practicing a deliberate policy of destitution of this highly vulnerable group' (ibid). Yet such a policy stance is failing to reduce the backlog of refused asylum seekers through coercion and poverty, for as Amnesty International (2006a, p.30) found 'many destitute rejected asylum seekers remain in the UK...living hand to mouth, surviving on the charity of others, their dignity stripped away by this existence', forcing individuals to negotiate a 'tattered safety net' of charitable provision 'homeless, hungry and hidden' (Lewis 2007, p.23).

These national accounts were reflected in the daily negotiations of housing and destitution in Sheffield, where the charity ASSIST (Asylum Seekers Support Initiative – Short Term) works to support destitute asylum seekers. ASSIST estimate 'there are between one thousand and two thousand destitute asylum seekers in Sheffield...[while ASSIST] only have resources to help about 70 people' (ASSIST 2008). In 2007 ASSIST reported that they provided 'financial support to over 60 destitute asylum seekers...[and] accommodation to over 20 people' (ASSIST 2007, p.1), this accommodation came in the form of two houses purchased through individual donations and a hosting scheme which placed destitute individuals temporarily in the houses of volunteer hosts. ASSIST had a weekly contact point within the Wednesday Talking Shop where people would queue up to receive a small amount of money on which to survive for the week (normally between £10 and £15 for an individual asylum seeker). Occasionally there would be anger and tension in this corner as people were turned away in favour of others with greater needs, a situation which seemed to be getting worse as volunteers with ASSIST told me that their resources were becoming increasingly stretched.

Naturally it proved difficult for me to talk to, and interview, many of these individuals but a number of brief exchanges were recorded in my research diary from encounters at The Talking Shop, firstly with Hassan;

> Over the last few weeks at The Talking Shop I've noticed that Hassan has been quite depressed and I ask Lynn if she thinks he is ok. She tells me that two weeks ago his asylum appeal was turned down and that he has been evicted from his NASS accommodation, he's now trying to avoid deportation and is living with Akan [another asylum seeker] on the floor of his flat...I later speak to Hassan and ask how he is, he tells me that he doesn't know what he will do, he's thinking of trying to get some work

illegally, but fears that if he is caught he will be deported straight away. Hassan feels awkward and ashamed having to live on the floor of Akan's room, but he asks me 'what choice is there?' (Research Diary, 24th November, 2006).

And secondly with an unidentified asylum seeker;

I'm talking with Adil when he gets called over to translate something and I am left alone at a table. Then I notice a man who has just come in, he walks over and sits opposite me with a drink in his hand. Not saying anything he just sits and stares at me. He wears a baseball cap pulled down over his face, has a mixture of mud and oil smeared on his shirt and jeans and as he lays his hands out on the table, reaching for his drink, I notice that they are riddled with cuts, scars and patterned red with spots of blood, some fresh, some dried into a darker crimson. I ask if he is ok and he says 'yeah', I ask if he needs anything, he says 'no'. For the next five minutes or so we sit in virtual silence as I try to make conversation and he replies in a series of one word answers. I ask if he is an asylum seeker, his response; 'refused'. Finally, he responds to me asking how he got the cuts, he tells me in broken English that he has been scavenging bins for disused electrical cable as he can make some money from selling it as scrap if he gets enough, but you have to search the bins for it and so he got the cuts from shards of metal and glass in the bins. After telling me this his mind seems to wander and he soon gets up and, without a word, walks out in the street (Research Diary, 28th March, 2007).

In both of these encounters the asylum seekers concerned had reached the end of the process of asylum, had effectively been deemed as outsiders to the nation and as such cast aside, no longer worthy of the conditional accommodation of those whose status is still undecided. They were no longer positioned in the spatial ambivalence of the threshold of decision noted in Chapter Three as being at the heart of domopolitics. Instead, they had been turned away by such modes of filtration and expected to leave as soon as possible. Here a domopolitics of the nation reaches its natural conclusion in the daily politics of the city, as a sovereign decision of abandonment discussed in Chapter Two places individuals beyond the political reach of a city that had hoped to be hospitable as I argued in Chapter Three.

The politics of destitution we see enacted here thus draws upon and finalises those moments of biopolitical and domopolitical distinction which pattern national framings of asylum and which filter into, and partly condition, the politics of asylum in Sheffield. To

return to that spacing of encampment noted in Chapter Two, Mills (2004, p.42) argues that for Agamben 'the originary relation of the law to life is not application, but abandonment', while for asylum seekers this position "before the law' itself entails a paradox: even though they are *outside it*, they are supposedly *subject to* its power' (Zylinska 2004, p.530, original emphasis). Outside the recourse to law, but not outside its application and imposition and it is just such a paradoxical positioning which the politics of destitution relies upon. As Lewis (2007, p.5) notes, once asylum seekers have been refused all 'avenues to a normal life are blocked. There is little incentive to remain in contact with the Home Office at this stage and therefore the whereabouts of many rejected asylum seekers are unknown'. This not only suggests that such a policy is failing, in not promoting voluntary removals, but it also means that all fragile and transitory rights which might be conditionally bestowed upon the asylum seeker are removed, there is little incentive to remain in contact with the Home Office simply because they no longer recognise the individual's right to an existence in the UK. Indeed the Home Office's response to these reports argues that 'we simply do not think that it is right that those without any right to be in the UK should be given the right to work or access to other services' (BBC 2007). In this sense the failed asylum seeker is effectively rendered a *homo sacer* by this policy, no longer recognised as 'legitimate', 'legal', or worthy of the right to exist in the UK their presence is a contagion, an unwanted and unnecessary intrusion to be dealt with through whatever means possible. The ability to strip an individual of all housing, social and financial support is predicated upon an Agambenian sovereign act of abandonment which places individuals outside the law, for their situation is seen to have fully exhausted the normal remits of legal proceedings, as Lewis (2007, p.6, added emphasis) comments they are, and crucially *can* be, '*made* destitute', *produced* as bare life by the act of abandonment.

The abandonment of destitution represents the point at which a distinction between citizen and bare life is finalised and reenacted through marginality. It is the point at which the threshold of decision which domopolitics represents is slammed shut. In the cases of those destitute individuals I met in Sheffield, reliant upon ASSIST for their very survival, their spatial experiences were structured around a lack of accommodation, a lack of the very basic conditions of hospitality offered to asylum seekers still awaiting their moment of decision. In this fashion we might consider Derrida's (2002) consideration of the French

"sans-papiers" as a group identified, and defined, almost exclusively through such lack. Derrida is led to ask what the "sans-papiers" are seen to lack;

> 'Lacking would be what the alleged "paper" represents. The right, the right to a right. One assumes that the "sans-papiers" is in the end "sans-droit," "without right" and virtually outside the law. By contesting his normality and civic identity, one is not far from contesting his very identity. One might say that he is lacking more than a determined thing, one thing among others: he is naked and exposed, without right, without recourse, deficient in the essential. Without anything. What he is lacking, in truth...is a *dignity*'. (Derrida 2002, p.135, original emphasis).

Here again we see a group pushed to the margins not only of the social, but also to the margins of existence due to a perceived lack of rights. As Derrida (2002, p.136) continues one 'refuses this dignity to those one is accusing...of being "unworthy of living on our soil,"' and in this sense the sovereign distinction of the ban acts as just such an accusation. The destitute asylum seekers of Sheffield represent the brutal conclusion of a politics of lack, wherein what individuals may be seen to lack is a rightful claim to the nation. For asylum seekers awaiting a decision the lack of legitimacy may be temporarily accommodated in the hope that once decisions are made individuals will either leave or work to build the necessary cultural capital required to overcome this lack (Hage 1998). However for those beyond such a decision, for whom the bareness of survival is itself challenging, they lack, from a governmental point of view, the *right to anything* within the nation.

The impact of national policies of destitution centred around a domopolitical logic of filtering out the 'worthy' refugees from the 'illegitimate' asylum seekers, was twofold in Sheffield. Firstly, it was clear that for those estimated one thousand asylum seekers in Sheffield made destitute through such a policy a life threatening situation was created in which survival was based upon only the most basic forms of benevolence and charity. Here once again we might note the resonances of Agamben's (1998, 1999) account of the *homo sacer* as a subject position beyond political sanction wherein the ethical concern of others presents the only clear means of survival (Žižek 2002). Thus in Sheffield the destitute were reliant upon friends, the charity of ASSIST and local churches in order to survive on a daily basis as they became increasingly invisible to the council and the government. Secondly,

while not visible to many within Sheffield, the destitution of asylum seekers was clear and stark to those still awaiting asylum decisions as many had to watch friends endure the heartbreak of refusal and the uncertainty of a destitute future. The situation of those asylum seekers receiving housing and support from ASSIST therefore acted as a constant reminder to those awaiting decisions of what fate may await them, of how pressing this uncertainty was and how perilous their position within the city was. From a domopolitical and biopolitical perspective, the refusal and abandonment of these individuals was the very founding gesture of an acceptance and legitimation of others, however, for those still held at that threshold of decision discussed in Chapter Three, the destitute offered a harrowing image of how far they too could fall if refused. In Sheffield a key outcome of this politics of destitution was to undermine and underwrite many of those hospitable, welcoming gestures seen through the previous three chapters, for while moments of ethical openness and responsivity may have arisen in public space, drop-in centres and through the work of the City of Sanctuary movement, reminders of destitution and of how the very basics of survival could be stripped back were prevalent through these policies. The rise in destitute asylum seekers in Sheffield thus points to the fact that housing and accommodation were viewed as key barriers which held individuals back from fully associating with the city. I want to therefore consider what having a home as an asylum seeker might mean, before examining how in Sheffield the spectre of destitution hung over asylum seekers' experiences of accommodation spaces, creating an affective atmosphere of unhomeliness.

Home Making and Refugee Resettlement

While destitution was an issue for a number of asylum seekers in Sheffield, the importance of establishing and creating a home was further highlighted through the case of refugees who had gained the right to remain in the UK. These individuals represented the opposite side of that domopolitical division noted in Chapter Three, those viewed as safe, checked and legitimate, able to stay and set up home in the city. I want to briefly counterpose their experiences of spaces of accommodation with the destitution of those abandoned by domopolitics, before moving to more fully engage with the experiences of those still held at the threshold of acceptance and rejection, Sheffield's undecided asylum seekers, as these two oppositional outcomes of domopolitics frame the experiences and expectations of asylum seekers.

The positive impact which housing may provide for refugees, once a decision has been taken and the right to remain has been granted, was highlighted by Adam, the head of a regional refugee housing association;

> I think that no one can argue that housing is a crucial and basic human right and vital for refugees to settle and to be settled, you won't be able to get a job without that and so when you're talking about integration it's a crucial thing. Personally I think it's a balance between employment and housing and that's the two elements that determine the life and the level of integration of refugees at various stages (Adam Interview, 2006).

For refugees once the uncertainty of asylum status is removed a house may provide the first step on a road to feeling accepted and at home within the UK, as it allows access to employment, benefits and the emotionally important security of a place to call one's own. Through my time at The Talking Shop a number of individuals made the transition from asylum seeker to refugee and faced having to leave NASS accommodation within 21 days of this decision. All of them found it difficult to obtain housing through normal council homelessness legislation and some had to spend the majority of their new benefits on temporary rented accommodation. Sercan was one individual who made this transition and by the end of my time in Sheffield he had secured a flat in the Broomhill area of the city;

> I spoke to Sercan at The Talking Shop today and went about setting up a time and a date for his interview. I suggested that we conduct the interview here as it was a place he was familiar with, but he immediately told me that he wanted to do it at his flat, he wanted to show me the place and was visibly glowing with pride at the thought of having someone to visit his new home (Research Diary, 11th July, 2007).

The following week I went to Sercan's flat to conduct the interview;

> Sercan shows me into his first floor flat up a steep flight of stairs, the hallway opens out into quite a large living room with a dining table, sofa, armchair, coffee table and a TV on a small cabinet in the corner of the room. The room is very tidy with a couple of medical textbooks piled in a corner and some newspapers on the coffee table. Sercan offers me a drink and as he goes to the kitchen to get a glass of water I set up my tape recorder on the dining table to start the interview...After the interview Sercan offers me a cup of tea and I get the feeling that he wants me to stay and give him some

company. I move to sit on the sofa and we chat for an hour or so about the renewed sense of hope that he has with refugee status, hope that he may begin work again as a Doctor, hope that he may see his family once again and hope that he may finally begin to forget the past. As I look around the room I notice how 'lived in' Sercan's flat appears, he has spread some of his possessions out, a picture of his family is placed next to the TV, while these few objects may not be much they seem to give a sense, both to Sercan and to me, of this as 'his place' (Research Diary, 18th July, 2007).

The marking of this space for Sercan as 'his' was central to the renewed sense of hope and aspiration that he felt upon being granted refugee status. Sercan now had a place to orientate himself to the world, at least some certainty and a feeling of partial belonging which had long evaded him. Such an experience of the first steps towards constructing a home while in exile were what many asylum seekers aspired to and it was often the first thing those granted status spoke of. For those granted status the struggle to get a house was often long and hard as individuals were not always seen as 'priority' cases on council housing lists, however once achieved housing for refugees often spoke to a sense of 'place itself in its invitation to imagine or 'implace' ourselves in new ways' (Robinson 2005, p.56), as the uncertain displacements of the past could be addressed. Robinson (2005, p.57, original emphasis) argues that the importance of home is felt through 'places which offered more than material comfort; they offered space – as in physical and emotional *room* – in which to choose to be alone or with others, in which to reflect', and while for Sercan such room to reflect manifested itself in a flat in Broomhill, this could only become such a space of comfort because of the security of position which it spoke to. Sercan's newly bestowed status made his position relatively secure within the city and as such he could find a place of 'material comfort' as he was able to possess and create this space as home, *his* home.

Visiting Sercan's new home highlights a number of contemporary discussions over what the home is and what it might come to mean for those who are displaced. Importantly for Sercan home was a space of possession and pride, a site to feel comfortable and yet also one in a process of construction and performance, both through the hosting of others as a hospitable gesture which bestowed possession and belonging (Derrida 2000a; Barnett 2005), and through the creation of a personal material culture of home with objects, portraits and possessions that create an identity for this space as one's home (Parkin 1999; Rose 2003; Tolia-Kelly 2004). Homes, and the aspiration of belonging which is tied to such

a notion, therefore represent a key space within the affective politics of asylum as a lived experience, for as Blunt and Varley (2004, p.3) argue, as a 'space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear, the home is invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life'.

If we consider Sercan's presentation of home and his pride within this space, we might note a number of resonances with the ways in which the home has been understood in human geography. Sibley (1995, p.93) notes that the home is most often depicted in benign terms, as 'a refuge, a source of comfort in a world otherwise replete with tension and conflict, and the only environment in which individuals can function as autonomous agents'. The home thus becomes the site to be oneself, to feel 'at home' with both one's identity and one's environment, as the home takes on the role of a shelter cast in opposition to the uncertainties of public space (Perkins and Thorns 1999; Kearns *et al.* 2000; Sibley 2001). Part of the reason for Sercan's decision to conduct our interview in his new home was his pride at his new place in the city, however it was also in the fact that this was the space he now felt most comfortable in, the space that he could identify as his refuge from the stresses of college, English classes and employment training. Home for Sercan was therefore a space of comfort constructed partially through his sense of ownership and possession and partly through the material culture of this space he had created, through family portraits, familiar books, music and so on. The idea of home created for Sercan was therefore one of continuous home-making as a banal practice of orientating oneself towards the world, thus home might be viewed as a 'material and an affective space, shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories and emotions' (Blunt 2005, p.506). The complexity of home within human geography emerges through its nature as not simply material, bounded and tangible, nor simply emotive and imaginary, but rather as an on-going co-construction of fields of thought, feeling and action, as 'a complex field of feelings and subjectivity: an anchor for senses of belonging, a mechanism for living with...and a site for constituting and performing selfhood' (Jacobs and Smith 2008, p.515). All of these resonances, of emotional and material investment, comfort and performance, were present in Sercan's home-making as his secure position within the city now afforded him the opportunity to create a home in this more normalised manner (Blunt and Dowling 2006).

Sercan's experience of creating a new home was however, far from normal for many in Sheffield, indeed as Mallett (2004, p.72) argues, the 'characterization of home as haven is an expression of an idealized, romanticized even nostalgic notion of home at odds with the reality of peoples' lived experience of home'. Rather, home is a spatial formation fraught with tensions, for as Blunt (2005, p.510) argues 'the home itself is intensely political, both in its internal intimacies and through its interfaces with the wider world'. The political dimensions of home are brought to the fore by considering the spatial experiences of those asylum seekers still awaiting Home Office decisions on their asylum claims, still accommodated by NASS and still held at the threshold of domopolitics. Thus while Sercan's experiences of creating a home draw together many of these aspects of home making itself, the experience of asylum seekers in Sheffield was often one of frustrated attempts to develop a sense of home within transitory spaces of housing. These individuals were accommodated and were not made destitute like those who had reached the end of the asylum process, however they stood in a liminal position within the politics of home, accommodated precisely *between* the destitution of the *homo sacer* and the opportunity to create a home in the city afforded to refugees through their newly offered status. In the following section I shall consider how for the majority of asylum seekers in Sheffield accommodation was provided as a minimum requirement of temporary asylum, but the structures of feeling associated with home were held in check through a series of prosaic restrictions on performing home as an emotional and material practice.

The Uncertainty of Home

In contrast to the experiences of Sercan, the majority of asylum seekers I met in Sheffield struggled to develop and maintain that sense of belonging and attachment to place associated with a notion of being 'at home'. There were a number of reasons for this, ranging from the liminal position of asylum seekers in the city through to the policies of NASS themselves and I want to consider each of these in turn. The first of these barriers was felt through the pervasive uncertainty of the asylum process itself. Bloch (2000) argues that immigration status is vitally important in determining the settlement processes of both refugees and asylum seekers, as 'not feeling secure about status prevented people from getting on with their lives and therefore settling in Britain' (ibid, p.85). The asylum 'waiting game' was experienced by almost all of those asylum seekers I met, most of whom

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had been waiting on decisions regarding their claims for at least three months and in some cases up to a year and a half. Uncertainty about status meant that individuals were unable to feel fully connected to Sheffield as the insecurity of their residence constantly undermined attempts to develop an emotional attachment to the city. In an informal interview Tinashe spoke to me about his situation;

> Tinashe told me that he still viewed Zimbabwe as a place he would one day like to return to, but is not sure if that will ever be possible. As he says 'the present is always so uncertain' and this uncertainty hinders any ideas he has of setting up home. He tells me that he has tried to mentally prepare himself for refusal and for possible deportation, but in such circumstances it is impossible to feel at home here, with this threat hanging over his head. Home he says is not a place for such threats. Tinashe tells me that 'the past and the future are the places of being at home', but the present can never be one (Research Diary, 20th June 2007).

The impact of this unbroken waiting was further impressed upon me at The Talking Shop by Faheem;

> Today I spoke with Faheem who I haven't seen for a month or so, I asked where he had been and he told me that his appeal hearing was next week and that he was very worried about it and so had not felt well enough to leave his house. He was clearly very nervous and had developed a facial tick which I had not noticed previously. As we spoke I tried to distract his attention from the hearing by asking whether he had looked into any of the English courses I had researched for him, he told me blankly that he had no plans anymore, that everything rested on Wednesday and that waiting for this moment was the worst part, how could he plan anything when he knew the date his future would be decided? (Research Diary, 20th July 2007).

The experiences of Tinashe and Faheem, of an unbearably stressful period of uncertainty, were replicated in the cases of many asylum seekers. Existing within a state of limbo appeared as a normalised attribute of the lived experience of asylum. Tinashe and Faheem's accounts both reflect the fact that 'the insecurity which asylum-seekers experience while waiting for their cases to be determined impacts on every aspect of their lives' (Bloch 2000, p.86). Both were unable mentally and practically to plan their futures, to think about establishing any form of attachment to their current spaces of living, for fear that these would be taken from them, for, as Parkin (1999) argues, once migrants have experienced forced displacement it is normal for them to continue to fear further displacement. As

Bloch (2000, p.86) argues 'without security of status and the associated citizenship rights, it is very difficult both structurally and emotionally to participate. If someone is not secure about their status then there is little incentive or enthusiasm to build a new life' (see also Buck 2001; Wilson 2001). The participation of which Bloch (2000) writes might be expressed through the act of home-making, through asserting belonging to a place, yet the insecurity attendant in the limbo status of many asylum seekers means that even this most basic sense of having a place is made extremely difficult to achieve. The uncertainty of the present means that home exists only in 'the past and the future' as Tinashe commented, while the spaces of accommodation which he currently inhabits can offer little more than spaces of inhabitation.

The insecurity attendant here has, to a certain extent, always permeated the status of asylum seekers, yet as Zetter and Pearl (1999a) argue since the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act there has been an intensified regulation of housing and welfare provision for asylum seekers as a series of nuanced distinctions between different categories of individual have been put in place. Zetter and Pearl (1999a, p.240-241) note that the;

> '[C]onsequence of increasingly diverse categories of eligibility and non-eligibility – made more complex by changing legislative provision and judicial rulings – is that local authorities have had to devise new checks and procedures by which to accept or reject refugee and asylum seeker housing claimants. By making the rules of access more complex, the procedures intensify the pressures on the client group and their experiences of exclusion'.

The increasing complexity of the asylum process, both in terms of categories of claimants and the appeals process, has therefore resulted in an intensification of the pressure and stress of this process on asylum seekers. As refugee status becomes ever harder to achieve, and the process of claiming asylum becomes ever more nuanced, the uncertainty and anxiety which attaches itself to asylum seekers is only likely to increase. In this situation that inability to think about the future, which we noted of Tinashe and Faheem, is likely to be intensified as the instability of playing the 'waiting game' has added to it the pressures of attempting to negotiate the myriad of domopolitical distinctions around which asylum provision is based. For those held at that domopolitical threshold of decision noted in Chapters Two and Three, being held in a state of limbo presented one means through which

the right to a home as a spatial imaginary was kept out of reach. Domopolitics therefore presents a logic wherein the notion of being 'at home' *should be* alien to asylum seekers as they are between home and destitution. I now wish to examine in more detail how such control works through the conditioning of accommodation for asylum seekers in a number of ways.

Negotiating the 'NASS Circuit'

The second area in which a sense of constraint manifested itself in asylum seekers' relations to housing was in their lack of agency within housing processes. Autonomy and agency were denied to asylum seekers in decisions not only over housing itself, but also over choices within their houses. Drawing upon the sense of uncertainty outlined above, the following modes of spatial regulation speak to this sense of helplessness in the face of decisions made *for* asylum seekers, not by them. Phillips (2006, p.542) notes that since 1999 NASS dispersal accommodation has been allocated 'on a 'no choice' basis' to asylum seekers, and it is the imposed nature of such accommodation which I wish to consider first. This assertion of spatial power had two key outcomes in Sheffield, firstly, a constant movement of people around the city, as asylum seekers were moved between houses and secondly, the location of individuals in areas they felt were inappropriate and dangerous. In a study of Somali refugees' housing histories in Sheffield Aden *et al.* (2007, p.3) found that;

> 'Almost immediately upon presenting to NASS, either in London or Liverpool, respondents were dispersed to other towns and cities and placed in temporary accommodation. Sometimes living in hostel accommodation and sometimes sharing a house or flat with other people seeking asylum, respondents passed through numerous temporary accommodation settings in different towns and cities while awaiting a decision on their application for asylum'.

The findings of Aden *et al.* (2007) reflect the experiences of many asylum seekers I met as it was common for individuals to be moved from housing to hostels, occasionally into detention and often returned seemingly without reason to new locations around the city. The housing patterns of asylum seekers were therefore characterized by instability and imposition as individuals were required to move 'because of the temporary nature of their

accommodation' (Phillips 2006, p.545). Unstable and often chaotic housing allocations through NASS have also been noted by Johnson (2003, p.5) who claims that asylum seekers 'reported being moved into and out of emergency accommodation with little warning, and had even been required to move from town to town on some occasions', a situation which made the provision of healthcare, services and the tracing of individual cases particularly difficult. Through my conversations at The Talking Shop I built up a picture of how often individuals had been moved and why they thought these moves had taken place;

> Through the last few months a number of regulars at The Talking Shop have told me that they've been moved from one house to another, often from one area to another, with little explanation. Shariq has been moved three times in his seven months in the city, while Ilya has been moved to a house in Doncaster. Today Omar told me that he has been moved again, the third time since I met him first in November. We talk about these moves with Faheem and Zada and they are of the opinion that the government is trying to move people around so that they can't feel settled. Faheem argues that they 'don't want us to stay' and so are trying to 'make things difficult'. For them the insecurity of accommodation is simply one more means to make things difficult, to make people feel less than welcome (Research Diary, 13th June 2007).

The movement noted above between houses, hostels, detention and occasional bouts of homelessness, may be seen to reflect the regulated mobility of homeless people which May (2000) argues is often confined to a strictly determined 'hostel circuit'. May (2000) notes that the transitory nature of hostel living is such that friendships and associations rarely develop, for while individuals often share experiences and characteristics, the mobility of their lives necessitates against sustained contact. We may note a similar experience within the accounts of asylum seekers in Sheffield, for here the movement around a 'NASS circuit' of sheltered and shared accommodation acts to deny the possibility of friendships developing as asylum seekers are forced to move on before such bonds may be cemented. In this manner those personal and familiar relations which Wise (2000) and others have noted as fundamental to the emotional construction of home are given little chance to develop. As Faheem and Zada commented a continual state of uncertainty over accommodation and subsequent movements around the city combined to prohibit people from 'putting down roots'. Instead Faheem and Zada felt that housing mobility was used to purposefully disrupt feelings of belonging and security.

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The Authority of the 'NASS Circuit'

The mobility associated with asylum housing was one which created discomfort and disorientation, as housing was selected, allocated and imposed as a means to control and constrain those asylum seekers awaiting decisions. In a number of cases such allocations led to tensions as individuals were placed in areas they felt were dirty, inappropriate or unsafe, the case of Faheem presents one such example;

> I went to Darnall and you know that I am not a Muslim and most residents there are Muslims, and I respect all religions but I felt that I had come from a world to a world which was the same world, you know. I came from Syria among Muslims and I came also to a new city full of Muslims, so I felt that there were many spies around me because I fled from persecution due to my religion, my ethnicity, so I was afraid that these people would be spies (Faheem Interview, 2007).

While Omar also spoke about 'being placed' in Darnall;

> *Omar*: I came on the bus [to Sheffield] it was evening time six or seven o'clock. I arrived in Sheffield, somebody was waiting for me to show me my accommodation, they send me to Darnall, with three other African men, so my first image of Sheffield it was so horrible.
>
> *Interviewer*: What were your feelings about it?
>
> *Omar*: Just, you know the Darnall area, I'm don't like to offend the people of that area but it was so silent and there wasn't any activity, because the first thing that I did I went to the library to check about the area and I found that they didn't have any map about this area showing which buildings were interesting, or in this area we have got this heritage or where you can walk, but nothing like this, just not much facilities and everywhere there are tins and rubbish and it's not clean, it's just horrible (Omar Interview, 2007).

For Faheem being placed in Darnall appeared inappropriate given the nature of his case and his background in Syria, his location amongst a group which he viewed as previously persecuting him, however problematic such a view may be, did not help him to deal with the stress of the asylum process. While for Omar, Darnall became synonymous with a deprived area lacking facilities, community engagement, and characterised by litter and anti-social behaviour. In both of these cases it is clear that neither Faheem nor Omar would

have chosen to live here. Accommodation under NASS, as we've noted, is allocated without choice to asylum seekers, their only other option is to opt-out of NASS support all together and face finding accommodation themselves with family or friends. Asylum seekers are thus expected to take, accept, and be thankful for, that which they are given, indeed within such a view of hospitable provision the comments of Faheem and Omar would be viewed as those of ungracious guests, daring to complain about the little they are offered. While I would not wish to suggest that asylum seekers should be given a free rein to choose their housing, their total lack of agency in this process, combined with the constant movement which accompanies it for many, establishes and perpetuates a position of marginality and dependence within society.

The (Violated) Sovereignty of Home

The dictation of house spaces was not however restricted purely to the allocation and location of a house itself, but also extended to condition performances and practices within these spaces of accommodation, in this sense NASS pervaded the house as a disciplinary mechanism of social and spatial ordering. The fact that housing properties allocated to asylum seekers are controlled through NASS and local housing associations meant that immigration and asylum officials reserved the right to enter properties unannounced if they felt it necessary. For Ilya this proved to be a cause of distress and came to represent the apparently rightless position of asylum seekers within British society;

> I think the asylum seekers have very small rights if you can say those are rights at all, because for example if the Home Office can concede sort of temporary accommodation, and not provide financial support, and the house providers who are providing this kind of accommodation they have their own keys and they can walk into your flat or in your house without even warning you, practically you live there but you are not in charge of your house, you are not in a position to say it is my home, and you know for an Englishman his home is his castle but it doesn't feel like it for an asylum seeker, even if he is getting temporary accommodation he's not safe (Ilya Interview, 2007).

Sibley (1995, p.90) argues that the home is 'personal space, or family space, one which others enter only by invitation' and therefore clearly here such spaces cannot be called home, for 'you live there but you are not in charge of your house'. The lack of agency over

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housing which asylum seekers experience extends not only to where they are housed, but also to the very privacy and integrity of that house itself. For Ilya this represented the position of asylum seekers as outside the normal set of rights for people in the UK, for while he acknowledges that the Home Office can 'concede...temporary accommodation', the ability of housing providers and immigration officials to enter houses unannounced undermines what little sense of hospitality is extended through the provision of housing. Asylum seeker accommodation does not feel like home as it does not feel safe, secure or a property one has any rights over, it is rather a conditional, restricted and fragile gift, constructed around an economic logic of exchange and debt, as we saw in Chapter Five. While accepting the gift of accommodation, asylum seekers are expected to obey the rules, to allow others to enter the house, to go where they are told to live and to leave such spaces when they are asked. Amongst these varied conditions and obligations the opportunity to feel at home is not prevalent, rather the intrusion of others, or the constant threat of such intrusion, acts, as Ilya suggests, to keep people from feeling in control of their most personal spaces.

What all these modes of conditioning amount to is a reflection of the wider spatial positioning of asylum seekers within Sheffield which I have sought to develop throughout this thesis. Here, in the negotiations of creating and finding a new home, the tensions of traversing a spatial politics of allocation, conditional hospitality and moments of ethical openness come to the fore. Thus while previous chapters have highlighted how gestures of openness and acts of kindness may allow individuals to feel more comfortable in the city, policies of housing and accommodation serve to restrict how comfortable asylum seekers can become. Considering asylum as a spatial experience through the case of housing thus returns us to that sense of asylum itself first noted in Chapter One, of a position between spatial categories and classifications, asylum as the spatiality of ambiguity. Asylum seekers' ambiguity is expressed through fitting neither the assured presence and home making of the refugee, or the destitute abandonment of the failed claimant, rather they occupy a position never fully at home yet never fully beyond the government's responsibility to accommodate. Asylum is therefore a spatial experience of discomfort, as the measures considered above attempt to allow presence, to accommodate difference, but never to let this become too comfortable, too homely. It is this sense of limitation which has acted as the baseline for all those moments of welcome noted throughout this thesis as

the ambiguity of a presence never fully accepted but not yet able to be rejected proves so hard to deal with. For domopolitics this represents the true 'asylum problem' referred to in Chapter One. With this position in mind I now turn to consider how this discomforting rhetoric of accommodation impacts upon accounts of the hospitable city.

Accommodation and the Unhomely Home

To return briefly to the national framing of Chapter Two, government policy towards the issue of asylum seeker housing has altered markedly over the last 15 years, as Phillips (2006, p.542) notes;

> 'Until the early 1990s, people seeking asylum had similar welfare rights to refugees and others in need, including access to social housing. However, the 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act began to restrict asylum seekers' rights to social housing, by removing the statutory obligation placed upon local authorities to house asylum seekers permanently under homelessness legislation'.

Following these restrictions the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act put in place a centralised system of housing and welfare support run through NASS, and in March 2006 the Home Office extended the dispersals system through signing a series of new contracts with nine private companies to provide accommodation (Home Office 2006b). At the time Immigration Minister Tony McNulty commented that;

> 'We take our responsibilities to the UK public, local communities and asylum seekers seriously and I believe it is important that we provide safe and decent accommodation to those individuals in need as they pass through the asylum process' (ibid).

It is this notion of providing 'safe and decent accommodation' which appears to be the key rhetorical device behind the government's approach to asylum housing, indeed the Home Office's approach to the integration of refugees, set out in their strategy document *'Integration Matters'* (Home Office 2005b), also highlights access to 'safe' accommodation as a means to promote community cohesion (see Carey-Wood 1997). As Perry (2005, p.5) notes the phrase 'safe and secure accommodation' has become synonymous with both governmental, and often charitable, discussions of the housing needs of asylum seekers and

refugees. However, Zetter and Pearl (1999a, p.236) suspect that housing policy has itself been used as a means to undermine and restrict the rights of asylum seekers, thus by 'disqualifying asylum seekers from access to public housing in particular, past and present UK governments have successfully implemented welfare disentitlement policies designed to deter and control asylum seekers'. While it is widely accepted that 'housing plays a crucial role in the capacity of refugees and asylum seekers to settle effectively in their host country' (ibid) current policies of restrictive housing allocation often undermine these modes of settlement as we have seen. The Refugee Council and other groups have argued that the process of settlement and integration for refugees *and* asylum seekers should be viewed as starting at the point of arrival in the UK (Carter and El-Hassan 2003; Hact 2004; ICAR 2004; Refugee Council 2004), yet the government's series of distinctions between refugees and asylum seekers legislate against such a reading of settlement, rather the 'principles underlying refugee integration sit somewhat uneasily...alongside government measures to manage the settlement of asylum seekers through 'dispersal'' (Phillips 2006, p.541). Accommodation, as we have seen in Sheffield, plays a key role in maintaining the filtering associated with domopolitics, as the ability to make a new home is restricted to those who have proved their right to be in the city and the nation.

The experiences of asylum seekers in Sheffield are thus indicative of the fact that for those still awaiting decisions, housing is provided as a means of accommodation alone, and this has a number of important implications. For those caught within the process of domopolitical decision making, asylum is an issue of temporary accommodation, and in doing so it is kept spatially manageable and disconnected from the imaginative belonging of the nation as a home. Thus Sercan could only begin to construct a sense of home once status, and therefore his position within a national domopolitics, had been assured. Therefore the control over accommodation and settlement associated with NASS dispersal policies is a means to control those who are viewed as questionable and ambiguous within the nation. van der Horst (2004, p.36) notes similar narratives of spatial management surrounding Dutch asylum reception centres, arguing that the 'dominant discourse on reception centres in the Netherlands is institutional, focusing on efficiency, functionality and care given to the needy', thus within 'reception policy home discourses are still virtually absent' (ibid, p.41). Here the 'concern is with giving a shelter and making the procedure run smoothly. Functionality within the aims of the asylum procedure is top

priority' (ibid). This policy of functionality, of 'giving shelter' at its most basic, thereby acts to keep asylum seekers from getting 'too comfortable' or too 'attached' to particular places. The increasing restrictions upon access to housing for asylum seekers within the UK and those modes of power noted in Sheffield, present one such means of spatial regulation. However, van der Horst (2004) also argues that that policy language of housing provision and accommodation which surrounds asylum in Home Office accounts also conveys a similar message, that asylum seekers should not be comfortable, not feel too welcome, and should certainly not have a home. Accommodation thus implies a temporary situation, a qualified position of waiting, and Fekete (2005) views such a discourse as allowing the accommodation of asylum seekers to be cast as a matter of 'warehousing', as the 'idea that refugees can be 'warehoused'...until conflicts are resolved denotes the denigration and reification of asylum seekers' (ibid, p.67-68).

Partly the centrality of accommodation to debates over asylum housing speaks to a desire to warehouse asylum seekers, to keep them out of the way until those modes of domopolitical sorting regulate and organise those to be made 'at home' and those to be cast aside. However, the experiences of asylum seekers in Sheffield point to a second implication of the prevalence of accommodation as a mode of presenting asylum housing, that of its links to a city, and a nation, keen to present itself as hospitable. Hospitality, as noted in Chapter Two, is centred on the idea of home (Derrida 2000b), yet to 'accommodate' is to make allowances for, to offer a space but under certain conditions, to never fully allow a guest to feel at home and to impose a limit on the tolerance one is offering. A language of 'accommodation' therefore implies not only a tolerant 'getting by' on the part of the host, but also an assumption of a temporal limit, for the setting up of home implies a permanency which the provision of 'safe and secure accommodation' does not (Derrida 2003). Such a discourse works, as Pugliese (2002, p.21) suggests, to obscure hospitality, for;

> '[T]he disbursement of essentials is structured in terms of services to be rendered, begrudgingly. What must be relentlessly evaded is hospitality: don't expect refuge, only shelter; don't expect nourishment, only food; don't expect comfort, only harassment. All these practices position refugees as interlopers parasiting the body of the nation. Any ethical gesture of hospitality has to be extirpated...for fear that the parasitical refugee might actually become comfortable in their new home'.

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The denial of comfort is linked to the denial of home. For asylum seekers the creation of a new home is elusive not only because of their situation of exile, but also because they are discursively constructed as outside the realm of rightful home-making. In Sheffield this positioning took place through those measures of uncertainty, movement and intrusion which made individuals feel uncomfortable, like an unwanted guest or one who had outstayed their welcome. Here there was an acceptance that Sheffield was being hospitable in some senses, in offering accommodation itself, however the limits of this were always clear, and often reasserted through the nature of accommodation as the bare minimum that could be offered. The knowledge of such a limit made spaces of accommodation discomforting ones, as places which should have offered security and sanctuary came to be reminders of both social isolation and one's insecure, guest-like nature. van der Horst (2004, p.45) again notes a similar discursive construction in Dutch reception centres, for here;

> '[C]entres are measured against the standards of cost efficiency. Food, hygiene and sleep are the three main criteria. Seen from this perspective the Dutch reception policy is very adequate. No asylum seeker, who is still in the procedure, has to go without sufficient food or a place to sleep'

It seems clear that such 'standards of cost efficiency' should not be applied as an adequate means to evaluate the lives of asylum seekers, just as the positioning of survival as the goal of asylum policy and practice should not be enough. Yet the positioning of a system established to be 'adequate' in itself creates a politics of discomfort which is designed to both satisfy those on the political far right who argue that Britain has become a soft touch, and as such the discomfort of poor housing and sink estates become a marker of Britain's 'toughened' stance on asylum, and those who perceive such discomfort as a means to deter future asylum seekers from Britain's borders. Naturally, what is lost here is precisely that which was noted in Sheffield, the stark impacts such a deliberate move to make people not feel 'too welcome', to make them feel decidedly unwelcome and uncomfortable, has on the everyday lives of asylum seekers who feel neither security nor comfort in the spaces they are allocated in the city.

The politics of discomfort which patterned the responses of asylum seekers to questions on home, housing and accommodation, therefore speak to those negotiations of domopolitics

and hospitality which we noted in Chapter Three. Asylum seekers' experiences of housing suggest that a domopolitics of filtering and distinction acts to condition their position within a hierarchy of hospitality. For those deemed to be safe and secure, a hospitality of home is offered, through which a guest may become, albeit conditionally and temporarily, a host within national space. Yet for those still awaiting a decision, still caught within the filtering of domopolitics at a national level, the hospitality of the city must always be a limited, begrudging one, one where discomfort ensures not only that individuals are monitored and known but that they are also aware of their liminal position, their precariousness and as such are expected to act accordingly. This interface between domopolitics and hospitality in the city acts to discipline asylum seekers, it keeps them in place and in known addresses and properties. A national domopolitics of ordering space and filtering difference has a greater impact in Sheffield when considering asylum housing than in other areas precisely due to the fact that Sheffield's autonomy to direct and govern accommodation policy is limited. What this suggests is that those moments of generosity and kindness offered through public spaces and dispositions in the city face a real challenge in the shape of a domopolitics which orders and regulates asylum housing itself. This is not to say that such a challenge is not surmountable, indeed one of the central roles of The Talking Shop was in allowing individuals to deal with the discomforts of accommodation, however it does call for a renewed focus not simply on improving housing conditions, consultation and integrity, but also on addressing the very discursive framing of asylum housing itself, for the damaging implications of 'accommodation' are that the image of asylum seekers as temporary and suspicious guests at best, and parasites at worse, is perpetuated and strengthened nationally and has serious impacts on the emotional and physical well-being of asylum seekers locally.

Anything but 'Home'

Rivlin and Moore (2001, p.329) argue that home-making is 'neither an automatic nor a straightforward process. Resolving the immediate problem of rooflessness, does not in itself bring the experience of home' and it is this disjuncture between accommodation and home which this chapter has sought to consider within the varied spatial experiences of asylum seekers. While spaces of accommodation were offered to asylum seekers in Sheffield, these did not necessarily translate into homes, rather a series of prosaic modes of

regulation and restriction denied many people the ability to reconstruct that sense of their place in the world which is attributed to the imaginative and material geography of home (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Tolia-Kelly 2004). Instead asylum seekers were often (re)moved from houses, intruded upon and placed in increasingly uncertain 'limbo' situations which meant that accommodation became cast as a series of marginal spaces of guesting along an insecure path towards refugee status, deportation or destitution. The politics of accommodation therefore directly reflect the impact of a national account of domopolitics in the city, as positions of acceptance, rejection and indistinction condition how asylum seekers are accommodated and what provision they receive. The hospitality of housing in Sheffield was one of limitations and fractures, one through which asylum seekers were made to feel uncomfortable and ill at ease within the city and within their houses, the creation of home for those still being filtered, checked and verified was to be avoided, instead they became temporary guests to be accommodated, endured and 'warehoused' until conflicts or decisions had passed.

The spatial power of NASS and the government to impose a position upon the apparent ambiguity of asylum seekers was never far away in Sheffield, for such a discourse patterned the ground of asylum housing from policy documents through to prosaic encounters, and reached its natural conclusion in the justification of destitution and the removal of all forms of support to those who had failed the system. In this sense, the consideration of asylum seekers' experiences of home and housing offered throughout this chapter has returned us to those national concerns with order, security, legitimacy and provision with which I opened this thesis. The daily politics of asylum in Sheffield, through which individuals have to negotiate the discomforts of appearing as an unwanted guest in a begrudging foreign land, reflect in many ways the discursive construction of asylum as an issue of unavoidable, yet unsavory, accommodation. In this chapter I have argued that those modes of welcome and hospitality offered across a number of spaces in Sheffield, from the city itself to the drop-in centre, are underwritten by the discomfort of a domopoltics of the nation that starkly reminds asylum seekers of their position, their liminality and their vulnerability. Dwyer and Brown (2005) note that government asylum policy is centred upon a concern for deterrence and link such a concern with the begrudging hospitality of providing only that which is necessary, it is this interaction between a politics of deterrence and a domopolitical logic of distinction which was enforced and perpetuated through the

unhomely housing of asylum seekers in Sheffield. In conclusion, Dywer and Brown (2005, p.378) argue that;

> 'Two linked themes are central to policy initiated in response to increased numbers applying for asylum in the past decade. First, is a purposeful attempt to use immigration and asylum legislation to deter those fleeing persecution from seeking asylum in the UK. Second, is a continuing reduction of the welfare rights that are available to those forced migrants who manage to enter the UK. The establishment of the separate and highly conditional NASS system of limited welfare support represents a concerted effort to exclude forced migrants from mainstream welfare services which are to be 'reserved' for citizens'.

These interwoven strands of deterrence can be seen to come to a natural conclusion in the destitution politics of the present, wherein a continual denial of welfare rights is projected as a tightening up of Britain's 'soft' image on asylum. For those who lack a right to not just a home, not even temporary and conditional accommodation, but to space within the UK itself, such a policy, and such a country, appears anything but 'soft', anything but 'home'.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION
A BECOMING SANCTUARY

'If there is to be a community in the world of the individuals, it can only be (and it needs to be) a community woven together from sharing and mutual care; a community of concern and responsibility for the equal right to be human and the equal ability to act on that right' (Bauman 2001, p.150).

'The way we treat the most vulnerable in our midst is a true gauge of our values as a nation and a people. The public rightly expects fair and humane treatment of asylum seekers, befitting of a civilised society. There is considerable distance to travel until the reality of how we treat people seeking sanctuary matches that aspiration' (Independent Asylum Commission 2008a, p.6).

Asylum is a claim for space. Asylum escapes and exceeds. It is with these two propositions that I opened this thesis, through calling for an account of asylum that took seriously the spatial and experiential nature of asylum as a relation to difference which brought together varied accounts of space, politics and ethics. Through the chapters that followed I have traced a path through the negotiations which saturate contemporary asylum by looking in detail at the ways in which national discourses of asylum, domopolitics and hospitality are played out through the prosaic negotiations of urban life and through a series of spaces of asylum within the city. Each of these chapters has presented a different take, a different position and spacing, on the issue of asylum in Sheffield. Yet, their relationship is one of mutual interdependence, of mutual creation, for the account of asylum I have created is one where asylum as a spatial experience is about not only Sheffield's narration of its hospitable past, not only about those community organisations and movements within the city which have sought to promote different sensibilities of welcome and responsibility towards others, not even about those varied spaces of interaction, engagement and isolation for asylum seekers centred around the drop-in centre, the public park and gardens or the home. Asylum in Sheffield presented an experience of negotiating all of these spaces, dispositions and discourses.

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Yet it was also more than this, it was about how these spaces and ideas came together, connected, conflicted and created new spaces of welcome, hostility and indifference, how a whole series of prosaic gestures, materials and bodies assembled and encountered one another momentarily and then faded from view. Viewing asylum in Sheffield as a spatial experience means that asylum is not reducible to dispersals, to detention, to drop-in centres, blocks of flats or city streets, to newspapers, tables, or urban design, rather, asylum meant a feeding together of these images, perspectives and narrations into a series of encounters, of moments of performing different spaces as part of everyday life. It is in this sense that asylum is excessive, 'more-than-representational' (Lorimer 2005), and crucially beyond the limits of simply national accounts of policy or local politics of provision. Asylum ties together different spaces, different connections, relations and demands, and in doing so I have argued that taking seriously the creative tensions of contemporary spaces of asylum offers the opportunity to envisage a politics which is responsive to the demands of both alterity, and those of the practice of space itself.

The narratives and spaces articulated through these chapters gather together to provide a partial and temporary account of asylum in Sheffield, one in which negotiations of ethos, temporality, disposition and policy come to the fore. Throughout these varied engagements with the city, I have argued that asylum presents a spatial imaginary of ambiguity and it is this position of liminality which conditions many of the necessary negotiations that have come to the fore when considering the spacing of asylum in the UK. This has been an argument to appreciate the prosaic politics of asylum itself, not simply through reducing the experiences of asylum seekers to those of difference within the city (see Iveson 2006; Watson 2006), but to argue that the position of liminality which accompanies asylum seekers creates distinct negotiations of space which cannot be contained within accounts of encountering difference (Ahmed 2000; Valentine 2008). Taking seriously the spacing of asylum therefore means taking account of how spaces of asylum come to be performed through conflicting ideas of hospitality, conditionality, aversion, welcome, generosity, indifference and humanitarianism, as spaces of asylum fold together these impulses and ask individuals to respond. I want to conclude by considering two central resonances of this work, firstly, suggesting how this study has sought to shed light upon asylum as a spatial experience itself, before secondly, arguing for a political account of becoming which has developed across the various political and ethical engagements of these chapters.

Spaces of Asylum, Spaces of Politics

The first of these concerns is to reaffirm the importance of expanding the spatial imaginaries through which we approach and consider the issue of asylum itself. Considering the embodied negotiations of asylum in the city as I have done here, which draws upon a lineage of urban ethnography and studies of prosaic relations to difference (Back 1996; Back and Nayak 1999; Duneier 1999; Nayak 2003; Swanton 2006), highlights the dizzying array of tensions and contestations for space, rights and opportunity which pattern the daily lives of asylum seekers. These are tensions which would be largely ignored were we to consign our analytic gaze purely to spaces of asylum more normally considered in recent years, such as the borders of the nation (Sales 2005; Tyler 2006), the detention centre (Hubbard 2005a, 2005b) or the refugee camp (Diken 2004; Pugliese 2002). In fact, for many asylum seekers these spaces are the exceptional ones, while the everyday spaces of the city considered here, the drop-in centre, accommodation, public spaces and so on, are the very banal sites through which asylum is lived, not only as a relation to the nation via its borders as the focus upon policy documents and national framings would have us believe, but also as a relation to other residents of Sheffield, other spaces and banal encounters. It is not only the tensions of traversing such spaces of the city which are denied in current focuses on national space, but also that range of moments of openness, generosity and responsibility towards others which emerge through the encounters these banal spaces make possible. It is easy to lose sight of these hopeful encounters in an issue surrounded by much frustration, fear and trauma, yet to do so means that the energy put into such engagements is lost. We should not be overly optimistic that asylum seekers will stop being political and public scapegoats for an array of social ills, however we must also take hold of, and make the most from, the hopeful resources at our disposal.

The importance of engaging with the banal spatialities of asylum is therefore threefold. Firstly, what my concern to study the dynamics which create these spaces has shown is that these everyday domains of practice, from the city as a whole to the park bench, are accomplished through complex convergences of different attitudes, outlooks and ethical positions, and this has consequences for the ways in which these spaces might be ordered and conditioned in the future. Thus, my focus on The Talking Shop in Chapter Five highlighted that drop-in spaces for asylum seekers, to fulfil the needs of both

volunteers and asylum seekers, should be viewed as shared and collective accomplishments of all who inhabit them and all should have the right to develop a sense of belonging within these sites, through relationships of friendship, generosity and reciprocity. Practically this means allowing those asylum seekers who wish to contribute in whatever way they can to do so and it also means trying to break down assumed norms of charity and giving within these spaces, by allowing others to assume positions of responsibility, from the simplicity of tea making to giving individuals a say in the future of these spaces. If these spaces are to be made more hospitable then it is crucial that the tensions which emerge through their continual construction are understood and taken into account. Thus sovereign rights to charity in drop-in spaces must be questioned in favour of more reciprocal visions of mutual learning and engagement, and measures of regulation and order in public space should be viewed as 'light touch' means to encourage public hospitality rather than to erase dissensus and incivility (Fyfe *et al.* 2006). Crucially, it is only through considering in detail how the liminality of asylum constructs such spaces that we might begin to offer alternative forms of engagement based around small achievements and mutual learning. This is not however to suggest that these multiple spaces of asylum within the city are somehow equivalent, rather it is to assert that their similarity, if any, lies purely in the unique, performed and temporary nature of their constitution in the present. Thus some spaces will present a more open face to asylum seekers and refugees in the city than others, some spaces will engender aversion and at times hostility towards difference, yet it is only through engaging with these spaces and the ways in which they present assemblages which encourage certain performances, relations and responses, that we might begin to consider how such spaces, and responses, might be performed differently for asylum seekers and refugees.

Secondly, focusing upon the ways in which spaces of asylum are created through the negotiation of diverse political logics of hospitality, encampment, tolerance and aversion, means communicating the fact that how asylum seekers experience the city, how they contribute to and construct spaces of shared presence, matters in and of itself. These negotiations do not matter simply because they may direct how the city responds to alterity in the future; they matter because they form that continual construction of the city as a shared accomplishment of all who dwell there (Lefebvre 1996a). Taking these experiences seriously communicates the fact that asylum seekers have an equal claim to the city, and to voicing that claim about space (Dikeç 2007). As I have argued, the

experience of contemporary asylum is one of negotiating an array of different spaces and discourses through everyday life, spaces in which national narratives of domopolitics and decision making come into contact with local politics of welcome, aversion and underlying socio-economic conditions, and as such engaging with the ways in which these tensions are actually experienced across the city must continue to be a central concern for research. Studying asylum as a complex assemblage of spatial experiences, of relations and connections between places, people, materials and narratives, means that it is no longer enough to simply focus upon how a bounded vision of the nation might constrain mobility and banal cosmopolitan instincts (Beck 2002; Nava 2002), nor is it enough to consider how asylum might represent a nomadic sensibility of relational connections. Instead, I have argued that it is the confluence between these positions that asylum highlights, the contradictions, tensions and connections which are thrown up precisely through attempting to negotiate different visions of the nation, the city and the street. There is no simple opposition here between a bounded, domopolitical nation, and an imposing, mobile, asylum seeker (Walters 2004; Ingram 2008), rather, taking account of asylum as a spatial experience serves to highlight how moments of boundedness intermingle and struggle alongside moments of mobility, openness and relationality. Spaces of asylum are therefore both open and closed, caught in tensions between different orientations, influences and performances (Morgan 2007).

The importance of noting these contests is in articulating, and calling for, a far more nuanced, *more human*, account of asylum itself, as a process and an experience which creates, distorts and in part sustains, human lives. Asylum seekers are neither the barbarians at the gate of an anxious nation (Tyler 2006), the romantic nomad of global mobility (Cresswell 2006), nor an abject humanitarian victim (Brown 2004; Žižek 2002, 2008). Considering asylum seekers' engagements with space as this thesis has done, demonstrates that asylum cannot be distilled into these categories, it is an individual, imposed and practiced position of relating to different spaces and different representations across the city and beyond. Taking spaces of asylum seriously means acknowledging that asylum seekers possess modes of spatial engagement and creation far more nuanced than simply those of an abstract reliance on charity and benevolent provision.

Finally, the importance of examining the diverse spatialities of asylum as a series of encounters with other individuals, places, materials and performances, is that through these engagements, conflicts and modes of living together in the city, a distinct politics of asylum arises which stands in contrast to the national frames of reference relied upon by most accounts of asylum. Here asylum has regularly been approached as an issue of national order, sorting and domopolitics (Fassin 2005; Fekete 2005; Sales 2002; Walters 2004), or one of cosmopolitan impulses and rights to refuge and belonging (Dummett 2001; Gibney 2004; Rosello 2001), however, these frames of reference deny the nuanced spatial politics of asylum noted throughout this thesis. Spacing asylum as I have done demonstrates both how these frames of reference come to infuse and influence everyday negotiations of difference and refuge, through spatial logics of encampment, hospitality and domopolitics, yet the political negotiations, content and creation of those banal spaces of the city discussed here are not exhausted by considering these frames of reference. What studying the active accomplishment of spaces of the city through asylum achieves is to shed light upon the fact that these spaces are produced through, and productive of, precisely new, emergent and contested forms of political response. The negotiations of space which have patterned each of these chapters, negotiations of hospitality, domopolitics, relational outwardlookingness and bounded visions of territory, are therefore productive, not only of spaces performed through these contests, but also of momentary alliances of interest, solidarity and agonistic 'small achievements' which offer moments of politics that cast into doubt the ability to consign asylum simply to an account of national territorial exclusion or cosmopolitan freedom. Thus, just as the spatiality of asylum cannot be confined to simple bounded categories or to romantic visions of mobility, so a politics of asylum is excessive and creative as it engages with both different spaces and different modes of thought. It is to the political vision of this thesis that I now wish to turn, in arguing that what these spaces have pointed towards, albeit problematically, is the possibility of a politics of becoming for asylum based upon the virtue of sanctuary itself.

A Politics of Becoming

A politics of becoming, as I suggested in Chapter Four, is a movement and struggle for recognition and rights which profoundly alters the political designation of roles and responsibilities previously in place (Connolly 1999a). As Connolly (1999c, p.54) argues the 'key to the politics of becoming is the struggle to get on the register', for it is this

struggle which designates the 'becoming political' (Isin 2002) of a given constituency. Within Connolly's (2005) account of a plural political system, the struggle for political becoming, for the agonistic recognition of a political voice for those currently cast as beyond or outside political discourse, is a central pillar which binds together the plural, agonistic and critically responsive elements of pluralism itself. Such pluralism is centred upon the right to question the political identities, positions and certainties of others, whilst acknowledging that one's own certainties are similarly open to challenge (Connolly 1999a; Owen 2008; Wenman 2003a, 2003b; Williams 2008). A politics of becoming represents a challenge to the naturalised order of politics from the position of those seen as not rightfully political within current formations, and as such throws into doubt the certainties and presumptions which maintain current accounts of political legitimacy. Through focusing on these banal spaces of asylum, and how they throw up a series of political contestations over space, ethics and rights within the city, I want to suggest that we might begin to envisage a politics of becoming for asylum seekers, one which views micropolitical cultural change as the foundation for wider political transformations, emerging from everyday spaces of asylum in Sheffield. This is a politics which is not content to simply lie within accounts of either national domopolitics or cosmopolitan ideals, but rather emerges precisely from the prosaic negotiations of the city and of asylum, to suggest a politics of ethical responsivity which is locally based, yet nationally influential. Such a politics is orientated around three key areas of concern.

The first of these is the importance of everyday, affective and open encounters with asylum seekers created through the very fabric of the city itself. As noted in Chapters Four, Five and Six, the centrality of spaces of encounter within the urban has been noted in a range of recent research considering how the 'prosaic negotiations' of living together throw up opportunities for engagement across cultural boundaries (Amin 2002a, 2003; Donald 1999; Laurier and Philo 2006; Wood and Landry 2007; Valentine 2008). The centrality of such encounters to the spatial experiences of asylum seekers is twofold, firstly, these offer opportunities to engage with members of the local community and when positive these encounters provide a sense of comfort and connection to the city itself, a feeling of belonging and acceptance through intercultural contact. This is not to underestimate the opportunity for incivility, aversion and hostility in such encounters (Brown 2006; Noble 2005; Watson 2006; Wells and Watson 2005), but it is to suggest that the simple act of accessing spaces of convergence, of meeting

and engaging with others is fundamental in opening the opportunity for a politics of small achievements, a micropolitics which seeks to address how individuals in the city think about, and accordingly respond to, asylum seekers and the very issue of asylum. Thus in Chapter Four I argued that the City of Sanctuary movement in Sheffield presented a case of attempting to alter the dispositions of Sheffield's residents towards asylum and that such work was partly orientated around the kinds of open and often surprising encounters which took place in drop-in spaces in Chapter Five, and in public spaces in Chapter Six. The second implication of highlighting the importance of these moments of urban encounter is in their ability to offer opportunities for the performance of situated, and responsive ethical dispositions. Following work on the situational and dispositional nature of ethical action (Connolly 2002; Thrift 2003, 2004b; Varela 1999), I have argued that one of the key roles which encountering asylum seekers in everyday life plays is in creating brief opportunities for the emergence of more generous, open, sensibilities towards others. Through meeting others and responding to their demands, individuals may take forward an altered account of difference into future encounters, a more generous, agonistic disposition which is willing to act responsibly when faced with asylum issues.

Such moments of encounter may therefore both comfort asylum seekers in the city, and allow ethical responses to difference to emerge, as asylum seekers become humanised, embodied and present in the lives of local communities. For both of these reasons, a politics of becoming around asylum would firstly seek to extend and expand the opportunities for engagement and encounter between asylum seekers and local communities. Through allowing, and encouraging, asylum seekers to access resources more regularly the preserve of citizens, such as libraries, museums, art galleries, community organisations and local decision making bodies. While for Sheffield's citizens this would mean being encouraged to engage with projects such as The Talking Shop and the NRC's befriending and mentoring schemes through wider advertising, this would mean greater education for all children on the realities of asylum through encountering the experiences of Sheffield's asylum seekers themselves, and this could perhaps mean a greater sense of mutuality through schemes to share common values and commodities such as food in weekly community events focused upon the exchange of ideas, beliefs and knowledge. The first pillar of any politics of becoming around asylum must therefore be one centred upon mutuality, open respect and agonism, upon promoting, and valuing, openness to asylum seekers.

The second key aspect to this approach, must be that of building upon these dispositional orientations to actively promote the idea of sanctuary as a public good. We saw such work taking place in Sheffield throughout Chapter Four in the form of the City of Sanctuary movement and this movement has now become a national network, stretching to eight other cities, and while these successes are to be welcomed, they should also open a wider engagement with the notion of sanctuary itself. The idea of sanctuary rests at the very heart of any account of asylum and as such altering political responses to asylum might involve considering how best to promote sanctuary, as the baseline of an ethics of responsibility, an ethics which is grounded upon the inescapable demand to respond to others (Critchley 2007). Recently, the Independent Asylum Commission (IAC) has published a series of reports into the current state of the British asylum system, highlighting a series of failures and recommendations to improve how asylum is current approached (IAC 2008a, 2008b, 2008c).[1] The first of these, titled *'Saving Sanctuary'*, foregrounds the importance of encouraging a 'protection culture' in the UK (IAC 2008b, p.23), which may be built upon promoting a 'centre ground' of sanctuary as a moral and humanitarian imperative (IAC 2008b, p.17). The IAC's (2008b) research highlights the fact that the notion of sanctuary is well supported among the British public, but that asylum is a far more contested issue, therefore the IAC recommend that asylum needs to be reconnected nationally with an image of sanctuary and refuge, as a virtue which has moral, humanitarian and public value. The IAC (2008b, p.18) also argue, as I have, that the 'promotion of positive encounters between communities and the involvement of local people at an early stage is specifically to be encouraged'.

The City of Sanctuary movement studied in Chapter Four represents one means to promote a notion of sanctuary nationally, and a means to link this ideal into local politics and urban identity as I argued there. However, the IAC (2008b, p.17-18) also recommend a range of other areas in which sanctuary might be promoted, such as, through a national 'sanctuary summit' to communicate this concept to the public, through wider education programmes which teach children the value of a safe haven and the realities of the asylum system, through national moves to expand Refugee Week

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[1] The Independent Asylum Commission is an independent enquiry into the implementation of national policies on asylum. It was launched in 2006 in the House of Commons and from 2006-2008 travelled throughout the UK to collect evidence from a range of witnesses (including asylum seekers and refugees, politicians, the UK Borders Agency, the Home Office, and workers in the refugee sector), on the current state of the UK asylum system.

celebrations and through forming 'sanctuary welcoming groups to bridge the divide between those seeking sanctuary and the local population' (ibid, p.18). These measures, together with the work of groups like City of Sanctuary, represent means of connecting those micropolitics of generous engagement noted above, in which dispositions to difference are worked upon through regular contact and mutual learning, to a wider macropolitics of affectively altering the way asylum is thought about. Sanctuary must be seen as a value in itself, a value linked to the demand for refuge placed upon the nation by asylum seekers. A politics of becoming must therefore have an affective element, a drive to change those 'techniques of thought' (Connolly 2002), through which responses to political issues are made. For a politics of becoming means a politics wherein the exclusion of a given group is no longer seen as given, natural or even defendable, and therefore such a politics must be based upon a raft of measures which work on individuals' perceptions of asylum seekers, opening space within them for contestation and argument. The research of the IAC (2008b) and the successes of the City of Sanctuary movement, suggests that the value of sanctuary might present just such a micropolitical 'hook' for this politics, a key virtue around which to orientate demands for greater rights and a greater voice within political debate. These first two aspects of a politics of becoming are therefore concerned with offering opportunities through which conventional modes of thought on asylum might be opened and altered, the third dimension seeks to extend this work even further and demands a greater sense of responsibility arising precisely from valuing sanctuary as a public ethical commitment.

The politics of becoming I have suggested so far might be seen to gravitate around an appreciation for both a culture of engagement and the promotion of an ethic of sanctuary and hospitality, which reflects a number of calls for hospitality itself to be viewed as a key ethical orientation for Europe (Amin 2004a; Bauman 2004; Derrida 2003). However, my third area of concern is to extend this value of sanctuary beyond the city and the nation, and to promote that sense of relational political responsibilities both within and beyond the city, which the City of Sanctuary movement gestured towards (Massey 2006, 2007). As we have seen throughout this thesis, one of the reasons why asylum presents such a taxing political question is precisely in its relational complexity, in the way it feeds together concerns over security, national integrity, humanitarianism, charity and fairness. As I argued in Chapters Two and Four, such a relational spatial politics is reliant upon a concurrent appreciation of negotiations of

propinquity, connectivity, and the embedded and territorial presumptions of much political practice (Amin 2004b; Allan and Cochrane 2007; Macleod and Jones 2007; Morgan 2007). As Massey (2007) argues, it is no longer enough for a city to accept the benefits it receives from its relational construction, rather, a demand for response, for a 'politics beyond place' which is responsible to the networks in which any city acts, is also required. Not simply because that alone may sustain such networks of constitution, but because there is an ethical demand, a responsibility, to do so. To attend only to the politics of propinquity, of the stranger next door, would be to miss the opportunity to contest and address wider *political discourses* on asylum which present individuals as either terrorists, scroungers or victims, wider *political practices* which make many destitute, uncomfortable or isolated in their new 'homes', and wider *political relations* which cause and perpetuate the suffering of refugees worldwide. Addressing the politics of propinquity within the city, through promoting those moments of critical responsiveness and generosity noted above, must therefore be supplemented by instilling an equally forceful disposition towards responsibility for the city's role within these wider frames of reference. As Massey (2007, p.216-217) argues, one thing this entails is;

> '[T]he acknowledgment of implication, through mutual constitution, in the ongoing production of difference and inequality around the world. This is the same reasoning that would argue against a politics only of aid (or only of 'hospitality' or of 'generosity') on the grounds, in part, that such a formation occludes the unequal relations in which we are all embedded and through which, again in part, the very need for aid has in the first place been produced. Rather, what are at issue are the responsibilities of place'.

Promoting sanctuary as an urban, and national, virtue, a belief behind which cities and citizens could be motivated, must therefore be linked to a desire to examine and critically question the conditions and politics which create the need for such sanctuary in the first place. This would involve, as suggested in Chapter Four, taking responsibility for the relations which Sheffield, or any other city, enters into, and calling for a more just response to asylum seekers, and the conflicts which create them. It would involve the work of the now national City of Sanctuary movement. It would involve projects of education to inform individuals of the UK's role within asylum as an international flow of people, notably highlighting the contributions made by other countries in accommodating refugees and asylum seekers. Most prosaically however, it would involve those micropolitical methods employed in Sheffield to celebrate the

relations and connections which have made Sheffield, and the demand to link such concerns to national campaigns on asylum around anti-deportation, the right to work and combating destitution. This final strand of a politics of becoming would therefore have to be orientated around a local politics of place, a politics which weaves together the concerns for a generous public sensibility and a public commitment to sanctuary noted above, and presents these concerns as not only beneficial to place, but also as extended beyond place, and as means to enact a responsibility to that beyond.

What I have attempted to sketch is a series of pillars around which an emergent assemblage of political responses to asylum might be orientated. These are points which have gained momentum throughout the proceeding chapters and points which have emerged through the spatial negotiations of asylum seekers in Sheffield and the work of those attempting to improve such experiences. We should be wary, however, of getting ahead of ourselves here, for as Beck (2002, p.29) argues;

> 'Even the most positive development imaginable, an opening of cultural horizons and a growing sensitivity to other unfamiliar, legitimate geographies of living and coexistence, need not necessarily stimulate a feeling of cosmopolitan responsibility'.

There is no guarantee that creating such a coalition of micro and macropolitical interests and influences would result in a change to the way asylum is presented and experienced at present. While furthermore, it must be argued that this kind of political and cultural work, of attuning thought and addressing attitudes, must be supplemented with challenges to the social inequalities upon which the exclusions of asylum are based (Valentine 2008). However, a politics of becoming centred around ideals of generous and mutual engagements with difference, sanctuary and relational responsibilities, might work at precisely those modes of thought both public and political, which currently present asylum as a domopolitical issue of filtering, classification and abandonment, rather than hospitality, sanctuary and refuge. The policy language of asylum as a national 'problem' and a terrorist threat noted in Chapter One, is therefore predicated upon particular dispositions towards asylum, particular visions of space and particular accounts of what politics is and who has a legitimate right to a political voice within contemporary Britain. At present that right is rarely extended to asylum seekers; it is the contention of this thesis that addressing this political abandonment demands a politics of becoming which emerges precisely from the spatial experiences of asylum

seekers in urban Britain. From those moments of openness, generosity and civility which we have seen and from an account of sanctuary as an ethical virtue, not an abused and derided commodity. A sense of sanctuary infused much of that which was positive about Sheffield's response to asylum seekers, from the generous dispositions of The Talking Shop, to the regulated hospitality of public space, promoting a politics of micropolitical change around asylum might offer the chance for sanctuary to similarly infuse far more of Britain's response to, and responsibility for, asylum.

Biopower and the City of Refuge

Within such a political vision however, we must also retain an awareness of the substantial challenge which engendering this form of political becoming presents. This is not simply because, as Beck (2002) notes, we can never guarantee a sense of cosmopolitan responsibility towards others, but perhaps more worryingly because of the biopolitical fractures of the present. Whilst I would question the purchase of extending Agamben's (1998) account of encampment and abandonment as social positions to consider social formations from the gated community to the theme park as Diken and Laustsen (2002, 2005) do, it is nonetheless valuable, as I suggested in Chapter Two, to acknowledge the pervasive impact of a biopolitics of distinction, bodily demarcation and social non-relation, upon the lives of asylum seekers in the UK. The domopolitical decisions of hospitality and abandonment noted in Sheffield throughout Chapter Three thus demonstrate that a biopolitics which attempts to order, classify and remove those singularities which cannot be subsumed within the state represents a pervasive logic behind much of the current asylum system (Papastergiadis 2006; ten Bos 2005). Biopolitical modes of ordering, from the classifications of the passport and the ID card through to the marking of the body itself as a commodity of surveillance at the biometric border (Amoore 2006; Lyon 2001), are increasingly patterning the lives of many asylum seekers and refugees in the UK as classification, identification and filtration come to operate as key responses to demands for refuge. As we saw in Chapter Seven, the conclusion of such a biopolitical logic is a 'compassionate repression' (Fassin 2005) wherein the hospitable welcome of a chosen few masks the sovereign abandonment of others seen to have exhausted their right to rights. The sorting of lives which this contemporary confluence of bio- and domo-politics presents embodies the central challenge to that vision of political becoming I have begun to sketch throughout this thesis. In part, the politics of becoming I advocate here is intended as a micro, and

macro, political response to the distinctions and fractures of biopower, asking, alongside Derrida (2002), that such decisions be made ever more hospitable. However, a biopolitical present undoubtedly offers an inhospitable, and challenging atmosphere through which to engage such a politics and calls for a wider engagement with the biopolitical distinctions which not only guide border practices and national sovereignty, but which increasingly confine and restrict the everyday lives of asylum seekers. Papastergiadis (2006, p.440) argues that '[a]ttention to these physic and cultural processes [of biopolitical distinction] is now a crucial part of understanding the formation of new political possibilities', and it is such attention which I have partly offered throughout the banal spatialities of asylum I have studied. In coming to terms with how social encampment and sovereign abandonment play a central role in not only defining and demarcating the borders of the nation and the social (Diken 2004; Tyler 2006), but also in creating and conditioning asylum as an encounter with varied spaces both within and beyond the city, from the detention centre to the drop-in centre, the possibilities for a political response to biopower in its present form might be envisaged.

In this case I have proposed a politics of becoming which ties together a political will to challenge and transform current demarcations of the rightfully political with an ethical orientation towards a wider sense of responsibility within the domain of political decision making. From this position, one emergent from the relations, tensions and dispositions which arose in Sheffield, I would contest Agamben's (2000) desire to fully reject the distinctions of the political present and to abandon the very notions of sovereignty and citizenship, and instead suggest that a politics of becoming is orientated around a Derridean sense of the decision as something which may be infinitely bettered, such that a justice, and hospitality, 'to come' must always be held against the distinctions and divisions of the present. This orientation for a politics of becoming returns us in part to the work of Simon Critchley (2000, 2007) noted in Chapter Four, who advocates a continual political challenge which works 'across, above, beneath, and within the territory of the democratic state, not in the vain hope of achieving some sort of "society without the state," but rather as providing constant critical pressure upon the state, a pressure of emancipatory intent aiming at its infinite amelioration, the endless betterment of actually existing democracy' (Critchley 2000, p.464). Such a politics orientated towards the spatial politics of asylum would represent a politics of becoming that sought to work at levels from the micropolitical to the international as Critchley (2000) suggests, in order to contest and challenge the formations of biopower. As I

suggested in Chapter Three, this is not to argue that biopolitical distinctions and the filtering of domopolitics can be fully alleviated or avoided, in part they sustain the very spatial constitution of hospitality, and as such Agamben's (1999, 2000) messianic attempts to envisage a 'form-of-life' beyond such divisions strikes me as both unrealistic and politically dangerous, for they remove an ethical and political imperative to take action in the present. Rather, it is to suggest that in taking seriously the ways in which biopolitics infuses not only the lives of asylum seekers but also the spaces through which asylum is partly constructed, we might begin to address a politics which attempts to instil within these decisions a sense of the hospitable. In this sense, as Diken and Laustsen (2005, p.192) recognise of the biopolitical camp, an ethical response to biopower 'urges risk taking. It is in this effort that we discover that the camp is not just a matter of walls and fences but also of doors and windows'. The 'doors and windows' of the camp offer shards of light which may cast into question the political legitimacy, and future, of those distinctions which perpetuate the camp itself. An ethical response in this sense implies a demand to contest and question these conditions as Critchley (2007) suggests, the politics of becoming I have sketched from my encounters in Sheffield seeks to bring together some of these shards of light in calling for a political future of agonistic contest not mired in the exclusions of a repressive domopolitics. One such future might be seen in Derrida's (2001a) account of the 'city of refuge', and it is here that I wish to conclude, with the belief that despite the fractures and fears of contemporary biopolitics there still remains a place for an account of the city as a space of sanctuary.

I began this enquiry by considering Derrida's (2001a) account of a 'city of refuge', and asking what kind of a politics might emerge through taking seriously the political entanglements of asylum seekers in the city. I believe that the modest politics of becoming I have gestured towards presents the most hopeful account of such a politics. However, there still remains one question which I posed in response to Derrida at the outset of this thesis, he argued that in proposing a 'city of refuge' 'we are dreaming of another concept, of another set of rights for the city, of another politics of the city' (Derrida 2001a, p.8), this is in part the politics I hope to have articulated throughout these pages, yet it is not exhausted here. Considering Derrida's (1999, 2000b) account of hospitality, I was led to ask, could a city ever live up to the promise of refuge?

The promise of refuge, the promise of hospitality itself, would, as I have suggested for Derrida (1999), represent an impossible gesture of welcome, a surprise visitation which would usurp the very position of the host in its fulfilment (Dikeç 2002). The impossibility of a 'pure' and unconditional hospitality is that which maintains a politics of hospitality, maintains a fidelity to the notion of a 'better' mode of welcoming as we saw in Chapter Three. Viewed as such no city could fulfil this promise of refuge, for this promise becomes an ideal around which to orientate oneself, a vision of what could (and yet could not) be. The politics of welcome we have noted in Sheffield is inevitably flawed, inevitably exclusionary at times and produced in a constant tension alongside impulses to domopolitics and sovereign abandonment. However, as Rosello (2001, p.20) argues, in such a political climate perhaps;

> 'Rather than (cynically) idealizing the idea of hospitality while refusing to practice it...it might be more ethical to recognize the existence of imperfect, flawed, and even hostile forms of hospitality that protect individuals from the perverse interpretations of purportedly benevolent scripts'.

Viewing Sheffield's attempts at providing a refuge in this manner might allow us to suggest that despite their shortcomings, their exclusions and necessary power relations, they do indeed provide moments of hospitality, gestures of welcome, and as such 'perhaps, certain forms of hostile, grudging, and limited hospitality may be better than nothing' (Rosello 2001, p.27). The city can provide a refuge, but a limited, conditional and fleeting one, one held under the sway of national policies and domopolitical impulses. The hospitality of the city may never fulfil a vision of a 'city of refuge', as a space which lies outside national concerns with limiting and conditioning hospitality, for this vision itself is a mirage, an impossible dream of sanctuary forever 'to come'. Rosello (2001) argues however, that such failure should be accepted, acknowledged and recognised, Sheffield in this account represents a city attempting refuge, a city where sanctuary is tainted by a relation to begrudging, hostile and unwelcoming accounts of asylum from a national frame of reference. Sheffield in this account can do little to alter this position, it is placed as a city receiving dispersals and able only to offer a limited hospitality to those who arrive, refuge thus becomes accommodation, sanctuary becomes warehousing.

Yet is there more to be said of Sheffield here? For accepting that certain forms of hospitality 'may be better than nothing' as Rosello (2001, p.27) does, serves to close the

question of hospitality itself, of hospitality as a continual negotiation of space, a negotiation *for* sanctuary. As Naas (2003, p.167, original emphasis) argues;

> 'Hospitality thus is and must remain an open question. We can never know whether there *is* hospitality as such, since pure hospitality is always impure, that is, always compromised insofar as it is achieved, real, made effective. The question of whether there *is* hospitality in a given situation must thus always remain open'.

The challenge of hospitality is therefore one of openings, of never losing sight of that unconditional ethic which might question and orientate our finite and definite actions, for this ethical demand, for hospitality, for space, is what may make the actions of the city responsible (Critchley 2000). It is in opening space for these negotiations, in allowing these agonistic moments to occur, that we may see the emergence of a city of refuge, a city constantly becoming, and a city riven with the tensions of practicing an imperfect politics of hospitality. It is these constant negotiations which may define a city of refuge, and which defined Sheffield's spaces of asylum, as sites where temporary and fleeting moments of respite, refuge and sanctuary may be sought out and performed. As Schlunke (2002, p.26) argues, within this process 'there is no resolution...only a constant negotiation between welcoming strangers, [and] farewelling ourselves'. Sheffield presents a city undergoing such constant negotiations, a city where refuge is sought and briefly found, yet it is in the negotiations of these spaces, and in negotiations of an ethic of hospitality towards others within the city, that different forms of relating, different sensibilities to alterity, and an emergent politics of becoming may be formed. Sheffield may not be Derrida's (2001a) 'city of refuge', it may not have performed a politics at odds with the state, a politics of radical and hopeful hospitality, however, its myriad of banal spaces, those everyday negotiations of disposition, ethical sensibilities and relational responsibilities which have marked this thesis, all point to the fact that, despite the boundaries and demands of national policies, prescriptions and imaginaries, different spaces are being created, and different politics are possible, always possible.

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APPENDIX A

FIELDWORK

Sheffield

I moved to Sheffield at the beginning of October 2006 and lived in the city until July 2007, occupying a house in the Ecclesall area to the west of the city centre. From here I became involved in a range of charities, organisations and events which allowed me to gain an insight into the politics of the city and its response to asylum seekers and refugees.

Participant Observation

Participant observation in and around Sheffield during my time there formed a major part of this research and it had three central orientations. Firstly, my involvement with the two weekly Talking Shop drop-in centres in the centre of Sheffield. I gained access to these early in my fieldwork and attended them twice weekly from the end of October 2006 until July 2007. As I developed friendships through the continual engagements of these spaces, I was offered further opportunities to research different aspects of asylum seekers' lives in the city. These included being invited to asylum seekers' homes, being invited for informal chats and coffee by asylum seekers and volunteers, and being asked to speak at a number of events listed below.

The second key area of my participant observation was through working with the City of Sanctuary movement. The first action of my fieldwork was to attend their one year anniversary event in October 2006, and from this I arranged a number of interviews with City of Sanctuary's founders. Following these conversations I was invited to take a position on the City of Sanctuary committee in order to offer my knowledge of hospitality and to gain further access to the daily workings of this group. With this position I attended committee meetings once a month, took part in a job selection panel for a new post in the organisation and attended all City of Sanctuary events over the year. I resigned from this position in July 2007, but maintain contact with the group.

The final area of my participant observation arose through being invited to, and attending a wide range of events in Sheffield which were organised around asylum and refugee issues. Below is a list of these events:

- City of Sanctuary committee meetings.
- City of Sanctuary AGM.

- The Talking Shop AGM.
- Church Action on Poverty committee meetings.
- A meeting of the Sheffield Humanist Society on asylum.
- Church Action on Poverty national conference, Manchester, 2006.
- 3 ASSIST demonstrations outside the Town Hall.
- ASSIST sleep-out outside Sheffield students union.
- ASSIST AGM.
- A march to support the right to ESOL provision.
- Performance of *'They get free mobiles don't they...'* by the Banner Theatre Company.
- Sharrow Lantern Festival.
- Performance of *'Sharrow Stories'* by Encounters art collective.
- Performance of *'Asylum Monologues'* by Ice and Fire Theatre Company.
- Refugee Education and Employment Programme AGM.
- Refugee Housing Agency Poverty and Homelessness Conference, Sheffield.
- Sheffield Refugee Forum Meeting.
- Sheffield Peace in the Park Charities Festival.
- South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group Meeting.
- Northern Refugee Centre Volunteer Training Workshop.
- National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns Training Workshop.
- Sheffield Refugee Week Opening Ceremony.
- *'Moving Here'* Refugee Week exhibition.
- Refugee Week and ASSIST *'One World Over'* Concert.
- Young Asylum Seekers Stories Refugee Week Event.
- Meeting of the Sheffield Amnesty International Group.
- Intercultural Dialogue event organised by the Islamic Society of Great Britain.
- City of Sanctuary Ceilidh.
- *'Justice for Asylum Seekers'* rally by Liberty.
- Refugee Housing Association Open Day.
- A Sheffield City Council debate on the right to work for asylum seekers.
- Launch of The Talking Shop Cookbook.
- Organised and attended several Talking Shop football sessions.

In-depth Interviews

Alongside the conversations, chats and fleeting exchanges of my participant observation, I conducted a number of in-depth interviews with respondents from across Sheffield's refugee sector. These were recruited both through formal approaches before my period of fieldwork and through The Talking Shop and those events listed above. Below is a list of the interviews, including details of when and where they took place. All names are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of participants.

- Craig, co-founder of City of Sanctuary, 30/10/06, Craig's home.
- Inderjit, co-founder of City of Sanctuary, 04/04/07, Victoria Hall.
- Lynn, founder of The Talking Shop, 20/07/07, in Talking Shop office.
- Adam, director of local refugee housing organisation, 08/11/06, Adam's office.
- Phillip, local councillor, 07/12/06, Phillip's office.
- Jill, local councillor, 27/11/07, Jill's office.

- Helen, council asylum seeker team worker, 07/12/06, the Town Hall.
- Mark, director of local refugee charity, 15/11/06, Mark's office.
- Rebecca, Talking Shop volunteer, 08/02/07, Sheffield students union.
- Anna, Talking Shop volunteer, 01/06/07, bench on Devonshire Green.
- Steven and Claire, ASSIST volunteers, 25/07/07, respondent's home.
- Ian, Northern Refugee Centre worker, 09/03/07, Ian's office.
- Jacob, Northern Refugee Centre worker, 29/01/07, Jacob's office.
- Elizabeth, Talking Shop volunteer, 24/05/07, Sheffield students union.
- Paul, charity worker and campaigner, 11/12/06, Paul's home.
- Omar, asylum seeker, 08/05/07, Sheffield students union.
- Adil, refugee, 29/06/07, The Talking Shop office.
- Mustafa, asylum seeker, 16/05/07, The Talking Shop kitchen.
- Faheem, asylum seeker, 01/06/07, bench on Devonshire Green.
- Zada, asylum seeker, 01/06/07, bench on Devonshire Green.
- Sercan, refugee, 18/07/07, Sercan's home.
- Rubi, asylum seeker, 21/05/07, café in Sheffield.
- Ilya, refugee, 06/07/07, The Talking Shop office.
- Tinashe, asylum seeker, 28/03/07, The Talking Shop kitchen.
- Hassan, asylum seeker, 25/05/07, The Talking Shop office.
- Shariq, refugee, 05/07/07, café in Sheffield.
- Naveed, refused asylum seeker, 22/06/07, café in Sheffield.

Participant Diaries

Prior to a number of the interviews noted above, I was able to persuade a small number of asylum seekers and refugees to keep a diary of their daily lives for me in order to chart more fully their everyday experiences of the city, its spaces and ideas of welcome. Following this diary-interview method, I collected these diaries, read and coded them and used their contents to direct our subsequent interview exchanges. The diaries were then offered back to the respondents with some wishing to keep them and others preferring me to take them. The details of these diaries are listed below, while the time frame for the diaries was not exact, and entries were not always dated and regular, reflecting in part the uncertain nature of asylum as a lived experience, indicative dates are shown here to suggest the length of time each diary covered.

- Omar, asylum seeker, diary recorded between 13/04/07 and 04/05/07
- Adil, refugee, diary recorded between 16/05/07 and 30/05/07.
- Sercan, refugee, diary recorded between 24/06/07 and 09/07/08.
- Shariq, asylum seeker, diary recorded 12/06/07 between 22/06/07.
- Tinashe, asylum seeker, diary recorded 07/03/07 between 16/03/07.

Archival Research

I spent a period of eight weeks between April 2007 and June 2007 undertaking weekly visits to the records and archives division of Sheffield public library. Here I reviewed all press coverage held for Sheffield's two newspapers, *The Sheffield Telegraph* and *The Sheffield Star*, from 1976 to the present. These searches were refined to consider only those stories which referred to keywords of 'asylum', 'asylum seekers', 'refugees', 'Gateway', 'Kosovo refugees crisis', 'Chilean refugees', 'Vietnamese refugees' and 'racism'.

Alongside this archival research I also used web based searches to examine the discursive construction of asylum both in Sheffield and nationally.

In Sheffield this involved studying the websites of the following organisations;
- Sheffield City Council.
- The Northern Refugee Centre.
- Indymedia Sheffield.
- City of Sanctuary.
- Church Action on Poverty, Sheffield.
- ASSIST.
- Yorkshire and Humberside Refugee Access.
- South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group.
- Sheffield Theatres.
- *The Sheffield Star* Newspaper.
- *The Sheffield Telegraph* Newspaper.

Nationally this involved studying the websites of the following organisations;
- The Home Office.
- The Independent Asylum Commission.
- The UK Borders Agency.
- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- The UK Refugee Council.
- The Strangers into Citizens Campaign.
- *The Guardian* Newspaper.
- *The Independent* Newspaper.
- *The Daily Mail* Newspaper.
- *The Sun* Newspaper.
- The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns.
- The No-Borders Movement.
- The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees.
- BBC News Online.
- The Banner Theatre Company.
- The Ice and Fire Theatre Company.
- Encounters Art Collective.
- The Refugee Housing Association.
- Shelter.
- The Housing Associations Charitable Trust.
- The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

Coding, Collating and Interpreting the Data

During the period of my fieldwork and for a further month and a half following its conclusion, I transcribed each of the interviews detailed above, noting the entirety of each conversation along with its context, location, time and date. Upon the completion of these transcriptions I contacted all those respondents involved and gave them the opportunity to read through my transcripts to assure that they provided an accurate reflection of our conversations. Only two of my respondents took me up on this offer, and both agreed that the verbatim transcripts I had taken were accurate. Alongside transcribing my interviews during this period I also began the process of reading and coding my archival notebooks,

which contained details of all the newspaper archives I had studied throughout the fieldwork and those websites and news resources noted above, the respondent diaries noted above, and the three research diaries I had kept from the first day of my fieldwork. These included ethnographic notes on my encounters throughout the city, my accounts of charity events, meetings, interviews and a variety of other notes, both conceptual and practical, which occurred to me during the process of conducting this study.

With these main resources brought together at the end of my fieldwork, I then began the task of attempting to make sense of, and form a coherent account from, their disparate tales. This process began with a painstaking period of coding in which I took each resource (interviews, respondent diaries, research diaries and archival notes, including images), read through these accounts and coded their content according to the main ideas and themes which emerged from within the text. A second round of coding was then undertaken which sought to break these master codes down into a series of more precise, subsidiary codes, often relating to particular conceptual ideas or arguments. The final stage of this coding process was to then divide these resources into separate files according to their particular codes, thus here sections of interviews were placed alongside archival text and ethnographic accounts to provide a collage of material which reflected upon a particular idea, space, concept or experience. It was from this series of grouped collages that the central themes for each chapter of this thesis emerged.

Throughout this process of closely reading and interpreting the texts and resources created during my fieldwork, a central concern was to both consider how these diverse accounts related to one another, how they came together to provide a series of snapshots of space, encounter and reflection, but also to write a thesis whose argument, structure and style was responsive to these snapshots. It was for this reason that the themes and concerns of these chapters emerge from this collage of data, rather than from a series of conceptual tools, and as such I have hoped to write a series of conversations as my conceptual thoughts were directed by the collages created and my interpretation of such resources was coloured by the theoretical lenses which orientated me. It was partly for this reason that an account of the spacing of asylum emerged so readily within this thesis for this was a concern which occurred time and again, both implicitly and explicitly, within the accounts my fieldwork produced.

The final point to note, in terms of constructing the thesis itself, was that whilst I tried to be as representative as possible in the quotes and data provided throughout these pages there are, naturally, notable emissions as a series of editorial decisions had to be taken as avenues were both opened and closed throughout the process of producing such a document. The accounts which are provided through these pages were chosen precisely to be indicative of a wider set of resources which could, also but not equally, have been used to represent the particular theme, idea or encounter at issue. Thus in the interview quotes provided I have attempted to add a sense of context through including details of the wider conversational flow of each encounter, and in ethnographic accounts I have sought to provide a snapshot of the moment at issue in context. Where there proved to be moments of disjuncture, discord or contradiction within these accounts, I have attempted to illustrate these as a means to highlight the consistently nuanced, complex and situational nature of both the encounters I write of, and the fieldwork which produced them.